

TÁBATA MARTÍN OLEA

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Spanish media**

A frame analysis of press editorials

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ABSTRACT

Ever since Spain became an immigration country, unaccompanied foreign minors – often referred to by the acronym ‘*menas*’ – have become the subject of media coverage. This study departs from the premise that the media constructs reality. Media representations of migrants must therefore be examined to uncover their impact in the social world. This research analyses representations of unaccompanied foreign minors in the press editorials published between 2018 and 2022. Frame analysis informs the theoretical framework of this thesis and it is applied through the constant comparative technique. This work uncovers seven different frames. Whereas the victim/threat dichotomy is the most prevalent throughout the newspapers, positive representations are also found. While newspapers within the liberal-conservative political spectrum frame unaccompanied minors in both positive and negative ways, this is not the case for the far-right and left-wing newspapers. The analysis also finds changes in framing according to decisive political events.

KEY WORDS

Unaccompanied foreign minors, *menas*, Spain, press editorials, frame analysis.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Tábata Martín Olea holds a BA in Education from the Rey Juan Carlos University (Spain) and an MA in International Migration and Ethnic Relations from Malmö University (Sweden).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Spain has seen an increase in migration flows from North and West African countries, surpassing Italy and Greece in the number of arrivals by sea in 2018 (Quintana-Pujalta, Sosa-Varacel & Castillo-Esparcia 2020: 1157). This increase has brought attention to a particular category of immigrant, that of unaccompanied foreign minors or '*mena*' (*menor extranjero no acompañado*). The latter refers to the legal acronym used in the country to label migrant minors who find themselves under State guardianship until they reach the age of 18, as they lack any other form of legal guardianship. Their status as migrants, together with their age, make this collective particularly vulnerable, as they need to navigate an unknown society without the care of an adult, which might expose them to the risk of exploitation (Derluyn & Broekaert 2008: 319).

Although institutional care must be provided, this task appears to be unsuccessful (Mendoza Pérez & Morgade Salgado 2019: 122), leading to a situation of institutional neglect followed by several incidents, protests, and political and administrative quarrels. Furthermore, rise in support for Vox, a far-right political party with an explicitly anti-migration discourse, and the complicated state of political relations with Morocco have also contributed to the increased attention this collective has received in the country. All these events have been followed by a series of news pieces and opinion articles by a Spanish press that has not remained indifferent.

Press attention to unaccompanied foreign minors is therefore what this article is set out to examine. The importance of exploring press representations rests on the idea that reality is dependent on interpretation (Goffman 1974: 3). The media, including the press, offers specific interpretations of reality. This is done through daily topic selection, by which news editors make decisions on saliency, making certain issues appear more important (McCombs 2004: 1), and framing. Through framing, journalists highlight some aspects of the subject of coverage whilst ignoring others (Ardèvol-Abreu 2015: 425). Therefore, both processes can influence the audience's opinions and interpretations (McCombs 2004: 1; Tankard 2001: 96) on specific events and reality. In its application of framing theory, this article therefore assumes that the interpretations and depictions of unaccompanied foreign minors and their circumstance offered by the Spanish press may represent societal views or may play a part in shaping perceptions of this collective in the broader society (Bleich, Bloemrad & Graauw 2015: 862).

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Previous research dealing with migrant representation in the media concludes that the majority of these representations are negative (e.g.: Burroughs 2015; Caviedes 2015). Nonetheless, so-called 'decisive events' –events with major structural economic, social consequences, such as crises, political events, etc.– (Lee, Li & Lee 2011: 336), may cause media outlets to shift the framing of the coverage accordingly (e.g. Gabrielatos and Baker 2018; Heidenreich et al. 2019; Quintana-Pujalta, Sosa-Varacel & Castillo-Esparcia 2020).

Most research also finds differences in migrant representation based on the ideological stance of the media, with negative representations arising more frequently in the conservative media (e.g. van Dijk 1991; Bauder 2008; KhosraviNik 2010; Chouliaraki 2017; Quintana-Pujalta, Sosa-Varacel & Castillo-Esparcia 2020). However, aside from von Nordheim and Henrik's (2019) work, which includes a far-right media outlet, there is little research that examines media outlets outside the conservative-liberal spectrum.

Concerning the legal category 'migrant', although variations exist across countries and over time, the frames of security, criminality and economic threat are the most salient ones (e.g. Caviedes 2015; Balch & Balabanova 2016; van der Linden and Jacobs 2017). This is also the case in Spain, where the media emphasises 'illegality', particularly in the case of African migration (Igartua et al. 2004; Martínez Lirola 2014, 2016). Refugees and asylum seekers are represented through both humanitarian and threat frames (e.g. van Gorp 2005; Haynes, Devereux and Breen 2006; Nickels 2007; Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017). Unaccompanied foreign minors are, however, an under researched category, even more so in Spain, where research on media representations of migrants and migration-related issues is fairly limited (Montagut and Moragas Frenández 2020: 74). Nonetheless, One of the few studies examining this category in the Spanish context, *Media representation of minors who migrate on their own: The MENA in the Spanish press*, finds that newspapers prefer descriptive terms over the use of the legal acronym 'mena', although the term is employed more frequently by the conservative press (Gómez-Quintero, Aguerri and Gimeno-Monterde 2021: 101). Furthermore, when the acronym is avoided there is also a tendency to apply a more humanitarian frame. Nevertheless, they do not find major differences in the framing based on the newspaper's political ideology (ibid.).

This article seeks to contribute to the understandings of media representation of unaccompanied foreign minors in Spain and to address the gaps found in the literature. To achieve this, it is guided by the following research question:

How are unaccompanied foreign minors –'menas'– framed in Spanish press editorial articles?

First, I situate unaccompanied foreign minors as part of the migration inflows to the country, the Spain-Morocco relations and the appearance of the far-right into the Spanish political arena. I then discuss the methods and material used for the analysis. Last, I describe the seven frames found in the analysis, ideology-based differences and the effects of decisive events in their representation.

UNACCOMPANIED FOREIGN MINORS IN SPAIN

The official definition of 'unaccompanied foreign minor' –*menor extranjero no acompañado*– provided by the Spanish state is that of a 'foreign minor under eighteen years of age who arrives in Spanish territory without being accompanied by an adult responsible for him, whether by law or by custom [...] as well as any foreign minor who, once in Spain, finds himself in that situation.' (BOE 2011). The treatment of unaccompanied foreign minors is

guided by a common EU migration policy opposing irregular migration, but at the same time to a legal framework in which minors are granted special protections, causing contradictions between national sovereignty in the form of immigration control and children’s rights (Parusel 2011: 139). Based on this, they cannot be held or expelled in the same way as migrant adults (ibid.). On a national level, this contradiction is evident in the Organic Act 1/1996 on the legal protection of minors (*Ley Orgánica de Protección Jurídica del Menor*) and the 4/2000 Organic Law on the Rights and Freedoms of Foreign Nationals in Spain and their Social Integration (Cheddadi 2020: 62–63). Whereas the former grants them protections as children, the latter set up to limit their rights as foreigners (ibid.).

During the 21st century, Spain has experienced two cycles of youth migration consistent with the broader migration trends. The first one, coinciding with that of other EU countries, took place during the first decade, with the number of arrivals by boat peaking between the years 2005 and 2008 (Quiroga, Alonso & Sòria 2010: 118). The second cycle, illustrated in *Table 1*, saw a dramatic increase in arrivals in 2017, with the number of unaccompanied foreign minors peaking in the year 2018. Thus, in 2018 there were 7,026 registered arrivals (Fiscalía General del Estado 2020: 881) and a total of 11,164 unaccompanied foreign minors registered in Spain (Olmedo-Moreno et al. 2021: 2). The significant majority of these minors are teenage boys from Moroccan, Guinean, Malian and Algerian origins (Bueno & Mestre 2006: 161; Fiscalía General del Estado 2020: 838).

Year	Arrivals by sea
2014	223
2015	414
2016	558
2017	2,345
2018	7,026
2019	2,873

Table 1: Number of registered unaccompanied foreign minors who arrived by sea between the years 2014 and 2019. Source: Fiscalía General del Estado (2020: 881).

According to the Spanish legislation, when neither safe repatriation nor family reunification is possible, the Spanish authorities are responsible for their care and protection (Rinaldi 2019: 805, 808). This task falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Autonomous Regions and the two Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla (Olmedo-Moreno et al. 2021: 2). These two cities, along with Andalusia, the Canary Islands and Catalonia, host the majority of these minors (Statista 2021). Their most recent

increase in arrivals has led to a situation in which institutional foster care services have found themselves oversaturated (Gómez-Quintero, Aguerri & Gimeno-Monterde 2021: 92) and to violent backlash from the local population. An example of this is the hand grenade found in the courtyard of one of the migrant youth centres in the Hortaleza neighbourhood in Madrid, which had to be detonated by the national police (Durán 2019).

The Spanish press has played an important role in the debate around unaccompanied foreign minors by highlighting the violent incidents and the deficiencies in their care and protection. The institutional abandonment they experience when they reach adult age and lose the protection the children's rights framework offer, making them irregular migrants, has also become a political and media talking point. Nonetheless, this situation was addressed in October 2021, when the socialist government presented the reform of the aforementioned Organic Law 4/2000. The reform is intended to end 'the current situation where unaccompanied minors and those who are involved in a process of emancipation were de facto prevented from being included' (Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones 2021, my own translation). Besides speeding up their documentation process from nine to three months (Rinaldi 2019: 808; BOE 2021), the reform also facilitates their access to residence and the workplace once they come of age (Oriol Val 2021). This reform was approved despite fears of the so-called 'call' or 'pull effect' –*efecto llamada* in Spanish–, a term widely used in Spanish politics in the context of regularisation processes of the immigrant population (e.g. Quílez 2005) as well as any other policy or governmental action aimed at welcoming, hosting and integrating migrants and refugees (e.g. Gómez 2018). The logic behind it is the idea that a liberal migration policy will attract more migration whereas a restrictive migration policy will act as a deterrent.

Spain-Morocco relations within the EU context and Unaccompanied foreign minors

The shift from a country of emigration to a country of immigration that took place in Spain in the 1990s (Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias & Pickles 2006: 235) came with a change in border and policy regime. Visa requirements were introduced after the country's incorporation to the Schengen area in 1995 and two border fences with more control and surveillance mechanisms were built around the two enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias & Pickles 2006: 235; Tyzler 2019: 5), which remained Spanish even after the Moroccan independence in 1956 (Tyzler 2019: 4).

Morocco's territorial claims after its independence as part of the decolonisation process have been the cause of tensions in the international relations between the two countries. On the one hand, Morocco's annexation of Spain's former colony of Western Sahara is justified by the former under the pretext of restoring its territorial integrity after the French and Spanish colonisations (Joffé 2010: 375). Ever since the late 70s, Spain has tried to maintain a position of neutrality as a result of political pressures from Morocco, Algeria and the Polisario Front (Benabdallah 2009: 427), a Saharawi nationalist movement fighting for the self-determination of the Western Sahara region (Joffé 2010: 375). The pro-Saharawi movement has a strong influence on Spanish civil society, making it difficult for any national

government to acquiesce in Moroccan claims (Benabdallah 2009: 427). Nonetheless, the different socialist governments have consistently worked towards improving relations with both Morocco and Algeria during the 80s, 90s and after they came into power again in 2004 (ibid.: 427–428). The last political move came in March 2022, when socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez shifted Spain's position of neutrality. This decision came after Morocco's relaxation of its border control around the enclave of Ceuta in May 2021 (Al Jazeera English 2022), following the relocation of Polisario Front leader Brahim Ghali to Spain for medical treatment (Al Jazeera English 2021), allowing around 8,000 persons into country, including several hundreds of minors (Sánchez & Testa 2021).

Morocco has also made claims over the two enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (Trinidad 2012: 961). These claims are a second source of tensions between the North African country and Spain. Nonetheless, the two enclaves have become a strategic site of migration control and border protection, as they constitute part of the external border of the EU (Tyzler 2019: 5), and Morocco's claims over them enjoy little international support (Trinidad 2012: 961).

These tensions exist in contradiction with the need for cooperation between Morocco and Spain and the European Union concerning migration control. Spain was one of the first countries to implement border externalisation together with Morocco, making Spain-Morocco interregional collaboration a perfect example of the the *Global Approach to Migration* (GAM) policy (Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias & Pickles 2006: 223, 234). Today, the Spanish Guardia Civil and the Moroccan forces are in charge of enforcing border control between Morocco and the two enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (Tyzler 2019: 5). Spain has also been launching joint sea patrol operations in conjunction with Morocco since 2004 (Spijkerboer 2007: 131). Both the enclaves and the Mediterranean Sea have become spaces for the so-called 'hot returns'. This controversial practice consists of *de facto* 'returns to neighbouring countries of people intercepted while trying to cross the border irregularly, without taking into account any assessment of their individual circumstances' (Alonso Sanz 2021: 335–336) according to international law.

Concerning unaccompanied foreign minors, the key role Morocco plays in the migration control policy of Spain and the EU, together with the fact that most minors who travel independently come from or arrive in Spain through this country (Barbulescu & Grugel 2016: 256) highlighted the need for collaboration between both states. This led to the Agreement between the Kingdom of Spain and the Kingdom of Morocco on the cooperation in preventing the illegal emigration of unaccompanied minors, their protection, and their concerted return, signed in Rabat on 6 March 2007 (Francia, Neubauer & Edling 2021: 5). The agreement is set out to establish a relation of cooperation between the two countries to prevent the irregular migration of unaccompanied foreign minors to Spain, their protection and their concerted return to their families (BOE 2013). This agreement was applied after the aforementioned events in El Tarajal to repatriate the hundreds of unaccompanied foreign minors who entered Spain, despite a temporary halting of the deportation processes by the Ceuta courts due to suspicions that they might not have complied with national law (EFE 2021).

Unaccompanied foreign minors and the Spanish far-right

The second cycle of migrant youth inflows has coincided with the rise in support for Vox, a populist radical right or far-right party founded in 2013 by former members of the conservative Partido Popular (PP) political party (Europa Press: 2018). It has also marked the end of what some scholars had theorised as the Spanish exceptionalism (e.g. Arango 2013; Alonso & Kaltwasser 2015). Vox made a breakthrough in December 2018, after the Andalusian regional election, for which the party had campaigned against migration (Jones 2018). One year later it entered parliament after becoming the third largest political force nationwide with over three million votes in the 2019 general election (El País 2019).

The party is notorious for its support for nativist policies and hard line on migration (Fernández Suárez 2021: 244). Specifically, as part of its anti-immigration rhetoric, Vox has targeted unaccompanied foreign minors on several occasions. Its party members have consistently attempted to establish a link between these minors and criminality or social problems by bringing attention to a series of incidents involving this migrant youth in their speeches and interventions in congress (Hernández 2018; Cheddadi 2020: 66). They have also organised protests in front of the migrant youth centres that shelter them (e.g. Europa Press 2019). Another way in which the party has targeted unaccompanied foreign minors consists of the use of a welfare chauvinistic rhetoric to present these minors as undeserving of public assistance and welfare provisions (Cheddadi 2020: 66).

This was made particularly notable during the 2021 Madrid campaign, when the party put up a poster in one of the main commuter train stations of the capital. The poster made a fallacious comparison between the 426-euro-pension a Spanish retiree purportedly receives and the 4,700 euros spent on an unaccompanied foreign minor – referred to as ‘*mena*’ on the poster– (Barrio, Alonso Sáez de Oger & Field 2021: 241). Supported by the ruling Socialist Party (PSOE), the public prosecutor issued a complaint to take down the poster as a precautionary measure (Peiró 2021) during the investigation to establish whether it constituted a hate crime (Jones 2021). Nonetheless, the Madrid Provincial Court ruled in favour of the poster and determined that ‘independently of whether the figures offered are true or not, [foreign migrants] represent an evident social and political problem, with consequences and effects on [Spain’s] international relations, as is well-known.’ (Peiró 2021; translation by M. Kitson).

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

This study’s theoretical framework is built upon frame analysis theory. As part of the agenda setting process, news and the media dictate ‘what to think about’ and ‘how to think about it’ (McCombs 1992: 820). This occurs through topic selection on the one hand and framing, or ‘second-level agenda setting’ (McCombs 1992: 820), on the other. This work understands framing and agenda-setting as complementary processes, both connected to news values or criteria used behind the selection and arrangement of news pieces (Ardèvol-Abreu 2015: 430). In line with McCombs, it is assumed that the salience of a particular event in the media and the interpretive schemas used to report the event go hand in hand. This is taken into account

in the analysis process.

The concept of frame can be traced back to Erving Goffman. Borrowing from the James-Schutz line of thought (Goffman 1974: 6), the author departs from the premise that reality is a status dependent on our own interpretation of events or, in the author's own words, a 'schemata for interpretation' (ibid.: 21). In this context, framing refers to how events are interpreted (ibid.: 10). As this theory works with the assumption that different interpretations are possible, the main purpose would be 'to explore the implicit and explicit understandings involved' (Ihle 2014). Nonetheless, one of the first and most widely acknowledged definitions of the concept of framing is that of Entman's, who provides a description articulated around four functions:

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

In the context of the media, framing theory is of particular importance when trying to uncover its ideological and discursive power (Haynes, Devereux & Breen 2006: 3). After topic selection, journalists also apply a specific lens or interpretive schema to make decisions regarding the aspects of a piece of news that will be more or less salient, defining the problem, its causes and possible solutions (Ardèvol-Abreu 2015: 425). This process is referred to as (media) frame building (ibid.: 425). Scholars distinguish between media or communication frames and individual or thought frames (e.g. Druckman 2001: 228). Communication frames are linked to the news and the media and its resources, whereas individual frames are cognitive schemas that facilitate the interpretation of information (Ardèvol-Abreu 2015: 431). The link between framing in a text and the actual frame takes place as a result of the reader's interpretation of the content of the text as part of the cognitive process (van Gorp 2007: 65). Thus, in general terms a frame can be defined as 'conceptual tool which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret, and evaluate information' (Neuman, Just & Crigler 1992: 60).

Frame packages and the frame-building process

Because of the nature of the media, journalists face certain time and space limitations when conveying information (Valkenburg, Semetko & de Vreese 1999: 550). This, in combination with the need to make the selected story or event accessible to an audience and the subjectivity of reporters and journalists, makes for the journalistic use of specific frames to present these in a more meaningful and compelling manner (Valkenburg, Semetko & de Vreese 1999: 550; van Gorp 2007: 67). This may be done through the selection of a particular aspect of the subject of coverage, specific sources, images, lexical choices, etc. (Entman 1993: 52; Rhee 1997: 27; van Gorp 2010: 86). These constitute the so-called 'framing devices' (van Gorp 2005: 486). On the other hand, the building of news pieces tends to follow a certain

structure aiming at answering ‘who is doing what and for what purpose’ (Rhee 1997: 28). This structure provides a specific narrative connected to the four functions of framing, as frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies (Entman 1993: 52). These functions are associated with ‘reasoning devices’ (van Gorp 2005: 486). Framing theory presupposes reasoning devices will manifest as part of the interpretation process of the individual or audience even when not found explicitly in the news piece (ibid.: 489). The set of framing and reasoning devices is referred to as ‘media package’ (van Gorp 2005: 486) or ‘frame package’ (van Gorp 2007: 64) and it is through these devices that the frame manifests itself.

In the context of media representation of migration, van Gorp (2005: 489) argues the victim-frame and intruder or threat-frame are two of the most common frames to represent asylum-seekers, linked to the humanitarian discourse and the securitisation discourse respectively (ibid.). On the other hand, migrants tend to be framed in terms of economic, social and cultural threats (e.g. Caviedes 2015; van der Linden and Jacobs 2017). I take these migration-related frames into account during the analysis.

MATERIAL & METHOD

To conduct the analysis, 44 press editorials published between the years 2018 and 2022 in nine newspapers of national scope have been selected. The motivation behind the selected time frame is that it coincides with a significant increase in the arrival of unaccompanied foreign minors to the country (Fiscalía General del Estado 2020: 837–838), as shown in *Table 1*. The newspapers have been selected based on readership and to cover the widest possible range of the political spectrum, including a left-wing newspaper and a far-right one. Some newspapers have both printed and digital versions, whereas the smaller ones only publish in digital format.

Newspaper	Reach per day¹ (2021)	Political Stance	Geographical spread	Ownership²	Editorials on UFMs (2018-2021)
<i>ABC</i>	359,000	Conservatism, Monarchism, Catholicism	National	Grupo Vocento	3
<i>El Correo</i>	253,000	Centre-right, Liberal conservatism	Regional and national	Grupo Vocento	4
<i>El Español</i>	-	Centre-right	National	Digital	3

¹ Printed version only.

² Source: Nogales-Bocio & Mancinas-Chávez (2014).

<i>El Mundo</i>	468,000	Centre-right	National	Unidad Editorial S.A.	2
<i>El País</i>	751,000	Centre-left Progressivism Secularism	National	Grupo PRISA	13
<i>El Periódico</i>	209,000	Centre-left Progressivism Catalanism ³	National	Editorial Prensa Ibérica	9
<i>infoLibre</i>	-	Left	National	Digital	2
<i>La Vanguardia</i>	399,000	Liberal conservatism Catalanism	National	Grupo Godó	5
<i>OkDiario</i>	-	Far-right Neoliberalism Spanish nationalism	National	Digital	3

Table 2: Overview of the selected newspapers, readership, ideology, scope, ownership/format and number of relevant editorials published within the time frame.

There are three main reasons for the decision behind the selection of press editorials over news articles. The first one is that the purpose of the editorials is to communicate the perspective of the newspaper on recent news and events (van Dijk 1989: 230). The second one is the fact that newspaper editorials usually publish about one event per day may be an indicator of the relevance such event has for the newspaper (ibid.). Both the opinions and the relevance attributed to a specific issue can be interpreted as a reflection of the newspaper's ideological viewpoint (ibid.). Although this is related to the agenda-setting process rather than framing, it will be briefly addressed in the analysis section, as this work assumes both processes are interrelated. Finally, although there is not a pre-defined structure for press editorials, the functional categories of 'definition', 'explanation' and 'evaluation' van Dijk (1989: 231) notes in his research are, for the most part, applicable to the editorials on unaccompanied foreign minors. The reasoning devices of the different frames might therefore be reflected in a clearer way.

To analyse the content of the editorials and obtain the frames employed by the newspapers, Glaser and Straus' (1967) constant comparative technique has been applied. It

³ In politics, *catalanism* refers to the support for the autonomy or Independence of the autonomous region of Catalonia.

combines explicit coding and it aims at developing theory in a systematic manner (Glaser & Straus 1967: 102). The method consists of four phases:

- (1) Comparing incidents to each category
- (2) Integrating categories and their properties
- (3) Delimiting the theory
- (4) Writing the theory

In the first phase each snippet in the data is coded into as many categories as possible. Both the categories and the data fitting into these categories appear during the analysis. New categories are needed if the incidents do not fit any previous one, and it is possible that the same incident fits into more than one category (Wimmer & Dominick 2011: 120). Coding in this phase involves the preliminary writing of categories and comparing each incident assigned to a particular category to the rest of incidents in the same category. This allows for the discovery of theoretical properties of the categories (Glaser & Straus 1967: 106). The second phase consists of defining the underlying properties that characterise each of the categories through the writing of rules and propositions (Wimmer & Dominick 2011: 121). The snippets here are compared to the properties of the category (Glaser & Straus 1967: 108). During the third phase the aim is to find patterns and connections among categories (Wimmer & Dominick 2011: 121), thus delimiting the theory. In the last phase the data is simplified and integrated into a consistent theoretical framework (ibid.).

The process will follow three steps described by van Gorp (2010: 94–97), namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding. These steps correspond to the first two phases of the constant comparative technique. For theory delimitation and writing, theoretical coding needs to be applied in the last stages of the analysis (Birks, Hoare & Mills 2019: 5). Nonetheless, this step is not always necessary (Glaser 2005 in Birks, Hoare & Mills 2019: 5) and it will not be applied in this case, as my aim is not to develop new theory. Instead, the results of the analysis are compared to the findings in previous research.

ANALYSIS

The analysis of the media framing of unaccompanied foreign minors in Spanish press editorials has uncovered seven distinct frames. Overall, the situation regarding unaccompanied foreign minors in Spain is evaluated as a problem embedded in a wider migration crisis and is in need of urgent solutions. Nonetheless, the way unaccompanied foreign minors are represented varies according to the different frames and their saliency.

Frame one: the victim frame

The victim frame is the most recurrent frame throughout the editorials examined. Victimisation is a strategy used by the media in order to present a person or a group of people as finding themselves under circumstances beyond their control and responsibility (van Gorp

2005: 489). Thus, this frame centres on the idea of unaccompanied foreign minors as innocent and helpless. Their past experiences are described as full of hardship, suffering and trauma (e.g. *El Periódico*, 11 March 2019; *El Español*, 8 November 2019). Such descriptions can be interpreted as a reasoning device that may spark ideas in the reader's mind that these minors had no choice but to migrate to escape from the misery in their country of origin. They are depicted as victims of mafias and exploitation, of violence and hate speech, of the different administrations in charge of their integration process, their families or simply as victims of their circumstance. They are often referred to as 'children' (e.g. *infoLibre*, 15 August 2020 and 22 August 2021; *El Periódico*, 30 January 2019 and 23 May 2019; *El País* 26 June 2021) who travel independently and find themselves alone in a new country and are therefore in need of care. Their state of vulnerability is brought up on several occasions:

[...] whatever you hear or read about crime in relation to these minors, abused, confused and very vulnerable teenagers, is a lie beyond isolated and irrelevant incidents. (*infoLibre*, 15 August 2020)

This vulnerability continues or even intensifies when they come of age, when they cease to be protected by the children's rights framework and might find themselves in an irregular situation as migrant adults. The slow procedures and the delay of comprehensive measures for their regularisation once they turn 18 leads to a lack of protection and risk of marginalisation, social exclusion, homelessness and exploitation due to the difficulty of accessing the labour market:

Experiencing deep frustration, their problems only multiply when they come of age. (*El Periódico*, 11 March 2019)

But the drama becomes even greater when they turn 18: they automatically enter a state of unbearable vulnerability; if, for better or worse, they had a blanket and warm food, when they reach the age of majority they have to leave the centres where they have [...] been for years. (*infoLibre*, 15 August 2020)

[...] but the worst is yet to come, when their coming of age leaves them without even a shelter to protect them from abandonment. (*ABC*, 3 July 2019)

The situation of unaccompanied foreign minors is explained by the lack of resources and institutional coordination to draw up a long-term action plan (*La Vanguardia*, 19 September 2019; *El País*, 14 March 2020; *El Español*, 18 August 2021). Additionally, *El Periódico* (30 January 2019) denounces possible irregularities in the management of the *Direcció General d'Atenció a la Infància i Adolescència* (DGAIA), the organism in charge of these minors in the region of Catalonia. This state of affairs is described as 'unacceptable' (*El País* 14 March 2020) and can be interpreted as producing shame and indignation. Several editorials refer to the measures taken to welcome these minors into the country as improvised

(*El Periódico* 11 March 2019; *La Vanguardia*, 19 September 2019; *El País*, 24 September 2021). These shortcomings result in a situation of abandonment and mistreatment at the reception centres at the border and shelters throughout the country that several press editorials consider a breach of human rights (e.g. *infoLibre*, 15 August 2020; *El País*, 14 March 2020). The treatment recommendation most editorials offer for this situation is a long-term, human rights based approach in line with the national and international law. This corresponds to the ‘humanitarian stand’ (van Gorp, Vettehen & Beentjes 2009: 7) on migration:

The EU needs to develop a long-term plan in which all Member States are involved and which respects human rights. (*El País*, 11 August 2018)

The situation of this underage youth, mostly coming from countries in the Maghreb area, requires attention, first of all, for humanitarian reasons. (*La Vanguardia*, 19 September 2019)

In light of the events in El Tarajal on May 19 2021 in the Spanish enclave and autonomous city of Ceuta, where Morocco relaxed its border control with Spain allowing an estimated 8,000 persons to reach Spanish soil, the victim frame takes a slightly different form. Here, unaccompanied foreign minors are presented as victims of Morocco’s geopolitical games and trickeries:

These minors arrived in Spain tricked by their government, who manipulated them by telling them about the possibility of attending a Cristiano Ronaldo game. (*El Español*, 18 August 2021)

The governmental response to this situation in the form of so-called ‘hot returns’, including the alleged return of unaccompanied foreign minors, is also addressed with a reference to the need to respond according to human rights by some of the editorials. Concerns about a possible breach of human rights are expressed again four months later, due to the lack of information regarding the deportation procedures and their temporary halting by the courts:

The priority of re-establishing normality must not take precedence over human rights, as has been the case with some of the ‘hot returns’ of minors in which the law may have been violated. (*El País*, 24 May 2021)

Therefore, no delicacy and care in the treatment of these minors once they cross to the other side of the border, as suggested by UNICEF and the NGOs that work there, who oppose this massive expulsion, can be expected [...]. (*ABC*, 14 August 2021)

Although the humanitarian stance might appear supportive, the language of victimhood may also contribute to the de-humanisation of unaccompanied foreign minors. This is because individuals presented as victims are presented as passive and voiceless, and

are only spoken about in terms of their basic human needs, and therefore are ascribed ‘bare’ or ‘minimal humanity’ (Malkki 1996: 390). This is a way of framing that presents humanity in a one-dimensional manner and leaves out elements that might contribute to the representations of unaccompanied foreign minors in a human way.

Frame two: the threat to European, national and local integrity

This frame is articulated around two different understandings of unaccompanied foreign minors. The first one is unaccompanied foreign minors as part of wider migration issues and Spain-Morocco relations. The newspapers interpret Morocco’s relaxation of its border control in May 2021 as retaliation for the presence of Polisario Front leader Brahim Ghali in Spain. The move is understood as an attempt to exert political pressure for Spain to change its stance on the Western Sahara. Here, migration and unaccompanied foreign minors are represented as a political tool and a threat to national and European borders. References to illegality and mass crossings are made on several occasions:

The fact that the *menas* who entered our country illegally did not do so as the result of a personal decision to emigrate for economic reasons, but used as instruments of diplomatic warfare by Morocco cannot be overlooked. (*El Español*, 18 August 2021)

A country that uses the opening of borders as a form of political pressure against Spain. (*El Español*, 18 August 2021)

Morocco was wrong to allow, if not encourage, this mass and irregular entry of migrants into Spain, as a pressure measure that worsened one of the lowest moments in recent years in the always delicate Spanish-Moroccan relations. (*La Vanguardia*, 17 August 2021)

Criticism of the use of the term ‘illegal’ as controversial appears in the context of forced migration and asylum seekers (e.g. Haynes, Devereux & Breen 2006; Scheel & Squire 2014: 188) and irregular migration (e.g. Burroughs 2015). The use of the word ‘illegally’ to describe undocumented entry has a criminalisation effect on those who cross the border without adequate documents (Haynes, Devereux & Breen 2006: 7), encouraging practices of control and prevention (Burroughs 2015: 172). Therefore, the backing of Spain by the EU as a response to this threat is celebrated:

Europe has unwaveringly backed Spain, making it clear that the Spanish border is a European border. (*El País*, 24 May 2021)

The understanding of the events in El Tarajal as a threat to the national and EU border leads to the abandonment by some editorials of the human rights lens characteristic of the victim frame, in which unaccompanied foreign minors are depicted as having no choice but to migrate. Thus, a different interpretation of the situation is presented:

The Spanish courts, in short, should [...] not interpret the situation as a simple humanitarian crisis; which is not, at least originally, because these minors are not fleeing a war or the political persecution from their Government. (*El Español*, 18 August 2021)

Once this premise is established, repatriation is presented as the treatment recommendation (e.g. *El País*, 24 May 2021; *El Español*, 18 August 2021; *OkDiario*, 15 December 2021). Repatriation as a possibility to address the situation of unaccompanied foreign minors in the country is also brought up by *El País* in 2018, before the events in El Tarajal, but is never presented as a truly plausible option, given the state of affairs of the Spain-Morocco relations (*El País*, 6 September 2018). On the other hand, and as a response to the 2021 legislative reform of the Organic Law 4/2000 to address the situation of unaccompanied foreign minors in Spain, *OkDiario* (15 December 2021) claims to align itself with the opinion of the law enforcement agency Guardia Civil, and presents the measures to render their repatriation more difficult as a ‘problem’.

Although representations of migrants as a threat from the outside are common in the press (e.g. Haynes, Devereux & Breen 2006: 9), *OkDiario* is the only newspaper that depicts unaccompanied foreign minors as a threat to national borders in a context unrelated to the events in El Tarajal. As a response to the 2021 legal reform by the Socialist led coalition, which speeds up the legal processes that facilitate their regularisation once they turn 18 so they can access to the labour market, the newspaper argues that ‘solidarity begins with accepting that it is impossible to turn borders into a kind of free-for-all’ (*OkDiario*, 15 December 2021) and warns about ‘a wave of immigrants risking their lives’ (ibid.) to try to reach Spain.

In the Spanish context, this is a reference to the aforementioned ‘call’ or ‘pull effect’ – *efecto llamada*–. The *call effect* is an expression that reflects the symbolic idea of the threat of an invasion and is often used in political discourse to oppose the facilitation of migrant regularisation and access to welfare provisions. This discourse might be reproduced by the media to evoke ideas of a potential invasion, usually as a consequence of more liberal migration policies or political action. This is a clear example of how the threat frame is embedded in the securitisation discourse. Securitisation occurs when a subject undergoes a transformation process by which it turns into an existential threat (Hirschauer 2014: 26), that is, shifting ‘from the ordinary to the extraordinary’ (ibid.: 28). Once this existential threat is established, urgent measures are put in place to fight it, such as sanctions, legal action or the restriction of rights (ibid.: 27). In this case, the people –including unaccompanied minors– who entered Spain from Morocco after the country’s relaxation of its border control measure embody the threat. Extraordinary measures, such as the deportation of unaccompanied foreign minors, are then justified, even if it comes at the cost of overruling legislation put in place to safeguard the rights of unaccompanied foreign minors:

As we explained in this newspaper, current legislation requires opening a detailed administrative file for each mena. An unfeasible task that would

delay for months a process that requires speed. (*El Español*, 18 August 2021)

The second understanding of unaccompanied foreign minors as a threat concerns lack of social cohesion and insecurity in the community. This is often voiced by the press editorials:

And the Government's decision, under the guise of good solidarity, could become a problem of security and social cohesion [...] (*OkDiario*, 15 December 2021) It is true that resources are limited, that integration is not easy and that there can be problems of social cohesion. (*El Periódico*, 12 August 2019)

This second depiction of unaccompanied foreign minors within this frame overlaps with frame number three, or (potential) criminal element frame, in which a much more elaborated description of what constitutes the local threat according to press editorials is provided.

Frame three: the (potential) criminal element frame

The (potential) criminal element frame links migrants to issues of crime. Although significantly less frequent than the victim frame, the connection between unaccompanied foreign minors and criminal activity is established on several occasions, particularly after a series of incidents taking place in the region of Catalonia were brought to light. This frame presents unaccompanied foreign minors as a (potential) threat to people's physical safety and personal or private property. Although all newspapers make a reference to their legal status as unaccompanied foreign minors – some even use the acronym 'mena' (e.g. *La Vanguardia*, 5 July 2019)–, *OkDiario*, the only far-right newspaper, is the also only one that brings attention to their place of origin as point of interest for its readership:

Theft, squatting and assault are some of the criminal activities in which some unaccompanied foreign minors are involved. (*El Periódico*, 3 May 2019)

Not a day goes by without a violent incident involving these unaccompanied minors of North African origin. (*OkDiario*, 26 October 2021)

Interestingly, two editorial articles from the two Catalan newspapers examined present unaccompanied foreign minors as making active decisions to end up in situations of abandonment that may lead to crime. This is one of the very few instances where the editorials selected present the minors as having agency and decision-making capacity instead of passive bodies. This 'ascription of sovereignty' (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski 2017: 617), may overstate the true capacity unaccompanied foreign minors have over their own decisions, attributing active maliciousness to their actions and therefore contributing to their

de-humanisation and further criminalisation:

Almost 20% of these kids have taken the path of drugs and crime. They reject guardianship and choose to live in squatted housing or on the street. (*La Vanguardia*, 5 July 2019)

Some of them find themselves on the street, stranded, either because of their own rejection of the resources available to take them in and integrate them, [...], which puts them in the position of opting for ways of earning a living that range from irregular to illegal. (*El Periódico*, 28 June 2020)

Framing migration from the perspective of criminality is a common practice in the press (e.g. Haynes, Devereux & Breen 2006; Caviedes 2015). Immigrants may be symbolically perceived as failing to comply with the law (McLaren & Johnson 2007: 717). In the case of unaccompanied foreign minors, however, most newspapers acknowledge that crime is more often than not a consequence of their state of vulnerability. According to press editorials, all unaccompanied foreign minors have the potential to engage in criminal activity. This is due to the limited amount of resources invested. The lack of available resources leaves them in a situation of neglect, with the consequential risk of turning to crime or joining criminal networks to survive. Crime here is mainly understood as failure in their process of integration for which the administrations are responsible. In this sense, the reasons for their victimisation are also the reasons for their criminalisation, which links the victim frame and the crime frame to a certain extent:

Crime is the undesirable consequence of a situation of neglect that many associations have been denouncing for a long time. (*El Periódico*, 3 May 2019)

If they are not accompanied by administrative, employment and social protection, they risk falling into destitution or being caught up in exploitation or criminal networks. (*El País*, 21 November 2019)

The treatment recommendation for this situation is, therefore, the same as for the victim frame. The press editorials call for a comprehensive, long-term plan to manage the reception and integration of these minors as well as larger economic investment to facilitate their integration and prevent them from turning to crime instead. Special emphasis on the need to integrate and incorporate unaccompanied foreign minors into the labour market is made (*El Periódico*, 5 May 2019; *La Vanguardia*, 19 April 2021). This integration discourse can be understood as existing in a dichotomous relationship with the repatriation discourse presented in the threat frame. Whereas the repatriation discourse views minors as not belonging and having no right to remain in the country, the integration discourse aims at making unaccompanied foreign minors part of the Spanish society and calls for more efforts and investment.

Although representations of migrants as victims and migrants as a threat or criminals might appear to be distinct ones, the link between the victim frame and the crime frame aligns with Chouliaraki and Zaborowski's (2017: 617) argument that these two categories or frames are 'co-existing, rather than opposing' in a global context of humanitarian security. Even though the authors focus on refugees as individuals depicted 'between victimhood and malevolence' (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017: 616), this conceptualisation appears to be also applicable to unaccompanied foreign minors.

Frame four: the supportive frame

The supportive frame includes representations of unaccompanied foreign minors as part of society (e.g. *El País*, 23 July 2021) and society as responsible for them (e.g. *El Periódico*, 5 February 2019), as deserving of a better future than the one Spain is currently offering to them (e.g. *ABC*, 3 July 2019) and express pride in being an open and welcoming society (*El Correo*, 18 November 2021). It also contains statements that show active support for the 2021 reform of the 4/2000 Organic law that favours the regularisation of unaccompanied foreign minors once they come of age and gives them more opportunities to access the labour market and social benefits, and support for further initiatives to facilitate integration and prevent social exclusion:

Changing the regulations was an essential, but not sufficient, requirement to ensure a path that facilitates social integration. (*El País*, 23 October 2021)

On the other hand, it also includes rejection of racism and xenophobia and opposition to Vox's discourse and actions, especially in light of a poster set up as part of the 2021 Madrid regional election. Most newspapers are aware of the consequences of Vox and far-right discourse and warn against its potential stigmatisation and criminalization effects:

The instrumentalisation by the far-right of the minor issues of violence and social cohesion to stigmatise the group and turn into a security issue a matter of social care for young people who, we must never forget, are minors and should be treated and protected as such. (*El Periódico*, 12 August 2019)

Faced with the response of the far-right, which frames this problem within a criminalising and xenophobic discourse for electoral purposes, we must turn the challenge of integrating immigrant minors into a matter of cohesion and social justice. (*El País*, 21 November 2019)

Several editorials interpret the violent backlash against unaccompanied foreign minors as a consequence of this type of discourse. After the attack to a migrant-youth centre in Hortaleza, Madrid, where a grenade that failed to explode was found in the centre's courtyard, *El País* (7 December 2019) reminds its readers that 'the centre now under attack has been systematically targeted by Vox leaders'. Only conservative newspaper *El Mundo* (6

December 2019) takes a different stance on the issue, and labels as ‘irresponsible’ the statements made by Interior Minister Grande- Marlaska and Socialist Party spokesperson Isabel Celaa linking the discourse of Vox to this incident:

After both said they were unaware of who was behind the grenade throwing, they did not hesitate to point the finger at Vox for their ‘hate speech’. (*El Mundo*, 6 December 2019)

Vox is placed under scrutiny once again during the 2021 Madrid regional election electoral campaign. As previously explained, the political party put up a poster in one of the main rail stations in the capital comparing the minimum pension of an old retiree (€426 a month) with the overall state expenditure on an unaccompanied foreign minor (€4,700). This poster was part of Vox’s electoral strategy, with an anti-immigration discourse built upon the targeting of irregular migrants and unaccompanied foreign minors. The poster presents the old pensioner as ‘your grandma’ in opposition to ‘a mena’ (Barrio, Alonso Sáez de Oger & Field 2021: 241). This can be interpreted as an attempt at creating or deepening the division between ‘us’ –Spanish people– and ‘them’ –unaccompanied foreign minors–, in which unaccompanied foreign minors are constructed as the ‘other’. ‘Othering’ is a process by which ‘one’s own identity’ is defined through ‘distancing and stigmatising an(other)’ (Grove & Zwi 2005: 1935). This is very clear in the case of the campaign poster, as it depicts unaccompanied foreign minors as undeserving and stealing public resources away from the native population, especially the most vulnerable ones. The reaction to this poster is, overall, one of rejection due to its immorality and deceitfulness:

Vox's comparison between a (minimum) pension and the State expenditure to support a foreign minor is not only nonsense, since it applies non-equivalent parameters, but also immoral. (*El Español*, 23 April 2021)

All newspapers writing about this issue disagree with the content of the poster. However, the assessment of the Madrid court rule after the investigation to determine whether the content in the poster could be considered a hate crime differs among the editorials. *El País* (22 April 2021) implies that Vox poster should be a hate crime whereas *El Español* (23 April 2021) and *ABC* (22 April 2021) condemn the content –*El Español* goes as far as to dismantle Vox comparison and explain why it is deceitful– of the poster but support the court in its decision. On the other hand, *El Correo* (6 July 2021) takes a more moderate stance when it expresses respect for the court decision but ‘shock’ at ‘the clear political drift in some of the speaker’s statements’. This statement is a response to the explanation behind the court’s decision, which affirms that unaccompanied foreign minors constitute a problem that affects the country’s international relations (Peiró 2021).

The supportive frame also emerges in two other instances unrelated to the 2021 reform or Vox. *El País* (23 July 2021; 24 September 2021; 23 October 2021) rejects on several occasions the fears of the aforementioned ‘pull effect’ and both *El País* (7 December 2019) and *infoLibre* (15 August 2020 and 22 August 2021) warn about how the use of the acronym

'mena(s)' is dehumanising and stigmatising. The reasoning devices behind all these framing devices evoke ideas of unaccompanied foreign minors as insiders in the Spanish society who are unfairly targeted and de-humanised. These would function as a reversal of the rupture between 'us' and 'them' for the readers.

Frames five and six: the positive evaluation frame and the human interest frame

Although less salient than the previous frames, there are several instances where the press editorials frame unaccompanied foreign minors in a positive light. The most common representation within this frame is that of foreign minors as brave young people fighting for their dreams and their future:

Unaccompanied foreign minors, in general, are brave young people who have left their country and their families to forge a better future among us through hard work and effort. (*La Vanguardia*, 19 April 2021)

On other occasions, the editorials bring attention to their integration. This focus is a way to counterbalance the criminalisation effect news articles and other crime stories may have, as acknowledged by left-wing newspaper *El Periódico* (5 May 2019). *El Periódico* makes general references to success stories by presenting statistics published by the Catalanian autonomous police Mossos d'Esquadra stating that '82% of [...] minors' are 'reasonably integrated' (*El Periódico*, 5 May 2019). On the other hand, centre-right newspaper *El Español* presents a success story from a human interest frame.

The human interest frame presents a story from a more emotional perspective and it aims at personalising the news (Cho & Gower 2006: 420; Steimel 2010: 220). Contrary to the process of collectivisation, which depicts migrants and refugees as a uniform mass where individuals remain nameless, homogenising them and potentially contributing to their de-humanisation (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski 2017: 616), a human-interest frame places the focus on the individual and their personal story, presenting them as human. In line with this, the newspaper focuses on the 'moving story of Sidi Talebbuia' (*El Español*, 8 November 2019), a Saharawi unaccompanied minor who migrated to Spain alone and managed to become a lawyer. Part of the personalisation process here consists of portraying Sidi as having agency to stand up to Vox and its criminalisation discourse against people like himself (ibid.). By giving Sidi a voice to narrate his personal story, *El Español* is recognising the importance of the 'right to speak on [one's] own issues and concerns' (Phillips 2003: 264) as representation and recognition of one's political voice is a matter of social and political justice (Fraser 2010: 21).

Frame seven: the utilitarian frame

Utilitarian frames argue for a specific stance based on whether that stance contributes to the achievement of a certain goal or a desired outcome or to defend certain interests (Helbling

2014: 24). This frame depicts unaccompanied foreign minors as a potential economic and demographic gain both for Spain and Europe. They are seen as an economic investment because there is a need for foreign labour to carry out tasks Spanish and European people are not interested in:

Several studies have recently pointed out that Europe will need millions and millions of foreigners, many of them Africans, to carry out certain tasks in the coming decades. (*La Vanguardia*, 17 August 2021)

The other side of the utilitarian argument is that of unaccompanied foreign minors as a demographic gain in a society facing significant challenges due to its ageing and low birth rates:

A number of studies have long pointed to the urgent need for a country with a very low birth rate to rely on foreign labour. (*El País*, 24 September 2021)

The utilitarian arguments that make up this frame appear as an alternative –or complementary– way for newspaper editorials to argue in favour of further investment and measures to improve the integration process of unaccompanied foreign minors into Spanish society. Nonetheless, utilitarian arguments are labelled as ‘selfish’ (*El País*, 24 September 2021) and do not overshadow human rights arguments as the main motivation to act.

Ideological differences

Overall, this analysis has not detected any major differences in the ways press editorials frame unaccompanied foreign minors for newspapers in the political centerfield. The newspapers mainly depict unaccompanied foreign minors as victims as well as a (potential) threat and present humanitarian arguments as a motivation to act. A combination of positive and negative representations appears in most newspapers. Differences in judgement regarding the court’s ruling on the Vox poster are found, but these are not particularly significant. Centre-right newspaper *El Mundo* shows reluctance to establish a link between the discourse of Vox and violence against unaccompanied foreign minors. It also depicts unaccompanied foreign minors as a tool by Morocco to threaten Spain. However, the newspaper does not offer a very clear picture regarding its standpoint on these minors. Only far-right newspaper *OkDiario* consistently represents unaccompanied foreign minors in a negative manner, with the exclusive use of the crime frame and the threat frame. This stands in striking contrast with *infoLibre*, the only left-wing paper included in the material. The editorials published by this newspaper represent unaccompanied foreign minors through the victim frame and the supportive frame exclusively.

However, it is important to note that there are significant differences in the amount of editorials published based on political ideology. Whereas the leading two centre-left newspapers –*El País* and *El Periódico*– published a considerable amount of editorials on

unaccompanied foreign minors, newspapers covering the conservative side of the spectrum –*ABC, El Correo, El Español, El Mundo*– published significantly less, with *La Vanguardia* being the only exception. The limited number of editorials published by centre-right or right-wing newspapers compared to the two centre-left newspapers can be interpreted as an indicator of the former placing less importance on the issue of unaccompanied foreign minors. This interpretation follows Dijk's (1989: 230) observation that salience of a particular topic in editorial articles can be an indicator of political differences in the newspapers. It is also worth noting how the two newspapers based in Catalonia, *El Periódico* and *La Vanguardia* published the second and third largest number of editorials on unaccompanied foreign minors, only after *El País*. The reason for this might be the fact that Catalonia is one of the main regions hosting these minors, along with the Canary Islands and Andalusia, as previously mentioned.

Decisive events

The analysis has also demonstrated how decisive events might change the frame(s) employed by the press or might change the salience of different frames, highlighting some over others. The events in El Tarajal change the framing of unaccompanied foreign minors from victims to threat. On the other hand, the salience of the supportive frame increases significantly after the court ruling on the poster put up by Vox during the Madrid electoral campaign. Decisive events might also shape how a specific frame is applied. This is reflected in the shift in the victim frame in light of the events in El Tarajal, where unaccompanied foreign minors are depicted as victims of Morocco's geopolitical strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

Concluding analysis

The analysis shows that the dominant frame is the victim frame. There is a tendency to portray unaccompanied foreign minors as helpless children in need of assistance. Humanitarian arguments are used as the main motivation to address the situation they find themselves in. The treatment recommendation derived from the humanitarian stance is to design measures and invest resources to facilitate their integration. Additionally, a (potential) criminal element frame that links them to criminal activity emerges. This frame appears after a series of criminal incidents involving these minors were subject of coverage in Spanish news. Editorials respond by echoing the connection between unaccompanied foreign minors and crime. Nonetheless, they establish an agent/victim dichotomy, where the minors are partially blamed for making decisions that lead them to commit crime but are also presented as victims of neglect with little choice but to turn to crime to survive. Thus, editorials call for further measures to facilitate their integration and avoid this outcome. The (potential) criminal element frame partially overlaps with the threat frame, which depicts unaccompanied foreign minors as a threat to EU and national borders in light of the events in El Tarajal, but also as a threat to social cohesion. The way editorials address the events in El Tarajal uncover representations of unaccompanied foreign minors as outsiders who do

not belong, as shown in the deportation discourse they offer as treatment recommendation. Albeit in different ways and to different extents, these three frames contribute to the de-humanisation of unaccompanied foreign minors and might perpetuate the ‘us’ and ‘them’ divide in the mind of the reader. Nonetheless, the victim frame might also encourage support for unaccompanied foreign minors, as they are presented as harmless and in need of help.

On the other hand, the supportive frame, the positive evaluation and the human-interest frame depict unaccompanied foreign minors in a positive light. The supportive frame understands unaccompanied foreign minors as part of the Spanish society and rejects racism and xenophobia, particularly as a counterreaction to the poster of far-right party Vox, that depicted them as stealing welfare resources from pensioners. The positive evaluation frame portrays them as brave and successful in their integration. Additionally, the human interest frame presents an individual depiction, introducing the readers to a human with a name, a personal story and agency to stand up to the criminalisation attempts by the far-right. This frame avoids their homogenisation and, therefore, de-humanisation. Last, the utilitarian frame presents reasons that support their inclusion into Spanish society other than humanitarian ones.

Although unaccompanied foreign minors are not explicitly presented as refugees or asylum seekers fleeing from conflict or persecution in the editorials, the victim/threat dichotomy established by the Spanish press is also found in previous research on media representations of refugees (e.g. van Gorp 2005; Nickels 2007; Chouliaraki & Zaborowski 2017). The reasons for this parallelism in their representation might be that both groups are perceived as being especially vulnerable, either because of their age or because of their reasons to leave their country of origin. At the same, they are also perceived as outsiders to the nation state, evoking ideas of threat or potential threat to national and social integrity. This dichotomy reflects the tensions between the securitisation stance and the humanitarian stance on migration. While the former responds to attempts at preventing irregular migration, the humanitarian stance present in the victim frame reveals a willingness to welcome unaccompanied foreign minors through their integration and a moral obligation to respect their human –and children– rights (Nickels 2007: 43). This acceptance is also present in the supportive, positive evaluation, human interest and utilitarian frames. This stands in contrast with representations of (adult) migrants, who tend to be portrayed negatively and as a threat.

The results regarding political standpoints are consistent with previous research on representations of unaccompanied foreign minors in the Spanish press. In line with Gómez-Quintero, Aguerri and Gimeno-Monterde (2021), this study has not found major differences in the depictions offered by the liberal and conservative press. It also mirrors the result of von Nordheim and Henrik (2019) in Germany, who find differences between far-right *Junge Freiheit* and the mainstream press in migrant representation. Thus, *OkDiario* differs from outlets in the political centerfield in the consistent use of negative frames. In his 2005 study, van Dijk (2005: 21, 35) noted that anti-immigration discourse was not present in the Spanish press due to the lack of far-right outlets. This has clearly changed with the appearance of

OkDiario, which explicitly opposes migration. Nonetheless, discourse on mainstream media seems unaffected by this, at least on the editorial level. Furthermore, the presence of the far-right in the political arena has prompted the emergence of an anti-racist discourse that actively supports unaccompanied foreign minors.

Finally, the study also finds differences in framing and saliency according to decisive political events. Thus, the threat frame arises mostly in light of the events in El Tarajal. These events also change the victim frame. Furthermore, the supportive frame becomes considerably more salient as a result of the Vox poster used for the 2021 Madrid electoral campaign. These findings are in line with the works of Gabrielatos and Baker (2018) and Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017: 1763), who find major related events have an effect in press coverage of migration.

Suggestions for future research

Overall, representations of unaccompanied foreign minors in the media are under-researched in both Spain and in Europe. In general, more research on different media sources –audiovisual, digital press–, research types –quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods– and source material to conduct a wider variety of analyses is needed. More studies including media outlets outside the conservative-liberal political spectrum would also be necessary, with a special focus on far-right outlets. Additionally, the link between media representations of unaccompanied foreign minors and public attitudes and ideas remains to be explored, particularly in light of the rise of the far-right all over the continent. Although far-right depictions of unaccompanied foreign minors in the Spanish context have been studied to some extent, the connection between the Spanish far-right discourse, media discourse and public attitudes needs further examination.

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