



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

# HUMANE OR PROFANE?

- A qualitative study of the portrayal of harm reduction in Swedish print media.

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## **Abstract**

**Title:** Humane or profane? - A qualitative study of the portrayal of harm reduction in Swedish print media.

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**Key-words:** Drug policy, harm reduction, print media, framing, social control

This thesis explores the term “harm reduction“ in the context of drug policy and strategies as well as how the concept of harm reduction is portrayed in the Swedish printed media. This study is a qualitative document analysis with an explorative approach which analyses 15 articles from three of Sweden’s top selling daily newspapers during a set period of 24 years spanning from 1992 to 2016. To analyze the empirical material, we have used a theoretical approach which consists of Framing theory and Social Control. The results show that Harm reduction is a term with a broad and varied description, often described loosely with little or no deeper description, thus making it hard to grasp or fully understand. Harm reduction is often seen as synonymous with needle exchange programs or drug liberalization. Despite harm reductions treatment methods in application in over 20 other European countries together with evidence of its benefits, Sweden still maintains its restrictive, zero tolerance approach to narcotics policies with harsh punishments for users and addicts alike.

## **Acknowledgement**

Thank you Adrian Groglopo for your guidance.

Our thoughts and empathy goes out to those struggling with addiction.

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# 1. Introduction

Questions about addiction have been a part of both of our lives for as long as we can remember. On a personal level with members of our own families and close social network suffering from addiction but also in regards to the music which has played a major role in our lives. The legendary reggae artist Bob Marley is synonymous with cannabis, the American hard-rock band Motley Crue with alcohol and the grunge-icon Kurt Cobain with heroin. It is hard to escape stories of overdoses, excesses and criminal behavior in relation to narcotics and alcohol which both glamourizes and demonizes it.

We have, on some level chosen to become social workers because of our earlier experiences with people in need of support. It was during our first year of the university program that we first came in contact with a book which would have a profound influence on the way we viewed and would thereafter approach the subject of addiction and people suffering from addiction. The book entitled *Chasing the scream* by Johann Hari (2015) boldly proclaimed that “Everything you thought you knew about addiction is wrong!” Hari’s claim was that addiction had more to do with people’s social connections, and in the case of people with addiction problems, the lack thereof than it did with the actual substance. This led us to discover and explore the research of others in the area of addiction, for example British psychiatrist and neuropsychopharmacologist Dr David Nutt , and professor of psychology and psychiatry at Columbia University, Dr Carl Hart.

At the time of reading *Chasing the scream* and other research we were both fortunate enough to be working the summer of 2015 at residential care homes for people with addiction problems. What we experienced first-hand mirrored that which we were reading in that, at some point in almost all of the clients lives, a social connection was either severed or damaged in some way thus leading them to seek a connection with a substance or substance abusers.

It was while working at the residences where we first heard the term harm reduction. The social workers in charge of the clients care all claimed that what they were doing was harm reduction. When we enquired further about the meaning and other application of harm

reduction none could fully explain to us in a way that satisfied our curiosity. Out of general interest when starting this study, we asked several of our classmates in the bachelor of social work program what harm reduction meant to them. Overwhelmingly the only answer they could give was that of needle exchange programs. Several of our professors also found it difficult to give a clear answer to what harm reduction entails. The brochure on Swedish narcotic policy (2016) published by the Swedish government describes it as a term used internationally but lacking a clear description. How can something be used in policy not have a clear definition?

## **1:2 Problem Formulation**

Over the following year and a half of our education, the term would surface again and again with still no explanation or clear examples, other than the needle exchange programs which were in debate at the time. What was being made more clear was that the hard-lined drug policies in Sweden were not having the desired result. Sweden has one of Europe's highest mortality rates in regards to overdoses while at the same time instigating tougher and tougher laws and penalties for those in possession of narcotics. The European union (EU) (2014) reports that the drug-induced mortality rate among adults (aged 15–64) was 92.9 deaths per million in 2014, more than four times the European average of 19.2 deaths per million.

We wanted to see what the Swedish government's perspective on harm reduction was and so turned to the latest brochure on narcotic policy (2016). In the brochure, we saw that the Swedish government is well aware of harm reduction and claims it is instigating methods for example needle exchange programs. Although unlike other countries, Sweden has allowed needle exchange programs to be put in place but at the discretion of the individual municipalities. We also noticed that on several points Sweden goes against what other EU countries are doing in relation to narcotics treatment and policy for example the use of injection rooms for intravenous drug users to inject under supervision of medical personnel in a private and safe environment. Another example of Sweden's alternative view on drug treatment is, most other EU countries consider Methadone treatment as a form of harm reduction whereas in Sweden it is referred to as medical treatment. Why does Sweden's understanding of harm reduction differ from other countries? It seems that there is a lack of a

common understanding on all levels of society from government to the social workers and even us students on what harm reduction is. In other countries, such as Portugal and Australia, who have adopted a harm reduction approach to addiction treatment has shown it to have a positive effect for the client and the professionals who work with them. According to the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) it is stated that the main reason that harm reduction approaches should be implemented is that these strategies save lives and diminish the likelihood of drug use problems for the individual, their families, and the surrounding community.

Harm reduction has become an increasingly popularized term within addiction-care as well as narcotic policy, yet there are very few people who can give a clear description of its applicability on a grass-roots level. Hurme (2002) argues that the term harm reduction is a term that, when it comes to drug policy, not yet fully described and understood and is more of a political slogan with very different interpretations, depending on context and political views.

As for the general public, gaining an understanding of the contents and application of harm reduction can be even harder. As Wakefield, Loken and Hornik (2010) explain, mass-media campaigns have been used for several decades in order to spread information on the risks of for example tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs. Snyder (2007) argues that many of these campaigns can and have shown to have a positive impact on the way people's behaviour changes in lieu of new knowledge and information. Could this same technique work for spreading the message of harm reduction? Why has no such campaign been done? Can it be that, the media in some forms can be used as a tool for social control to steer the general public into certain thought patterns? There is a number of common characteristic which most countries are in agreement on for example, as the name suggest the goal is to reduce harm.

### **1:3. Aim**

This study is an explorative study which aims to analyze how the term Harm reduction is presented in Swedish print media and with what meaning it has been ascribed. In this study we analyzed three of Sweden's daily newspapers during a set period of time from 1992 - 2016.

## **1:4 Research questions**

In order to guide us in this study, we have developed these following three different research questions,

- In what ways, if any, do Swedish newspapers frame the term harm reduction?
- Is there a general consensus as to the meaning and applications of harm reduction?
- How can these frames be understood from a social control theoretical perspective?

## **1:5 Limitations**

Harm reduction is a term applicable in many different areas of society, areas in which harm to a person or persons is of concern. From motor vehicle safety to sports and recreation. In this study, we have limited ourselves to the domain of narcotics and drug policy.

In this study, we aim to seek understanding of how the printed media in Sweden addresses harm reduction. Since we are limited by both time and the length of our study, it was not possible for us to investigate official government material concerning harm reduction, thus we have restricted our study to print media and compressed it further to three of Sweden's most sold newspapers; Svenska Dagbladet (SvD), Göteborgs Posten (GP) and Dagens Nyheter (DN). Furthermore, we have limited our material to a set period of time, spanning from 1992-2016. The motivation for this time-period selection is that we during our research noticed that there were more accessible research data during this period. We have also chosen to keep the timespan as recent as possible in order to include the most recent articles as harm reduction is, as mentioned an increasingly hot topic within addiction treatment and care. We are aware of the fact that this is rather large period of time and that opinions regarding harm reduction have most certainly changed during these 24 years. Harm reduction has been influenced by different political and scientific ideas, but we stand fast that we were in need of this broad search period, otherwise we would, in our opinion, have a much too small empiri to conduct our research. If our study were to incorporate official political documents and material from Swedish health and social departments, we could conceivably achieve a deeper and more nuanced understanding of Harm Reduction and how it is presented to the general public however time is a major factor in our decision to minimize the parameters.



## **1:6 Relevance to Social work**

Before we can present our beliefs on why this topic is relevant to social work, we must first define what social work is. The definition of social work as agreed upon at the general meeting of the international federation of social workers (IFSW) is:

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (IFSW, 2014)

Several of the fundamental values mentioned in the above description reflects why we chose to become social workers and why the harm reduction approach is something to value. To clarify, our interpretations of these values in relation to our study are:

Social cohesion- *The extent to which there are bonds of trust that bind people together into a society, as opposed to mistrust.* The metaphorical binding of people, is what keeps a society healthy. Humans are, by nature a pack animal and in need social interaction in order to survive and thrive. When a person's social connections or trust in others is damaged, it is at this point that the need for escape or self-medication arises. Often this is done with either drugs or alcohol. The harm reduction approach works to reduce the amount of damage the substances inflict on the person and their surroundings while maintaining a humanistic connection to the affected person without judgment.

Human rights- we argue that respecting a person's human rights are one of the absolute fundamentals of social work. From a person's right to a decent standard of living to a person's right to choose how they live their life, as long as it does not impact upon others safety.

Respect for diversities- the respect of diversity is not just referring to a person's gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, economic status or religion but also a respect of a person's lifestyle choices or life situation. The taking of drugs is both a lifestyle choice, for the majority of people who take psychoactive substances for recreational reasons although at the same time it is possibly a symptom of a deeper problem which the individual is facing. Nobody chooses to be an addict.

Collective responsibility- As a modern evolved society we have the responsibility to care for those who struggle. Drug addiction is a sickness which can be temporary if approached and treated in the right way.

The media, has played a major part in deciding how we see addicts, both consciously through the news which it chooses to report and unconsciously in films and tv's portrayal of drug addicts and addiction. As such it is media who will play a part in how we change our perspective and what information and knowledge is spread to the general public. Changing how we view people with addiction problems is, in our opinion the first step in helping the afflicted and helping them find their way back to society.

Social workers cover a great deal of different sectors within a welfare system and care programs, from schools to prisons as well as social service treatments centers. Drug and alcohol use and abuse is a factor which crosses over into many different arenas within social work. In order for social workers to effectively approach their client's situations and needs they require the latest in evidence and experience based methods and strategies whether controversial or not. According to the United Nation's (UN) publication from March 2015 *Perspectives on the development dimensions of drug control policy*, there has been substantial evidence that harm reduction strategies have been effective, not only in the fight against HIV and viral hepatitis but also in regards to overdose prevention. This new information and knowledge is not restricted to only social workers. The general public also has a right to be informed. Media plays an integral role in how we see the world. According to the UN Alliance of Civilization (2015):

Technology has made the media the most important immediate influence on opinions and understanding in the industrialized world and has significantly heightened media impact in the developing countries as well (UN 2015).

For our society to be built on a foundation of social cohesion and trust it is of utmost import that we trust the fact we are informed and can trust the information we are given.

## **1.7 Disposition of the thesis**

This thesis is organized as follows: in chapter one, we have given a brief description as to how we first encountered the topic followed by our problematization of the issue. From this we created an aim and research questions. Chapter two provides a summary of the current state regarding harm reduction. In chapter three we present a description of frequently used terms and provides a thorough explanation of Harm Reduction and Swedish drug policy. Chapter Four provides a description of the methods process in our study, and chapter five presents the theoretical framework that is the basis for the analysis. In chapter six is our analysis section where we present the material. Chapter seven presents our results and answers the research questions as well as the study's aim. We conclude with a discussion chapter and suggestions for further research. Chapter ten is the full list of the sources used in the research.

## **2. Background**

In this chapter, we focus on the background to our research, as well as explaining relevant terminology (and criticism towards them) that occurs in our study. There is also included an explanation on why we think that our choice of subject is of relevance to Social work.

### **2.1 Narcotics and drug description**

Harm reduction strategies can be put into effect in any number of area from diet and nutrition, automobile safety standards as well as drug and alcohol use and abuse. In this study, we will be focusing on harm reduction in relation to narcotics and drug use. However, before we can focus our research within the realm of narcotics we must first define the term narcotic. The Oxford dictionary (2016) says that the word narcotic has be used interchangeably with the

words drugs and controlled/illicit substances and has been used to describe any number of mind altering substances from cannabis to crack cocaine. We argue that there are many different, confusing and contradicting criteria from what is considered a narcotic and what is not. For example some consider cannabis to be a narcotic while others do not. The Oxford dictionary (2016) also specifies a narcotic as an addictive drug affecting mood or behaviour, especially an illegal one. Whereas the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime(UNODC) as well as The World Health Organisation(WHO) both describe narcotics in general medical term as a chemical agent that induces stupor, coma, or insensibility to pain, also called narcotic analgesic. This is also the definition within the context of international drug laws and control as stated in the *UN`s single convention on narcotic drugs 1961 Convention*. Often the word narcotics or drugs are referred to as, and defined by the term *controlled substances* which is described by WHO (2016) as a Psychoactive substance which are forbidden by law or limited to medical and pharmaceutical distribution.

The definition of narcotics in accordance to the Swedish law book (2016) is:

With drugs as understood in this Act drugs or hazardous goods addictive properties and euphoric effects or goods that can be readily converted into products with such properties or effects,

1. on such a basis are subject to control under an international agreement to which Sweden is a party, or
2. the government has declared to be regarded as narcotics under the law.

Act (1999: 43).<sup>1</sup>

For the duration of this thesis we will be using the interchangeable terms: drugs, narcotics and controlled substances as characterized by the aforementioned world health organization's description.

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<sup>1</sup> translated from Swedish using google translate.

## **2.2 Harm Reduction**

Svensson (2012) describes harm reduction as an umbrella term, covering political initiatives, interventions and programs intended to decrease the consequences of drug use. It is a strategy applicable on all levels of society, individual and structural. The main purpose is to decrease the social, economic and health damages caused by drug and alcohol consumption through the application of policies, programs and other harm reducing practices (Svensson, 2012:55) .

Einstein (2007) states that harm reduction is based on a non-judgmental approach with an emphasis on meeting the client where they are. With this it is meant that when working within a harm reduction capacity one approaches a client with a more empathetic mindset and a deeper understanding of the client's current life situation. Svensson (2012) argues that one of the fundamental principles regarding harm reduction is that drugs are a part of our society and are not likely to go anywhere. Therefore, the idea of a drug-free society, which is more common with conservative strategies concerning drug use, seems to be unachievable and insignificant. No society or culture are completely devoid of problems. The same people that strive for a society free of narcotics, never claim that there is likely to exist a society free from crime, sickness and ignorance, hence, the idea of the drug free society can be viewed as a utopia (Svensson 2012:59).

Sieger (2003) says that the understanding that drugs are a part of our society is essentially the acceptance that there will always be users of such drugs. This however should not be interpreted as using drugs is a good thing. It simply embraces the fact that no matter what measures are taken there will always be users, unwilling or incapable of a life of abstinence and it is here that a harm reduction approach offers the option of helping them and not to incarcerate or punish them (Sieger, 2003:4). This perhaps can ensure that the usage of drugs is done in as safer way as possible and perhaps this can be a gateway to reaching those experiencing addiction problems. Usually, they exist in the margins of society out of reach for professionals to offer help.

Stimson (2010) states that harm reduction is not only well suited when one is referring to illicit drugs, it is a strategy that extends over a whole range of different areas such as the seat

belt in your car, making it safer to drive or perhaps the regulation of bars and restaurants, making them a safer place to consume alcohol (Stimson, 2010:3).

Svensson (2012) argues that harm reduction is probably best known to the general public in relation to HIV prevention. It came to prominence alongside the discovery of HIV in the mid-1980s. This was when the concept of a needle exchange program was born. Another harm reduction method used to reduce harm and stop the spreading of HIV and other venereal diseases was massive distribution of free condoms. This marks the breakthrough for harm reducing strategies, making it more important to stop the spreading of HIV rather than making addicted personalities drug free (Svensson 2012:55).

Hart (2016) refers to Harm Reduction to educate people on how to use drugs in a safer way. Like many other advocates of a harm reduction approach Hart accepts the fact that drugs are a part of our society and are not likely to disappear. He states that the vast majority (75%) of heavy drug users who overdose, do so by combining the heavy drug with another sedative like alcohol or benzodiazepines. Hart argues that a Harm reducing strategy would be to educate and inform users that, if you are going to use, for example, heroin, do not combine it with another sedative. Newcombe (1987) is commonly credited with being the first to coin the phrase “harm reduction” or the reduction of drug-related harm. He first used the term in an article published in 1987. In the article, “High time for harm reduction”, Newcomb argues that there are four main components of a harm reducing strategy: the rationale, content, implementation and evaluation (Stimson, G 2010:5). These four terms and harm reducing strategies in general are advantageously described by Tammi and Hurme (2007). They state that the usage of illicit drugs should be viewed upon in neutral rather than judgmental approaches. Drug policy should rely solely on scientific approved evidence-based data, not ideology or dogmatic structures. One should also respect the aspects of human rights and justice, and be careful not to compromise these in order to achieve a society completely free of drugs. The user is a citizen and a member of society, not an outsider or subject to different kinds of treatment (Tammi & Hurme, 2007:85).

### *Critical claims concerning Harm reduction*

Critique towards the term harm reduction has come in many forms and from many angles. Drug counselors with clinical experience will argue that there is no such thing as safe drug use, on any level. Hathaway (2001) states that the most effective way of reducing harm is to advocate total abstinence. He argues, like many others that harm reduction is suffering from its very vague definitions, making it hard to grasp. Naturally, everyone wants to reduce harm for those suffering, although, Hathaway argues it's far too easy for politicians to gain popularity points by adopting a humanistic persona. Resulting in harm reduction losing its credibility.

Hathaway (2001) also proclaims, that it is a very difficult task to measure the success regarding harm reducing strategies. Data concerning social stigma is very hard to make quantifiable. One can, for example measure needle exchange programs, but most of the parameters of harm reduction remain on a philosophical and abstract level, making them very hard to examine. Better data is required in order to determine if a specific intervention can be regarded as harm reducing, or not.

Former Swedish minister of child and elderly care, Maria Larsson reasons in a similar way saying that harm reduction is an expression with very vague content. Larsson further claims that it is hard to determine whether these strategies can show positive effects on problematic drug use or not. There are far too many parameters involved to pinpoint just one of them being the main cause when one discusses the causes of problematic drug use and possible solutions for it (Expressen, 22/3 2012). In fact, she argues that statistics from 1995-2009 published by the European Union's department of narcotics (ECNN) displays increasing levels of fatal drug use in several European countries that have adapted harm reducing strategies. That provides little support for harm reducing methods.

Svensson (2012), argues that regarding needle exchange programs, critics may say that it is a method that is counter-productive, leading to increasing numbers of intravenous drug use. Additionally, another commonly critique, involves the treatment of heroin-users with medicines like methadone, it is simply a way to replace one addiction with another (Svensson 2012:52).

## 2.3 Sweden's narcotic policy

According to the Swedish narcotics policy publication released by the Swedish government in 2016 the Swedish narcotics policy is built on the vision that Sweden should be a narcotic-free society with a focus on reducing both the supply and the demand of narcotics in Sweden. The drug policy in Sweden is considered a so-called restrictive model which refers to its zero tolerance of drug distribution and usage. Furthermore, the Swedish narcotics policy (2016) states that the key areas are:

...prevention, care and treatment, social initiatives and efforts to improve the health of people with substance abuse or dependent (Swedish Government 2016:4)

Sweden's hard stance on narcotics is often traced back to the research and writings of the psychiatrist Nils Bejerot. Bejerot's area of research was drug use in particular intravenous addiction. From his research findings Bejerot adopted the opinion that drug abuse and intravenous addiction was an infectious epidemic leading him to be a strong advocate for a zero-tolerance drug policy.(Bejerot,1967: 437). In 1969 Bejerot started the *Narkotikafrågan och samhället (The drug issue and the community)* which continued a lobbying campaign for a restrictive narcotic policy. Tham (2003) writes that in 1968, a new legislation came into effect. This legislation would be The Narcotics Drug Act *narkotikastrafflagen* (Tham, H. (red):2003:5).

This new legislation, together with increased presence of narcotic police was to reduce the supply of narcotics while insuring that the addicts do not suffer as a consequence of the new legislation, thus giving a clear distinction between the distributor and the user ( see. Träskman, P, Tham, H. (red):2003:18). In the early 1980's there was a modification to the drug legislations to include the punishment of the users as well as the distributors. (Lag 1968:64).( Tham, H. (red):2003:5). Also during the earlier parts of the 1980's there was a significant increase in punishment and imprisonment lengths, in some cases doubling that of the previous penalties. The Law on compulsory care of adult addicts (LVM) also came into effect during this decade as did the criminalization of consumption. Later during the 1990s



the penalty for consumption was also increased to involve the possibility of incarceration which in turn lead to an almost doubling of incarcerated drug users (Tham, H. (red):2003:13).

Sweden is one of a majority of countries who have signed the *UN's drug conventions* agreement as well as accepting the UN political declaration of an "integrated and balanced approach to address the world drug problem" from 2009. As part of the European union Sweden also adopted the EU strategies which will run from 2013 to 2020 as guidelines for their narcotic policies (ibid: 2016). In 2007 the UN office of drugs and crimes released an article commending Sweden on its successful narcotics policy entitled *Sweden's successful drugs policy*.

#### *A review of the evidence.*

According to the Swedish Government policy (2016) the UN General Assembly Special Session on World Drug Problem reviewed and adjusted the previous declarations in order to approach drug problems from a health perspective with an emphasis on preventive work, care and treatment, and work to reduce injuries needs to be given further priority.

In regards to harm reduction, the Swedish narcotics policy publication makes a point of acknowledging its existence and wide-spread use internationally as a method to reduce the harmful effects of drugs-use and addiction. Although it also makes note of the fact that it lacks a clear definition. Sweden's application of needle exchange programs as a countermeasure to HIV is also mentioned in regards to the legislation which was set in place to allow the individual counties to implement such programs at their own discretion. The policy brochure additionally points out how Sweden's interpretation of harm reduction differs from other countries in that, for example methadone programs are not considered a harm reduction strategy as it is in other countries rather it is seen as a medical treatment.

#### *Criticism of Swedish narcotic policy*

Tham (2005), calls into question the Swedish government's claim that their drug policies have been successful. In his article, he makes the claim that the drug use in Sweden has been on the increase since the early 1990s whilst the increase in 'more of the same' methods of

control have had little effect and harm reduction strategies have been given little consideration and largely rejected (Tham, 2005:69).

Svensson (2012), who has focused his research on addiction and drug use also raises some critical points in regards to Sweden's acclaimed narcotic policies. In response to The Narcotics policy and narcotic debate he mentions that although Sweden is praised by the UN as being the first in Europe to implement needle exchange programs they neglect to mention that in the 30 years since it's application only 2 of the 20 counties have actually instigated such programs (Svensson, 2012:170)

### **3. Previous research**

In this chapter, we present four articles which contain previous research that we believe are of relevance to our study. To find research concerning harm reduction and what it entails is a relatively easy task. One can simply search on google or visit the local library to find plentiful books as well as scientific articles which use the term "harm reduction". But to find research regarding harm reduction and media turned out to be a more difficult task. After an extensive search, we were able to find four research articles that seemed relevant to our research area, three of which are in English and one in Swedish. Two of our previous research articles focus on the media and its coverage of harm reduction. These lead us to our research question as to how the Swedish media presents harm reduction. A third research article, also relates to the media but in the context of how the media is used to change or influence health behaviors. The final research article makes the argument that harm reduction, in a Finnish context lacks clear definition which in turn lead to our question as to a general consensus to the term harm reduction both nationally and internationally.

#### **3.1 Harm Reduction - a conceptual problem in drug policy<sup>2</sup>**

Hurme (2002) seeks to investigate how harm reduction is described in a Finnish context. He does so, by analyzing documents on Finnish narcotic policies, statements and claims. He argues that the term harm reduction is a term, that when referring to drug policy, is yet to be

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<sup>2</sup> translated from Swedish using Google translate

fully described and understood. According to Hurme it is more of a political slogan with varying in substance depending on context and political views.

His findings show that harm reduction is a broad term which covers a wide range of areas and in many different contexts. This leads to varying interpretations of what harm and harm reduction strategies are. Harm reduction is not a uniform term and often its motivation is a political one. Hurme concludes that harm reduction is not a coherent term with a single meaning, but a set of different techniques and strategies that lie beyond the range of the unequivocal, government-acted drug policies. It is to be viewed as a set of local strategies dealing with drug-related difficulties, not dependent of the welfare systems rather more often on local authorities and charitable organizations.

### **3.2 Danish heroin prescription in Swedish print media: Exploring the silent agreements of harm reduction and zero tolerance.**

Ekendahl's (2002) aim in this article is to investigate how the Swedish media reacted to the recent heroin maintenance program in Denmark. This program has made heroin available by prescription. Ekendahl pays particular attention to how the Swedish media made use of the term 'heroin users' and 'treatment' and the meaning they attributed to them.

In his article Ekendahl shows that the Swedish media, like many other media sources tend to sensationalize drugs and drug-users, often by portraying them in a negative light and using descriptions like criminals, deviant or stating they "they" are leading dangerous lives.

The differences between the Swedish and Danish social responses to drugs and addiction is also a major component to Ekendahl's paper in regards to Sweden's zero tolerance and Denmark's more liberal approach. This is relevant to our research in that our focus is on how the term harm reduction is described by the Swedish government and furthermore how it is presented in the media. We also believe this research is relevant to ours as they are both analysis' focused on the media's portrayal of harm reduction, as Ekendahl discusses, a media analysis is important because the media both shapes and reflects public opinion.

### **3.3 Proactive or sensationalist? the media and harm reduction**

In this article, Dillon (1998), argues that amongst social workers and other professionals, an underlying fear of being misinterpreted makes them remain silent instead of speaking out and discussing harm reduction strategies in media. This research consists of three Australian case studies that Dillon uses to seek understanding of a variety of media strategies concerning harm reduction. Dillon also seeks to understand the way in which these strategies were successful. Dillon reasons that if we move towards a more open-minded discussion regarding harm reduction in different media channels, we could thereby increase people's knowledge and perhaps make them realize that harm reduction does not encourage people to use illicit drugs. One can summarize that Dillon insinuates that media is constructing a somewhat fuzzy and misleading description of the term Harm reduction. He also advocates media training for professionals, both when speaking to and reading different sorts of mass-media.

### **3.4 Use of mass media campaigns to change health behaviour**

Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik (2010) discusses mass-media and its ability to affect people and their behavior. The writers have carefully examined different areas such as tobacco use, safe driving and breastfeeding and how media campaigns may or may not have had positive effects on these wide-ranging behaviors. It discusses the fact that powerful social norms and pervasive product marketing makes for a competitive factor when seeking the public's attention. An interesting parenthesis in this study, is that no review of illicit drug use was identified in the study. It is interesting in that, if narcotic consumption is as big a problem as we are led to believe by the state, then why has there been no media campaign warning the public of its harms and how to seek help? One of the article's main conclusions is that:

The increasingly fractured and cluttered media environment poses challenges to achieving adequate exposure to planned media messages, rather than making wide exposure easier (Wakefield et al, 2010:1268).

This quote may be the single most important conclusion of this study since our aim is to investigate how media addresses the term Harm reduction.

### **3.5 Summary**

This section of previous research proves that the most common opinion regarding harm reduction is that it is hard to grasp and hard to describe. One can refer to it as a somewhat fuzzy term that in need of clarification. Hurme (2002) argues that harm reduction is a hard to describe term. Since his research is conducted in a whole other context, being political documents and policies it is of interest to us because our questions run parallel to each other. It is therefore of great interest to see if our findings are of somewhat similar character. Ekendahl (2002), Dillon (1998) and Wakefield et al, all conduct research in a mass-media context and their findings, in our opinion, matched our hypothesis that harm reduction is a term in need of clarification. It is of great necessity to do further research on this topic since there seems to be a wide knowledge gap in what harm reduction is.

## **4. Theoretical approach**

In this chapter, we present the two theoretical approaches that are used in this study; Social Control and Framing theory. We present them by explaining them in a historical context and why we believe that they are of relevance to our study today. The choice of frame theory was decided because of frame theory's direct application to the analysis of textual furthermore, as Entman (1993) describes, its ability to describe the power of communicating text and a texts ability to influence its readers (Entman, 1993: 51).

Social control theory seemed an applicable theory to understand in which way the media is using its broad reach and influence in order to portray a particular view point on such an important issue.

### **4.1 Social control**

Social control is a term with many different descriptions and perceptions, but the most common is probably that of Cohen (1985). Cohen states that:

Those organized responses to crime, delinquency and allied forms of deviant and/or socially problematic behavior which are actually conceived of as such, whether in a reactive sense (after the putative act has taken place or the actor been identified). Or in the proactive sense (to prevent the act) (Cohen 1985:3).

Social control is about structures, processes and mechanisms that regulate behavior so that individuals act in accordance with rules, norms and values set up by social groups and society. Engdahl and Larsson (2011) argues that it has been pointed out that the groups who are relatively powerless and tend to behave in ways that do not fit with the moral order in a society, more often than others suffer from moral panic. Social phenomenon arouses excessive reactions and are often identified as a threat to the existing moral order. These individuals deviating from the current social norms can then, often through news reports and media debates be addressed in a stereotypical and/or prejudicial way. For example, connected to attributes like "the evil one" is not an uncommon description. This would, in our case be linked to how the media presents drug users and harm reduction in a morale-judged and stereotypic way (Engdahl & Larsson 2011:80).

Johansson (2004) argues that the individual-driven society of today, makes people divided into social categories, lifestyles and subcultures, which opens up for new dimensions of social control. These processes come in handy when developing advertisements and public profiles aimed at a particular focus groups. He further claims that it makes it easier to develop a state controlled apparatus's (Johansson 2004:155).

Social control is often divided into two major ways for a society to control its citizens, the *informal* and *formal* control. Jiang, Lambert and Wang (2007) gives an simple description of what these terms entail. They argue that formal control is most often described as official controlling agencies such as law enforcement, courts and correctional facilities. The informal control on the other hand can be described as unofficial agencies such as family, neighborhood and peers.

A large number of social phenomenon can be regarded as a way of social control, Engdahl and Larsson (2011) states that such phenomenon's can be exemplified by public schools. On one hand, it can be seen as a way to educate and promote knowledge and creativity, but on the other hand it can be viewed upon as a way to control our way of thinking. Likewise, the social construction of family and family life, can be a source of love and social comfort, but can also be saturated by social norms and certain expectations on how one is supposed to behave. The act of deviance can then be a subject to sanctions by the surrounding community, for example social exclusion and bullying (Engdahl and Larsson 2011:52).

Social control is often approached with a critical point of view towards governmental control of society's members. In particular, scientists tend to be criticizing the control concerning deviance amongst citizens, deviance meaning such behaviors as criminal conduct and people struggling with economic and social failures (Larsson et al 2011:54).

The term social control was first launched around the year 1900 by American sociologist and criminologist Edward Alsworth Ross (1866-1951). It first came into use when sociologists active in this century began to use the term social control as a method to analyze society and investigate on how a society regulates itself. Scientists of this time argued that the fundament of society was that it was built on the idea of social control, thus, in order to understand society and how it operates, it was a necessity to study the strategies of control (Larsson et al. 2011:54).

### *The media and social control*

Is the printed media a form of social control? As we discussed above, the printed media can be seen as an instrument used to enlighten and educate the general public of important events occurring in the world, but it can also be seen as a way to control what kind of information we receive. Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien (1973), argue that knowledge is a base to obtain social power, meaning that we are driven by a force to position ourselves in a higher state than others. It is stated by Donohue et al (1973) that the control of knowledge is of high importance to develop and maintain power. Svensson (2013) states that most of Sweden's big-selling newspapers today are owned and controlled by private interests (including the newspapers in our study). We argue that in order to sell magazines, which is the core of a

profit-driven corporation, newspapers of today are limited in their ability to print what they want. This is in part because they do not wish to be viewed as deviant or deviating from the norms of the society. Yet, we believe, that there are other subsystems to discuss which effects what a newspaper can or cannot print. This stems from the work of Chomsky (1992) and his model of propaganda, saying that the news media are adapted to the politically and economically influential in society.

Not only are there economic incentives, but also political ones and in some instances religious factors.

## **4.2 Framing theory**

The theory of framing was first introduced by Goffman (1974). Goffman developed his theory in order to investigate how humans organize and structure experiences. These schemata of interpretations are people's way of giving meaning to a seemingly meaningless situation (Goffman, 1974: 21). Goffman explains that interpretations of a situation or frameworks are, on a primary level either natural or social. Natural meaning that a situation happens of natural causality, unguided and unorientated (Goffman, 1974: 22). The social framework however is an understanding of a situation or event that is in some way coaxed with an intended aim by an intelligent agency, as in another living person (Ibid). Goffman believed that these frameworks not only help us to interpret the world around us but also how we exert influence over human consciousness through communicating knowledge from one person to another by speech, a news report or novel (Entman, 1993:51f).

Entman has focused much of his research on communication and published several papers on framing theory. Entman explains:

To frame is to select some aspects of a 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 for the item described (Entman, 1993: 52).



What Entman is saying here is that we take portions of our experiences, as we perceive them and make them more meaningful in order to convey them to another person/persons in order to either define, evaluate or offer a solution.

Over the last few decades, coinciding with the emergence of mass-media's ability to reach a far greater audience, the research of framing has broadened its focus to incorporate how framing is applied to media, such as news coverages and political campaigns. According to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), framing in the media is how news reports characterize an issue and how this can influence the way an audience understands it (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007:11). Entman (2003) further explains that framing in the media is expressed by highlighting facets of issues or events in order to promote a particular interpretation or solution to an issue (Entman, 2003: 147). Entman describes in his research how news-report frames perform at least 2 of the following functions whilst covering an event or issue.

- *Defining effects or conditions as problematic*
- *Identifying causes*
- *Conveying a moral judgment of those involved in the framed matter*
- *Endorsing remedies or improvements to the problematic situation* (Entman, 2003: 417)

According to Entman (2003) the two most important functions here are the defining of the situation and the suggestion of possible solutions. These are important because defining of the situation as problematic will inevitably help to predetermine the other functions and by offering a solution will either promote support for, or opposition to the issue at hand. This can be illustrated by the words and images used to make up the framework of a news item which can then be used to influence the audience and stimulate a particular response.

Entman claims that, in order for these frames to have the greatest influence they should include a cultural resonance as well as magnitude (Entman, 2003: 147). With this Entman means that to have the greatest influence and impact the frames should have cultural significance and be persistently repeated. In his analysis of the media and political actions following the events of September 11, 2001, Entman showed how his theory can be applied in

reality, in particular how President Bush spoke in the media. Bush's repetition of words like "attacked", "war", "terror" and "evil" in combination with the repeated images of the world trade Centre (WTC) buildings collapsing incorporated high magnitude and high cultural resonance. High magnitude in that it these frames were prominent on every news channel and repeated countless times during the day. The cultural resonance was exemplified in the way that the WTC was used as a symbol for the United States of America and the presence of the American flag at the sight reinforced this connection.

*Media bias and slanting:*

Entman (2010) discusses two closely related terms within media framing, that of media bias and media slanting. Media slanting explains Entman, is not to be confused with media bias. Slanting is when the media emphasizes one side of a particular topic while degrading or ignoring the other side in order to give weight and attention to certain attributes.

Bias often falls under two categories: Context bias and decision-making bias (Entman, 2010: 392). "Content bias is a term used when referring to consistently slanting the news to favor one particular side in order to promote the success of a specific stance or ideology (See Entman, 2007, Entman 2010). Decision making bias is the belief that journalist and editors' work is decided and influenced upon by their own personal beliefs and ideologies (Entman, 2010: 393). These decision-making rules are referred to as the journalistic heuristics. These heuristics help us understand how decisions are made on what is published. Entman discusses that these are not necessarily connected to individual journalist's ideologies and beliefs but rather stem from two other influences. The first being that media publications are in direct competition with other media actors and thus must cater in some way to the masses in order to sell their product to a larger consumer. The second being is rooted in the service of the citizens, with this it is meant that the media will focus on, especially in political related matters that which it interprets as popular and powerful (Entman;2010: 395). It is also Entman's belief that if a large enough group of people are influence and this can affect leader's strategies and actions (Entman, 2010: 420). However, suggests Entman, this public opinion in itself becomes a frame used by politician as a strategy used for their own agenda (Ibid).

## **5. Methodology**

In this chapter, we describe our approach when writing this thesis. A full description of how we gained access to our research material and which methods were used to analyze our empirical data. Ethical aspects and our study's reliability and validity are also included in this section.

### **5.1 Qualitative method**

David and Sutton (2016) explain qualitative research as methods used within the social sciences focusing on the collection and analysis of non-numerical data for example descriptions of events, interviews and document analysis (David & Sutton, 2016: 99). Qualitative research is considered an interpretive method using language as a tool to gain understanding of how people experience reality (Brennen, 2012:4). Brennen argues that qualitative research seeks to understand the contexts, usage and meaning of words as it is through our discourses, writing & speaking that our ideas and information are passed on to others and thus our reality is constructed by how we communicate (Brennen, 2012:14).

### **5.2 Document analysis**

David and Sutton (2016) describes document analysis or text analysis as research in which textual material is collected and analyzed, textual data refers generally to that which can be read, although also attains to material in picture form (David & Sutton (2016: 159). Bryman (2011) states that text analysis is a method used in order to find meaning from the perspective of those who authored the text (Bryman, 2011: 507). David and Sutton (2016) discuss further benefits of text analysis over other types of qualitative research method for example interviews, one being that text generally outlives its author making it available when a physical interview is no longer possible (David & Sutton, 2016: 159). Another reason they mention is that text analysis is a non-reactive method, meaning that the researchers have no influence over the subject matter included in the text (Ibid). One of the major draws to text analysis, according to David and Sutton is the abundance of material available.

### **5.3 Data collection method**

At first, we searched for research material using the selected newspaper's own search-engine on their websites. The result did not satisfy our requirements so we collected our research material using the Swedish database Mediearkivet, which we gained access to through the local library database. Mediearkivet is an extensive database that contains newspaper articles from almost every Swedish and Scandinavian newspaper as well as journals spanning a very long period of time. Furthermore, you gained access to a wide range of other media, such as web-archives and blogs. You need access to either the library or the University's databases in order to obtain Mediearkivets material.

When searching for previous research concerning harm reduction in a Swedish context we turned to search engines google scholar, the university library database and scopus. We conducted the search using the following keywords:

“harm reduction”, “harm reduction Sweden”, “harm reduction policy”, “harm reduction policy Sweden”, “harm reduction media”. “Harm reduction printed media”, “harm reduction in news media” “defining harm reduction”, “drug policy”, “drug policy Sweden”.

David and Sutton (2016) reasons that the selection of data should be done in such way that the data can be viewed as representative for the topic of the study. They speak of four different criteria to have in mind when selecting research data: Authenticity, credibility, representativity and meaning. The first two requisites in simple terms means it is of importance that the data is not a forgery and that the sources are credible. Representativity and meaning are closely related and can be described as the data being valid, also that the data is representative of the aim of the study (David & Sutton 2016:163). We argue that our data of choice in this study are not a forgery and though we cannot identify all sources that are used in the articles, we believe that since we have chosen articles from three of Sweden's largest selling most well-known newspapers the prerequisite of credibility in terms of sources are to be viewed as fulfilled. Regarding that the data is representative of the aim of the study, we mean that this prerequisite is fulfilled since all articles, in some way concerns the term harm reduction.

The material was collected from Mediearkivet database during one day, on the 26th of October 2016. Since our aim is to investigate how the term “harm reduction” is addressed in Swedish media, we narrowed our search to “harm reduction”. A wide range of articles from several different newspapers was presented, and we chose to analyze articles printed in GP, SvD and DN. Five articles from each newspaper were chosen which gave us fifteen different articles in total to investigate. According to Tidningsutgivarna (TU, 2014), regarding these newspapers' political conviction, both GP and DN are considered liberal and SvD is considered being more right-wing oriented. TU (2014) has also shown that they are three of the top selling newspapers in Sweden, which can be interpreted as they are the ones that are most read by the general public in Sweden. Since these newspapers differ in political views we predict a broader variation of harm reduction descriptions, thus giving us a better sense of understanding on how harm reduction is presented to different fractions of the public by the Swedish media.

Since we chose to investigate newspaper articles published over a long period of time, it also gave us information on how the term harm reduction has altered in its description through different political and social eras during this period. Furthermore, we argue that, our data is chosen because we believed that these fifteen articles of choice were the ones that gave us the most extensive information. David and Sutton (2016) explains this way of conducting research data as a selective or theoretical selection. Researchers tend to choose informants or data that are believed to be the most suitable for their purpose (David & Sutton 2016:197). We did not see any other option available in terms of selection since we noticed that though there were an overwhelming number of articles when searching for harm reduction that only mentioned harm reduction very briefly as well as in a context outside of our focus. What fitted our study best was to include those articles that had the most information and substance on the term harm reduction, resulting in the fifteen articles. As David and Sutton (2016) argues, this type of selection is solely built upon the researchers' opinion on what or whom is of greatest interest to investigate (David & Sutton 2016:197).

Since all of our empiri is in Swedish, we used Google translate to translate our quotes into English as well as our combined knowledge of both Swedish and English. Although in some

cases, google translations did not end up being translated in a satisfying way, hence, we translated as accurate as possible on our own and made sure that the translated quote were as close as possible to the original Swedish quote.

## **5.4 Preconceptions**

Our preconceptions about harm reduction strategies are quite extensive. Although we were not as familiar with the concept, we feel nevertheless that we had a good idea of what we thought was a good, humane treatment of addiction. And this idea was quite similar to the concept of harm reduction. We both tend to lean a little more towards a liberal way of thinking in that we both agree that today's restrictive drugs policy in Sweden no longer can be regarded as sustainable. Not because we think that a shift to a more harm reduction policy would be much more efficient, but because we both have a strong belief in humane strategies. Is it possible even to measure effectiveness? Why punish those who already suffers?

As we have stated before, Sweden has one of the highest mortality rates among heavy drug addicts, and we believe that a different and perhaps more effective strategy would be to focus on health care instead of punishment. We have also mentioned previously that we have worked in the addiction treatment sectors which also gives us an understanding of the subject. We are aware that this can affect our objectivity, but to be open and honest about this fact is to be transparent. However, one can never be entirely objective, just by choosing this topic, we have already taken a position by deeming this subject important enough to highlight.

## **5.5 Methods of analysis**

### **5.5.1 Inductive approach**

In our research, we have taken an inductive approach. Bryman (2008) describes that with an inductive approach you start your analysis with the empiri, and then build your theories based on your findings (Bryman 2008:28). According to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) when analyzing frames in news articles an inductive approach is a useful method for detecting the different ways in which frames are used to highlight an issue (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000:94).

### 5.5.2 Content analysis

Elo and Kynga (2008) describe content analysis as a flexible research method which can be used with both quantitative and qualitative data as well as inductively or deductively (Elo and Kynga, 2008:107). In our study, we chose to use a Qualitative content analysis (QCA) approach. QCA is a method of analyzing textual data in order to reveal the underlying themes (Bryman, 2008: 505) and meanings by categorizing coded frames to sections of the material (Schreier, 2012: 1).

We began our analysis by reading through the articles for any mention of the term “harm reduction”. These sections were then highlighted for further analysis.

We manually analyzed the highlighted section from a thematic approach looking for emergent themes such as “is the language positive or negative in nature?” also “is harm reduction connected directly or indirectly to any particular group, organization or individual?”.

Following our analysis of the highlighted section we broadened our focus to place harm reduction into the context of the rest of the article. A thematic approach was also taken here through searching for themes which connect or compared harm reduction to any current practices, policies or approaches. By applying these thematic frames, it allowed us to reduce our data to a more concise and manageable amount.

### 5.5.3 Coding frames

Coding frames is a method used within quantitative content analysis which helps the researcher to reduce the data into categories in order to select certain key aspects to focus on (Schreier, 2012:59). Goffman (1974) first presented the idea of framing in his research by explaining how people create frames of an event in order to give them meaning (Goffman, 1974:21). With this Goffman meant that, just like a picture frame sections off that which is to be focused on, so too does the human mind. Entman (1993) further explains how frames are the basis for how we communicate our interpretations of events and ideas to others (Entman, 1993: 52). D’angelo and Kuypers (2010) point out that much of the research using frames involves understanding how politicians, stakeholders and issue advocates use journalists and other media communication to present their preferred meaning of an event (D’angelo and Kuypers, 2010:1).

## **5.6 Ethical aspects**

To have an ethical approach is of great importance when conducting research and this study is by no means an exception, though we admit that it was quite troublesome at first to find some major ethical issues to discuss, a document analysis using newspaper articles as research material also raises some ethical questions in need of clarification. The question on how to handle the material is one of the important ethical issues to discuss.

Nygren (2012) states that one of the ethical cornerstones when engaging in scientific research is the importance of gaining participants consent (Nygren 2012:32). The material used in this study are considered public documents, making them accessible, for all to read. Authors and participants have given their consent to be quoted and published, hence, asking for consent when collecting our empiri was not a necessity. Although, as David and Sutton (2016) argues, you need to have an ethical approach in situations like these as well. They state that the collection of textual documents often is done without the individuals concerned knowing that they are to be a subject to research (David & Sutton 2016:162). We found this as somewhat troublesome since this is exactly what has occurred in our study. Our way of handling with this issue was to carefully anonymize those individuals included in the articles. Although the articles are published material accessible for general public, we did not feel it was of relevance to use the authors of the articles names. We believed it was of greater import whom these actors represent, as in the newspapers, institutions and organizations. Furthermore, we argue that since all our citations used in the analysis are translated from Swedish to English, one must be very careful not to translate the citation in a way that original meaning of the quote is distorted.

## **5.7 Division of labor**

Initially there was some concern about how this work could proceed as we had experienced previously while working together we could easily lose focus and drifted away in the non-constructive way. However, we can proudly state that the work has proceeded in a very satisfactory manner. The work ethic, and discipline have been at a high level and focus was maintained throughout the process.



This division of labor in our study was as follows: All parts of the paper are designed by both in unison. The work has taken place at a public library where we met daily. We were careful to divide all operations so that we both contributed an equal effort, both in terms of writing and also searching for literature and previous research as well as other information of relevance.

Through continuous discussions about the topics we approached, we were able to link our thoughts through all parts. Malcolm possibly wrote a major part of the analysis when the deadline was approaching. Since Malcolm's mother tongue is English, the writing proceeded somewhat quicker with him writing, it should never-the-less be noted that Daniel was always present to dictate, and search for information. Malcolm was also the one, who in the end read and corrected any grammatical details and flow of the text.

## **5.8 Reliability & Validity**

According to David and Sutton (2016) validity refers to the instrument's ability to measure what it purports to measure. Does the collected data reflect reality? Are the results found applicable in other contexts? Reliability, is described as, if the method and it's results seems to be trustworthy and if the same results will occur if the research was to be conducted by someone else (David & Sutton 2016:220). Reflecting on this study's reliability and validity leads to the following discussion: Since we are loyal to the idea of transparency when conducting research, we have shown earlier in this study that we have a certain number of preconceptions regarding narcotics and harm reduction. Does this fact affect this study's selection of data and result? Possibly yes. The question of if this study is a result of a confirmation bias has risen several times during this research process. Nickerson (1998) says that:

Confirmation bias connotes the seeking or interpreting of evidence in ways that are partial to existing beliefs, expectations, or a hypothesis in hand (Nickerson 1998: 175).

In other words, did we select our material to confirm our thesis and omit material that did not? We argue that being transparent and aware of this fact strengthens our study's credibility.

## **5.9 Reflections on methods used**

We read first to highlight the sections on harm reduction, this focused our attention on these sections where we could possibly have read the entire article several times in order to understand the context of the articles, which we began to understand later. We should have gathered our material first as opposed to focusing on the pre-analysis sections of the study.

Regarding our way of collecting data, it would have been better to perhaps broaden the search to help widen the understanding on harm reduction. The involvement of other sorts of data would have been a strategy to achieve this. If one were to involve political documents and media headings and pictures, we then would have a greater possibility to deepen our research further. In order for this study to maximize the reliability we could have used a larger material bank with more examples from perhaps other newspapers making it more generalizable, but on the other hand, why must a study be generalizable? We have chosen to search for depth instead of width. That gives us the opportunity to see nuances and to gain understanding of how a phenomenon might be explained, there and then.

The fact that we narrowed our search to just” harm reduction” is good in that it limited our material, but that also made our range rather scant. Perhaps we should have broadened our search simply by also using the Swedish translation “*skademinimering*”.

## **6. Analysis**

In this chapter, we present and analyze our material with the help of our theoretical framework. This chapter consists of four parts where we describe each one of our frames and it’s possible connections to social control.

Jansson (2010) describes two ways in which to approach framing in text form. The first is the implementation of frames by the author to deliberately guide the reader’s interpretation (Jansson, 2010: 22). The second is the approach in which media researchers take. Researchers seek to identify the frames in order to draw a conclusion as to what the author wished to convey, their intentions and possible impact(Ibid). In our research, we have taken the second approach in which we, through analysis of the newspaper articles have identified four frames

which we believe describe how the term harm reduction is presented in the individual newspaper articles. The four frames which we identified are:

*Opposition frame (negative)*

Opposition frame negative is when harm reduction is positioned in direct opposition to another approach regarding drug-use and/or abuse in a right vs wrong context. In this frame harm reduction is viewed as the lesser of the two approaches.

*Opposition frame (positive)*

Opposition frame positive is when harm reduction is positioned in direct opposition of another approach to drug-use and/or abuse in a right vs wrong context. In this frame harm reduction is viewed as the more favorable of the two approaches.

*Informative frame*

Informative frame is where a more detailed description of harm reduction is offered to the reader in a factual way or with examples of harm reduction practices or methods.

*Macro frame*

Macro frame is when harm reduction is directly or indirectly attached to larger groups for example a country or political.

Table 1. Frames found in the articles

	Opposition frame (negative)	Opposition frame (positive)	Informative frame	Macro frame
<b>Svenska Dagbladet</b>				
Article 1			X	
Article 2		X	X	
Article 3	X			
Article 4		X		
Article 5	X			X
<b>Göteborgs Posten</b>				
Article 1		X		
Article 2				X
Article 3		X		
Article 4	X		X	
Article 5	X			
<b>Dagens Nyheter</b>				
Article 1		X		X
Article 2		X		
Article 3	X			
Article 4	X			X
Article 5	X			

## 6.1 Opposition frame (negative)

A number of key themes emerged in relation to how harm reduction was framed as a *negative opposition* in the context of addiction and narcotic policy in Swedish media. The theme of *opposing* addresses the way in which comparisons are drawn between harm reduction and other approaches or opinions on addiction and drug-use. *Negative consequences and/or Concern for negative effects* theme addresses the way in which harm reduction is portrayed as a sort of gateway to larger issues and social problems. And finally, *Negative labelling* examines how these articles either intentionally or unintentionally attach negative labels to either advocates or clients of harm reduction approaches.

### *Opposing*

One immediately visible theme in our analysis was that of Harm reduction opposing other ideas, policies, methods or ideologies. These oppositions are separated into; positive and

negative oppositions. This particular section will focus on the negative oppositions, which were the most prevalent theme in our research. This is where harm reduction is seen as the negative or least preferred approach.

Harm reduction usually goes hand in hand with legalization requirements. But if Sweden wants to be a credible alternative to the drug policies like Holland and some other countries are conducting, then it is completely the wrong way (GP, 2003-03-12).

An article from SvD also states:

It should be obvious for Sweden's Social Affairs minister Lars Engqvist, to be in place in Portugal to forcefully argue for the restrictive and humane drug policies of the Swedish model (SvD, 2000-11-10).

The first citation puts forth the idea that a harm reduction approach would be less desirable than the current policies regarding narcotics in Sweden. The author makes the connection between harm reduction and legalization of drugs and in so uses Holland as an example of what Sweden must avoid becoming. This implies that Holland's softer approach on drug-use has had detrimental effects and as such should be seen as a deterrent for applying a more relaxed approach to narcotics. The second citation is in reference to an EU conference which took place in 2000 to discuss the fight against drugs. The conference was specifically organized to discuss how the EU is to apply a harm reduction strategy to its narcotics policies. The focus of the article is the author's response to Lars Engqvist's decision not to attend. The author's opinion is clearly stated, he believes the Swedish restrictive narcotics policy should have a representative at the conference in order to defend it. What is striking here is the use of condemnation in the language used, for example "completely the wrong way" and "forcefully argue" gives a sense of complete conviction that there is no other viable option than the "Swedish model". These citations echo those used by Ekendahl (2012) where he writes that the Swedish model of drug policies is portrayed as superior by implicitly referring to other countries policies in ways such as "thoughtless" or labeling them as failures (Ekendahl,

2012:429). It can be seen here that the newspapers are reproducing and projecting the views of the political elites and in so reinforcing what Cohen (1973) referred to as sustaining the dominant beliefs in order to maintain social control over the general public (Cohen, 1973: xxxvi).

#### *Negative consequences and/or Concern for negative effects*

Many *negative consequences* are predicted by the authors in the articles, as a result of adopting of a more harm reductive strategy. In a majority of the article a common connection is made between harm reduction and the legalization or liberalization of drugs.

and it thus looks as if its aim is in fact to open the door to a first modified form of the legalization of drugs, in other words, harm reduction (DN, 1992-12-09).

The author of one particular article in GP (2003) responds to the Sweden's national narcotics coordinator's suggestion of a permanent needle exchange program.

What he does not explain is how can it be easier to motivate addicts to receive care if at the same time giving them a new clean syringe in their hand. Mixed messages have never been a successful pedagogic, why should it be now? (GP, 2003-03-12)

As we can see here, it seems important for the opponent of harm reduction to emphasize the possible negative consequences of applying such methods in order to strengthen their own argument whilst simultaneously presenting a discourse of fear over what could or will happen. Lloyd (2013) explains that the media has always played a crucial role in amplifying dangers and stoking fear in the public (Lloyd, 2013: 92). This claim is confirmed by the article in which *opposition negative* framework is prevalent.

Alex Wodak is a known supporter of the so-called harm reduction, which means that he wants to make it easier for people to do drugs, including allowing cannabis. It is a completely different agenda than we have in

health care in Sweden. Excessive mortality among drug users is not solved with needle exchange programs (DN, 2009-08-18).

The link between harm reduction and legalization or liberalization of drug use is made in all of the articles which fall under the *opposition negative* frame. This implies that the authors believe or at least will lead the reader to believe that harm reduction's intention is to allow the free use of drugs. Aside from a few individual cases, such as Holland and Portugal our research has found little evidence to indicate that harm reduction encourages the use of drugs, rather it chooses not to focus on the drug-use itself but instead concentrate on the harm in which it causes to the individual and society in order to reduce such harm.

These examples of possible negative consequences are what Cohen and Blomberg (2003) refers to as the media's barrage of "crisis level" social problems. Cohen and Blomberg make the case for a postmodern social control in which technology and media play a vital part in convincing the public of many social problems and deviant behaviors for example drug use, sexual promiscuity and psychological issues in order to cause fear and mistrust in each other. This is to further their agenda by offering solutions for example different ways to keep an eye on you. (Cohen and Blomberg, 2003:193-194). In the case of these article the authors give the reader the picture of drugs being released onto the streets via legalization.

### *Negative labelling*

The application of the *opposing negative* frame is used to highlight the deviations to the existing moral code or norms, which in this case refers to the current restrictive policies of Sweden's narcotics control. In doing this the authors, either consciously or subconsciously paints the opposition as deviants in order to maintain the social control over its readers by reminding them of the socially accepted norms, zero tolerance to drug-use as well as describing some of the characteristics of the norm-breakers.

but now it is no longer long-haired hippies who want access to free drugs, but neo-liberals who will bring researchers, doctors and some policemen. In

Sweden, the old, drug-using fuzzy leftist is replaced by fuzzy rightists who want to make the drugs free (DN, 1992-12-09).

This citation from DN uses many labels to describe to the reader who is breaking these social norms. Although the broad spectrum in which the author frames the deviants does little to single out any particular identifiable group or type of person. The article describes people who represent both sides of the political spectrum, rightists and leftist as well as academics like doctors and researchers begs the question “who, exactly is representing the norm?”. It could be interpreted that almost anyone can fall into this category as long as they go against the current restrictive policy. The authors use of the adjective “fuzzy” to describe the political status of the people involved also adds to his subjectivity thus causing confusion as to whom he is arguing against. The fear of being misinterpreted or labelled is what Dillon (1998) suggests is a major factor in why people who work with addiction choose to avoid proactively and publicly promoting harm reduction in the media (Dillon, 1978: 178-179). Cohen (1985) explains from a social control perspective that implementing the usage of harm reduction strategies are seen as a way of giving in and succumbing to free narcotics in society implying that the use of narcotics is to be seen as a deviant behavior and therefore a threat to the prevailing moral order and should be punished by community sanctions, often in the form of tougher measures in the form of imprisonment. (Cohen 1985:3).

when the issue ends up in Parliament, I hope that wise members will stop the proposal (Göteborgs-Posten, 2003-03-12).

This final quote the writer uses the phrase "the wise members of parliament" this can be received as a way to place their opponent in a direct binary opposition which, in this case would mean that the opponent is viewed as ignorant or unwise if they are to oppose the views of the writer.



## 6.2 Opposition frame (positive)

In this section, we will address those articles which showed harm reduction as a *positive opposition*. As it was mentioned in the previous section (*opposition Negative*) the most prevalent framework which surfaced from our material was that of *opposing* policies, methods or ideologies. The theme of *opposing* corresponds with the theme of *Quoting of organizations and professionals* as a majority of the *opposing* views in this section are those made by professionals and organizations. And finally, the theme of a *Humanistic perspective* theme discusses how harm reduction is considered by certain groups as a humanistic issue rather than a criminal one.

### *Opposing*

It is possible that this means that there is a new debate on drug policy. I hope that the harm reduction debate should be more professionally than before (SvD, 2012-03-27).

The researchers also question whether the Swedish restrictive drug policy is as effective as it is usually claimed (DN, 2014-10-31).

The two citations above are taken from two separate newspaper and quote two different criminal law professors who both agree that the current policy of penalizing drug-users and addicts has not had the desired effect and a new debate on better strategies, for example harm reduction needs to take place. Both of these professors take the stance that drug-use and addiction should not be considered a criminal problem.

Since the prohibition policy has devastating consequences on the individual and the societal level, one must seek new ways to reduce the harmful effects (GP,1995-12-02).

The author of this article goes on to mention that Harm reduction has already been implemented by 20 other European countries insinuating that the Swedish system is an exception to the rule and perhaps not up to the standards of the majority of European

countries. Ekendahl (2012) also makes this point, that Sweden has a reluctance to develop its drug treatment approaches in tune with many other European countries (Ekendahl, 2012: 423). His findings make the claim that the discussion of drug-use and treatment, in particular heroin related, is taken from a “one track model” i.e. the restriction and punishment opinion (Ekendahl, 2012; 430). This meaning that there is little or no discussion of a possible alternative on a political level. The citations in the articles above could suggest a sort of revolt against Cohen (1973) s dominant ideology by attempting to shift the balance of power through the spreading of knowledge( Donahue et al, 1976: 652) about the effects of the restrictive drug policy.

#### *Quoting of organisations and professionals*

Swedish drug-user’s union welcomes the harm reduction approaches as opposed to the harder grip of the current Swedish narcotics policy. This group believes that the current legal system does not take into account the addiction factor which leads to criminal activity, often where addicts sell drugs in order to support their own habit and this leads to longer sentences for supplying. This is in line with what the criminal law professor say, that a response to addiction and drug-use under the current legal system leads to further criminal activities in that the sentences are long and harsh. Furthermore, these sentences lead to a larger contact network and gangs when incarcerated. An addiction researcher from Lund university states that research from both America and Europe shows that:

A harder grip leads to an increase in harder crimes (GP, 1995-02-12).

The articles in this framework use quotes from professionals and relevant organization to strengthen their argument for harm reduction whereas the article adopting a *negative opposing* framework tend to write from an ideological viewpoint enforced, for the most part by personal opinion and beliefs. Cohen (1973) explains that the mass media have used socially accredited experts in order to define threats to societal values and interest in order to cause a moral panic. Using these experts to give a diagnosis and solutions to these issues, persons or groups was used in order to instigate new laws and policies (Cohen, 1973: 1-2). This tactic

appears to be applied instead, labelling the restrictive narcotics policy as the threat to social values and interest

*Humanistic perspective*

on humanitarian grounds to cease the persecution of addicts (GP, 1995-02-12).

The *humanistic perspective* theme, as mentioned above refers to the use of language about how Sweden's current system does not view addiction or the application of harm reduction as a humanistic or moral obligation rather they remain strong in the opinion that total restriction and zero tolerance to drug-use is still the most effective approach despite what research says or the changes in opinion in other western countries. This quote uses the strong descriptive word *persecution* to emphasize the persistent hostility and ill-treatment (Oxford dictionary description of persecution) of people with addiction problems.

To deal with the excessive mortality of drug-users, humane and scientifically sound interventions is needed (GP, 2015-06-25).

This citation GP refers to high mortality rate amongst drug-users in Sweden in comparison to other European nations and the belief that a more scientifically proven and humane approach such as harm reduction is required to address such a problem.

The use of a humanistic perspective in these article is in tune with the discourse which Ekendahl (2012) discusses, in which the user is transformed from the villains, as is the case in our negative labelling frame to victims in need of helping (Ekendahl, 2012: 430). This would seem to be an attempt to curb the effects of the informal, or moral control, as explained by Jiang, Lambert and Wang (2007), meaning the judgement and exclusion posed by families and peers (Jiang et al 2007: 262).

### 6.3 Informative frame

In this section, we address how the authors actually describe harm reduction and what types of information is given regarding what harm reduction entails as well as any examples given. The information and descriptions given in these articles were varied and many. The theme of *safety* addresses how the authors of the articles understand and explain harm reduction as a safety measure for the wellbeing of the drug-user. The *Perception* theme reflects how harm reduction approach has an alternative perception of drug-users and drugs. The theme of *examples* is, as the name suggest, the *examples* the authors offer of harm reduction in practice.

#### *Safety*

Harm reduction, that is, to a certain extent accept dependence but do what you can to minimize the adverse effects for users and the society around them (SvD, 2016-07-28).

Therefore, state-financed health organizations and drug-related aid organizations since the beginning of the nineties tried to go out with advice on how to make it as safe as possible, a direction called harm reduction (SvD, 1998-08-28).

In contrast to the zero tolerance is rather talk about harm reduction, ie measures to reduce the damage that abuse brings (GP, 2001-02-02).

These two quote emphasize that harm reduction, in their opinion is a focus on the person behind the drug. With the use of words such as “make it as safe as possible” and reduce the” damage” the writers show an acceptance of the existence of drugs and addiction and like many fields in which harm reduction is applied, the aim is to keep people safe despite their choices. Wakefield et al (2010) discuss the proven benefits of using the media as tool in order to spread the information about health and safety. Although they state that when trying to get this information to those most at risk can be difficult due to the fact that there are many competing factors which make is difficult (Wakefield et al, 2010:1261). In relation to addictive substances like drugs, alcohol and tobacco these competing factor are product

marketing (alcohol), film and media (smoking, drugs and alcohol shown in a glamorous way) as well as addiction itself. This can draw parallels to many human activities which have a level of risk involved: cars have seat-belts because some people drive fast or recklessly, athletes have helmets and other protective equipment to reduce the inevitable risk of harm or even the use of contraceptives to reduce infection or unwanted pregnancies. All of these actions have focus on the reduction of harm over the prohibiting of the action.

### *Perception*

We will no longer punish those who occasionally smokes a joint (GP, 2001-02-02).

We try not to be judgmental or encouraging, we only think they have the right to information. Harm reduction is to accept that drugs are and will be around, despite a ban (SvD, 1998-08-28).

The theme of *perception* in these article is a way for the author to perhaps get the reader to reassess their perception of drug-use and addiction with the use of harm reductive approaches. The first quote is from the Belgian health minister referring to Belgium's recent decision to allow cannabis or hash for personal use. In these cases, harm reduction portrays drug-users as victims of stigmatization or even prejudice due to their lifestyle choice. Phrases like “no longer punish” and “not to be judgmental” insinuates that previous perceptions of this group are no longer deemed fitting and that a different view is being taken. Hurme (2002) also makes the argument that a human rights perspective is advocated by stressing the rights and equality of the users in order to make the claim that strict drug policies are the cause of much harm to them (Hurme, 2002:242). This claim flips the usual perception of drug users as criminals to see them more as victims of the system.

### *Examples*

Examples of such measures include needle exchange operations and treatment with methadone and Subutex (SvD, 2016-07-28).

the term emerged in the eighties in connection with attempts to provide heroin addicts sterilized disposable syringes to prevent the spread of AIDS, but is now also applied in the fight to prevent more deaths of ecstasy (SvD, 1998-08-28).

The example of needle exchange programs is the most common example of harm reduction given in our material regardless of which frame the articles adheres to. Needle exchange is prominent in more than half of our material, 8 out of 15 articles, whereas other such example like medicine-based replacement therapies for example methadone or Subutex are mentioned in only 3 out of 15 articles. This can be because either a lack of knowledge around harm reduction practices or possibly a conscious decision to use the extreme end of the drug-use spectrum, heroin and other intravenous drugs. This can be explained from a social control perspective as a social phenomenon that often arouses reactions and is seen as a threat to the moral order, therefore the media portrays harm reduction only in its more extreme forms and perhaps in a way that are hard to understand for a common public that have little or no experience with drug use (Engdahl & Larsson 2011:80). Another interesting development was despite more than half of the articles mentioning harm reduction strategies such as needle exchange, only 3 of those 8 mentioned why needle are exchange and to what effect.

### **6.4 Macro frame**

This final frame describes how the authors of our articles associated harm reduction with different groups on a macro level. The themes which surfaced represent larger groups such as societies and countries. The theme of *political connection* describes how harm reduction is frequently associated with a political leaning or ideology. The theme of *Dutch model* assesses how Holland's approach to drug-use has been closely observed since it relaxed its laws on cannabis. It has been both praised and criticized. The final theme, *European Union* shows what the *European Union* has for perspectives on Harm reduction.

### *Political connection*

The first two quotes here were taken from the same article which is a strong opposition to a minister of the Feminist party's avocation not just of harm reduction but her opinion of the rave culture of the mid 90's in Sweden. The author has a harsh reaction to the minister's recent position in representing the rave culture youths and her apparent stance on legalization of certain narcotics. The author speaks of the minister's "ignorance" about raves as well as her engagement with police on their enforcement of a restrictive narcotic policy.

In Europe, it is left politicians who believe that more drugs in a controlled manner is humane (harm reduction) for addicts (GP, 1996-03-16).

This citation points directly to the left political parties as the advocates of harm reduction, not just in certain countries but rather "in Europe". This is an assumption that all who belong to the left of the political sphere advocate a "humane" harm reductive opinion in relation to drugs.

The Left Party is now trying to normalize the language about abuse and also allow raves which leads to harm reduction (GP, 1996-03-16).

This second quotation uses interesting language to make a point which is not entirely clear to the reader. As with the first quotation, it names the left as the advocates of harm reduction. If we are to reverse the statements equation by saying that harm reduction is caused by normalizing the language of addiction and allowing rave parties, we see that this statement is devoid of rational and lacks any of the understandings of what harm reduction means. This can be linked to the findings of Hurme (2002) where he argues that harm reduction is often used as political statement without really knowing or caring for that fact what it entails.

### *Dutch model*

He should use this forum to take action against an increasingly wide acceptance of abuse and an increasingly permissive drug liberal attitude of Dutch model (SvD, 2000-10-11).

This quote was a continuation from a previous quote regarding Sweden's Social Affairs minister Lars Engqvist's visit to Portugal to argue for the Swedish model. After his criticism of the Portuguese and their harm reductive based narcotics reform the author continues by using Holland as another example of a model denounced as unfathomable by the Swedish narcotics policy advocates.

Harm reduction, the Dutch recipes. in several European countries, have accepted that drugs are available in the community. In contrast to the zero tolerance, instead, talk about harm reduction (GP, 2001-02-02).

In this article the Dutch model of harm reduction is further discussed by mentioning their needle exchange programs as well as their decision to provide heroin to addicts in controlled forms in order to reduce overdose, criminal activities as well as preventing the spread of diseases through intravenous drug-use. This form of social control can be interpreted as removing the visible shackles of laws and punishments to give the impression of freedom, while still maintaining control through regulated distribution. This is a step away from formal control as described by Jiang et al. (2007), where it is stated that formal social control is often linked with laws and regulations and it's consequence being imprisonment.

In both Holland and England harm-reduction has influenced the narcotics policies (DN, 1992-12-09).

In this quote the author speaks about Holland and England adopting a harm reduction approach as well as implicating this approach with so called "health-buses". These health buses hand out methadone and clean needles to intravenous drug users. This reiterates Holland stance on a harm reductive perspective other than simply legalizing cannabis.

### *European Union*

Almost all European countries have tried to pursue a prohibitionist drug policy, but in recent years, harm reduction has gained ground in country after country (SVD, 2000-07-07).



This article is the author's view that most country's narcotics policy has first been restrictive but later have been changed to a more harm reductive policy. They state that Sweden is one of the few country's who still hold fast to the restrictive policy. Their argument is that it does not have to be either or rather perhaps a third option is more pragmatic, a combination of the two.

The news was that Sweden, as one of Europe's last countries now became an active advocate for harm reduction (DN, 2016-03-05).

This citation again makes reference to the fact that Sweden is one of the few countries to instigate a more harm reductive approach to drug-use and abuse. The last quote is another indicator that the European Union is working hard to address the drug problem with a harm reduction approach. This can be understood from the same perspective as Larsson et al. (2011), meaning that scientists and other professionals tend to be criticizing the recent discourse on deviance and that it should be viewed as a non-deviant behavior that are in need of care not more control. It seems as though that these thoughts are an influence on a political level.

The harm reduction model already used by 20 European cities working together to tackle the growing drug problem (GP, 1995-02-12).

## **7. Findings**

This study's aim was to investigate how the term "Harm reduction" is presented in Swedish print media. In order to do so we carried out a qualitative document analysis of three of Sweden's top-selling daily newspapers GP, SvD and DN.

In the material, we found four frames in regards to the use of the harm reduction term. As was mentioned in the introduction of the analysis section, According to Jansson (2010) framing analysis has two forms, one from the perspective of the author and how they consciously or unconsciously frame issues in order to put forward a particular perspective. The other form of framing is from the perspective of the reader as in how a reader interprets material by

categorizing information in frames. This is also done either consciously or subconsciously. This study's analysis is from the perspective of the reader thus making the frames of an interpretive nature. A social control perspective was then used in order to understand any possible meanings behind the use of these frames.

From the *Macro frame*, we observed how the newspapers describe the large scale of the drug problem and how the European Union members are working both individually and as a whole in order to tackle the issue. By using the "bigger Picture" the newspapers article we studied also point out that Sweden is one of the few countries within the EU to not apply harm reduction strategies at the same level as the other members. This can be seen as either Sweden's refusal to adjust its perspective on drug-use to a more harm reductive perspective, which goes vehemently against its current restrictive policy on narcotics. Another explanation could be that Sweden government believes its narcotics policy to a successful one. As Cohen (1973) explains this may be that the media is simply sustaining the dominant ideology of the illegality of narcotics in the eyes of Swedish law.

From the *informative frame*, we observed how and to what degree the articles gave information about harm reduction, either in a clear description of the term from different perspectives or through giving examples of harm reductive strategies in practice. This frame showed several things of interest. Firstly, that there is a shift in perception regarding how drug-use and addiction is seen by the public on a societal level as well as an international. Many countries within the EU as well as America have adapted or are in the process of adapting their laws so that minor drug use is no longer considered a crime. Furthermore, there is an expanding view that casual users of certain drugs like cannabis should not be labelled as criminals. This, it would seem is a first step in harm reduction. By seeing a drug-user not as a criminal appears to lead people to want to help rather than punish an individual. The safety of the user as opposed to the punishment of the act can be seen as the basis of harm reduction.

By far the most prominent example of harm reduction strategies visible in the material was needle exchange programs. As mentioned previously, needle exchange programs are named in

8 out of the 15 articles with further examples of methadone and Subutex as substitutes for opiates. Despite the frequent mention of needle exchange programs there was a lack of clarity as to why needles are exchanged. Three of the articles we analysed gave a reason for needle exchanging although they varied from preventing the spreading of HIV/hepatitis to ecstasy overdose prevention. The lack of information as well as continuity in descriptions of harm reduction was not only in regards to examples, it is notable that in many of the articles there was conflicting arguments as what harm reduction was. These ranged from harm reduction being an approach to reduce harm to the drug users and most frequently, a gateway to legalization or liberalization of drugs. In one particular article harm reduction was described as simply making it easier to do drugs.

This lack of information contra to the frequency of usage of the term harm reduction raised several questions. Firstly, is the lack of information on the part of the authors? Or perhaps they have chosen to frame the issue in such a way that information is irrelevant. Donohue et al (1973) explains that the control of knowledge is of high importance to develop and maintain power. Thus, the withholding of information is a simple tactic in order to prevent a threat against that power. As Cohen (1973) explains, each society has an idea of what deviant behavior is and what causes this deviance. The information of which these ideas are formed is often received secondhand and already framed by the media. This packaging has been influenced by many factors from political leanings of the newspaper to the commercial advertisers who fund it. In our research, we found scattered information on harm reduction yet very little of substance or clarity leading to the confirmation of the previous research of Dillon (1998) and Hurme (2002) that harm reduction is a broad term which lacks any clear description.

From the material, there are two frames involving harm reduction as an opposition to other approaches to drug-use and addiction. These were of either a negative or a positive character. As seen in the table explaining our frame coding we can see that of our 15 articles, 7 of which were negative opposition frames and 6 were positive. This shows us the polarity of the issue regarding narcotics in that there is many who argue for and against adopting a harm reductive approach.

From the negative frame, it is notable that many of the articles authors interpret harm reduction to mean Liberalizing or legalizing drug-use. Cohen (1985) explains that from a social control perspective this would imply that any use of narcotics is to be seen as a deviant behavior and therefore a threat to the prevailing moral order and should be punished by community sanctions, often in the form of tougher measures in the form of imprisonment. Implementing the usage of harm reduction strategies are seen as a way of giving in and succumbing to free narcotics in society This coincides with the finding of this study in that, those who opposed harm reduction and labelled it's advocates as, among other thing, liberals tended to be in support of the harsh penalties for drug-use. (Cohen 1985:3). This argument was also addressed in Ekendahls (2002) article stating that the Swedish media portrays drug users in a negative light, labelling them as deviant and leading a dangerous life.

Articles encompassing the *opposing negative* frame frequently used negative or demeaning language when describing both advocates of harm reduction as well as those receiving or in need of harm reduction treatments. Labels such as hippies, neoliberals, fuzzy left/rightists and in one particular case an individual is single-out and described as a self-professed supporter of harm reduction. In this individual case the author gave their own description as to what Harm reduction means by stating “that he wants to make it easier for people to do drugs”. Further insinuations that harm reduction simply does not work implies that anything other than restriction and punishment would be unwise. This is what Jiang, Lambert and Wang (2007) referred to as social exclusion, an example of informal social control imposed by one's peers creating a sense of moral panic that later can be connected to the idea of the media panic. Media panic is where people and social phenomena are likely to be portrayed in a stereotypical way, often with the help of various media forums such as newspapers and television (Engdahl, O 2011: 80). The *Positive opposition* framed articles counter this argument and labeling by describing harm reduction as a shift in focus from the act of drug-taking to its effects. This in a sense reduces the stigmatizing of the person by referring to them, not as a drug abuser or addict but as a person who has been effected by drugs.

Looking at these frames separately we see that they are the two most common frames each comprising of roughly half of our articles each. What becomes more interesting is when,

instead of referring to these separately and focusing on the negative and positive characteristics, we instead look at them as a single frame of opposition. When combining the two it shows that opposing one argument over another is the commonality of 13 out of 15 articles. Cohen (1973) discusses that many researchers have argued the fact that society's main source of information about the norms as well as the boundaries between what is right and what is wrong comes from the news. It tells us who the good guys are as well as the bad also who not to be. The question as to whether there is a general consensus as to the meaning and applications of harm reduction?

The media gives the public the characteristics which are attached to the deviants in order to make it easier the cast a judgement. But as is the example in this study, there are certain issues which are argued strongly on both sides making it difficult to form an informed opinion. Thus, the issue of harm reduction has many contradicting yet equally convincing arguments and explanations that have made it unclear harder to find which side of the fence ones stands. The rise of the new generation of liberal lefts and their influence together with individualization often leads us to see addicts and outcasts as people in need of help rather than punishment. Yet Sweden's long history of drug prohibition and the belief that "all use is misuse" has created a sort of cognitive dissidence within Swedish society.

The increasingly fractured and cluttered media environment poses challenges to achieving adequate exposure to planned media messages, rather than making wide exposure easier (Wakefield, Loken & Hornik 2010:1268).

## **8. Discussion**

As the theory of framing explained, there are many layers to how people communicate. Framing is about interpretation. People frame all information which we experience in order for it to make sense. At the same time all information that we pass on to others is also framed in order to highlight particular parts of our interpretation. This is then framed by the receiver in order to make sense of it. And so on. All of which is individual and subjective. We can

deceive others by how we frame while at the same time be deceived by how we take in information.

The aim of this study was to investigate how harm reduction was presented to the general public by the way of newspaper articles. During our research we analysed how the Swedish government, newspapers and academics see and presents harm reduction. This was frustrating to say the least. For something which has been proven in many other countries to be an effective method of addressing the harm caused by drug-use, there was little to convince us that the Swedish government and policy makers take it seriously.

In our research we found that harm reduction is a little discussed topic. This could be because of its connection to drugs and the tabu which surround such a topic. Sweden holds fast to its idea that drugs are bad and only a restrictive policy can control it. Even amongst our friends and fellow classmate the topic of drugs is a “for or against” topic and seldom room for exceptions. Yet when asked about harm reduction the discussion runs dry. How can we help those in need without focusing on how and why they got there?

Like most important issues which society faces, the issue of drug-use has become incredibly polarized. The same is evident on the political field between left and right ends of the political spectrum which no longer just disagree but rather fire hatred against the other. Another example is the cultural arenas in particular the current refugee crisis. One can either support letting in all who are in need or close the door to all. The world have become more and more an “us against them” battle where people push further and further towards their own side and repel against the other. This has led to a fear of discussion. If you support harm reduction you are automatically for drug-use or legalisation. On the other side if you don't approve of drugs, for whatever reason you must then appose harm reduction or any other ideas that are not anti-drugs. As we saw in the articles we studied, there is a lot of name calling and stone throwing at the opposing side. We see only issues, opinions and ideologies and have lost sight of the people lost in the crowd.

We believe that this is because of a lack of discussion and information. Harm reduction in some cases leads to decriminalisation of less harmful drugs but from what we have learnt it is not so that people can just get high. It served a purpose and there was a thought behind it which stemmed from a discussion about the issue at hand. Sitting back and hoping that the current method of restriction will finally work is essentially to doing the same thing over again and expecting a different result.

We are not suggesting that the same positive results would come if Sweden decriminalised all drugs, as Portugal has done. We are simply stating that some kind of change needs to happen in order to help those who suffer from the harms of drugs. Change happens through the sharing of information and an open discussion.

## **9. Further research**

Based on the results we achieved in this study we argue that further research is of great necessity to clarify the term Harm reduction to the general public. Since our research on how media (being Swedish daily newspapers) produces and presents harm reduction, we believe that there is a need for research on people's perceptions of harm reduction and to what level they understand it. It would have been of great interest to also examine people's attitudes towards harm reduction. Is it positive or negative, or is there a lack of knowledge on the subject? This might have been appropriate for a survey. Further research may also address how people received or are receiving their understanding of harm reduction. What sources of information do they take part of?

Since our material stretched over nearly three decades, we noticed that there were multiple differences in the way harm reduction were presented during different time periods. We noticed a tendency during the early 2000s for the newspapers to have a more negative view of harm reduction whereas in the recent articles a positive reception of harm reduction was more prevalent. It would have been of interest to conduct a comparative analysis of these different eras and scrutinize whether these differences are due to different political and societal discourses.

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