

Lund University

Department of Sociology



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Depiction of psychopathy in Swedish mass media

- A qualitative content analysis regarding the Swedish mass media outlet Aftonbladet's depiction of people with psychopathy

Author: Klara Astner

Bachelor thesis: SOCK08, 15 credit

Spring semester 2021

Supervisor: Anton Törnberg

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Abstract.

The purpose of this study was to explore how Swedish mass media depicts people with psychopathy through the use of the following questions: How are people with psychopathy depicted in the media outlet Aftonbladet? What perception of people with psychopathy does this imply? This was done using an inductive approach accompanied by qualitative content analysis. Purposive criterion sampling and inductive coding following Mayring's (2000) step model of inductive category development, were also used. The result was the formulation of three overarching themes: *Information*, *dehumanization* and *message*. Information referred to information presented by Aftonbladet regarding psychopathy and people with psychopathy. Dehumanization referred to dehumanizing comparisons and statements about people with psychopathy. Finally, message regarded statements addressing the reader directly, as to inform how one should regard and behave towards people with psychopathy. Overall the depiction of psychopathy in the studied articles proved to be thoroughly negative, depicting people with psychopathy in a demoralizing and dehumanizing manner. Goffman's theory of stigma was then chosen based upon the results and applied in order to further analyze the perception of people with psychopathy as implied in the studied material. This was used to further emphasize the stigmatization observed within the studied articles.

Keywords: Aftonbladet, psychopathy, mass media, qualitative content analysis, Goffman's theory of stigma, inductive approach.

Word count: 10425

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Purpose and research question	2
2. Previous literature.....	2
2.1. Psychopathy as a concept	2
2.2. Sociological relevance	5
3. Theoretical perspective	7
4.1. Goffman’s theory of stigma.....	7
4. Methodology.....	9
4.1. Methodological approach.....	9
4.2. Sampling and material	10
4.2.1. Selection of media outlet.....	11
4.2.2 Selection of articles.....	12
4.3. Method of coding and analysis.....	13
4.4 Ethical considerations.....	15
5. Analysis and result.....	15
5.1. Information.....	16
5.1.1. Criteria	16
5.1.2 General.....	16
5.2. Dehumanization:	18
5.2.1. Animal/creature comparisons	18
5.2.2. Murderer comparisons	18
5.2.3. Sub-human functioning.....	19
5.3. Message.....	21
5.4. Theoretical analysis	22
6. Discussion.....	26
7. References and material	28
7.1. References.....	28
7.2. Material.....	32

1. Introduction

If someone were to ask you to describe psychopathy, what would your answer be? It might seem like a weird and rather unimportant question, and it might even be, depending on the context. Yet the concept of psychopathy, and the perception of the disorder among not just professionals, but laypersons as well, do hold significant importance.

This is because there exists no clear scientific consensus regarding what exactly psychopathy is (for example, Crego & Widiger, 2015; Horley, 2014), meaning that the perception of psychopathy depends on who you ask. According to Horley (2011) the interpretation of the term can depend not only on a user's specific profession or professional training, but possibly even on their politics. To complicate things further, the concept itself has been shrouded in obscurity ever since its creation. As Scott (2014) states, the early taxonomies and psychodynamic formulations were in need of specificity and struggled to operationalize psychopathy. As mentioned above, this unclarity still exists today, with Skeem et al. concluding that “[f]ew psychological concepts evoke simultaneously as much fascination and misunderstanding as psychopathic personality, or psychopathy” (2011). But the vagueness and plasticity of the concept, according to Eghigian (2015), is also one of the main driving forces behind its popularity, having been embraced by clinicians, researchers and mass media alike.

Nonetheless, regardless of its obscurity, the term psychopathy is never used in a positive manner, and although the social consequences are rather unclear, they appear profound (Horley, 2011). There exist, however, several studies that have examined the effect of the term in judicial settings and come to the conclusion that people who are described as “psychopaths” can be seen as deserving of harsher punishment (for example, Cox et al., 2016, Edens et al., 2005). This perception has been linked to the depiction of people with psychopathy in popular culture and mass media by studies done by researchers like Smith et al. (2014), and Furnham et al. (2009).

In addition, one does not need to look far to see the popularity of the concept within mass media. Take, for example, one of the most popular mass media outlets in Sweden according

to a study made by Pew Research Center in 2017; Aftonbladet (Mitchell et al., 2018). Aftonbladet has published several hundreds of articles that, in one way or another, depict people with psychopathy or the disorder itself. Therefore, due to the possible effect media outlets seemingly can have on the public's perception of psychopathy, Aftonbladet can be seen as an interesting object to study in regards to the depiction of psychopathy in mass media.

1.1. Purpose and research question

The purpose of this study is to explore how people with psychopathy are depicted within the Swedish mass media outlet Aftonbladet and what type of perception of people with psychopathy this implies. This will be explored through an inductive approach accompanied by qualitative content analysis. To accomplish this, the following questions have been asked:

- How are people with psychopathy depicted in the media outlet Aftonbladet?
- What perception of people with psychopathy does this imply?

2. Previous literature

This section will be divided into two parts. The first will regard how psychopathy is and has been conceptualized, while the second will focus on sociologically relevant literature regarding its depiction and usage. Note that the importance of the first part is due to the lack of consensus and clarity surrounding the concept, something that has also been seen in the studied articles. Therefore, in order to clear up some of the confusion that the content of these articles may give rise to, the most significant aspects of the concept of psychopathy have been described, including a quick summary as to why this lack of consensus exists in the first place.

2.1. Psychopathy as a concept

Explaining psychopathy is no easy feat due to the confusion surrounding the concept (Crego & Widiger, 2015; Horley, 2014; Ogloff, 2006; Papagathonikou, 2019; Scott, 2014). Crego and Widiger (2015) also conclude that the conceptualization of psychopathy is surrounded by a lack of consensus, referencing to the fact that the disorder has been described differently by researchers like Cleckley, Hare, Lilienfeld and Widows, Lykken, Lynam et al., L. Robins, Skeem and Cooke, Patrick et al., as well by the American Psychiatric Association. They also

go as far as to claim that “the syndrome probably lacks validity as a true syndrome in nature with a single common etiology. It is instead a construction by clinicians and researchers of a constellation of traits that has strong clinical and social importance” (Crego & Widiger, 2015). What does not help is that the term has a long and complicated history (Horley, 2014; Papagathonikou, 2019; Scott, 2014). Therefore some of the more significant developments of the concept during history shall now briefly be discussed.

The word “psychopath” itself is a combination of the Greek word for spirit: psyche, and suffering/feeling: pathos (Scott, 2014). It seems to have first appeared in the 1840s within German psychiatry, where it appears to have been used to describe all psychological issues, or at the very least, complex ones that involve significant disturbances in mood and thought (Horley, 2014). Feuchtersleben, for example, in 1847 described “psychopathies” as diseases of personality (ibid). Later, in 1891, Koch coined the term “hereditary psychopathic inferiorities” to describe what he called physical signs of degeneration (Gutmann, 2008). Something which has many similarities with today's description of personality disorders (ibid).

Yet the construct of psychopathy was first to be operationalised in 1941 by Cleckley in his seminal work *The Mask of Sanity* (Scott, 2014). In it he described a “psychopath” as someone who, despite not being insane, displays a grossly disturbed behavior that is oftentimes chaotic, destructive and irresponsible within relationships. He also stated that although they may seem able to relate superficially to those around them, they demonstrate no regard for the feelings of others (ibid). Later, in his third edition of the book, published 1955, Cleckley also summarized 16 behavioral characteristics of a psychopath (ibid). Cleckley’s work went on to inspire Hare (1980) in his development of the Psychopathy Checklist (PCL), with its successor: Psychopathy Checklist - Revised (PCL-R) being created in 2003 (Hare & Neumann, 2005).

Today, psychopathy is generally seen as consisting of two dimensions (Emmelkamp & Meyerbröker, 2019, p. 133). The first one, primary/core psychopathy, consists of emotional-interpersonal traits that emphasize social dominance and narcissism, like for example; entitlement, grandiosity, low anxiety, lack of remorse, manipulateness and shallowness (ibid). The second one, secondary psychopathy, on the other hand emphasizes social deviance

and includes aggression, antisocial behaviors, anxiety, impulsiveness, irresponsibility, etc. (ibid).

Still, when it comes to assessing psychopathy, Hare's PCL-R is oftentimes referred to as the gold standard, and is the most influential operationalisation of psychopathy (Papagathonikou, 2019; Neumann, 2016). The PCL-R consists of 20 items, of which 18 are grouped into four different categories; interpersonal features, affective features, lifestyle features and antisocial features (Hare & Neumann, 2005). The items in the interpersonal features facet are: Glibness and superficial charm, a grandiose sense of self, pathological lying as well as cunning and manipulative. The items in the affective category consist of: lack of remorse or guilt, shallow affect, callousness and lack of empathy as well as failure to accept responsibility for one's action. In the lifestyle feature facet, the items are: need of stimulation/proneness to boredom, parasitic lifestyle, lack of realistic and long term goals, impulsivity, irresponsibility. Lastly there is the antisocial feature facet, which consists of: poor behavioral controls, early behavioral problems, juvenile delinquency, revocation of conditional release and criminal versatility (ibid). The two items of which do not belong to any of these facets are promiscuous sexual behavior and many short-term marital relationships (ibid). Each item can be given a score of "0", "1" or "2", where 0 indicates that the feature is absent, 1 that the feature applies somewhat, and 2 that the feature applies fully. Consequently, the scores can at most be equal to 40, whereof having a total of 30 scores or more means the person has psychopathy (ibid).

Furthermore, besides the lack of consensus regarding the conceptualization of psychopathy, the term is also commonly used interchangeably with the terms sociopathy, dissocial personality disorder and antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) in clinical literature, research literature and popular media, complicating things further (Conti, 2016; Horley, 2011). This became even more noticeable with American Psychiatric Association's release of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) where they mention that ASPD also has been referred to as psychopathy, sociopathy and dissocial personality disorder (Conti, 2016). This can be seen as problematic given that the current consensus among the majority of researchers is that these are distinct, albeit related, constructs (Conti, 2016; Ogloff, 2006).

ASPD in the DSM-5, as the name implies, is typically associated with antisocial behavior like violence and crime (Emmelkamp & Meyerbröcker, 2019, p. 131). In order to be diagnosed the person has to have a history of repeated conduct disorder before age 15 (like theft or aggression towards people or animals), as well as at least three behavioral problems occurring after age 15 (ibid). It is also useful to note that Section III of the DSM-5 include a psychopathy specifier for the diagnosis of ASPD that is modeled after more recent conceptualization of the term by researchers like Liliendelf and Andrews and Patrick et al. who put a greater emphasis on constructs such as fearlessness, boldness and invulnerability respectively (Crego & Widiger, 2014).

Dissocial personality disorder is described in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th Revision (ICD-10). In section F60.2 it is explained as a personality disorder characterized by disregard for social obligations and callous unconcern for the feelings of others. It consists of a low threshold for frustration and aggression, a tendency to blame others for one's own actions or rationalize them, and the person's actions and behavior should also not be readily modifiable by adverse experience. The diagnosis also includes amoral, antisocial, asocial, psychopathic and sociopathic personality disorders (World Health Organization, 2016). Sociopathy on the other hand is an outdated term (Conti, 2016), that was first used in 1914 by Birnbaum in order to emphasize the disorder's psychosocial nature and highlight the role social learning and deficient early environmental influences have (Scott, 2014). It existed in the first and second edition of the DSM, but was replaced by ASPD in the third edition (ibid).

In summary, as explained by Horley (2014), psychopathy is a highly popular construct within forensic psychology as well as, albeit to a somewhat lesser degree, in forensic psychiatry and criminology. A construct that, in the present day, is used to refer to a disorder that is typically poorly understood or lacks specified biogenesis. It is characterized by things such as a lack of empathy, a thrill seeking behavior, dissembling and egocentrism. In addition, it is not unusual for psychopaths to be seen as criminals or at least very antisocial.

2.2. Sociological relevance

The importance of the concept of psychopathy can especially be seen in regards to how it is used within legal settings. In Sweden, a person that has committed a crime but who during the crime was affected by a severe personality disorder can be sentenced to psychiatric care.

However, psychopathy does not, as of today, count as a “severe” personality disorder by law and is thereby not included among reasons as to why someone may be sent to psychiatric care (Rättsmedicinalverket, 2018). Although, some researchers (for example, Fine & Kennett, 2004; Freedman & Verdun-Jones, 2010), argue that this should not be the case due to the neurobiological irregularities people with psychopathy present, as these irregularities are argued to explain their propensity for antisocial behaviour.

Another example regarding the perception of psychopathy in legal settings, is how it at times can impact sentencing. This is because among jury members in the U.S, the perception of people with psychopathy is often that they are socially adept and intelligent but also dangerous. Which, at times, makes them seen as deserving of harsher punishment (Cox et al., 2016; Edens et al., 2013a; Edens et al., 2013b; Edens et al., 2005; Mowle et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Smith et al. (2014) propose that jury members' perception of psychopathy may be heavily influenced by the exposure to mass media's portrayals of psychopathy due to the availability heuristic. Edens et al. (2013b) echo this thought by mentioning that the label of “psychopath” may be tied to the narratives of serial killers and mass murderers through the sensationalized and limited portrayal of people labeled as psychopathic in popular media, which consequently, may contribute to laypersons' understanding of psychopathy. Furnham et al. (2009), when studying laypersons' understanding of psychopathy, came to a similar conclusion, where they proposed that the biased perception the general public were found to have regarding the disorder may be due to how psychopathy is depicted in popular culture. Especially in relation to fictional serial killers or mass murderers like Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho* and several James Bond Villains.

Keesler and DeMatteo (2017) also found that popular media in the form of cinematic portrayal, seemingly affected laypersons' understanding of psychopathy, although they found this understanding to be mixed. They speculated that the participants' conceptualization of psychopathy may have been the result of traits shown to be associated with psychopathy in popular media in antagonists and protagonists. But this mixed understanding of psychopathy may also have to do with the construction of psychopathy, even besides cinema, being far from homogenous. Instead popular portrayals of psychopaths range from especially violent and impulsive criminals to corporate figures who climb to the top of the social hierarchy through their skill and callousness (Skeem et al., 2011). Within the Swedish context research

has also shown that the perception of several different aspects within the psychopathy construct differ among people (forensic evaluators, forensic ward staff and clinical ward staff) working within Sweden's forensic mental health system (Sörman et al., 2014). Nevertheless, it seems like it is not uncommon for people with psychopathy to be viewed as different from the rest of humanity and particularly dangerous. A view that is also accompanied by therapeutic nihilism regarding treatment (Edens et al., 2013a; Edens et al., 2013b; Eghigian, 2015; Scott, 2014; Skeem et al., 2011).

In conclusion, the media's role in presenting complicated concepts such as psychopathy seem to hold great importance. Something that becomes even more prominent when you take into consideration the strength of viral media as an efficient delivery system of messages, and the danger that can arise if said message is not true (Vista, 2015). Therefore, due to the confusion regarding the concept of psychopathy (as shown above), there is a great chance that this is especially true in regards to psychopathy.

3. Theoretical perspective

In order to better understand how the implied perception by Aftonbladet of people with psychopathy relates to the depiction made regarding people with psychopathy, Goffman's theory of stigma was used. This theory was chosen based upon the content found within the selected articles, and the formulation of themes and sub-themes this resulted in. Goffman's theory of stigma shall hereby be summarised in conjunction with other contextually important terms like; social identity, blemishes of individual character and the discredited/discreditable.

4.1. Goffman's theory of stigma

According to Goffman (1963) society establishes the means of categorizing individuals and the corresponding attributes to these categories that are considered ordinary for its members. Furthermore it is the social setting that indicates what categories of people we are expected to encounter in a certain situation. This enables us to deal with the ones we expect to encounter without spending any special attention or thought. Therefore, when we are met with a stranger, appearances are the first thing that allow us to anticipate that person's category and attributes: their social identity. These anticipations are then what we lean on and transform into normative expectations, and then into righteously presented demands (pp. 10-11).

However, as Goffman informs (1963), we barely become aware of the demands we have made until the question comes as to if they can be fulfilled; if the assumptions we made are true or not. The assumption about a person's category and attributes is furthermore their virtual social identity. But it can also be revealed that the stranger possesses some kind of attribute that differentiates them from others in the category of persons available. A kind of attribute that is undesirable, and in the worst case an attribute that implies that a person is dangerous, thoroughly bad or weak. In our minds this reduces the individual from a whole and usual person to one that is tainted and discounted (p. 11).

This is what is called a stigma, especially if the discrediting effect is very extensive. It can also be called things such as a failing, shortcoming, handicap, etc. Although it is important to remember that not all undesirable attributes are a problem, only those which are incompatible with our stereotype of how a certain individual should be. In addition, the attribute that stigmatizes one person can confirm the commonness of another, meaning it is not automatically discrediting. A stigma can therefore be seen as a special type of relationship between attribute and stereotype (Goffman, 1963, pp. 11-13).

Goffman (1963) moreover differentiates between three different types of stigmas. One can be regarded as abominations of the body, e.i physical deformities, another is the tribal stigma of race/nation/religion which can be transmitted through lineage and contaminate all members of a family equally. Finally there are blemishes of individual character. This last one is the type of stigma that is relevant for this study. It includes negative personality traits such as weak will and dishonesty that are deduced from a known record of, for example, mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, unemployment and so on (p. 13).

Furthermore Goffman (1963) explains that stigmatized individuals can either be discredited or discreditable. If a person's stigma is evident when they present themselves or is known by others beforehand, he is a discredited person. And since no one is likely to openly recognize what is discrediting them, the situation can grow tense, uncertain and ambiguous for everyone involved, but especially so for the one who is stigmatized. Here the stigmatized person might cooperate with the non-stigmatized people by acting as if the known difference they possess is irrelevant or not to be attended to. On the other hand you have the discreditable, whose stigma is not immediately obvious or known by others in advance (or at least not known by the stigmatized to be known to the others). This means that the problem

faced by the discreditable is not about managing the tension that can arise during social activities, but managing the information about their stigma. In other words, questions of displaying or not displaying; telling or not telling; to let in or not to let in; to lie or not to lie become relevant. Then, for each of these, there is also the decision of how, when, where and to whom (p. 56).

Still, what does this culminate in? According to Goffman (1963) this, by definition, means that we believe that the person with a stigma is not quite human. This assumption then leads to us exercising different forms of discriminations, though which we effectively, albeit often unthinkingly, reduces his chances in life. We, so to speak, construct a stigma theory, an ideology to explain the stigmatized person's inferiority and to account for the danger they represent (p. 14).

4. Methodology

This study has operated through an inductive approach, meaning that the theory is guided by the observations or results made by the study (Bryman, 2016, p. 49). The approach was used since the aim of this study was to explore how Aftonbladet depicts people with psychopathy. It was, in other words, important to let the material guide the result. This stands in contrast to what is called a deductive approach, which lets a theory, and the hypotheses derived from it, guide the data collection process (Bryman, 2016, p. 47). But since the material studied included several contradicting statements, this would also run the risk of excluding articles that would contradict the theory. Consequently, the themes and subthemes were constructed using the studied material before a particular theory was even considered.

4.1. Methodological approach

Qualitative content analysis is the research method used in this study, which in its most simple form, is the search for underlying themes in the material used for analysis, and is probably the most common approach in qualitative analysis of documents (Bryman, 2016, p. 677). This model is also used as a way to explore the complexity of communications in ways that may not be possible when using a quantitative analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 86). In it, both manifest and latent content are examined, as well as meanings in context, while the themes usually aim to both summarize the content in the material and highlight key content (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 87-88).

The form of qualitative content analysis to be used in this study is the narrative format. According to Drisko and Maschi (2015), the narrative format is the most common form of presentation for qualitative content analysis, and is used to identify core themes or categories as section headings in the report. Each core is moreover interpreted in a summary manner and illustrated through quotations that portray the ideas or perceptions present in the text (p. 109). Furthermore, since qualitative content analysis mainly is a descriptive research method, a significant part of the analysis involves the process of coding (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 109).

Lastly, it is important to clarify the difference between qualitative content analysis and what is called grounded theory. Because there seems to be a lack of consensus regarding what exactly qualitative content analysis is, and due to the similarities between qualitative content analysis and grounded theory, confusion has emerged (Cho & Lee, 2014). Drisko and Maschi (2015) also highlight this, explaining that it is not completely uncommon for publications that self-describe as a qualitative content analysis, to refer to the use of Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory as their method of coding (p. 104). As a result, it would benefit this study to clarify how these research methods have been operationalized in this study.

Some of these similarities, as stated by Cho and Lee (2014), between these research methods include: being built upon naturalistic inquiry, the ability to collect data from multiple channels, following the systematic procedure of data analysis, the search for codes and categories and later themes. However, one of the most significant differences is that the final result of qualitative content analysis is a list of categories and themes, while grounded theory aims to develop a substantive theory that surpasses a list of codes (ibid), thereby making qualitative content analysis into a descriptive research method and grounded theory into a conceptual one (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 104). Since this study does not aim to formulate a theory, but to describe how Aftonbladet depicts people with psychopathy, this also explains why qualitative content analysis has been used above grounded theory.

4.2. Sampling and material

This study has employed what is known as purposive sampling. According to Palys (2008), purposive sampling is virtually synonymous with qualitative research. This perception is

shared by Bryman (2016) who points out that the majority of qualitative studies uses some form of purposive sampling (p. 498).

Purposive sampling, in and of itself, simply means that the sampling is done with the goal of the study in mind. Meaning that the units of analysis are picked based upon criteria that makes it possible for the research question to be answered (Bryman, 2016, p. 498).

There are however a plethora of strategies one can apply when using purposive sampling. Palys (2008) even states that since there are many objectives a researcher might have, the list of purposive strategies one can follow is virtually endless. As a result there exists no one best sampling strategy, instead the best strategy depends on the context of the study and nature of the research objectives (Palys, 2008).

In this study, the purposive strategy that has been applied is criterion sampling. Palys (2008) explains that criterion sampling involves searching for cases or people who meet a certain criterion. In the context of this study the cases are the articles from Aftonbladet, while the criterion relates to the outlet's depiction of people with psychopathy.

4.2.1. Selection of media outlet

As stated in the research question, this study will focus on the Swedish evening paper Aftonbladet as a means to analyze how people with psychopathy are depicted in Swedish mass media. The decision to use this particular media outlet was based upon a couple of factors. First was its popularity as an outlet. In a study made by Pew Research Center in 2017 that looked at what media outlets people in Sweden consider their main source of news, SVT was ranked the highest with 39%, followed by Aftonbladet at 17% (Mitchell et. al., 2018). The reason Aftonbladet was chosen above SVT however, was because SVT is a public service television company, not a newspaper. This becomes a huge problem when you take into consideration the fact that SVT operates four different channels, whose programmes only can be viewed on SVT Play for 30 days after they have been broadcasted (SVT, n.d.).

Besides popularity, the policies and claims of Aftonbladet were considered an important factor. They claim that the goal of their journalism is to be true and reliable, and that no loyalties, be it to a partner, ideology or other, are allowed to get in the way of this. Quotes are also said to be presented as literally as possible while still being comprehensible to the reader, and that they strive to have every report confirmed by at least two independent sources. But if

the information is proven to be incorrect, they claim to correct the error as soon as they are made aware of it. Lastly, they are careful to inform that they follow the ethics of journalism in Sweden and explain how these are implemented (*Aftonbladet*, 15-05-2021).

Furthermore, this study will purely focus on the articles released on their internet website of the same name (*aftonbladet.se*). This is not only due to availability, but because studies show that people more often read evening papers on the internet than they do physical copies. A trend that has been on the rise since it started to be measured in 2007 (SOM-institutet, 2020).

4.2.2 Selection of articles

The articles were found by the use of *Aftonbladet*'s own system for searching among their articles. Searching the word "psykopat" (in English: psychopath) yielded 550 articles. Since this search did not include articles where the main word was "psykopati" (in English: psychopathy) an additional search was added using this word instead. This yielded an additional 74 results.

Besides the exclusion of re-uploaded articles and copies between the two searches, the selection criteria for the articles were developed as the study progressed. This was because the content within the 624 articles was virtually unknown at the beginning. As a result it was only after all these articles were looked over that a set of criteria was formulated:

- It has to be an article.
- The article has to represent *Aftonbladet*, this excludes debate articles.
- People with psychopathy/psychopathy has to be the main focus in the article or alternatively one of the main focuses, as long as it meets all the other criteria.
- The article has to include ways that will help the reader "identify" people with psychopathy through some form of direct description of psychopathic people or the disorder itself (like a list of identifiable characteristics or through statements by experts*).
- Articles that indirectly describe psychopathy*, are only to be included as long as they reach all the other criteria.

* "Experts" refer to people whose profession directly or indirectly relates to psychopathy, like psychologists, psychiatrists, etc.

* This can for example be descriptions of actions by or traits belonging to a person who is deemed psychopathic.

This led to a total of 50 articles to be included in the study. These articles were then downloaded in order to make it easier to highlight sections of information and underline specific words during coding. It also allowed for “comments” to be easily placed, which were used to summarize the highlighted sections in the article into short words or phrases. Furthermore, it might be worth clarifying some parts of the process behind the formulation of these criteria:

The use of words like “psychopath” were in many articles used as a form of name calling, but without any explanation as to why it was used or what the word means. As a result, articles such as these were excluded. It is true that one might be able to speculate about how this indirectly relates to the perception of the disorder, but this would stray away from the purpose of this study. The research questions aim to explore how Aftonbladet presents people with psychopathy - not how the word is used besides referencing the personality disorder.

The reason as to why articles that only indirectly described psychopathy were not included, was mainly due to the vast amount of material. Indirect statements and small sections or comments made about psychopathy were considered either too vague or did not contain enough information to be deemed useful. In other words, these articles did not bring anything new or substantial to the material already chosen and were therefore excluded. However, it is still important to note that indirect descriptions of psychopathy were still used, but more so to underline direct statements about psychopathy. This was because they could more or less always be linked to some form of direct statement made in that article or in a different one.

4.3. Method of coding and analysis

Inductive coding was the form of coding used in this study. In essence, inductive coding means that the researcher formulate a category based on the analyzed data, and is used within qualitative content analysis in order to help keep the development of categories prioritised over the researcher’s theories and ideas (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, pp. 103-104).

Coding in and of itself, as described by Saldaña (2015), is the act of arranging things in a systematic order, to categorize. The process of coding is thereby the act of applying and

reapplying codes to qualitative data (p. 8), while a code usually refers to a short phrase or a single word that is used to symbolically assign a summative, salient essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute (Saldaña, 2015, p. 3).

Coding can then be used for discovering patterns in the data you analyze. But as Saldaña (2015) states in reference to Hatch (2002), it is important to not only think of patterns as stable regularities, but as something whose form can vary. Patterns can in other words be identified by different characteristics. Referencing Hatch (2002), Saldaña (2015) explains that these can be based upon: similarity, difference, frequency, sequence, correspondence or causation (p. 6).

Coding can become even more complex if not all meaning is manifest, and instead have to be interpreted (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 84). The issue being that the different backgrounds and knowledge of researchers might affect the interpretation (ibid). This was the reason behind why indirect statements in the studied articles were considered in the context of the direct statements, and mainly used to underline them.

The application of inductive coding followed Mayring's (2000) step model of inductive category development. The main idea of this model is to formulate a criterion of definition based upon the theoretical background and research question. This criterion of definition then determines the aspect of the textual material that should be taken into account. This material is then worked through and the categories/themes are tentatively deduced step by step. These are thereafter revised by the use of a feedback loop and eventually reduced to main categories/themes and checked in respect to their reliability (Mayring, 2000).

At first every section that directly or indirectly described people with psychopathy or the disorder itself was highlighted. Thereafter, these sections were separated based upon what "type" of content they included, such as general information about the disorder or dehumanizing statements. These were then used to deduce three overarching themes and a couple of sub-themes.

4.4 Ethical considerations

Due to Aftonbladet being consisting of publically open material and claims to follow the ethical guidelines used in Sweden regarding publicity (*Aftonbladet* 18-05-2021), there were no ethical issues faced in this study.

5. Analysis and result

Three main overarching themes were identified in the articles; *information*, *dehumanization* and *message*. The first theme, information, consists of two sub-themes; “criteria” and “general”. Here criteria relates to traits and/or behaviors that are, according to the articles, used to identify a person with psychopathy. General, on the other hand, refers to information given about psychopathy beyond what is mentioned in criteria, such as who is at risk of developing psychopathy, how many are estimated to have psychopathy, etc.

The second theme, dehumanization, has three sub-themes; “animal/creature comparisons”, “murderer comparisons” and “sub-human functioning”. Animal/creature comparisons, like the name suggests, refers to the act of likening a person with psychopathy to an animal/creature or using animal characteristics to describe a person with psychopathy. In a similar vein, murderer comparisons refers to the act of comparing a person with psychopathy to murderers, not uncommonly serial killers or mass murderers in fiction and non-fiction. The last sub-theme; sub-human functioning refers to a general statement about how (all) people with psychopathy think and function that holds a negative connotation. This is separate from the content under criteria, where only specific traits or behaviors are discussed.

The last theme, message, does not contain any sub-themes and simply focuses on the messages that directly target the reader, and whose goal is to relay information about how one should regard or handle a person with psychopathy. These are all considered overarching due to their tendency to accompany or underline one another. Information about a trait considered psychopathic can, for example, indirectly or directly be used to justify a dehumanizing statement.

5.1. Information

5.1.1. Criteria

The traits and behaviors representative of people with psychopathy in the selected articles do more often than not relate to the ones seen in Hare's test; the PCL-R. Several refer to Hare and either list some of the traits/behaviors mentioned in the test, or all of the traits/behaviors from the PCL-R. There are however a few articles that differentiate between primary and secondary psychopathy, and describe the two similar to Emmelkamp and Meyerbröker (2019). For example, one article describes primary psychopathy as characterized by charm, grandiose perception of oneself, lack of empathy, boredom, pathological lying, lacking feelings of remorse and guilt, and secondary psychopathy as characterized by impulsivity, lack of remorse and guilt, poor self-control, promiscuity, lack of realistic and long term goals, early behavioral issues, juvenile delinquency, irresponsibility and many short-lasting relationships (*Aftonbladet*, 06-09-2018).

Some other noticeable traits/behaviors that are recurrently mentioned as directly (as well as indirectly) related to psychopathy are things such as difficulty in learning from mistakes, immorality, borderlessness, social dominance, jealousy, illogical behaviors, finding enjoyment in pushing others down, dangerousness, economical irresponsibility, systematic abusiveness (physical and psychological), having hidden agendas, controlling behaviors, seductiveness and calculativeness.

5.1.2 General

Beyond traits and behaviors there is some other information about psychopathy that is presented in the studied articles that is of interest for this study, namely how many people are estimated to have psychopathy, how the disorder develops and is defined as well as what the treatment options are. When it comes to the estimation about the number of psychopathic people, among the articles most agree that roughly 1% of the population have psychopathy, whereof most are men. According to several of the articles however, there is also a higher number of people with psychopathy in certain parts of society. The most frequently mentioned are prison where around 15% of people are said to have psychopathy and at the boss' office, where, for example, one article states that you are 4 times more likely to meet a psychopath at the boss' office than the janitor's office (*Aftonbladet*, 19-07-2012). However, high status careers and the stock market are also mentioned a few times as places where

people with psychopathy are drawn to. Or, as one article conveys, referring to Hare, that psychopathic people exist wherever there is money, prestige and power (*Aftonbladet*, 08-03-2011a). Yet, this does not necessarily mean that they have a place in society. As one chief physician in psychiatry, Krakowski states: “We live in a time where social relationships, empathy and ability to find common solutions become more urgent. In such a society there is no place for psychopaths” (*Aftonbladet*, 09-03-2021, my translation).

Regarding what determines whether or not someone will become psychopathic, the consensus among the articles is that both genetics and upbringing have a role to play. But when it comes to treatment options the overall consensus is that there simply is none. In the articles it is several times stated that there is no “cure” for psychopathy, and that there is no point in trying to change or treat people who have it. This can for example be seen in one article where Krakowski states that: “you can never expect a person with antisocial personality traits to change fundamentally. One cannot urge a psychopath to become more empathic. One time a psychopath, always a psychopath” (*Aftonbladet*, 09-03-2021, my translation).

Lastly it is important to note that psychopathy in general is defined differently by different articles, although the term “psychopath” is used consistently throughout every studied article. While several refer to psychopathy in regards to Hare’s PCL-R, that is not the only way psychopathy has been defined in the studied articles. Some use the term antisocial personality disorder, ASPD, and psychopathy interchangeably (for example, *Aftonbladet*, 19-12-2020), while one, for example, depict psychopathy as a type of antisocial personality disorder (*Aftonbladet*, 03-08-2011b). Yet a few others, as mentioned under “5.1.1. Criteria”, differentiate between primary and secondary psychopathy, and of these some use secondary psychopathy and sociopathy interchangeably (for example, *Aftonbladet*, 14-08-2018). In addition, another article depicts primary and secondary psychopathy to be a part of dissocial personality disorder (*Aftonbladet*, 06-09-2018).

5.2. Dehumanization:

5.2.1. *Animal/creature comparisons*

One recurring pattern in the studied articles is the act of comparing people with psychopathy to animals in various ways. In one article Aftonbladet interviewed the psychologist Engen Nilsen who states: “The psychopath lacks human empathy, and cannot be cured. Just like a *beast of prey* the psychopath responds with their own aggression against external threats, in order to achieve their goals” (18-09-2019, my translation). This is not the only time people with psychopathy are referred to as predators, however. In another article they refer to Hare when describing them as human predators who cold-bloodedly take and do what they want (Aftonbladet, 25-08-2015a). Another way people with psychopathy are depicted in a couple of the articles as having claws in the sense that one can get “caught” in the claws of a psychopath.

In yet another article where Aftonbladet interviewed Emanuell, a psychotherapist, people with psychopathy are described as having a more “reptile-like behavior” than narcissists, as they choose a “victim” to butter up and are patient in their courting of said victim (29-11-2018). They are also portrayed by relationship-expert Rusz in one article as “creatures who lack empathy” (Aftonbladet, 25-08-2015b, my translation), and in another she likens people with psychopathy to venomous snakes that though their charm succeed in infiltrate and poison you (Aftonbladet, 08-02-2016).

5.2.2. *Murderer comparisons*

Another pattern that was found in several of the articles included in the study was the act of likening people with psychopathy to infamous murderers in both fiction and non-fiction. One article states that people with psychopathy have the same ruthless traits as sadistic murderers (Aftonbladet, 08-03-2011a). In another Florette (an author and lecturer regarding psychopathic people in the workplace) says that there are several examples of serial killers who are “true psychopaths”, i.e people who have strong characteristics of both psychopathy and sociopathy (Aftonbladet, 06-09-2018). Additionally, in one article during an interview with James Fallon, a professor in psychiatry who openly talks about his psychopathy, the interviewer referred to him as having “the genes of a murderous criminal” (Aftonbladet, 28-02-2017, my translation).

Regarding exemplification, the serial killer Theodore Robert Bundy (more commonly known as Ted Bundy) who killed more than 25 young women and girls in the 1970s, although the exact number of victims is uncertain, (Jenkins, 2021), is the most commonly mentioned. Usually as an example of the most “extreme” or “pure” form of psychopathy. One article even uses Ted Bundy as a way to measure the severity of psychopathy. In it Wøbbe, a chief psychologist, differentiate between what she calls a “true psychopath”, i.e a person who have a score of 40, the highest possible, on Hare’s PCL-R, and a “everyday psychopath” who is a person who display psychopathic traits and who she estimates would score between 14 and 18 on said test, and that anyone with a score above 30 “is a Ted Bundy”. The same article also regards the “everyday psychopath” as a “light version of Ted Bundy” as Wøbbe states that the only difference between “everyday psychopaths” and psychopaths like Ted Bundy and other people like him are more extreme (*Aftonbladet*, 26-06-2020). Other real life murderers or otherwise infamous people that have been used to exemplify psychopathy are the cult leader Charles Manson (*Aftonbladet*, 26-06-2020), recidivist Clark Olofsson (*Aftonbladet*, 19-07-2012) and mass murderer Tore Hedin (*Aftonbladet*, 06-09-2018).

Fiction wise, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde are mentioned more than once. This is as the characters (or alter egos) from the 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Stevenson, today often are used when referring to the exhibition of extremely contradictory behavior, particularly between private and public selves (Lebeau, 2020). Another fictional character that is mentioned in several articles, is the one of Hannibal Lecter from *Silence of the lambs*. Besides these, characters like Jack Torrance from *The Shining* (*Aftonbladet*, 06-09-2018) and Patrick Bateman from *American psycho* (ibid) are also mentioned.

5.2.3. Sub-human functioning

In the articles there exist a plethora of demoralizing statements encompassing all people with psychopathy. These both include statements about how a “psychopath” functions and what the results of these functions are, although these are often intertwined. This can for example be seen in one article where the relationship expert Rusz presents the sentence “he caresses with one hand and strikes with the other” (my translation) as being an excellent summary of how a psychopath functions (*Aftonbladet*, 08-02-2016). In another article she explains this statement further and explains the way people with psychopathy break down their victims is by switching between friendly and hostile behavior, doing what they want and taking what they want in cold blood (*Aftonbladet*, 19-07-2012). She also informs *Aftonbladet* that living

with a person who has psychopathy is horrible as they are experts at finding their partner's weak spots, breaking you down bit by bit and attacking without warning (ibid). Moreover, these statements mirror many others that say that all people with psychopathy are psychologically and/or physically abusive in relationships. One example of this is when Krakowski, a chief physician in psychiatry, says that no relationship with a psychopath is a successful one unless one stands living in a state of constant fear (*Aftonbladet*, 09-03-2021). Another clear example is when the psychologist Engen Nilsen says that he got very many questions from patients who lived in destructive relationships and says that a psychopath was behind every single one, and also concludes that "if you let them into your life, they will completely and utterly pollute your existence - and will never stop" (*Aftonbladet*, 18-09-2019, my translation). Directly presenting destructive relationships and "psychopaths" as concepts that go hand in hand is also evident in one article whose subtitle is "Do you live in an unhealthy relationship or with a psychopath? - This is how you break free" (*Aftonbladet*, 14-11-2018, my translation). In the same article it is also argued that a person with psychopathy will brainwash their partner and never leave them willingly, instead doing everything they can to win them back (ibid). It is also mentioned in a couple of articles that a person with psychopathy aims to lower your self consciousness and make you insecure.

Another perception that permeates the studied material is that people with psychopathy never care about anyone else besides themselves. For example, Ruzs, in one article states that "[a] psychopath does not give a shit about you" (my translation) and that people with psychopathy are unreliable and do not care at all for another person's feelings (*Aftonbladet*, 08-02-2016). In the same vein, the chief psychologist Wøbbe says that when a person with psychopathy says they love you or they are sorry they do not mean it, and that the only person that matters for them is themselves (*Aftonbladet*, 26-06-2020). Although sometimes, people with psychopathy are not only mentioned as only caring about themselves and their own feelings, but not having feelings at all, stating that psychopathic people mimic emotions but do not experience them.

This can be related to what Engen Nilsen states in one article, namely that control, status and power is all that exists in their brain and that everything they do is for their own gain (*Aftonbladet*, 18-09-2019). They are also described by the psychiatrist Andersson as terrorizing their surroundings and creating misfortune and disarray in their quest for power (*Aftonbladet*, 13-10-2017). Similarly, the author Florette points out that a person with

psychopathy does not look at you, but through you. That they invade other peoples' comfort zones and that, while they may seem interested in building trust, they in fact only use others as tools in order to reach their own goal (*Aftonbladet*, 06-04-2017).

In summary one can say that the consensus is that people with psychopathy are terrible partners that use systematic abuse to control you and even if they are not in a romantic relationship, they will still bring nothing but misery to those around them. Consensus also surrounds the perception that psychopathic individuals do not care about anyone else but themselves and use others as means to reach their own goals. Goals which consist of things such as status, control and power.

5.3. Message

A majority of the studied articles have a section dedicated to how one should act if they were to come across a person with psychopathy. The messages that are the most frequently conveyed shall hereby be discussed. One of these is that you should trust your gut; if someone seems to be too good to be true, they are probably a "psychopath". One article also says that your instincts more often than not will alert you if you are talking to someone with psychopathy by activating primitive reactions that warn you of a potentially dangerous situation, referring to a study that showed that 77% when asked got physical reactions like shivers and goosebumps when talking to someone with psychopathy (*Aftonbladet*, 19-07-2012).

When it comes to what you should do if you suspect someone to have psychopathy, the most frequent answer is that you need to stay away, break free or even flee. Or, as one woman, who reportedly lived with a psychopathic partner, puts it when asked what someone who lives with a psychopathic person should do: "Break free, it is about life or death. They kill you, the psychopaths" (*Aftonbladet*, 19-12-2020, my translation). In other words, like the psychologist Engen Nilsen declares, the only thing you can do is to change your job or terminate the relationship immediately, if not it will only get worse. According to him this is because trying to understand or discuss with a person who has psychopathy is futile; it won't make a difference (*Aftonbladet*, 18-09-2019) .

This sentiment, namely that you need to cut any ties you have with a psychopathic person since understanding and discussions will not do any good, is persistent throughout the studied

material. For example, when discussing what you should do if your neighbor has or shows signs of psychopathy, the TV-coach Gåde says that you should involve yourself as little as possible since it is impossible to find common ground with a psychopathic person. Nor does it work to establish a “contract” or lead discussions as a person with psychopathy is unable to keep their part (*Aftonbladet*, 11-03-2011). In another article where both Wøbbe, a chief psychologist, and Howner, a specialist in forensic psychiatry at the National Board of Forensic Medicine, conclude that one should not confront a person with psychopathy or someone with psychopathic traits as you will become a target of their anger (*Aftonbladet*, 11-01-2021). Howner also does not recommend one to try and explain how they feel due to the lack of empathy a person with psychopathy has, instead she states that it is better to be transparent, predictable and strict in your communication so there is no room for the person with psychopathy to manipulate you (*ibid*).

Besides trusting your gut and practising avoidance, it is also several times recommended that you document everything the person with psychopathy says and does. According to Wøbbe, this is because people with psychopathy are experts at making you doubt what has been said (*Aftonbladet*, 11-01-2021). And when it comes to dealing with a colleague with psychopathy, Duvringe, an author, even proclaims that the most important thing you need to do is to document and gather evidence (*Aftonbladet*, 06-04-2017).

5.4. Theoretical analysis

According to Goffman’s theory of stigma, society has established a way in which individuals can be placed in different categories in accordance to their attributes. The one they belong to is their *social identity*, while others’ assumption of said person’s social identity is their *virtual social identity*. Although sometimes a person can be revealed to have an attribute that differentiates them from others in the category of persons available. Then, if this attribute is undesirable, and especially if its discrediting effect is very extensive, it can be called a stigma. Since an undesirable attribute only becomes an issue if it is not compatible with our stereotype of how a certain individual should be, a stigma might be more accurately viewed as a special type of relationship between attribute and stereotype (Goffman, 1963, pp. 10-13).

In the context of this study, the stigma will involve psychopathy, and will belong to a certain sub-type; blemishes of individual character. This type of stigma includes negative personality traits that are deduced from a known record of, for example, a mental disorder or addiction

(Goffman, 1963, p. 13). In the case of this study, the blemishes of individual character refers to attributes associated with psychopathy, i.e psychopathic traits, that are deduced from the disorder itself.

What is interesting in the case of psychopathy, is that some of the negative attributes applied to a person with psychopathy are directly related to what these attributes are deduced from (the disorder) and not from a stereotype (for example the assumption that a person who is unemployed is lazy). Because one can hardly glance over the fact that, by the definition of tests like the PCL-R, people with psychopathy possess commonly perceived negative traits such as pathological lying, irresponsibility and callousness (Hare & Neumann, 2005).

This of course raises the question of how this affects the application of Goffman's theory of stigma. A stigma is after all a special type of relationship between attribute and stereotype (Goffman, 1963, pp. 11-13), so if some significant assumptions are related to the formally defined disorder and not to a stereotype of the disorder, does this undermine the application of the term stigma?

The conclusion reached here is no. Because while some attributes are indeed directly related to the formal ways to define the disorder, many are not, and, more importantly: many are generalized and used in a way as to present people with psychopathy as: immoral, dangerous, and sometimes even less than human. In the articles the disorder is not viewed as merely a part of who they are, that can be expressed in numerous ways based on the individual. Instead the disorder is who they are as individuals. Worded differently, the individual "becomes" the disorder. This can be seen in how people with psychopathy are always referred to as "psychopaths". Regardless of whether or not the intent was to equate people with psychopathy to their disorder, the word still implies that the line between a person and their disorder has become blurred.

There is, so to speak, a huge difference in acknowledging the symptoms that formally define a disorder and stigmatize a person due to said disorder. This relates to what Goffman (1963) says happens if the attribute is so undesirable or extensively discrediting that the individual comes to be perceived as thoroughly bad or dangerous, to the point where they are reduced from a whole and usual person to one that is tainted and discounted (p. 11). Therefore I would not conclude the stigma in this case is not based upon the sum of traits actually

associated with the disorder, but more so the assumptions about who people with psychopathy are as individuals due to having the disorder.

In Aftonbladet, these stereotypical assumptions about or stigmatization of people with psychopathy can be linked to the ones summarised under “5.2. Dehumanization”. Namely that they are animalistic, function in a way that is sub-human and are similar to murderers. This dehumanization, as explained by Goffman (1963), is due to our tendency to believe that the person with a stigma is not quite human (p. 14). Nonetheless, the stereotypical assumptions of people with psychopathy is not limited to the ones described under ”5.2. Dehumanization”. Some of the traits described under “5.1.1 Criteria” are also included as they are not direct symptoms of the disorder but more so stereotypical in nature. This, for example, includes the notion that people with psychopathy are systematically abusive both physically and psychologically, and that they find enjoyment in pushing others down.

Furthermore, one central aspect of psychopathy, as presented by Aftonbladet, is their ability to “blend in”, e.i. hide the fact that they have psychopathy. This is in accordance with what Goffman (1963) states about the discreditable and the discredited. Because some stigmas are easier to conceal than others, meaning that some barely affect the individual’s relation to strangers or acquaintances (p. 71). This usually results in the person with psychopathy being discreditable instead of discredited. That is to say, their stigma is not obvious or known to those around them. Hence the questions of displaying or not displaying; telling or not telling; to let in or not to let in; to lie or not to lie, as well as to whom, when, where and how, become a central issue (Goffman, 1963, p. 56).

But what about those who are not mere acquaintances, but friends or partners? In cases such as these, Goffman (1963) concluded that discovery prejudices established relationships as well, threatening not only the current image those people have of them, but the one they will have in the future; not only in appearances, but in reputation. Consequently both the stigma and the effort to conceal or remedy it become a fixed part of their personal identity (p. 83).

Hereby one can conclude that the act of concealing one's stigma becomes a central part in the life of a person with psychopathy. The importance of this becomes especially evident when you look at the message Aftonbladet forwards about psychopathy, and about how people with psychopathy should be treated. As seen under “5.3. Message” this means that they should be

socially excluded and avoided at all costs since they are unable to change, untrustworthy, abusive and so forth. This is also communicated as important to the point where you are instructed to document everything a person, whom you suspect to have psychopathy, does and says.

This puts the person with psychopathy in a peculiar situation where they on one hand are stigmatized because of who they are and how they behave, but on the other are described as being unable to change. They are told that they have a limited place in society or even no place at all, but without being given any way to change that. They are criticized over things such as lying and manipulating, but if their stigma becomes known, they run the risk of being socially excluded.

However, if a person with psychopathy manages to reach a respectable position in society despite being open about having psychopathy, this does not mean the stigma becomes obsolete. This can most clearly be observed during an interview between *Aftonbladet* and James Fallon, a well-known and respected professor in psychiatry who openly talks about having psychopathy. In it Fallon is not only told he has the genes of a murderous criminal (as mentioned under “5.2.2. Murderer comparisons”, but the interviewer ends the article by mentioning that they may have been manipulated during the interview, although they “choose” to believe that they haven't (*Aftonbladet*, 28-02-2017). According to Goffman's theory of stigma, this can be explained by the fact that the stigmatized individual in many cases has no immediate control over their level of abiding to the norm. It is a question of the individual's condition, not his will (Goffman, 1963, p. 152).

In summary, I would like to quote Goffman, on one of his conclusory statements about stigma:

The stigmatized individual is asked to act so as to imply neither that his burden is heavy nor that bearing it has made him different from us; at the same time he must keep himself at that remove from us which ensures our painlessly being able to confirm this belief about him. Put differently, he is advised to reciprocate naturally with an acceptance of himself and us, an acceptance of him that we have not quite extended him in the first place. (1963, p. 146).

6. Discussion

The goal of this study has been to explore the depiction of people with psychopathy within the Swedish mass media outlet *Aftonbladet* and what perception of people with psychopathy this implies. This was explored through the use of qualitative content analysis accompanied by an inductive approach. The result was the formulation of three overarching themes: “Information”, “Dehumanization” and “Message”. These were further analyzed using Goffman’s (1963) theory of stigma.

The first theme, information, consisted of the sub-themes “Criteria” and “General”. Here criteria relates to traits/behaviors that are described as psychopathic in nature, and general to information such as how many people are estimated to have psychopathy or where they can be found. Dehumanization is made up of three sub-themes: “Animal/creature comparisons”, “Murderer comparisons” and “Sub-human functioning”. As the name implies, Animal/creature comparisons and Murderer comparison involves the act of comparing people with psychopathy to animal/creatures and murderers respectively. Sub-human functioning refers to an overall negative or demoralizing statement about how everyone with psychopathy functions. The last theme, Message, does not contain any sub-themes and refers to statements that tell the reader how they should act or regard people with psychopathy.

One interesting find was how most of the traits/behaviors that were described were related, and several times quoted, to those found in Hare’s test: the Psychopathy Checklist - Revised. Interestingly enough, Hare was also mentioned during a couple of statements when people with psychopathy were likened to beasts of prey, and also during discussions where it was concluded that people with psychopathy are oftentimes found in prison and within finance.

Another was the extent to which professionals in fields such as psychology and psychiatry used dehumanizing as well as generalizing statements in order to describe psychopathy. One prime example of this is a statement made by psychologist Engen Nilsen: “The psychopath lacks human empathy, and cannot be cured. Just like a beast of prey the psychopath responds with their own aggression against external threats, in order to achieve their goals” (*Aftonbladet*, 18-09-2019, my translation).

When applying Goffman's (1963) theory of stigma to the depiction of people with psychopathy, the perception of people with psychopathy within the studied articles seems to be that they are thoroughly bad and dangerous in nature due to their disorder (stigma). But also that they are seemingly seen as less than human and best handled through social exclusion and avoidance as they cannot change. In addition people with psychopathy seem to face the contradictory situation of being blamed for who they are, and at the same time, depicted as unable to change. The conclusion reached here is that Goffman's (1963) theory of stigma can rather accurately be applied to the results and maybe even used to explain them.

In addition, further research regarding how the stigma associated with psychopathy affects people with the disorder and/or traits of it, could be of interest. As this could bring a better understanding about how the depictions of people with psychopathy affect the view of the people being depicted. Also, as stated under "2. Previous literature", the perception of psychopathy among jury members has been linked to the depiction of people with psychopathy in the media (for example, Furnham et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2014). However, since there seems to be a lack of how jurymen in Sweden regard psychopathy, this could prove interesting to explore. Most studies about the effect of the perception of psychopathy in court, have, after all, been made on jury members in the U.S (for example: Cox et al., 2016; Edens et al., 2005). Furthermore, this could be interesting as it would allow for comparisons to be made between how people with psychopathy are depicted in Swedish mass media and the perception jurymen in Sweden have of people with psychopathy. Whatever the results would be, it would still benefit the pool of research regarding how mass media may affect public perception of mental disorders and more specifically psychopathy. Although this would likely require further studies about the depiction of psychopathy in Swedish mass media, as there to the knowledge of this study, seems to be a lack of research in this area.

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7.2. Material

Aftonbladet:

09-03-2021 Experten: Så känner du igen en psykopat

22-01-2021 Så vet du om Tindermatchen är en psykopat

11-01-2021 Så känner du igen psykopaten på videomötet

19-12-2020 Leena har haft flera psykopater i sitt liv (the one referred to directly in the text)

19-12-2020 Marie: Han har dödat mig psykiskt

12-11-2020 Småbarnspappan: "Jag är psykopat"

26-06-2020 Så känner du igen vardagspsykopaten

25-10-2019 Så kan uppfostran påverka barn med psykopatiska drag

23-10-2019 En liten grupp unga riskerar psykopatiska drag som vuxna

18-09-2019 Så känner du igen psykopaten (the one referred to directly in the text)

18-09-2019 Testa dig själv: Är du psykopat?

08-01-2019 "Så var det att växa upp med en psykopatmamma"

29-11-2018 Så känner du igen Facebook-psykopaten

14-11-2018 Eva och Sara Levde med en Psykopat

06-09-2018 Så vet du om någon i din närhet är sociopat
05-09-2018 Stefan lämnade sin fru för en psykopat
14-08-2018 Forskning: Så ser du om ditt barn riskerar att bli psykopat
25-04-2018 Danmarks "GW": Madsen njöt av att mörda
20-11-2017 Lisa: Min ex-mans kvinna förstör mitt liv
13-10-2017 Psykiatern: "Trump är narcissistisk psykopat"
03-08-2017 "Han försökte strypa mig - flera gånger"
07-04-2017 Lasse: Hon har förstört mitt liv
06-04-2017 Så avslöjar du en kvinnlig psykopat
28-02-2017 "Jag upptäckte att jag har en psykopathjärna"
08-02-2016 Sådan är psykopaten
24-01-2016 TESTA: Lever du med en psykopat?
26-10-2015 "Jag längtar tills min mamma dör"
25-08-2015 "Hon hotade mig när jag försökte lämna henne"
25-08-2015 "Jag lever i ständig rädsla"
25-08-2015a Lever du med en psykopat?
25-08-2015b "Stundtals var jag livrädd för henne"
01-05-2015 Carina levde med en psykopat i flera år
14-01-2015 "Efter en vecka blev jag hans fånge"
19-12-2014 - Jag blev charmad av den snälla Janne
24-10-2014 Psykologen: De läser lätt av vad du vill ha
15-04-2014 "Hon tog en bit åt gången"
15-10-2013 dokumenten som pekar ut "Quick" som psykopat och farlig
19-07-2012 Vem är psykopat?
11-03-2011 Experten: Därför väljer vissa kvinnor att leva med farliga män
11-03-2011 Han är psykopat och borde låsas in
11-03-2011 Är din granne en psykopat? (the one referred to directly in the text)
08-03-2011b Din chef kan vara psykopat
08-03-2011 En plantskola för psykopater
08-03-2011 Eva Rusz: De saknar medkänsla
08-03-2011 "Finns det även kvinnliga psykopater?"
08-03-2011 "Pastorn är psykopat"
08-03-2011 Psykopater bäst på finansmarknaden
08-03-2011 Rekryterare: Störningen är dubbelt så vanlig bland chefer

08-03-2011a Testa själv - är din kollega psykopat?

08-03-2011 Är din chef psykopat?