UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

JMG – DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

DIGITAL DISCONNECTION IN SWEDISH NEWS MEDIA

A critical discourse analysis

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Essay/Thesis:	30 hp
Program and/or course:	MSc in Political Communication
Level:	Second Cycle
Semester/year:	St 2021
Supervisor:	Marie Grusell
Examiner:	xx
Report no:	xx

Abstract

The use of new information- and communication technologies, and social media platforms in particular, has rapidly increased from 2010-2012, when social media 'boomed' in Sweden. Thereafter, these platforms have become integrated in all aspects of everyday life – in the social as well as the functional, e.g. communicating with friends or performing tasks at work. Yet, some people choose not to participate in the online community, for various reasons (political standpoints, life-style choices, et cetera). These are, in this thesis, referred to as 'digital disconnecters'. Previous research on digital disconnection has mostly dealt with motivations to disconnect, or the consequences of disconnecting (e.g. health implications or social implications), but it is a rather small field as of today, and not much research has dealt with the discourse surrounding disconnection, in contrary to 'constant connection'. The purpose of this thesis is to examine media representations of digital disconnection, as portrayed in Swedish legacy news media (Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet and Expressen), and furthermore to describe how digital disconnection is 'talked and written about' in Sweden during 2010-2012, when social media boomed, and 2018-2020, when social media platforms – and Facebook in particular – have received a fair amount of criticism from experts and Silicon Valley 'insiders'. The theories used to explain the results are 'media representations', 'media discourse' and 'political consumerism', and a critical discourse analysis has been undertaken to examine and describe the phenomenon. The study moreover showed that digital disconnection is mostly represented as healthy and authentic, while constant connection is represented as harmful (to relationships and one's mental health) and addictive. Those who disconnect are framed as 'enlightened' and firm in their values, e.g. by boycotting Facebook for political reasons. However, no clear difference could be seen between the two time periods (2010-2012 and 2018-2020).

Keywords: Digital disconnection, media representations, critical discourse analysis, political consumerism, social media

Number of words: 20 312

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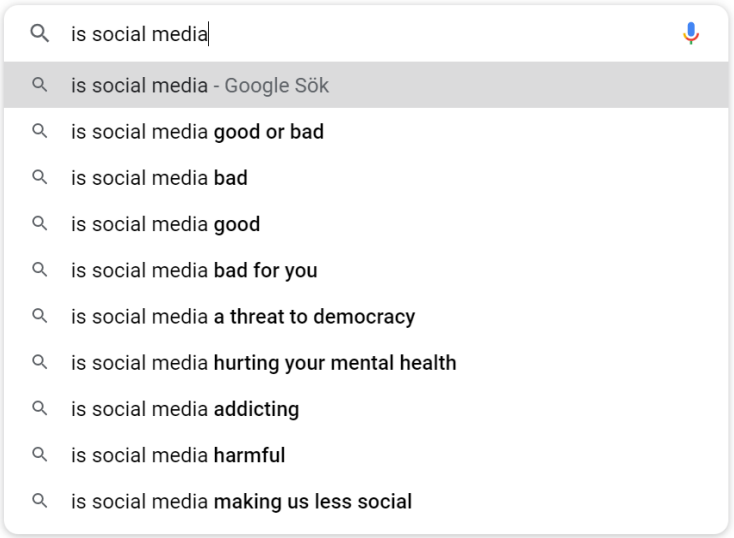
1. Introduction



When typing "is social media…" into Google's search engine, a few interesting suggestions appear. This search (see the figure above) was performed in Google's anonymous mode, to make the results reasonably undisturbed by my own algorithms (because I have searched for these things during the whole semester, and it is plausible that Google now serves me what I want on this subject).

Topping the chart is a not-so-simple, yet simply put question of whether social media is 'good or bad', followed by three similar questions. Thereafter, we turn to the broader questions. Is social media a threat to democracy, is it hurting our mental health, do we get addicted to it, does it make us less social? These questions are partly answered by contemporary research on social media usage and its implications for personal mental health (e.g. Pennington, 2020), relationships (Twenge et. al., 2019) and politics (Kaun & Trére, 2020), even if it remains to be seen what long-term consequences there are for living in a hyper-connected world where, even though we are more 'connected' with each other than ever, something seems to have been lost. Authenticity, perhaps – a concept that, as we will see, often is used when describing choices to 'disconnect' digitally and reconnect with the offline world (Konrath, 2012; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020).

Anyhow, it seems clear that as of today, the criticism against a hyper-connected society and 'big data' come from all angles; tech-celebrities who write books on quitting social media (Lanier, 2018), communication- and psychology researchers, and 'normal' people seeking authenticity or privacy (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020; Foot, 2014). The social media concept – very new and invigorating in about 2010-2012, when it 'boomed' in Sweden (Internetstiftelsen, 2016) – has seemingly swayed from a

few initial skeptics to a 'culture of fear' around social media use (O'Reilly et. al., 2018). Yet, far from everyone gets scared away by this, and social media platforms are normalized to a degree where we use them in school, at work, and for all types of communication in industrial western societies (Brügger, 2015; Wyatt, et. al., 2002). Thus, it is hard to quit them entirely without losing an important tool (Pennington, 2020). It is also important to note that the social media platforms themselves do not have a moral compass, and what is seen as 'inauthentic' in western societies may be considered a tool for resistance in e.g. totalitarian nations, where social media platforms are used for activism (Yang, 2014; Postill, 2014). On the other hand, it is clear that the structure of social media platforms largely promotes certain types of 'bad' behaviors – e.g. polarization, slacktivism, inauthentic and faceless communication (Brügger, 2015; Konrath, 2012; Lanier, 2018) – leading groups or individuals to disconnect from what they deem as inauthentic or harmful (e.g. Kaun & Trére, 2020; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020).

The period from 2018 to 2020 is particularly interesting to look at when considering the rising criticism against social media usage (during this time, books and documentaries that criticize social media usage reached grand commercial success, which will be further explained in the next chapter). 'Digital detox' is a term that recently has gained popularity, particularly in self-help literature but also in everyday talk and news reporting (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). Moreover, previous research on 'digital disconnection' has shown that people's choices to disconnect also can have strong political motivations, such as boycotting established social media platforms in favor of others that are better at preserving privacy (Kaun & Trére, 2020; Marien et. al., 2010). The concept of 'digital disconnection' can be defined as "*practices of disconnection that counter the hegemonic temporality of fast capitalism, that is especially connected to the massive spread of social media platforms"*(Kaun & Treré, 2020), and will be further described in the theoretical chapter. As this thesis revolves around decisions to quit social media and the criticism of perpetual connectivity as it is reflected in Swedish media content, Kaun and Trére's definition is very helpful. It refers to 'a massive spread of social media platforms' which started approximately between 2010 and 2012 in Sweden, according to Internetstiftelsen (2016).

The aim of this qualitative and descriptive study is thus to explore how 'digital disconnection' as a phenomenon has been represented in Swedish media content between 2010 and 2012, as well as between 2018 and 2020; namely, from the social media 'explosion' to the recent rising criticism against these ICT:s. By analyzing media content, it is possible to identify hegemonic trends and ideologies at given times, since journalistic material often mirrors contemporary ways of talking and writing about – as well as attributing meanings to – issues or events (Carvalho, 2008; Fairclough, 2001). Most previous research on digital disconnection have focused on motivations to disconnect (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020; Kaun & Trére, 2020; Portwood-Stacer, 2012), how the decision is perceived

by friends and family (Foot, 2014), or the potential health benefits of quitting social media (e.g. O'Reilly et. al., 2020; Coyne et. al., 2020), but not much research has been done on how we talk or write about digital disconnection in Sweden, namely the 'discourse': *"A social practice happening in the material world, which is reformulated in text and discussions"* (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016).

By studying news articles from the years of 2010-2012 and 2018-2020, it is plausible that at least two types of disconnecters can be identified: those who instantly reject new technology, as historically seen with e.g. the anti-television movement in the US (Mittell, 2010), and those who 'comes to a realization' after some years of use, e.g. 'Facebook dropouts' (Portwood-Stacer, 2012; Foot, 2014; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). This 'hypothesis' is grounded in previous research on new technology use, such as the work of Mittell (2010), and more recent findings that have appeared after some years of massive social media use (e.g. Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). The methodology and theoretical framework applied to the study is *critical discourse analysis*, where the results will be evaluated through a consideration of media representations, media discourse, and the contextual construction of these (the critical discourse analysis can help to answer these theoretical questions, in addition to its function as a methodological framework) (Fairclough, 2001).

For the purpose of this study, the four largest legacy newspapers in Sweden (Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet, and Expressen) will be examined – due to their function as quality information/news sources in Sweden – to answer the following questions:

RQ 1: *How do Swedish legacy newspapers represent the phenomenon of 'digital disconnection' in 2010-2012 and 2018-2020?*

RQ 2: *How has the increased use and normalization of new information- and communication technologies affected the Swedish media discourse on 'digital disconnection'?*

RQ 3: *What ideologies and themes are represented in the media discourse?*

The theories and methodology applied to this study are further elaborated on in the following chapters. First, the progress and backlashes of social media platforms will be presented, followed by a chapter on usage-non usage, digital disconnection, media representations, and media discourse in the study's theoretical section. Secondly, the method of critical discourse analysis, its analytical tools, the empirical material (with sampling and selection), and an evaluation of the method choices will be described in the chapter on methods. Lastly, the thesis will end with an analysis of the empirical material and a concluding discussion.

2. Connecting Sweden: A brief history of social media

In this chapter, some background and history of new information- and communication technologies (ICT:s) internationally and in Sweden will be presented – along with previous research on the acceptance or/and rejection of new technologies. The central concept of this thesis, 'digital disconnection', will be discussed in section 2.3. together with previous research on the subject.

2.1 Enter new technology

There are many factors at play when a new technology enters the market. It is plausible that the new technology initially will meet some skepticism (Mittell, 2010), that it will be evaluated due to its perceived usefulness versus 'risk' (Legris et. al., 2003; Brügger, 2015; Swilley, 2010), and furthermore, its degree of normalization beyond the 'early adopters' (Tobbin & Adjei, 2012). The case of new ICT:s is particularly interesting because they have, in many ways, changed communication processes worldwide in a little over a decade – for better or worse or neither, it depends on who you ask (Schäfer, 2015). In recent years, it has become clear that the 'risk' of social media usage might have been underestimated in favor of its usefulness and practicality (Brügger, 2015; Swilley, 2010). This risk has, as we will see, been problematized by some early adopters (Lanier, 2018). On the other hand, these social media platforms have grown to be an integrated part of daily life, and to 'disconnect' from them are often framed as 'detoxing' (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). To fully understand the concept of 'digital disconnection', it is helpful to describe the increasing 'connection' that has happened during the last decade. Thus, this chapter involves an overview on the 'progress and backlashes' of new ICT:s.

2.2. Progress & backlash

In 2018, the former Silicon Valley icon Jaron Lanier released a book called 'Ten arguments for deleting your social media account right now'. In 2019, Mark Boyle, author and occasional writer for The Guardian, wrote a book on 'quitting technology' and living entirely offline for a year in the Irish countryside. In 2020, the potential harm of ICT:s (information- and communication technologies) was addressed in the Netflix documentary 'The Social Dilemma', where Silicon Valley dropouts express various concerns about their previous workplaces. Google's former design ethicist Tristan Harris there claims that he will not let his own children use social media. Terms such as 'digital detox' have recently popped into this field of research, and many self-help books offer guidance on 'how to quit social media and gain a more authentic lifestyle' (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020).

The thought of living more 'authentically', far away from the ball and chain of fast capitalism, is however nothing new. Consider Thoreau's 'Walden' from 1854; a biographical venture into the wild – to escape *"industrial society and its political, social, ethical and epistemological values"* – and an early form of 'disconnection' from hegemonic trends (Sloan, 2015). To 'disconnect' demands something to disconnect from, whether it is an entire lifestyle or a product of that lifestyle (e.g. 'industrial society' or new technologies). And to understand contemporary forms of disconnection, it is necessary to consider today's increasingly connected society; a product of technological progress that, like the industrial progress in Thoreau's case, has changed the way we live – politically and socially (Schäfer, 2015). The introduction of social media, for instance, has dramatically changed our social interactions (Konrath, 2012) and our ways of conducting politics or participating in political activities (Schäfer, 2015; Dalton, 2014; Marien et. al., 2010). Some argue, in line with Thoreau's need for escaping industrial society or Mark Boyle's disconnection from fast capitalism, that these new 'layers' added to human life (more 'connection') paradoxically disconnects us from authentic social relations and 'meaningful' activities (Konrath, 2012). The rise of social media and 'constant connection' – now, hegemonic trends of our time – must be addressed to illustrate the contemporary relation between connection and disconnection, and social media 'progress' and pushbacks. The real progress arguably started with the launching of Facebook in 2004 (Brügger, 2015).

Facebook was launched as a university project, but reached a broader English-speaking public in 2006; the platform was then described as *"a social utility that connects you with the people around you"* (Brügger, 2015). 2006 was also the year when Facebook 'exploded' in terms of new memberships: it had 12 million English-speaking users in December 2006, and 100 million in August 2008. In 2008, Facebook became available in other languages, a feature that developed along with an increased number of users worldwide (Brügger, 2015). To 'connect' online with 'the people around you' seemed new and invigorating, even if older platforms like MySpace partly offered the same thing. Brügger (2015) argues that Facebook's success largely depended on its 'flexible framework', by offering a mini-version of the world wide web, where the user can stay at one website while exploring various types of content (status updates from friends, private messages, pictures, movie clips, news, and other entertainment). Facebook paved the way for other platforms offering twenty-four-seven 'connection', such as Twitter (2006), Instagram (2010), and Snapchat (2011) – but remains the 'king of the hill' of social media platforms, partly by buying its competitors. Instagram, for instance, was bought by Facebook in 2012.

In a Swedish context, The Swedish Internet Foundation *(Internetstiftelsen)* started to measure social media usage in Sweden in 2010. In a survey on mobile social media usage, reaching from 2010 to 2016, they asked how frequently Swedes used social media in their smartphones. By 2010, only *3%* used social media daily, and *10%* used social media 'sometimes'. Only two years later (2012), *27%*

used social media daily and *42%* used it 'sometimes' (Internetstiftelsen, 2016). From 2012 to 2016, social media usage in smartphones kept going upwards; but the most dramatic change between single years was seen between 2010 and 2012 (Internetstiftelsen, 2016).

This time period – where a growing share of social media users goes online on their ever-present smartphones instead of waiting for computer access – could thus be considered a 'breaking point' for constant connection in Sweden. These years (2010-2012) are therefore interesting to compare with 2018-2020, where documentaries such as 'The Social Dilemma', personal stories of disconnection, and warnings from the inside of Silicon Valley have arisen from a fair share of skeptics. These two time periods can consequently be considered *'critical discourse moments'* (Carvalho, 2008) in the history of social media in Sweden.

This study aims to investigate how these changing technological and social factors have affected the discourse on 'digital disconnection', as will be presented and defined below, by looking at *media representations* of individuals or groups that have chosen to disconnect. A *critical discourse analysis* will be performed on four Swedish legacy newspapers (Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet, and Expressen) during the time period of 2010-2012 and 2018-2020. By examining journalistic discourse, which tends to be a *"typically discursive re-construction of reality"* (Carvalho, 2008), it is possible to identify potential changes in why, and how, people choose to disconnect digitally in an increasingly digital world.

For this purpose, it is also of interest to discuss patterns of usage and non-usage of new technologies such as social media. In section 2.2, 'To use – or not to use', previous research on social media usage and its implications will be looked into further.

2.3. To use – or not to use

The phenomenon of individuals or groups that reject modern technologies has been researched throughout the years, with contemporary examples such as anti-television groups in the US (Mittell, 2010) and the pushback on social media in neo-liberal consumer cultures, for example by studying Facebook 'dropouts' (Portwood-Stacer, 2012; Foot, 2014). However, when it comes to research on the internet and its users, most scholars have focused on how people *use* the internet. For example, in terms of new possibilities and new forms of political mobilization (Dalton, 2014), but also what potential harms it can bring in the form of polarization and social media 'addiction' in individuals (Schäfer, 2015; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020).

Konrath (2012) early suggested that there have been *"remarkable changes in social traits and behaviors due to new media in recent years",* pointing towards a potential increase in 'social disconnection' side by side with an increasing 'digital connection'. Some psychological studies on social media effects have found slight associations between social media use and mental health problems among adolescents (Keles et. al., 2020), but others refer to this risk as perceived more acute than it is. O'Reilly et. al. (2018) argue that there is a *"culture of fear around social media"* today and that adolescents tend to integrate that view, even if they themselves have not suffered from anxiety or depression due to social media use. It is, rather, perceived as something that possibly can have 'bad effects' on one's mental health (O'Reilly et. al., 2020; Coyne et. al., 2020). On the other hand, Konrath's (2012) notion of 'social disconnection' is still relevant. Twenge et. al. (2019) highlights the looming implications of increased digital media use for in-person interactions: *"As digital media encompasses more of an adolescents' time, it is important to recognize the potential costs, which may include less in-person social interactions and more loneliness."* But as of today, it is hard to determine the long-term consequences of social media, even if existing research can give some clues regarding changing patterns of human interaction (Keles et. al., 2020; Twenge et. al., 2019).

Recently, there has been a general movement towards skepticism to the increasing use of ICT:s (information- and communication technologies), and terms like 'digital detox' have entered the picture. A question very present in this discussion asks whether life on the internet and on social media, in particular, is an 'authentic life' – or just an illusion, with 'online interactions and faceless communication' (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020), the same issue as referred to by Twenge et. al. (2019). This question has been gaining importance in our contemporary consumer culture where attributes such as 'authentic' or 'real' matter more and more, according to Syvertsen and Enli (2020). Some social media dropouts, e.g. individuals quitting Facebook on their quest to become more authentic or self-fulfilled, have been interviewed in previous studies, aiming to map out their thoughts and motivations (Portwood-Stacer, 2012) but also to see how their actions have been interpreted and received by people around them such as friends and family (Foot, 2014). Studies on 'quitting social media effects' have shown that individuals who previously spent a lot of time on social media platforms did experience benefits when going offline: *"The participants experienced several communicative benefits, including an increase in meaningful interactions with close relational partners and a decrease in social comparison with weak ties"* (Pennington, 2020). Also, individuals who took a break from Facebook tended to become more satisfied with life, and experienced more positive emotions during their 'detox'; especially those who previously compared themselves to others on social media (Tromholt, 2016). A study by Brailovskaia et. al. (2020) even showed that participants who stopped using Facebook tended to increase their daily physical activity. Meanwhile, Pennington's study (2020) further concluded that those who quitted social media did feel 'out of the

loop' and had difficulties in keeping up with job networking when going offline. With this in mind, using or not using social media platforms has become a multifaceted decision (Pennington, 2020).

At the same time – ever since the internet became a thing – there are ever-present, broader discussions on the democratic implications of internet use overall; advocates emphasize the internet's positive features, such as increased access to information and the possibility to participate in political debate online, while the cynic might highlight the tendency for polarization, unfruitful quarrel, and the large ICT-companies' gathering of big data (Schäfer, 2015). This is the "*ambivalent promises of the digital public sphere"*, as Schäfer (2015) nicely puts it. While the internet offers accessible information on practically everything, users must navigate in this vast digital landscape and are often drawn to content that confirms their own beliefs (Masip et. al., 2019). The 'selective exposure' that consequently follows can increase the tendency for fragmentation into *"distinct communities that do not interact, thus contributing to an increased polarization between those of differing political stances"*, and furthermore, the 'digital public sphere' might rather become multiple 'digital public spheres' (Masip et. al., 2019; Schäfer, 2015). But internet access has also made it possible for citizens to participate in e.g. activism online, to connect with others globally, and to further social movements in totalitarian states (Yang, 2014; Postill, 2014).

The 'ambivalent promises of the digital public sphere' (Schäfer, 2015) is thus an exceptional way of describing internet use in general. Obviously, we live in a time where almost everyone with internet access can make a million choices regarding their own internet activities; which social media platforms to employ (or not to employ), how secretive to be with one's own personal data, who to follow on Instagram, et cetera. Some choose not to be there at all.

2.4. Digital disconnection

A small but growing research field has focused on the political act of media non-use, or 'digital disconnection', a useful term suggested by Kaun and Treré (2020). The digital, here, refers to digital technologies, and ICT:s in particular. A mere 'technology' as such could include material objects like a hairdryer or an excavator, but also computer software and social media; in this sense, to reject a new technology could be to use a shovel instead of the excavator, or to completely boycott all internet use. On the other hand, a shovel is also a form of 'technology'. Thus, it is hard to avoid all modern technologies, and the boycotter must make a selection based on her preferences. The disconnection is 'rarely total' (Jorge, 2019). Perhaps it is perfectly fine to use a more anonymous search engine (like 'DuckDuckGo', claiming to be "the search engine that does not track you", and launched in 2008)

that, unlike Google, does not store personal data. Or to use email to communicate with friends, but at the same time avoiding Facebook and Instagram.

This reasoning makes 'digital disconnection', too, somewhat hard to define – but attempting to emphasize the groups or individuals that disconnect for political reasons, Kaun and Treré (2020) delimit the scope to those who avoid established forms of digital connectivity for various reasons. 'Digital disconnection', in that sense, can include media non-use, media refusal, and the boycotting of certain platforms to 'further political causes'. The *"voluntary avoidance or rejection of certain types of digital media"* (Jorge, 2019) as well as *"practices of disconnection that counter the hegemonic temporality of fast capitalism, that is especially connected to the massive spread of social media platforms"* (Kaun & Treré, 2020) constitutes a good definition.

Kaun and Treré (2020) have studied 'digital disconnection' as a form of social movement, and distinguishes between digital disconnection as repression, as resistance, and as a performance and lifestyle politics (Kaun & Treré, 2020). Earlier studies on disconnection, e.g. a study from 1998 by Katz and Aspden, looks at early internet dropouts (Americans in 1995 and 1996) and concludes that those who 'dropped out' tended to be younger, poorer, and less well educated; a problem more of availability, and one's social and economical condition in adopting new technologies. The mechanisms behind today's digital disconnecters look somewhat different in Western democracies. As Kaun and Treré propose, disconnection can happen due to political resistance (e.g. not wanting to share personal data with social media platforms) or lifestyle politics. In lifestyle politics, digital disconnection can be used as a means to achieve a higher level of 'authenticity' in one's life (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020).

When reviewing previous literature on the political practice of 'digital disconnection', it seems safe to say that early research has dealt with problems mostly related to access and availability (Katz & Aspden, 1998), with the mindset that everyone *should* have access to the internet in their role as citizens. Those who are not present online become a part of 'the invisible group'. The digital divide, for example, emphasizes this exclusion. But when someone *voluntarily* decides to disappear from the online sphere, they would in this sense also lose some of their democratic capabilities or modes of participation, even if the act of disappearing is a form of participation itself (Kaun & Treré, 2020). This is an interesting paradox. Wyatt, et. al. (2002) put it nicely with a car metaphor: *"The more people use cars, the greater the infrastructure to support them, and the lessening of car-free space."* The more people use the internet for societal functions, such as paying their bills, performing their jobs or communication platform, the more institutions (e.g. societal functions, education systems) will rely on internet services or online communication (Wyatt et. al. 2002). Trying to live more 'authentically' with limited internet use may therefore create some difficulties in everyday life (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020).

Perhaps it is also necessary to differentiate between different kinds of technology here. Political institutions, education systems, and employers do not (usually) rely on television to communicate with citizens, so the anti-television movement cannot be considered an equally important societal issue. Although it is an example of a group rejecting modern technology for various reasons, e.g. by comparing someone who spends many hours in front of the television to a drug addict (Mittell, 2010). More modern research (from 2000 and forward, especially in the aftermath of Facebook's increasing popularity and the controversies surrounding their use of personal data), such as the work of Syvertsen and Enli (2020), arguably emphasizes other aspects of internet use and non-use. Post-material concepts like 'self-fulfillment' and 'authenticity' are involved in discourse about quitting social media, especially in self-help books and literature on 'digital detox' (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). The faceless interaction on online platforms was framed as non-authentic or 'fake', and therefore not worthwhile, according to the study subjects. Pennington (2020), Tromholt (2016), and Brailovskaia et. al. (2020) could also confirm that quitting Facebook generated positive results in individuals, such as having more meaningful and qualitative conversations, relationships, and activities, or feeling more satisfied with life; results that strengthen the argument for quitting social media in order to live more 'authentically'.

Then, there are those who quit for other political reasons, like not wanting Facebook to have access to their personal data (Foot, 2014). This issue is arguably more tied to integrity than to authenticity; a skepticism towards 'big data', and as presented in 'The Social Dilemma' documentary, how large social media companies sell personal data for advertising profit. The social media user has become a product whose preferences are analyzed and used for marketing purposes (Lanier, 2018). This revelation has stirred some debates on ethics for personal data and has surely evoked a share of antagonism towards ICT companies that reduce individuals to data-sets (Lanier, 2018; Fuller, 2019; Foot, 2014). The 'political resistance'-aspect of digital disconnection (e.g. in the case of Facebook and their use of personal data) could in this scenario play out in form of a boycott, or the selection of another platform for communicating online (Kaun & Treré, 2020). Yet, returning to Wyatt et. al.'s (2002) car metaphor and Jorge's (2019) notion that 'disconnection is rarely total', most people today need to employ some online platform to manage their daily tasks – but which platforms to use can become a politically loaded question; for the big-data skeptic, but also for the individual striving for a more 'authentic' life without digital distraction (Foot, 2014; Kaun & Treré, 2020; Jorge, 2019).

Also interesting to note, when studying patterns of digital disconnection, is that terms related to addiction or substance abuse often appear in liaison with digital technologies. The television was called "the plug-in drug" by the anti-television movement, and to quit Facebook or limit one's internet use today is referred to as 'digital detox' (Mittell, 2010; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). These technologies, then, are framed as something we should limit our use of; but still a sort of public sphere where we all

need to be present to avoid missing out on anything important (Pennington, 2020). The ‘drug metaphor’ is quite accurate; the digital disconnecter might want to quit social media or other digital platforms, but there will, perhaps, always be a fear of ‘missing out’ – whether it is related to keeping up with friends or participating politically online. As stated above, digital disconnection is ‘rarely total’, and more about countering hegemonic elements that are established in fast capitalism society – such as large social media platforms – than rejecting the whole technology as such (Jorge, 2019; Kaun & Treré, 2020).

3. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the study's theoretical framework will be described, starting with a section on media representations. Thereafter, political consumerism, post-materialism, and media discourse will be described in the following sections.

3.1. Media representations

Looking at previous research, such as the work presented above, we already know much about people's motivations to disconnect digitally. Some studies have used interviews as a method to find out what lies behind such a decision (Portwood-Stacer, 2012; Foot, 2014). Others have investigated the popular advice of self-help literature, where post-material values like 'living an authentic life' are highlighted and digital detoxes are encouraged (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). Moreover, the activism of digital disconnection as a political statement and the motivations behind rejections of new technologies such as the television have been reviewed (Kaun & Treré, 2020; Mittell, 2010). However, there is a lack of knowledge on how digital disconnecters are *represented* in mediated contexts because most representations of digital disconnecters come from their own subjective experiences – if they chose to share it with an audience – such as Mark Boyle's book, or why not Thoreau's Walden (which also, arguably, tells the story of an early disconnecter). But that is how the authors want to represent themselves and their individual struggles while criticizing societal trends, and not necessarily how digital disconnection as a wider phenomenon manifests in media discourse.

Media 'representations' of certain groups or individuals often produce and reinforce stereotypical characteristics, which in turn affect how they are perceived in society at large: *"Very few of us are unaffected by media discourse, and the media's importance in the modern world is incontrovertible."* And for most people, the media is *"a primary source of understanding of the world"* (Talbot, 2007).

Whether media representations are 'true' or not is partly a question of epistemology. According to Alhamdan et. al. (2014), the positivist view of media representations suggests that the represented subject has *"an objective existence outside the realm of language and representation"*, while a constructionist would claim that "*how the subject is portrayed in the media is an act of discursive construction resulting from a power-knowledge nexus*". The question is then, whether the media *reproduces* a reality (e.g. objectively 'true' representations of digital disconnecters), or only *constructing* it. Lippmann (1922) early argued that *"news and truth are not the same thing"*, and that the two concepts must be separated. According to Lippmann, a journalist who produces a news article departs from his/her own subjective view of reality or 'truth, thus not reflecting an overall or objective

truth: *"His own opinion is in some vital measure constructed out of his own stereotypes, according to his own code, and by the urgency of his own interest. He knows that he is seeing the world through subjective lenses"* (Lippmann, 1922). Moreover, Lippmann's insightful notion of 'the pictures in our heads' – that people must simplify the complex world that they live in by creating 'pictures' of reality, often based on pre-existing narratives (e.g. produced by journalists, who in their turn also have pre-existing 'pictures in their heads', perhaps produced by other journalists) – further explains these mechanisms. Safe to say, however, is that media representations always emerge from a background of socio-political and cultural contexts (Alhamdan et. al., 2014; Lippmann, 1922).

In the case of digital disconnecters, it is then plausible that an 'objective understanding' of the phenomenon does not exist in media representations. It is also likely that these representations, as Lippmann (1922) noted, are produced out of stereotypes, through the fairly subjective lenses of journalism, and rather 'simplified'. The individual characteristics of 'invisible' digital disconnecters are hard to determine – and Katz and Aspden's (1998) term of 'the invisible group' might still be relevant when talking about the digital divide, accessibility issues, and people who disconnect without raising their voices about it. These groups are plausibly represented by those who publicly argue for their choices, such as previously mentioned Mark Boyle or Silicon Valley dropouts. Stereotypical features – as produced and reproduced by popular culture, the media, and furthermore by journalists – have a tendency to outrule the nuances (Gorham, 1999; Lippmann, 1922).

With that in mind, the media representations of digital disconnecters should be reviewed through a lens of constructivism; the 'selection, staging and forms of presentation' as employed by journalists *"creates an analytic grid for the experience of the world and sets frames for its presentation"* (Poerksen, 2008) or if you will, creates the 'pictures in our heads' (Lippman, 1922). Media discourses are then, arguably, a product of journalistic constructions over time. Considering the mass media's role as our 'primary source of understanding the world' (Talbot, 2007), the 'creation and distribution of ideologies' in media discourse generates 'symbols through which we organize a common culture' (Ahmed & Mattes, 2017). In research on media representations of minorities, it has been shown that dominant social values and ideologies in a culture are furthered by the mass media, often leading to stereotypical representations of minorities overall (Ahmed & Mattes, 2017). Törnberg and Törnberg (2016), for instance, analyzed representations of Muslims in social media discourse, finding that they are portrayed as 'a homogenous outgroup that is embroiled in conflict, violence, and extremism'. Taylor (2014) investigated representations of migrants in the UK and Italian press, finding that some nationalities were more negatively framed than others. Kabgani (2013) analyzed the representation of Muslim women in non-Islamic media (The Guardian), using critical discourse analysis to 'unravel hidden ideologies as well as biases' in the discourse – finding that, in contrary to her first hypothesis, the representation of Muslim women were mainly positive; e.g. that they were determined in their

religious beliefs, but at the same time, depicted as 'independent individuals in search of the resurrection of women's identity' (Kabgani, 2013).

Digital disconnecters can, as of today, also be considered a minority in the age of social media. Not a minority that necessarily differs from the majority in terms of ethnicity or religious beliefs, but perhaps by other beliefs and convictions. By applying critical discourse analysis (CDA), it is possible to expose hidden ideologies in the media discourse (Kabgani, 2013; Carvalho, 2008), and to investigate how digital disconnecters have been represented and depicted in the media along with technological progress (e.g. the launching of Facebook) and changing social factors (the rising popularity of social media, followed by criticism and scrutiny).

3.2. Post-materialism & political consumerism

If digital disconnection among individuals or groups in modern western democracies can be defined as *"practices of disconnection that counter the hegemonic temporality of fast capitalism, that is especially connected to the massive spread of social media platforms"* (Kaun & Treré, 2020), and considering the change from 'a problem of availability' to a more post-material approach (disconnecting to gain 'authenticity' in life), it is helpful to apply post-materialism and partly also political consumerism to the study's analysis.

Inglehart (2008) defines post-material values as *"a change from survival to self-expression"*, arguing that a generational change has taken place, where self-expression today has become an increasingly prominent factor in political participation and everyday life. Dalton (2014) argues that we are witnessing a 'change of nature' regarding political participation; while general partisanship and voter turnout might be on the decline, new forms of participation emerges from the post-material citizen. Those who have fulfilled their basic needs (availability) can instead engage in political self-expression, such as political consumerism with 'buycotts and boycotts' (Marien et. al., 2010; Dalton, 2014).

The mechanisms behind 'buycotts and boycotts' are quite simple. If you are poor and have bad teeth, you will probably buy the cheapest toothbrush because it is the one you can afford (you just need a toothbrush and anything goes). But if you have the resources to choose between a selection of toothbrushes, your political convictions might guide your choice. A climate activist in this position would perhaps go for the eco-friendly toothbrush made out of bamboo – instead of the one-dollar, plastic one. The plastic item is boycotted because plastic 'is bad for the environment'. Thus, the

climate activists' political convictions have guided her consumption choices, an act of self-expression in the marketplace (Stolle et. al., 2005; Inglehart, 2008; Marien et. al., 2010).

Social media have made it easier than ever to express one's political convictions to a wider public. Users can engage in 'hashtag activism', global networking, and building their own personal 'brands' online (Kaun & Uldam, 2018). Moreover, 'slacktivism' ('slacker activism') has become a popular expression for *"describing the disconnect between awareness and action through the use of social media"* (Glenn, 2015). 'Slacktivism' thus describes the effortless activity of e.g. liking or sharing something on social media, in contrast to e.g. organizing a street protest. Frequent exposure to political social media content has, on one hand, been 'weakly, positively associated' with participation in offline activism – but mostly with increased slacktivism (Leyva, 2017). On the other hand, the use of social media for political purposes can somewhat strengthen participation: *"Social media may, indeed, engender slacktivism, but empowerment, engagement, and social stake demarcate the difference between slacktivism's lazy form of involvement and usage of social media as a legitimate tool for prosocial behavior"* (Smith et. al., 2019). Thus, it is necessary to consider all forms of political expression online; but the 'slacktivism' trend and its implications should not be forgotten (Glenn, 2015; Leyva, 2017; Smith et. al., 2019).

The online sphere (and social media platforms in particular) is furthermore a melting pot of political consumerism and (post-material) self-expression, where it is easy to show political convictions without much effort (Glenn, 2015). Yet, the 'effectiveness' of social media as a political tool varies, based on how it is used; the 'slacktivism' symbolizes shallow engagement, but it does not exclude other forms of usage (Smith et. al., 2019). Acknowledging social media as a 'tool' or a 'product' that can be used for various purposes also makes it possible to *not* use it. Seen as 'products', social media platforms can be subject to the buycotts and boycotts as mentioned above (Marien et. al., 2010).

The mechanisms exemplified in the "toothbrush-climate activist scenario" are plausibly also at play when someone disconnects from social media platforms in modern western democracies today. The platforms are available to anyone with a smartphone and internet connection, but some choose to renounce themselves from this online 'community' for more or less political reasons; as a form of resistance, as Kaun and Treré (2020) pointed out, or to regain 'authenticity' in a society where faceless communication and shallow relationships on social media are the new norms (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). Or, not to mention the 'slacktivism', a trend that has appeared due to the plausibly 'shallow' nature of social media (Glenn, 2015; Leyva, 2017; Smith et. al., 2019). To disconnect digitally, then, is arguably a boycott of *"the hegemonic temporality of fast capitalism"* and in particular, *"the massive spread of social media platforms"*. But it also implies a boycott of the underlying 'new norms' of today, and moreover, a highly post-material question of what is 'authentic' and what is not.

3.3. Media discourse

To see how the progress and pushbacks of social media – its integration into our daily lives and furthermore, how certain events have evoked criticism towards it – have manifested in the public mind, it is helpful to look at discourses. The *critical discourse analysis*, this study's analytical tool, will be further described in the chapter on method. The 'discourse analysis' can be viewed as both a theoretical framework and an analytical tool (Fairclough, 2001; Carvalho, 2008), which will be the case in this thesis. But it may be advantageous to briefly define the concept of 'discourse' before moving on to methods.

Previous research on 'digital disconnection' has shown that the *discourse* of disconnection has been surrounded by thoughts of skepticism towards constant connection, its implications for our (mental and physical) health and our relationships (Keles et. al., 2020; Twenge et. al., 2019; Pennington, 2020; Brailovskaia et. al., 2020), the question of what is authentic and what is not (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020), the implications of 'big data' and digital disconnection as resistance and politics (Foot, 2014; Kaun & Treré, 2020). Moreover, the increased use of new technologies have been compared with substance abuse (Mittell, 2010), and the democratic capabilities (and inabilities) of internet use have been discussed (Schäfer, 2015; Glenn, 2015; Leyva, 2017; Smith et. al., 2019). This 'discourse', as laid out here, represents research findings which in turn contributes to societal discourse if/when they reach public acknowledgment. Plausibly, the media discourse will look similar, since media discourses typically are "*discursive re-constructions of reality"* (Carvalho, 2008), and 'news worthy' research findings often appear in the news, thus contributing to the overall discourse.

A *discourse*, then, can be defined as *"a social practice happening in the material world, which is reformulated in text and discussions"* (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016) and a *"(re)contextualization of practices"* (Van Dijk, 2009). Fairclough (2001), another famous name in the critical discourse analysis club, argues that language (and the use of it) must be viewed as an 'integral element of social processes' and that every social process and practice includes meaning-making, i.e. semiosis, that reflects in how we talk or write about something. The language used when describing certain social practices and processes thus contributes to their discourse (Fairclough, 2001).

Carvalho (2008) further highlights that texts (e.g. news articles) always build on previous ones, and this 'intertextuality' follows or challenges already existing discourses. Thus, a discourse can develop or change along with new 'trends', scientific findings, or (perhaps surprising) perspectives that counter hegemonic trends (Carvalho, 2008). For instance, Silicon Valley celebrities who will not let their children use the social media platforms that they themselves have created, which can be considered a particularly newsworthy topic; plausibly to a degree where it actually might skew the discourse a little. Yet, as Lippmann (1922) pointed out, media discourse is only an attempt to describe

reality. But perhaps it is the closest we can get to mirror an overall societal discourse (Carvalho, 2008), without having to interview every single person that chooses to disconnect digitally.

All attempts to perform discourse analyses do more or less depart from a constructivist view; how we speak or write about something affects our ideas of it, how we imagine 'it' to be, which in turn affects how we create practices around it, and vice versa (Boréus, 2015; Fairclough, 2001). And as we will see, Carvalho's (2008) model of *critical discourse analysis* takes contextual as well as textual factors into account. Thus, every news item can be analyzed due to its own characteristics in relation to the context from where it is produced, and potential discursive changes can be identified in the media constructions and representations of digital disconnection.

3.4. Summary

The theoretical concepts that have been described in this chapter – media representations, political consumerism, post-materialism, and media discourse – will be used to explain the findings of the critical discourse analysis. 'Media representations' can help to illuminate how the phenomenon of digital disconnection is constructed in the news (e.g. Lippmann, 1922). 'Political consumerism' and post-materialism can illuminate the mechanisms and ideologies behind value-based motivations for disconnection (e.g. Marien et. al., 2010). Lastly, the concept of 'media discourse' is used to explain the 're-constructions of reality' that emerge in the empirical material. Thus, plausibly mirroring an overall discourse in Swedish society (Carvalho, 2008).

4. Method

Using critical discourse analysis (CDA) on a selection of news items from Swedish legacy newspapers, this study applies a qualitative and descriptive approach. In this section, the study's methodological choices and data sampling procedures will be presented, as well as the study's limitations and an evaluation of the method choices.

4.1. The critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), as a theoretical framework, has been frequently used in studies that aim to investigate media representations – and how they change over time, or between different media outlets (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016; Taylor, 2014; Kabgani, 2013). A 'discourse' can be defined as *"a social practice happening in the material world, which is reformulated in text and discussions"* (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016) and a *"(re)contextualization of practices"* (Van Dijk, 2009). Moreover, texts *"always build on previous texts, taking up or challenging former discourses"*, and this process is commonly referred to as 'intertextuality' (Carvalho, 2008). The perhaps most famous name when talking about discourse and discourse analysis overall is Michel Foucault (1984), who highlights the 'focus on power relationships' in society, expressed 'through language and practices'. A Foucauldian discourse analysis might consider e.g. how the powerful use language to strengthen or preserve their authority, or such. In Foucault's own work 'Madness and Civilization' from 1961, for instance, he performs a major discourse analysis on the concept of 'madness' and how it has changed depending on in which timely context it is used. 'Madness and Civilization', according to Boréus (2015), constitutes a classical school example of discourse analysis. However, discourse analysis as a method has been frequently used since then and it has been adapted to the context in which it is applied. The *critical* discourse analysis (CDA) has an approach that is nicely described by Mullet (2018):

"Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities. CDA rests on the notion that the way we use language is purposeful, regardless of whether discursive choices are conscious or unconscious."

As mentioned above, the CDA has been popular in research on media discourse, because what is written in the media tends to mirror societal trends and processes (Lippmann, 1922; Fairclough, 2001; Carvalho, 2008). Carvalho (2008) suggests a framework for analyzing media discourse, where the purpose is to *"analyze journalistic discourse and its social embeddedness"*. Journalistic texts are *"typically discursive re-constructions of reality"*, and because of this feature, very suitable for critical

discourse analysis (Carvalho, 2008). Journalistic discourse must also be viewed in a larger context, and the language, wording, and expressions used by journalists are presumably reflections of the language that is used in society at large but also emerging from journalistic custom. "*The media's depictions of social problems will depend largely on the preferences and options of media professionals, including the news values in operation, but necessarily build on the ways other social actors construct issues in their multifarious discourses"* (Carvalho, 2008).

CDA can moreover be used to examine the relations between texts and social processes, where the researcher *"wants to expose the causes and consequences of specific discourses and to denounce the social, cultural or political wrongs which they sustain"* (Carvalho, 2008). In this study, 'media representations of digital disconnecters' are examined by applying CDA to media content; aiming to map out how technological and social factors have affected the representation of those who choose to 'disconnect' – but also to reveal the underlying discourse. By using Carvalho's (2008) step-by-step media discourse analysis, it is possible to identify media representations of digital disconnecters; and to connect those representations to the time and context that they sprung from.

Carvalho's framework of analyzing media discourse consists of a *textual* analysis and a *contextual* analysis. The textual analysis includes 1) layout and structural organization of the text, 2) the objects of the text, 3) the actors, 4) language, grammar, and rhetorics, 5) discursive strategies, and 6) ideological standpoints. In the contextual analysis, a 1) comparative-synchronic analysis and 2) a historical-diachronic analysis will be performed. Thus, the texts will be evaluated due to their time of publication and the current state of technological and social factors in Swedish society.

The aim of the comparative-synchronic analysis is to compare one text with other representations of the issue, by different authors or from another news outlet, to identify alternative depictions. The historical-diachronic analysis is more concerned with social matters, e.g. the political, social, and economic context in which the text is published. Also, this part is about gaining an understanding of how the issue has changed historically, namely the *"evolution of the discourse"* (Carvalho, 2008).

If CDA would only be applied to one specific time point, it would not say much about the evolution of the discourse – how technological or social factors (e.g. the introduction of Facebook with its 'utopian' aim to connect people, versus the rising criticism in recent years) have affected the discourse on digital disconnection (Carvalho, 2008). However, by using Carvalho's analytical model – with a textual and contextual analysis performed on 'critical discourse moments' (2010-2012 and 2018-2020) – it is possible to illustrate a more holistic picture of digital disconnection discourse, and its interplay with technological progress and changing social factors. Carvalho's (2008) analytical model also suggests that the analysis should begin with an open-minded, inductive reading/overview of the empirical material since *"it allows for the identification of the most significant characteristics*

of the data, without the filter-effect of a tight research program". In this way, it is possible to inductively identify significant arguments, perspectives, and debates. According to Carvalho (2008), this initial reading of the entire corpus should be followed by a further delimitation of the empirical material, guided by criteria such as identification of critical discourse moments, re-sampling in *"peak periods of coverage" or* re-sampling within each media outlet. This process will, however, be discussed further in the chapter on 'sampling & selection of empirical material'.

4.2. Swedish legacy newspapers

The discourse analysis of this study is performed on the four largest legacy news outlets in Sweden, to get a holistic view of digital disconnection as a political phenomenon. Sweden is an interesting case to study because it is a western, industrial welfare state where post-material values are prominent (Knutsen, 1990). Thus, it is plausible that choices of disconnection rely on rather 'political' standpoints instead of problems of availability (even if the digital divide, e.g. the lack of sufficient digital knowledge amongst elderly people, still exists – but that is not the scoop of this study) (Knutsen, 1990; Inglehart, 2008).

The four Swedish newspapers that will be examined are *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*. These legacy news outlets have the largest publics in Sweden and hold slightly different ideological standpoints and traditions, even if the journalistic products (in terms of news reporting) hold the same 'objective' values. Dagens Nyheter and Expressen have a liberal tradition while Svenska Dagbladet is conservative and Aftonbladet is socially democratic, according to their own descriptions.

Moreover, since digital disconnection is a rather narrow phenomenon, it is appropriate to include all four news outlets in the study's data sample – to get an empirical material that is large enough to represent digital disconnection in Sweden.

4.3. Sampling & selection of empirical material

To identify the empirical material, a search was performed on the media archive 'Retriever' through the University of Gothenburg's database. The search was delimited to the time periods ('critical discourse moments') of 2010-2012 and 2018-2020, and moreover, restricted to Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet, and Expressen. Keywords were used to identify relevant

publications, and all texts – news articles as well as editorials – that relate to digital disconnection have been selected for analysis.

As a first step in identifying discursive trends on digital disconnection between 2010 and 2012, a few pilot searches were made in Retriever on e.g. *'sociala medier'* AND *'kritik'* OR *'bojkott/bojkottar"* OR *'nobba/nobbar'* OR *'skeptisk'* (social media AND criticism OR boycott/boycotting OR rejecting Or skeptical) and other synonyms for non-use, from the first of January 2010 to the 31:th December 2012, thus covering three entire years. The purpose of the pilot search was to identify the Swedish vocabulary used when describing 'digital disconnection' (the term must be translated and adapted to the Swedish context), and furthermore to delimit and customize the keywords. Using this inductive approach in finding relevant keywords (made possible by conducting a boolean search where synonyms for 'rejection' or 'skepticism' were combined with 'social media'), it became clear that Swedish vocabulary describing digital disconnection mostly consists of '*nobba/nobbar'* (turn down, or reject), *'sluta(r) använda'* (stop using), *'skeptisk'* (skeptical) and *'kritik/kritisk'* (criticism) along with *'sociala medier'* (social media). This procedure was repeated during the time period of 2018-2020, aiming to cover all aspects of digital disconnection; those who disconnect, but also 'criticism' or 'skepticism' directed towards the increased use of social media.

A final search was later performed on *'sociala medier'* in combination with *'kritik'* OR *'kritiserar'* OR *'kritisk'* OR *'nobba*'* OR *'bojkott*'* OR *'skeptisk'* OR *'slutar använda'* or *'slutat använda'* in both printed press and online articles from Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet and Expressen. During 2010-2012, this search generated 1922 results, but not all of them were tied to the phenomenon of digital disconnection. A systematic overview, performed by manually and purposively selecting articles with relevance for the study's topic, helped to delimit the results further; a sample of 41 articles, that told stories of 'disconnection' or uttered skepticism towards increased 'connection', were furthermore selected for analysis between 2010 and 2012 and downloaded from Retriever.

Between 2018 and 2020, the same keywords generated 10 384 search results, but all of them were not about digital disconnection. Moreover, much has happened with social media during these years; today, they are integrated in all aspects of life, and thus, also in all aspects of news reporting (Carvalho, 2008). I.e., the results produced by this search were too large to overview and needed to be delimited. A further limitation was made by restricting the results to articles in the printed press. After this procedure, 3949 search results remained. These were systematically overviewed, and here, 78 news items related to digital disconnection. 'Systematically overviewed' in this context means that the news items were selected in a purposive way rather than randomly sampled, as were done with the time period of 2010-2012.

The criteria for an article to become a part of the study's corpus, in the purposive sampling process, was that the chosen article must have *digital disconnection as a topic*, that it *focuses on social media criticism* or that it takes a *renunciatory stance against social media.* These topics were mostly identified already in the article's headline or entry. While one has to be aware of the implications of using 'purposive' sampling instead of random sampling, it was necessary for the aim of this study to identify relevant articles, something that only was possible by performing a systematic, manual reading of the search results.

It was also interesting to note that while 2010-2012 generated only 41 relevant search results on digital disconnection, 2018-2020 generated 78 in the printed press only (the slight methodological change in data sampling will be discussed in the next section). This body of 119 news items in total constitutes the study's empirical material and a basis for the critical discourse analysis (CDA) as presented above. The 119 articles were inductively read, as proposed by Carvalho (2008), to make a first assessment on which articles should be examined further. Since we have recognized 2010-2012 and 2018-2020 as 'critical discourse moments' regarding digital disconnection in this study, a suitable method for delimiting the material further is to select one article from each newspaper (Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet, Expressen) for each year, i.e. one item representing Dagens Nyheter 2010, one item representing Svenska Dagbladet 2010, and so on. To re-sample articles within each news outlet is something that is suggested by Carvalho (2008), and makes it possible to delimit the material while retaining the holistic perspective.

The criteria used during the inductive reading of the 119 articles – the process of re-sampling within each news outlet – were based on the article's relevance regarding digital disconnection and its scholarly definition. Namely, the articles that best described *"practices of disconnection that counter the hegemonic temporality of fast capitalism"* (Kaun & Trére, 2020) within each news outlet for each year were chosen for analysis, resulting in a corpus of 24 articles in total. E.g. were concrete stories of disconnection and active criticism over a hyper-connected society prioritized over general criticism of, let us say, children's screen-time and worried parents. To be included in the corpus, the article needed to include *both* criticism against hyper-connectivity and a choice to disconnect (e.g. by an individual). Therefore, the 24 chosen articles must be considered *as close to the core of digital disconnection as possible,* describing it as 'practices of disconnection' but also in terms of 'countering the hegemonic temporality of fast capitalism'.

4.4. Textual analysis

Carvalho's (2008) take on critical discourse analysis has already been described above, but perhaps it is helpful with a further presentation of the analytical tools used in the study. The *textual analysis* consists of:

Layout and structural organization: Carvalho describes this part as 'surface' elements of the text. It includes e.g. the article's size or the usage of visual elements (pictures or graphics). Furthermore, Van Dijk (2009) and Carvalho (2008) emphasize the importance of article headlines and entries; these *"marks the preferred reading of the whole article and should therefore be carefully examined"* (Carvalho, 2008).

Objects: To identify the objects of a text is an important step in revealing and understanding discourses, according to Carvalho (2008), who argues that the concept of an 'object' is similar to the concept of a 'theme' or a 'topic'. Questions to ask here, suggested by Carvalho, are *"which objects does the text construct?"* and *"what events/specific issues are associated with the broader issue under consideration?"* Issues can be 'tackled' from different perspectives, and the purpose of identifying objects in the text is partly to map out *"the links between reporters/sources and specific events"*, and in such a way, to reveal the political standpoints of certain discourses (Carvalho, 2008).

Actors: Questions suggested by Carvalho are *"who does the article mention?"* and *"how are those actors represented?"* Actors are both subjects (they do something) and objects (they, or their actions, are talked about in the article). How actors are represented in texts matter because *"texts play a major role in constructing the image of social actors"* (Carvalho, 2008) and it is helpful to identify whose 'perspective' dominates and what type of social influence that actor may have.

Language, grammar, and rhetoric: *"The vocabulary used for representing a certain reality (e.g. verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and the writing style (e.g. formal/informal, technical, conversational) are important dimensions of the constitution of meanings"* (Carvalho, 2008). Metaphors, rhetorical figures (for instance, rhetorical figures that appeal to emotions are common in journalistic texts) and 'persuasive devices' in the text can reveal 'underlying ideological presuppositions' (Van Dijk, 2009; Carvalho, 2008).

Discursive strategies: When producing a journalistic product, an angle must be chosen, because it is impossible to show the whole of reality. This is often referred to as the 'framing' of reality; framing organizes discourse in line with a certain point of view (Carvalho, 2008) and 'involves selection and composition' (Entman, 1993). To choose a journalistic angle is, consciously or unconsciously, a 'discursive manipulation of reality' (Wodak, 1999) and more or less the process of creating a 'picture in our heads' of something (Lippmann, 1922). When investigating discursive strategies in a text, it is

necessary to look at the *framing* of events, as well as the *positioning*, *legitimation,* and *politicization* (Carvalho, 2008). The *positioning* aspect refers to the construction of social actors and their identity in relation to other social actors. The *legitimation* aspect is about the justification of an action, based on normative reasons (Wodak, 1999), e.g. "this person could legitimately do this because he/she was in this/that position". The *politicization* aspect is *"the attribution of a political nature or status to a certain reality"* (Carvalho, 2008). Carvalho suggests that questions like *"what are the relations between the discursive strategies of each social actor and news discourse?"* and *"how do news outlets reconstruct the strategies of policy-makers and antiwar activists, for example?"* should be applied to the textual analysis in this stage.

Ideological standpoints: These can be somewhat tricky to identify in journalistic text, but nevertheless, they are embedded in there; there is no such thing as total objectivity (Lippmann, 1922). For example, the analyst can look for 'ideological mechanisms' in presuppositions and assumptions, what is implied in the text, and even which aspects are mentioned or which are left out, not unlike the framing as mentioned above (Fairclough, 1995; Carvalho, 2008). According to Carvalho, the ideological standpoints are *"embedded in the selection and representation of objects and actors, and in the language and discursive strategies employed in a text"*.

4.5. Contextual analysis

The *contextual analysis* asks questions tied to social context. This analytical dimension is separated into a *comparative-synchronic* and a *historical-diachronic* analysis, which were briefly described in the section on 'Critical discourse analysis' and further elaborated on here. According to Carvalho's (2008) framework, these time-and-context related dimensions are analyzed *"by two main means of inquiry, respectively, comparison and historical analysis"*:

Comparative-synchronic analysis: Mapping out all alternative media representations of an issue (e.g. in different news outlets during the same time period) makes it possible to compare depictions of reality. By doing this, the researcher can possibly create an own image of the issue that is more correct than it is portrayed in each individual news outlet (Carvalho, 2008). The comparative-synchronic analysis differs from an 'intertextual analysis' (they are otherwise quite similar in nature because both looks at intertextuality, how texts are integrated with each other, and the links between them) by letting one representation of reality confront another; thus revealing 'specific discursive traits of a given news outlet' (Carvalho, 2008).

Historical-diachronic analysis: The political, social, and economical context in which an issue plays out, and in which journalistic texts are produced, have to be taken into consideration in the discourse

analysis (Carvalho, 2008; Wodak, 1999). A series of constructions (e.g. representations of digital disconnection over time) should be reviewed in relation to dominant discourses at that time. Carvalho (2008) suggests asking questions like *"what were the political, social and/or cultural implications of dominant discourses?"* or *"how did representations of reality impact subsequent ones?"* The overarching aim is, however, to *"produce a history of media constructions of a given social issue"* (Carvalho, 2008). For the sake of this study, the 'context' in which the media representations of 'digital disconnection' play out can be considered the 'progress and backlash' of social media, as discussed in a previous chapter (2.1). This historical context, from the social media 'boom' in 2010-2012 to the rising criticism in later years, thus constitutes a façade against which the discourse develops (Carvalho, 2008).

4.6. The corpus

The following table shows the 24 articles that were selected for analysis in Retriever. The titles (in Swedish) are followed by the source of publication (news outlet) and date of publication.

Title	News outlet	Date of publication
"Därför nobbar han Facebook"	*Expressen*	*30 March 2010*
"Studenterna: Vi är beroende av internet"	*Aftonbladet*	*27 April 2010*
"Jag loggade in 20 gånger per dag"	*Svenska Dagbladet*	*18 August 2010*
"Generation Facebook förtjänar något bättre"	*Dagens Nyheter*	*23 November 2010*
"Stopp för Facebook på arbetstid"	*Dagens Nyheter*	*19 January 2011*
"Nätskeptikerna på frammarsch"	*Svenska Dagbladet*	*18 August 2011*
"Har du loggat ur Facebook för gott?"	*Expressen*	*2 September 2011*
"Hatstorm mot nya Facebook"	*Aftonbladet*	*26 September 2011*
"Internetfri tid allt viktigare"	*Dagens Nyheter*	*25 January 2012*
"Folk trodde jag var död"	*Svenska Dagbladet*	*13 March 2012*
"Nu visar Facebook sitt rätta ansikte"	*Expressen*	*4 April 2012*
"Mikael Romero: Journalister – sansa er eller sluta twittra"	*Aftonbladet*	*2 November 2012*

”Erik valde bort världen”	*Aftonbladet*	*12 March 2018*
”Hejdå Twitter”	*Expressen*	*5 April 2018*
”Hitechföräldrar skickar barnen till teknikfri skola”	*Svenska Dagbladet*	*26 July 2018*
”Fem skäl till att radera dina konton i sociala medier redan i kväll”	*Dagens Nyheter*	*8 September 2018*
”Vi har börjat vantrivas i Uppkopplingskulturen”	*Svenska Dagbladet*	*4 January 2019*
”Överläkaren Anders Hansens varning: Mobilen stör vår koncentration och sömn”	*Expressen*	*6 March 2019*
”Nu är vi nätets heroinister”	*Dagens Nyheter*	*18 October 2019*
”Simon, 18, testar ett Nedkopplat liv”	*Aftonbladet*	*19 October 2019*
”Bengtsson vill bojkotta Sociala medier inför OS”	*Expressen*	*9 March 2020*
”Flera svenska företag Bojkottar Facebook: viktigt Att de lyssnar”	*Svenska Dagbladet*	*3 July 2020*
”The Social Dilemma är Vår tids viktigaste film”	*Aftonbladet*	*22 September 2020*
”Ilskan mot Facebook Får högerkonservativa Plattformar att växa”	*Dagens Nyheter*	*30 November 2020*

4.7. Methodological reflections

There is perhaps no need to discuss ethics in this study since it is based on newspaper material and does not involve any individual directly. Discussing the study's quality, the research questions this study aims to answer are of a descriptive nature and follows the type that Bryman (2016) formulates: *'Describing a phenomenon (what is x like or what forms does x assume)'.* It does not aim to make any causal claim, just to describe a phenomenon (Bryman, 2016). Thus, the quality lies within the study's effort to describe how digital disconnection is represented in the Swedish media, and to what degree it succeeds in doing this. The study's validity and reliability furthermore depends on how well the

research design functions in relation to the study's aim, and whether the CDA has been performed in such a way that subjectivity errors are minimized (Kuckartz, 2013). To ensure this, Carvalho's systematic CDA-framework is followed, and the research design is inspired by previous studies that have investigated media representations with CDA as a method (e.g. Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016).

It is moreover possible that the research questions are too narrow in the sense that they aim toward a rather narrow answer, namely the representations of digital disconnecters in news media. The question is whether we gain any deeper knowledge on the bigger issue, namely how these representations actually mirror the reality and citizen's understandings of digital disconnection. The selections of texts might also be problematic because they, of course, do not mirror reality in the sense that they are produced by professional journalists and it is plausible that they produce a rather homogenous picture of the phenomenon, a methodological problem that Neumann (2008) addresses: *'Realities are maintained by the frequent repetition and confirmation of representations and the absence of commotion does not mean that the discourse in question is non-conflictual.'* To avoid this, as much as possible, four different news sources were included in the study. Yet, we know that journalistic discourses tend to be rather similar in every journalistic setting (e.g. Carvalho, 2008; Lippmann, 1922) and homogeneity is thus hard to avoid completely. This is particularly relevant in this study since we are looking at a part of the citizenry who are (usually) not present online and plausibly less present in media representations as well, but it is also interesting in the same sense. Those who actually go 'official' with their disconnection choices are plausibly those who are visible in the media, thus 'representing everyone'. This is surely an issue of validity.

Furthermore, the selection of keywords (as presented in the section above) created some struggle; even if the Swedish vocabulary for digital disconnection was somewhat identified, the searches in Retriever can not be said to be entirely foolproof. Since the material in the second search (2018-2020) became too large to overview manually, the method had to be modified and that might have skewed the results a little. Only printed press articles (as found in Retriever) were included in the 2018-2020 search, while the 2010-2012 search included online publications as well. However, because of the large difference in initial search results (1922 results for 2010-2012 and 10 384 for 2018-2020), it is plausible that the sample from printed press only in 2018-2020 (3949 search results) can represent the discourse of that time. I.e., the empirical material is still large enough to say something about the potentially changing discourse. Moreover, it is not strange that the 2018-2020 search generated a larger number of search results – after all, social media platforms have gradually become more and more integrated in our lives and daily tasks, and are therefore also more frequently integrated in overall discourse, not only when an article discusses social media itself. Yet, it cannot be said that the two periods are entirely equal in representation, which surely is a flaw in the study's construction. A solution would be to remove online articles from 2010-2012 as well, but after testing that, it became

clear that the sample from 2010-2012 needed the online articles to be large enough to use as empirical material.

Lastly, the method of 'purposively' selecting articles to analyze in the larger, initial corpus might have implications for the study's reliability, which is important to be aware of. However, when investigating a narrow phenomenon such as digital disconnection, and when it is somewhat complicated to produce keywords that will generate foolproof search results, purposive selection became the most valid method. At least, it made sure that the right articles ended up in the analysis; thus, that the study measured what it aimed to measure. And as mentioned above, the purpose of this study is not to be particularly generalizable – instead, it aims to describe a small piece of journalistic discourse. Furthermore, in the struggle of performing a critical discourse analysis on a somewhat 'fuzzy' subject, the researcher can benefit from keeping an open mind regarding methodological choices (Weiss & Wodak, 2003).

5. Analysis

In this chapter, an analysis of the corpus based on Carvalho's CDA-framework will be provided. The *textual* analysis is presented in section 5.1. to 5.6., followed by the *contextual* analysis in section 5.7. to 5.8. The analysis is performed in an essayistic way, supported by examples and quotes from the articles. Moreover, the reader should keep in mind that it is the *media representations* of digital disconnection, as portrayed in the articles, that are subjects for analysis. Namely, media constructions of the *entire* phenomenon are in focus – *not* the traits of specific actors or journalistic conduct. However, the traits of specific actors or e.g. discursive strategies employed by journalists are included in the CDA, and must be considered as incorporated in the analysis as such. What results and conclusions that furthermore can be drawn from the analysis, as well as the task of answering the study's research questions, will be saved for the upcoming chapter on results.

All quotes and examples, as used in the analysis, are retrieved from the corpus and translated from Swedish by the author.

5.1. Layout & structural organization

19 of the articles in the corpus covered *one page or more*, and included imagery. Only five articles were dedicated to *less* than one entire page, and were either presented in small columns or half-page texts. When Facebook or Twitter figured in the articles, the social media platform's logotype or an image of its owner(s) were commonly included. Mark Zuckerberg's picture appeared frequently in the articles featuring Facebook, often with a facial expression that should 'match' the article's theme. In the article titled *"Nu visar Facebook sitt rätta ansikte"* (Expressen, 2012), Zuckerberg's smiling face positioned next to an entry proclaiming that 'Facebook stores more and more sensitive, private information of more and more people' constitutes an illustrative example of this *juxtapositioning* between text and imagery. Other visual elements in the corpus were pictures of interviewees, e.g. in *"Simon, 18, testar ett nedkopplat liv"* (Aftonbladet, 2019) and in *"Erik valde bort världen"*(Aftonbladet, 2018), where one interviewee smiles into the camera, holding up the antique Nokia phone which has replaced his smartphone. The other interviewee is shown playing his guitar, and in a creative work environment.

Considering the article's *surface elements*, the headlines and entries were concentrated on personal stories of digital disconnection, criticism against large social media corporations, the 'unhealthy' milieu on social media, and the democratic implications of increased social media usage in politics. Not seldom were quotes in the headlines or entries uttered by celebrities, such as the Swedish physician, psychiatrist and tv-personality Anders Hansen in *"Överläkaren Anders Hansens varning:*

Mobilen stör vår koncentration och sömn" (Expressen, 2019) or author and computer scientist Jaron Lanier in *"Fem skäl att radera dina konton i sociala medier redan i kväll"* (DN, 2018). In addition to that, many headlines connected heavy social media use to addiction and substance abuse, e.g. in *"Nu är vi nätets heroinister"* (DN, 2019).

5.2. Objects

Considering 'objects' as themes or topics, the following themes/topics could be identified in the corpus (they are not mutually exclusive, i.e. one article can include multiple themes).

An individual quits social media for privacy purposes:
E.g. in *"Därför nobbar han Facebook"*, where the Swedish prime minister at the time claims that he ...*"does not want to be totally* ***exposed*** *and* ***available*** *all the time"* (Expressen, 2010), referring to the increasingly popular Facebook usage at the time. Or in *"Nu visar Facebook sitt rätta ansikte"* (Expressen, 2012) where the commercial interest of social media platforms – and its implications for the users – is discussed. The articles on this theme also emphasize *positive* aspects of internet and social media use. The Swedish prime minister who rejected Facebook himself still tried to explain the *benefits* of free and uncensored internet use to a Chinese presidential candidate, during his visit in Sweden (Expressen, 2010). However, the theme of *privacy issues* (e.g. to maintain one's personal privacy by not being 'available' and exposed all the time, as stated by the Swedish prime minister) can be found throughout the corpus.

An individual quits social media for health purposes, or to become free from an addiction:
E.g. in *"Folk trodde jag var död"* (SvD, 2012) where a 20-year-old man stopped using his smartphone. The man's 'digital detox' were described as following in the article:

"For a while, he experienced ***abstinence****, but thereafter he became very* ***calm****. But some of his friends thought that he was* ***dead****"* (SvD, 2012).

The 20-year-old thus went through a phase of abstinence from his smartphone, although he felt better afterwards without it. On the other hand, his 'disappearance' from the online sphere created some confusion for his friends. He did experience *health benefits*, but at the same time, he felt socially 'out of the loop'.

Leaving social media due to political fears:
E.g. "*Hejdå Twitter"*, written by famous Swedish author and personality Jonas Gardell (Expressen

2018). Gardell here argues that we all should reject Twitter as a forum for communication, because it has been…

*…"hopelessly **infected**, **defiled** and **perverted**, and stands beyond saving" (Expressen, 2018).*

Another example is *"Ilskan mot Facebook får högerkonservativa plattformar att växa"* (DN, 2020). A relatively new platform, Parler, is discussed as an alt-right alternative to Facebook and Twitter, because the latter are perceived as 'banning alt-right conservatism'. Parler is thus used as a form of *resistance* against the more established platforms, an alternative where the users can express themselves freely and without any interference from so called 'biased' moderators.

Criticizing the hyper-connected world:

E.g. *"Vi har börjat vantrivas i uppkopplingskulturen"*, a part cultural piece, part book review in SvD (2019) that discusses mechanisms of connection versus disconnection:

*"Actions like Quit Facebook Day have, since long, shown that disconnection constitutes a **power tool** that – if it was used by enough people – could **disturb** the dominating order. Even if as of today, nothing points towards that people's online presence should decrease, disconnection constitutes the **ultimate threat** to the digitized economy"* (SvD, 2019).

This article deals with the very essence of digital disconnection, and furthermore discusses its implications as a power tool. Another article in the corpus that deals with this type of criticism is e.g. *"Fem skäl att radera dina konton i sociala medier redan i kväll"*, an interview with Jaron Lanier (DN, 2018) where the reader is warned about the multifaceted and negative consequences of frequent social media usage.

5.3. Actors

Three clusters of represented actors could be identified in the corpus; *celebrities* and *experts*, individuals telling *personal stories* of disconnection, and the *antagonists* (i.e. those who are framed as scapegoats when social media is described in negative terms).

Celebrities and experts:

Those who gave their advice in the articles tended to be celebrities and experts, like the previously mentioned *Jaron Lanier* (DN, 2018) or Swedish physician and psychiatrist *Anders Hansen* (Expressen, 2019), or *Silicon Valley dropouts* with inside information from the social media companies (Aftonbladet, 2020). These are constructed as 'truth tellers', and their advice is of a dystopian nature:

*"Google and the other tech-companies **deliberately** show a worldview that is **not true**; a sharpened, **polarized** world image that drives more traffic and money to the social media platform's **owners**. Facebook themselves have admitted that they fueled a **genocide** in Myanmar by sleeping at work"* (Aftonbladet, 2020).

But there are experts who emphasize the positive aspects, too. Social media expert Sofia Mirjamsdotter claimed in 2012, in a quote, that she…

*..."trusts Facebook and believes that they will **not** use our personal information in the **wrong ways**, because then, they would be **smoked** as a company"* (Expressen, 2012).

These utterances show important *nuances* in the reporting on digital disconnection, but in this particular corpus, the positive aspects constitute a minority. Experts, Silicon Valley dropouts and physicians are mostly represented as *counterweights* to other people in power, e.g. Mark Zuckerberg or representatives of the social media companies. This divide between 'experts' plausibly mirrors the overall debate on internet optimism versus internet cynicism, but also the fact that this is not a black-and-white question.

Personal stories of disconnection:

These individuals are not asked for expert advice, and their acts of disconnection are rather portrayed as experiments in the corpus. E.g. in *"Erik valde bort världen"* (Aftonbladet, 2018) or in *"Simon, 18, testar ett nedkopplat liv"* (Aftonbladet, 2019). In the latter article, the interviewee is quoted when stating the following:

"*I wanted to see how **addicted** I am, and what **effects** I could get from disconnecting. It has been a **liberation** to not have that **stress** all the time; the thought that I might have gotten some messages or such"* (Aftonbladet, 2019).

The interviewee from the former article (Aftonbladet, 2018), stopped reading the news when Donald Trump became president in America. He is moreover quoted saying that he...

*..."feels **good** being disconnected from/**unknowing** about what is happening in the world"* and that *"his time is now entirely his own"* (Aftonbladet, 2018).

Both these stories illustrate actors/individuals that disconnect and find *authenticity* or stillness in being offline. Although these actors are not portrayed as especially knowledgeable or 'voices of reason', they contribute with *personal experiences* and *insight* into what it is like to disconnect.

The 'antagonists':

Employees at and owners of the social media companies, especially Mark Zuckerberg, are portrayed in a rather negative light when they occur in the articles. They are represented as 'experts that should know better' which is emphasized in e.g. *"The Social Dilemma är vår tids viktigaste film"* (Aftonbladet, 2020), *"Nu visar Facebook sitt rätta ansikte"* (Expressen, 2012), *"Hatstorm mot nya Facebook"* (Aftonbladet, 2011) and *"Flera svenska företag bojkottar Facebook: Viktigt att de lyssnar"* (SvD, 2020). In the latter article, a CEO for a Swedish clothing company states the following about her company's boycott of Facebook as advertising platform:

"We hope that this ***boycott*** *will lead to* ***reflection*** *and* ***measures****; if Facebook wants to have a long-term relevance, it is important that they start* ***listening*** *to us"* (SvD, 2020).

The CEO alludes to 'the spread of hate and racism' on the platform, and demands that Facebook should moderate its content. Those in power over e.g. Facebook are addressed in the articles, but they themselves are seldom quoted. Instead, other actors are *criticizing* them for being ignorant or unsensitive, as shown in the example above. This has led to boycotts by companies that have certain values, which they believe are not shared by Facebook. Facebook's top employees, then, are represented in an *antagonistic* manner, in contrast to the experts or Silicon Valley dropouts that have chosen to 'tell the truth'.

5.4. Language, grammar & rhetorics

A *metaphor* that occurs frequently within the corpus is the drug-metaphor, and in *"Mikael Romero: Journalister, sansa er eller sluta twittra"* (Aftonbladet, 2012), the debater Mikael Romero claims that 'all journalists on twitter seem to be intoxicated or alcoholics' because they, according to Romero, behave like alcoholics:

"It is the same, ***disease-like*** *behavior; here was the same jaundice, indignation, self-centeredness and categoric wish to always be right"* (Aftonbladet, 2012).

Romero performs more of a parable to substance abuse; the metaphor is not only used to make a point but rather as an analytical tool. The 'disease-like behavior of journalists on Twitter' constitutes a façade for Romero's entire argumentation. In e.g. *"Nu är vi nätets heroinister"* (DN, 2019), *"Jag loggade in 20 gånger per dag"* (SvD, 2010) and *"Studenterna: Vi är beroende av internet"* (Aftonbladet, 2010), the drug allusions are purely metaphorical, being employed to describe a compulsory behavior or an addiction that is not really related to drugs but to internet or social media. The frequent use of drug-metaphors illustrate an *awareness of the backsides of living in a*

hyper-connected society, and in particular, of our tendency to become 'addicted' to things that offer easy accessible entertainment.

The language employed in the articles differed from when an 'ordinary' person was interviewed and when an 'expert' was interviewed; the 'ordinary' person is described with a *softer* and more *informal* language while the experts figure in unison with hard facts. The formal/informal approach moreover depends on the article's respective topic. In *"Hightechföräldrar skickar barnen till teknikfri skola"* (SvD, 2018), Silicon Valley employees 'disconnect' their own children by sending them to a tech-free school. The tone is formal:

"The children's parents work at companies such as Google or Apple; and ***despite the fact*** *that this particular private school, in the* ***heart*** *of the* ***tech-industry****, costs approximately 200 000 (Swedish) crowns a year... the classrooms have green boards, classical wooden benks and* ***not a single computer****"* (SvD, 2018).

Using the phrase 'despite the fact' emphasizes the *contraposition* of high-tech parents sending their children to a tech-free school, and moreover, that the tech-free school is very expensive. This rhetorical strategy, as employed throughout the text and furthermore in *"The Social Dilemma är vår tids viktigaste film"* (Aftonbladet, 2020), plausibly makes the reader wonder why someone working at Google would send their child to a tech-free school, thus portraying these high-tech parents as *hypocrites* and *non-authentic*. Moreover, *responsibility* is a term that frequently occurs in relation to Facebook in particular; in the articles describing boycotts and criticism directed towards the platform, it is demanded that Facebook's employees take responsibility for their site and its content. The language used in these conflicts is characterized by outright criticism and once again, an *antagonistic* view of these companies.

5.5. Discursive strategies

Common journalistic angles in the material are the *questioning* of the 'hyper-connected' world we live in and stories of stepping out of it, *criticism* against social media companies and the impending implications of *online politics* – the democratic implications, as discussed in e.g. *"Nätskeptikerna på frammarsch"* (SvD, 2011) – as well as 'experts' warning about mental health problems tied to extensive social media usage. The *discursive strategies* as illustrated in the corpus is, seemingly, nothing surprising; disconnection from the online sphere is commonly portrayed as *healthy* and *authentic* while *skepticism* is directed towards social media platforms and Facebook in particular. Digital detox is even portrayed as something explicitly fashionable:

*"The internet evangelists have become **doomsday** prophets, politicians demand more **control** over the internet, the constantly connected disconnects; to be an **internet skeptic** has become highest **fashion**"* (SvD, 2011).

Whether the criticism is directed towards the social media platforms themselves or towards their users varies. Seemingly, the internet lacks a moral compass; but that some social media platforms seem 'rigged' to bring out the worst in humans is pointed out as a crucial issue. This is a double-faced question which is tackled from various angles in the corpus, such as in the example below, where the social media users are portrayed as the problem:

*"The internet is a part of our reality and can be used for good as much as for bad; it is **not** either or, the internet itself is not the problem – we **humans** are"* (SvD, 2011).

People's struggle to use something in reasonable quantities (alcohol, social media) is also highlighted throughout the corpus, and most of the articles portray a problematization of usage and non-usage; the fine line between consumption and 'unhealthy' overconsumption that you need to 'detox' from to regain sanity/health/authenticity/meaningful relationships. Yet, digital disconnection is mainly represented as something an *enlightened few* are doing, e.g. in *"Hightechföräldrar skickar barnen till teknikfri skola"* (SvD, 2018) or the expert that has found that social media is bad for our concentration (*"Överläkaren Anders Hansens varning: Mobilen stör vår koncentration och sömn"* from Expressen, 2019). These are sometimes positioned against the 'addicted mass', creating a distinction between the enlightened ones (e.g. ex-Silicon Valley employees, Anders Hansen), those who are becoming enlightened (e.g. in the personal stories of digital disconnection) and the mass that needs to be guided by those who 'know better' (e.g. in *"Generation Facebook förtjänar något bättre",* an article from 2010 where the author criticizes social media usage at large). The *enlightened* criticism, as represented throughout the corpus, is legitimized by the interviewee's or the author's authority as experts, cultural celebrities, or their experiences of living in a time where social media did not yet exist, as illustrated in the quote below. The author of this debate article (DN, 2010) is a professor, and she reflects upon her students, 'generation Facebook':

*"The more time I spend with **Generation Facebook**, i.e. my students, the more convinced I get that much of the software that for now shapes their generation is **unworthy** of them; they are more interesting than it, and they **deserve better**"* (DN, 2010).

Moreover, digital disconnection gets *politicized* mostly due to the increased use of social media in politics. As discussed in e.g. *"Ilskan mot Facebook får högerkonservativa plattformar att växa"* (DN, 2020), the *resistance* form of digital disconnection has very political implications, e.g. in further polarization. The article portray U.S. conservatives that boycott Facebook due to value based

differences, and have found an alternative platform, Parler, where they feel that they can express themselves more freely:

*"Parler has become an obvious **resistance** for those who believe that the large social media platforms are a part of an **elite** that supports the Democrats; Parler's entire concept is about being able to choose a **filtered** reality"* (DN, 2020).

The quote comes from an expert on desinformation, and sheds light on the worry surrounding online polarization, which perhaps is the most 'political' angle that can be found in the corpus. Interesting to note is that this type of digital disconnection is rather about *changing platforms* than boycotting social media entirely; the online platforms are needed to communicate, and without them it would be hard to find a common sphere – what seems to matter politically, though, is who are in charge of these platforms and if they share your *political values*.

5.6. Ideological standpoints

The following ideological standpoints could be identified in the corpus; digital disconnection/digital detox is *healthy and authentic*, '*Silicon Valley hypocrites'*, and what I have chosen to call *'the political perspective'*. The ideological findings are presented below.

'Digital disconnection/digital detox is healthy and authentic':
In many of the articles, it is presupposed that disconnection is healthy and that too much connection is unhealthy, or at least something that should be minimized. Disconnection is portrayed as *beneficial* for one's mental health and ability to concentrate and sleep, as well as one's relationships. E.g. in the article *"Internetfri tid allt viktigare"*:

*"According to a British study, more than half of the study subjects thought that it is **important** with internet-free time, and a third of the parents believe that modern technology has affected family life **negatively**"* (DN, 2012).

The use of drug metaphors belongs in this category too, and so does the expert advice from Jaron Lanier (DN, 2018) and Anders Hansen (Expressen, 2019). However, it is notable that these articles often include some *positive* aspects of internet use too. Another example from *"Internetfri tid allt viktigare"*, building onto the quote above, is:

*"Professor John Clarkson, responsible for the study, thinks that the new communication possibilities mostly are **positive**; but some **cannot cope** with the new situation"* (DN, 2012).

Once again, the *human* aspect is emphasized, rather than a condemnation of the technologies themselves. Still, the 'human aspect' can include top employees at Facebook or Google too, and their presumed lack of responsibility for what they have created, as illustrated in *"Fem skäl att radera dina konton i sociala medier redan i kväll"* (DN, 2018) and *"The Social Dilemma är vår tids viktigaste film"* (Aftonbladet, 2020). In the latter, however, the *media itself* is framed as the problem (e.g. the use of algorithms), but only because it is 'rigged' in certain ways by its creators.

'Silicon Valley hypocrites':

In *"Hightechföräldrar skickar barnen till teknikfri skola"* (SvD, 2018), the weirdness is implied already in the article's title; if someone creates something (Facebook, Twitter), it is presumed that this person did it for a good reason. Yet, in this article, the story reminds slightly of Victor Frankenstein and Frankenstein's monster. What is created is supposed to be fantastic and revolutionary, but in the end, you want it to stay away from your friends and family:

*"The **countermovement** against technology's role in our daily lives seem to be a part of a larger trend, where the alarm is coming from the **inside**; the mastermind behind Facebook's like button, Justin Rostenstein, has openly said that he **regrets** creating something he knew would be addictive, and possibly has a **negative effect** on young people's self-confidence"* (SvD, 2018).

The same thing is implied in e.g. *"The Social Dilemma är vår tids viktigaste film"* (Aftonbladet, 2020) and in *"Flera svenska företag bojkottar Facebook: Viktigt att de lyssnar"* (SvD, 2020), where the ICT-companies' leaders are portrayed as irresponsible and ignorant.

'The political perspective':

Arguably, everything is more or less 'political', but the *democratic implications* of increased social media usage are embedded in a large part of the corpus. Since the empirical material consists of articles about digital disconnection (if the scope would have been broader, e.g. including articles on social media usage overall, then it would plausibly look different), it is not especially surprising that the negative aspects of online communication for democracy are emphasized. E.g. in *"Ilskan mot Facebook får högerkonservativa plattformar att växa"* (DN, 2020), *"Hejdå Twitter"* (Expressen, 2018) and *"Mikael Romero: Journalister, sansa er eller sluta twittra"* (Aftonbladet, 2012). These articles portray polarization and the 'increasingly aggressive' tone on social media as large democratic issues, e.g. in *"Nätskeptikerna på frammarsch"* (SvD, 2011):

*"The internet is being **filtered** so that we see only what Google thinks we **want** to see; and so that we are trapped in **filter bubbles** with like-minded people only"* (SvD, 2011).

It is moreover illustrated that to be an internet skeptic has become trendy instead of retrogressive, and that it is becoming *increasingly popular* to criticize Google and other big data-companies for nurturing polarization.

5.7. Comparative-synchronic analysis

When comparing the representations of digital disconnection between Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet and Expressen, the similarities are more striking than the differences. Expressen's (2018) *"Hejdå Twitter"*, for instance, has its equal in Aftonbladet's (2012) *"Mikael Romero: Journalister, sansa er eller sluta twittra"*, where well-known debaters highlight the 'unfruitful quarrel on Twitter' with similar arguments. The depictions of (mostly) Facebook in relation to digital disconnection in all news outlets show an antagonistic stance against and a questioning of Facebook's methods, e.g. in *"Nu visar Facebook sitt rätta ansikte"* (Expressen 2012), in *"Hatstorm mot nya Facebook"* (Aftonbladet 2011), in *"Fem skäl att radera dina konton i sociala medier redan i kväll"* (DN, 2018), and in *"Flera svenska företag bojkottar Facebook: Viktigt att de lyssnar"* (SvD, 2020). The drug-metaphors can moreover be found in articles from all news outlets, thus strengthening the 'addiction' element of the discourse.

Furthermore, the use of expert advice regarding digital disconnection (the benefits of disconnecting/the 'dangers' of being hyper-connected) is popular in all the news outlets; Expressen notes that Fredrik Reinfeldt, Sweden's prime minister at the time (2010) is skeptical against Facebook but positive towards overall internet use, and publishes Jonas Gardell's anti-Twitter debate article in 2018. In addition, they publish Anders Hansen's scientific findings (2019) and that the Swedish athlete Angelica Bengtsson boycotts social media before the Olympic Games (2020). The empirical material from Aftonbladet includes somewhat less celebrity advice, and focuses more on personal stories of disconnection. The material from Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet includes more 'hard' news, such as *"Ilskan mot Facebook får högerkonservativa att växa"* (DN, 2020), *"Stopp för Facebook på arbetstid"* (DN, 2011), *"Flera svenska företag bojkottar Facebook: Viktigt att de lyssnar"* (SvD, 2020) and *"Hightechföräldrar skickar barnen till teknikfri skola"* (SvD, 2018). However, the components of the texts that have been presented in the analysis above have shown that the *themes, ideologies and language* used in the articles do not really differ between the news sources; rather, it points towards a quite homogenous discourse on digital disconnection in Sweden. The discursive traits of given news outlets are thus not specific for Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet or Expressen but perhaps for the *overall view* of digital disconnection in the country.

5.8. Historical-diachronic analysis

Here follows a history of media constructions of digital disconnection between 2010 and 2012, as well as between 2018 and 2020. This is the last part of the analysis, built as a *chronological timeline*, systematically presenting the most notable findings for each year.

2010:

In *"Därför nobbar han Facebook"* (Expressen, 2010), Fredrik Reinfeldt, the prime minister of Sweden, has a meeting with China's vice president at the time, Xi Jinping. Google has recently said that they are going to leave China because of the Chinese government's censorship requirements. Reinfeldt talks to Jinping about *the benefits of having free internet access*, yet Reinfeldt claims that he *does not* use Facebook himself. He mostly highlights the potential 'backsides' of the internet:

*"Much of what we fight to hold back today will show its **ugly face** on the internet; e.g. lunges against homosexuals, racist utterances, bullying and sexual grooming"* (Expressen, 2010).

In *"Studenterna: Vi är beroende av internet"* (Aftonbladet, 2010), an American professor in journalism conducted an experiment on students – she wanted to see what would happen if the students lived without smartphones and internet access for 24 hours. Then, she is quoted while presenting the following result:

*"During the **24 hours** without internet and smartphones, the 200 students felt very uncomfortable, and showed symptoms that otherwise are seen in **alcoholism** and **drug abuse**"* (Aftonbladet, 2010).

Interesting to note is that this is 2010; according to the numbers from Internetstiftelsen (2016), social media usage in smartphones were in the starting pits of its 'boom' that happened between 2010 and 2012 (from 3% Swedish citizens using social media daily in their smartphones 2010, to 27% in 2012). On the other hand, these articles are featuring social media platforms slightly less than the later ones; here, focus lies more on *the internet* itself, even if Facebook figures in two of the articles, such as *"Jag loggade in 20 gånger per dag"* (SvD, 2010) and *"Generation Facebook förtjänar något bättre"* (DN, 2010). In the former, a woman is interviewed about her 'Facebook-addiction':

*"Anna closes her account for months when she feels that she has **overdosed** on Facebook"* (SvD, 2010).

In the latter, the author reflects upon what she calls *generation Facebook*, the launching of Facebook as an university project, and how it has grown over the past years. She makes a distinction between herself and the 'Harvard kids' that started the platform, and how their "ideas on what a person is

supposed to be" differ from her own. But she also acknowledges a certain *greatness* in the work of e.g. Mark Zuckerberg:

"In a few years, I will wrongly remember how close to ***Zuckerberg*** *I was, in the same way as everyone in Liverpool during the 60's had 'met' John Lennon"* (DN, 2010).

As portrayed here, something 'big' has surely happened. For better or worse, but it is thoroughly acknowledged that this change in the digital landscape will have considerable consequences for everyone.

2011:

'Facebook' is included in all four articles. In *"Stopp för Facebook på arbetstid"* (DN, 2011), multiple governmental employers and even hospitals have banned Facebook (as well as other social media platforms and the online marketplace Blocket) from the workplace. The decision is motivated by security standards that might be threatened by social media:

"We know that ***harmful*** *code spreads through Facebook, which can lead to* ***interruptions*** *in the healthcare's computer- and journal systems'*, says an employee who works with computer security at a hospital (DN, 2011).

Although, some of the employers removed the ban a year later, claiming that social media had become too important in communication processes. In *"Nätskeptikerna på frammarsch"* (SvD, 2011), it is claimed that internet skepticism has become fashionable. Books are being published on the subject and there is a discussion about internet's role in Anders Behring Breivik's murder of 77 people in Norway (a discussion of anonymity and increased surveillance online). The author of one internet-skeptical book is quoted when stating the following:

"We have lived our lives in the eye of the storm, with ***technological progress*** *and information booms; it is easy to become distracted, but only the most* ***naive*** *spectator would argue that the internet's breakthrough only has brought* ***good things****"* (SvD, 2011).

In *"Har du loggat ur facebook för gott?"* (Expressen, 2011), on the other hand, early adopters of Facebook seem to have gotten tired of the platform, claiming that it has become 'too big':

"A new study shows that – even if Facebook and social media usage has ***increased*** *among younger people and those interested in technology – the early adopters are* ***dropping out****"* (Expressen, 2011).

A social media researcher furthermore argues that Facebook usage has become *normalized* and that it is not as *trendy* anymore. Moreover, it has gone from "being a forum for social life to becoming a time-killer", and the researcher thinks that "Facebook will disappear sooner or later; being replaced by

new forms of social media". In *"Hatstorm mot nya Facebook"* (Aftonbladet, 2011), criticism is rather directed towards an update of Facebook, and mostly to the platform's new use of algorithms:

*"A new way to prioritize other's posts has been introduced; an **algorithmic** program now decides which activities that seem most interesting, and those are put on **top of the feed**"* (Aftonbladet, 2011).

This criticism highlights the problematic aspects of an increased use of algorithms, that a computer-driven program should decide what we 'want to see' on social media. An issue that will continue to generate debate, as we will see.

2012:

In *"Internetfri tid allt viktigare"* (DN, 2012), the author starts with a question; how will the social media 'communication boom' affect family life, and all other relationships? She refers to scientific studies that warn about too much social media usage, while encouraging families to 'map out' their social media use by documenting it, thus being able to understand and evaluate these new habits and their implications. In *"Folk trodde jag var död"* (SvD, 2012), a young man refers to his previous social media usage as a 'job that he did not want', and furthermore elaborates on his decision to disconnect:

*"It was really **hard**, I did not know what everyone else were doing, and they did not know what I was doing; after a while, my friends started to believe that something had happened to me, that I had **died** or **moved abroad**"* (SvD, 2012).

In *"Nu visar facebook sitt rätta ansikte"* (Expressen, 2012), Facebook is listed on the stock exchange and celebrates its 8th birthday. The social media boom is a fact in Sweden (Internetstiftelsen, 2016). Zuckerberg is portrayed as the 'ruler of a new, worldwide empire' and overall, the 'power' of Facebook and other social media is established. In *"Mikael Romero: Journalister, sansa er eller sluta twittra"* (Aftonbladet, 2012), the message is imminently negative regarding the potential of social media:

*"It is my absolute **conviction** that the sociality of our society, how we meet and **treat** each other, can be **harmed** by the Twitter communication format"*, writes the debater (Aftonbladet, 2012).

2012 shows a general undecidedness regarding the increasingly cemented power of social media and the implications of that – but that these platforms have become inherently important seem to be a fact.

2018:

In *"Erik valde bort världen"* (Aftonbladet, 2018), a former top employee at Nike sportswear, Erik, goes offline when Donald Trump becomes president in America. The choice is based on Erik's dislike of Trump. He disconnected from 'the world' (i.e. the news) in a quiet protest, and has not consumed

any news since. In *"Hejdå Twitter"* (Expressen, 2018), another choice to disconnect is made by Jonas Gardell:

*"I do not know how many that would **follow** my example if I disconnected from Twitter, but it is actually **worth** a try"*, writes Gardell (Expressen, 2018).

That others would follow his example of Twitter-disconnection is not impossible due to Gardell's celebrity status in Sweden, but it appears mostly as a quiet wish to escape the Twitter landscape which Gardell means is harmful for the societal debate. However, these two articles illustrate wealthy, knowledgeable people that choose to disconnect, and both Gardell and Erik have – in one way or another – gotten tired of the 'tone' employed on social media. In *"Hightechföräldrar skickar barnen till teknikfri skola"* (SvD, 2018) and *"Fem skäl till att radera dina konton i sociala medier redan i kväll"* (DN, 2018), the same *tiredness* is expressed, but the criticism is rather directed towards those who created the platforms, not the users that populate them. The Frankenstein-ish scenario that runs through both articles suggests that the hyper-connectivity has escalated out of control and that it needs to be mitigated.

2019:

In *"Vi har börjat vantrivas i uppkopplingskulturen"* (SvD, 2019), Facebook's transformation from university project to a business that commercializes on personal data is discussed once again, as well as the question whether 'the connectivity industry is becoming its own worst enemy'. The article's author furthermore argues that the most effective way of protesting against Facebook is to disconnect from it:

*"Some researchers describe digital participation as a form of **work without payment**, where people **donate** their time, their social contacts and their creativity; disconnection thus becomes the ultimate form of **anticapitalist resistance**"* (SvD, 2019).

On the other hand, the same article includes a somewhat countering narrative, that clearly illustrates the willingness to debate on this subject (e.g. the pros and cons of social media usage):

*'Some argue that parts of the **power** that earlier was in the media industry has been **transferred** to the social media users; since now, they can produce e.g. their own content'.*

Moreover, in *"Överläkaren Anders Hansens varning: Mobilen stör vår koncentration och sömn"* (Expressen, 2019), Hansen likes to talk about the fact that human brains have not changed since we lived on the savannah and have thus not adapted to the new, stressful environment that the hyper-connected society constitutes. This is a more pedagogical way of discussing the health implications of increased social media usage. Hansen has also released a book titled *Skärmhjärnan*

('the screen-brain') and participated in a family-friendly tv-show on the same topic. His celebrity status in Sweden plausibly illustrates that digital disconnection has become *popularized*, or popular science.

In *"Nu är vi nätets heroinister"* (DN, 2019), the article's author argues that Twitter is addictive, but that there is no need to quit it entirely – we just need to *recognize* Twitter's areas of usage. Politics should not be performed on Twitter, for example, but it is a great platform for jokes and gossip. Lastly for 2019, the interviewee Simon tries a disconnected life in *"Simon, 18, testar ett nedkopplat liv"* (Aftonbladet, 2019). He is quoted while explaining his thoughts on social media usage and time:

*"You waste a lot of time on **nothing**, really; I think we should be more **aware** of what we are doing with our time"* (Aftonbladet, 2019).

Simon furthermore notices that without social media, he became more *creative* (e.g. learned how to play the guitar). He also realized that the time he previously spent on social media was rather ill-spent, concluding that one should indulge in more *meaningful* activities than scrolling on social media.

2020:

In *"Bengtsson vill bojkotta sociala medier inför OS"* (Expressen, 2020) the Swedish athlete Angelica Bengtsson claims that "to be an influencer is a full-time job", and that she has tried to build an audience on social media because "today, almost all sponsors demand that you are active on social media platforms". Thus, for an athlete on her level, the athletic achievements does not seem to be enough in 2020 – Bengtsson needs to be an influencer on social media as well. Which, according to Bengtsson, is taking time away from her physical training:

*"For athletes that feel a **pressure** to conciliate their followers or fans, it can become a **heavy yoke** to carry"*, she says in the article (Expressen, 2020).

It is furthermore said that the only time Bengtsson can actually boycott social media is before competitions that demand her full attention, such as the Olympic games. Social media is portrayed as something that is not enjoyable, but necessary for a person in Bengtsson's shoes. In *"Flera svenska företag bojkottar Facebook: Viktigt att de lyssnar"* (SvD, 2020), another form of boycott is described, where companies urge Facebook to take responsibility for the 'spread of hate and racism'. Whereas Bengtsson's boycott is based on *time*, this is based on *political values*. In *"The Social Dilemma är vår tids viktigaste film"* (Aftonbladet, 2020), disconnection due to political values and due to mental health issues is encouraged, and moreover, the use of *algorithms* and the treatment of *personal data* is criticized once more; although here, the tone is more dystopian-sounding. Interesting to note is also that in this article, the criticism is directed towards the *media itself*, and not the people using it:

"As Marshall McLuhan said already in the 60's, the ***media is the message****; it is the actual media's* ***construction*** *that constitutes the* ***foundation*** *of all the hatred, the conspiracies, the addiction, the registration of opinions"* (Aftonbladet, 2020).

The creators of the media, however, must be held responsible for its construction:

"Social media companies successfully use the same, addictive design that the ***casino business*** *uses to* ***lure*** *people into gambling addiction'* (Aftonbladet, 2020).

Lastly, in *"Ilskan mot Facebook får högerkonservativa plattformar att växa"* (DN, 2020), the problem of *polarization* is furthermore emphasized, and the fact that it has gone so far that some people quit Facebook and chose an alternative, but smaller, platform. This boycott of established social media platforms is also *value driven*:

"Those who earlier saw ***established news media*** *as their enemies now include* ***established tech companies*** *in the enemy's team as well"* (DN, 2020).

It is a renunciatory stance against the 'elite' and the people behind e.g. Facebook and Twitter, and questions of free speech and integrity are emphasized in the article. The tone is not dystopian but rather *analytical*, further highlighting the excitement of discussing these issues as products that have emerged from a digital media landscape – something that is not really considered new anymore, but something that we are still adapting to.

6. Results

In this chapter, I will sum up the findings from the analysis, divided into three sections where each section aims to answer one research question. As is familiar, the research questions are 1) How do Swedish legacy newspapers represent the phenomenon of 'digital disconnection' in 2010-2012 and 2018-2020? 2) How has the increased use and normalization of new information- and communication technologies affected the Swedish media discourse on 'digital disconnection'? And 3) What ideologies and themes are represented in the media discourse? The results, as provided here, and its implications will be further explained in the concluding chapter.

6.1. Representing digital disconnection in 2010-2012 & 2018-2020

RQ 1: How do Swedish legacy newspapers represent the phenomenon of 'digital disconnection' in 2010-2012 and 2018-2020?

This question can successfully be answered by compiling the findings from the CDA's textual analysis. A *juxtapositioning* between text and images, e.g. showing a smiling face in contrast to a dystopian-sounding text, was commonly employed in the corpus. Moreover, interviewees that had disconnected from social media were oftentimes portrayed as *creative*, *happy* and *brave* in the imagery. Quotes in the article's headlines or entries were mostly uttered by *celebrities* or *experts*; and commonly alluded to themes of *addiction* or *healthiness/unhealthiness*. This is true for all years and news outlets included in the analysis. The objects (themes/topics) that occured most frequently are disconnection due to *privacy issues*, to become free from a social media or internet *addiction* or to improve one's *health*, leaving social media due to *political fears* of e.g. polarization, or general *criticism* against the hyper-connected world, oftentimes deeming it as *inauthentic*. These objects were not specific for any year or news outlet, but figured throughout the corpus. All news outlets showed an *antagonistic* stance against the large ICT-companies such as Facebook and Twitter, and more than often represented its owners as irresponsible 'Victor Frankensteins'. Furthermore, the same actors (e.g. celebrities, experts, ordinary interviewees that try digital detox) tended to figure in all articles from all years and news outlets. The most frequently represented digital disconnecters were the ones who went offline from social media platforms after *some years of use* (for different reasons, such as privacy issues, value-based boycotts, reaching a state of authenticity in life) while those who instantly reject a new technology were *not represented at all* in the corpus. Allusions to, and metaphors of, *substance abuse* (e.g. alcoholism and drug addiction) were used throughout the corpus. The language, grammar and rhetorical strategies in the articles differed slightly. Not because of differing news outlets or years, but rather depending on the actor represented in the article; an expert was oftentimes

accompanied by a *formal* tone, while the individual who tries digital detox is described more *informally*. The discursive strategies, or 'angles', as found in the corpus were mainly representations of digital disconnection as *healthy* and *authentic*, criticism towards or the boycotting of ICT-companies (Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook in particular) by individual actors or Swedish companies, and celebrities or experts coming with 'enlightened' advice.

Thus, it can be said that digital disconnection, as a phenomenon, was represented as *authentic* in contrast to hyper-connectivity, that it is *healthy* and *encouraged* by experts, that those who disconnect are shown to become more *creative* and *satisfied* with their situation (e.g. their mental health and their relationships), but also that there is a great interest in these discussions (e.g. the pros and cons of increased social media usage) and that those who disconnect risk to 'miss out' on certain things (e.g. social interactions and professional networking). Moreover, the choice to disconnect comes out as somewhat 'elitist', being portrayed as an *enlightened* choice that is often encouraged by people in power positions or celebrities, and often put in contrast to the 'addicted mass'.

6.2. The increased use & normalization of ICT:s

RQ 2: How has the increased use and normalization of new information- and communication technologies affected the Swedish media discourse on 'digital disconnection'?

The results from the CDA's contextual analysis are suitable for answering this question. The *historical-diachronic* analysis provided a chronological overview of how digital disconnection has been represented throughout the chosen years, 2010-2012 and 2018-2020. Considering this, the earlier articles focused slightly more on the *human aspect* of social media and connectivity (e.g. individuals' online behavior and internet addiction) while the later articles emphasized the *algorithms* and the *design of the platforms* more, even if that was briefly mentioned already in 2011. However, these differences are too small to draw any obvious conclusions from, and it must thus be said that the digital disconnection discourse has not *noticeably changed* from the first time period to the latter. Considering the *comparative-synchronic* analysis, it became clear that the representations between news outlets, despite their slightly differing political standpoints (Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Expressen, Aftonbladet), did not differ to any notable degree. What was written in one article from Aftonbladet, for instance, often had an article with equivalent content in Expressen, and so on. What can be said, on the other hand, is that the disconnecters represented in the entire corpus were portrayed as quite homogenous, with *stereotypical* characteristics, such as yearning for authenticity or as distrustful of e.g. Facebook and their use of personal data, while Mark Zuckerberg and colleagues were exclusively represented in an *antagonistic* manner. This finding indicates

something interesting. As social media platforms have become such a large part of our daily lives (even more so today than in e.g. 2010), the same 'sensation' of *skepticism* towards those who store sensitive private information, or the same assessment of what is *authentic* or not, have surrounded the discourse on digital disconnection from the social media boom in 2010-2012 and up until today – even if the use of ICT:s has increased massively and has become even more normalized in 2018-2020.

6.3. Themes & ideologies

RQ 3: What ideologies and themes are represented in the media discourse?

The results of the textual analysis (objects, discursive strategies and ideological standpoints) have helped to answer this research question, by identifying themes and ideologies that have figured throughout the corpus. Themes that figured frequently were individuals that quit social media for *privacy purposes*, e.g. by not wanting to be available or exposed all the time, individuals that quit social media to regain a better health (physically and mentally) and to become free from an *addiction*. Moreover, themes relating to *political fears* such as polarization, filter bubbles and their implications for democracy were found in several articles, as well as critique directed towards a hyper-connected society. Ideologies that figured frequently were the portrayal of digital disconnection or digital detox as *healthy*, *authentic* and *meaningful* while its opposite (hyper-connectivity, extensive social media usage) were represented as harmful to many aspects of life; one's mental health, relationships, et cetera. Another ideology that manifested itself in the corpus was that of the social media platform's 'hypocritical' creators, often countered by 'voices of reason' such as Silicon Valley dropouts or experts that generally condemn social media usage. Lastly, the fear of *polarization* (which I have chosen to call 'the political perspective', even if all ideologies mentioned here are more or less political in nature) and social media's implications for the political debate figure as a pervading ideology which is arguably of a more internet-dystopian nature.

7. Concluding discussion

The phenomenon of digital disconnection is a rather small field of research as of today, and more studies are surely needed to map out how it is used in today's increasingly connected and digitized world. Not least because of its implications for societal functions, e.g. that digital disconnecters risk becoming 'invisible' due to their lack of presence online (e.g. Katz & Aspden, 1998), but also for spotting trends relating to concepts such as political consumerism (e.g. the value-based boycotting of Facebook) and life-style politics (e.g. disconnecting to live more authentically), as suggested by e.g. Marien et. al. (2010) and Kaun and Trére (2020).

This study has tried to fill a small knowledge gap in the field of digital disconnection by investigating and describing the discourse surrounding it in 2010-2012 when social media 'boomed' in Sweden (Internetstiftelsen, 2016), and 2018-2020, when experts and Silicon Valley dropouts raised their voices regarding the backsides of massive social media usage (e.g. Lanier, 2018). The aim was to describe an overall, societal discourse – namely how digital disconnection is generally talked and written about – during these years in Sweden. The results were furthermore summed up in the previous chapter, and the three research questions were each provided with an essayistic answer.

The answer to the study's first question, *how Swedish legacy newspapers represent the phenomenon of digital disconnection in 2010-2012 and 2018-2020*, was found to be quite homogenous. To disappear voluntarily from the online sphere, or to counter the *hegemonic temporality of fast capitalism* as it is manifested in the massive use of social media platforms today (Kaun & Trére, 2020), were frequently represented as both *brave* and *desirable* for many reasons, e.g. to peel off the inauthentic layer of connectivity and social media from 'real life', the same mechanism as previously suggested by Syvertsen and Enli (2020). On the other hand, digital disconnection in everyday life was sometimes portrayed as unattainable for the whole citizenry, but rather as a privilege for 'enlightened ones' or experts (e.g. as illustrated in the Svenska Dagbladet article from 2018 where high-tech parents sent their children to tech-free schools). Neither did the increased use and normalization of new ICT:s, which arguably happened between 2010-2012 and 2018-2020, seem to have affected the discourse on digital disconnection to any notable degree, as asked in the study's second research question.

The study's third question asked which themes and ideologies that could be found in the corpus. The most common themes were found to be 1) An individual quits social media for *privacy purposes*, 2) An individual quits social media for *health purposes*, or to become free from an *'addiction'*, 3) Someone leaves social media due to *political fears*, 4) Someone is *criticizing* the hyper-connected world. The most notable ideologies as found in the corpus were 1) Digital disconnection/digital detox is *healthy, authentic, and worthwhile*, 2) Those who created the most popular social media platforms

of today are *'hypocrites'* (i.e. they are portrayed as antagonists), 7) A political perspective, e.g. the *fear of polarization* due to increased use of social media platforms for political debate. Similar themes and ideologies figured throughout the entire corpus, as well as between news outlets. Yet, between 2018 and 2020, a slightly stronger focus on the fear of increased polarization on social media platforms could be detected. Although, this trend appears too weak to draw any safe conclusions from. Moreover, the *culture of fear* surrounding social media in the disconnection discourse, as suggested by O'Reilly et. al. (2018), seems to flow through all articles in the corpus, and so does the *drug allusions*. The positive sides of social media usage are only briefly mentioned in the corpus, but there are nuanced discussions on whether it is the *platform itself* or the *people using it* that causes the most trouble (e.g. Schäfer, 2015). Digital disconnection is furthermore portrayed as both resistance and lifestyle politics (Kaun & Trére, 2020) based on post-material values of self-expression and self-realization (e.g. Inglehart, 2008). Any 'instant rejections' of social media as new technology (in 2010-2012) were not seen in the corpus, in contrast to what was hypothesized in the introduction.

Perhaps these representations can give, at least, a vague picture of how digital disconnection has been constructed discursively in the Swedish news media, at two critical discourse moments. Thus also, how it has been treated as a subject in society overall (e.g. Carvalho, 2008). The results of this study might not be generalizable, but rather tells a story of a phenomenon that is likely to grow as a countermovement to constant connectivity (e.g. Kaun & Trére, 2020; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). As discussed in the section on methodological reflections, the empirical material might also be too narrow to outrule all alternative depictions of the phenomenon. Moreover, the methodological adjustment that had to be made can possibly have skewed the results; but this risk should be considered fairly small, since online articles and printed articles are equivalent and do not differ in content, only in format. In addition to that, the empirical material was selected by purposive sampling, which might have had implications for the study's validity. However, the study's only aim was to describe a phenomenon, and thus, the quality lies within its effort to do that (Bryman, 2016).

7.1. Implications & future research

The thesis' overarching theme has been that of *how we talk about digital disconnection in Swedish society,* and judging from the results of this study in combination with previous research, it seems clear that digital disconnection is represented as something healthy and desirable, as previously suggested by many scholars (e.g. Syvertsen & Enli, 2020; Kaun & Trére, 2020; Pennington, 2020) – but also, something that probably is not possible (or even desirable) for everyone. To 'counter the hegemonic temporality of fast capitalism' seems as a mission for those who are already enlightened, or those who can *afford* to dispute hegemonic, societal trends. Voluntary digital disconnection is

exclusively represented as authentic and thus, it becomes clearly post-materialistic and *self-expressive* (Inglehart, 2008; Dalton, 2014). The pattern of political consumerism – for instance, in the example where Swedish companies boycott Facebook due to political values, or where U.S. conservatives chose Parler instead of Facebook – further strengthens this mechanism and shows that social media platforms are *products* that we chose to use or boycott based on personal beliefs about the platform's owners (e.g. Marien et. al., 2010). It will be interesting to see how this develops in the future, but already as of today, we have witnessed a slight fragmentation of social media platforms, as suggested with e.g. Kaun and Trére's (2020) notion of disconnection as *resistance*; many chose to boycott Facebook, but continue to use other forms of social media, such as Parler. Moreover, the life-style choice of disconnection implies that those who want to live more authentically might consider going offline, thus disappearing from the online sphere. These implications are kind of ambivalent, since choices of disconnection (whether it is by life-style choice, resistance or other reasons) means that someone potentially will miss out on societal functions in an increasingly digital world (Wyatt et. al., 2002) , and possibly, that online platforms will become more fragmentized (e.g. Masip et. al., 2019). Yet, experts claiming that digital disconnection is mentally healthy, or individuals yearning for more authentic lives without social media, cannot be dismissed. Perhaps that is a dilemma for the future; if a new, voluntary 'digital divide' will appear in Western democracies.

Further research regarding digital disconnection should look into other perspectives on the issue, e.g. how it has been represented in other countries' news media, and which themes and ideologies that figure in different contexts. Another idea would be to investigate other sources than the news media, to get a broader picture of the disconnection discourse, or to look further into the framing of digital disconnection. Lastly, further research could also explore how stories about disconnection are received by other people (e.g. readers, television audiences), or perform a longitudinal study on how the phenomenon of digital disconnection will develop in the future, as speculated in above.

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