Journalism at the Borders
Johan Östman

Journalism at the Borders
The Constitution of Nationalist Closure in News Decoding
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Abstract


This dissertation is a contribution to the social analysis of nationalism. Its disciplinary context comprises the field of empirical studies that explore how forms of mediated quasi interaction can function in processes of reproduction and transformation of nationality. The study poses the question of how news journalism can establish national frames of reference within which social reality is made meaningful by citizens.

The research design facilitates a novel contribution to a field of research that is largely dominated by studies of media output. Two distinct but intertwined domains are empirically studied: news as a form of discourse and the moment of news decoding as a form of social interaction between readers and texts.

The results from the empirical studies show that phenomena deemed undesirable by the prevailing moral order tend to be symbolically expelled from the national community that news audiences recognize as their own. As a conclusion, two sets of structures and mechanisms are identified as generative of this logic. Their joint articulation in news decoding can establish nationalist closure of meaning by connecting morality to nationality.

First, certain established interpretive repertoires can be brought into play in the moment of decoding. These function ideationally to depict other nations and ethnic minorities pejoratively. Thus they indirectly give meaningful content to the nation and its majority population. The invocation of such frameworks of meaning tends to employ discursive resources from the news domain itself. This is a feature that ultimately reveals the subordination of news reception to elite news journalism as a knowledgeable institution.

Second, as a textual system, news discourse can function interpersonally to establish a configuration of identities and relations between itself, the news consumer and other institutions and actors in society. In accordance with this configuration, the audience can incorporate the position of being citizens (in a moral sense) and national members (in a geopolitical or an ethnic sense). The character of these identities and relations is an effect of news journalism being an inherently national institution, and of the normative presuppositions built into the structure of news values itself.

Keywords: nationalist closure, nationalism, morality, news journalism, preferred meanings, encoding/decoding, interpretive repertoires, referential, metalinguistic.

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I spent my first years of study at the Postgraduate School Conditions of Democracy at Örebro University. This interdisciplinary context provided a challenging milieu that forced all of us to consider the biases and received ways of thinking within our own disciplines. My gratitude goes to my colleagues at Conditions of Democracy.

For some reason, Veronica Stoehrel once thought that academic life would suit me. I took my first unsteady steps into this strange world under her supervision at
Halmstad University nearly a decade ago. I am grateful to Veronica and all my former colleagues at Halmstad University.

Doing a Ph.D. is basically a lengthy ego trip. It is however not the kind of trip where you feel good about yourself. It is quite the opposite. At some point in the process, your sleep most likely gets disturbed and your short-term memory deteriorates. You lose interest in doing things most people consider fun, and you may even stop bothering much about people that once occupied a significant place in your life. I realize these traits can be unpleasant for the people around you. I also realize I was hardly immune to any of them. I would like to extend my final gratitude to my family: Anna, Disa and Sigrid. These girls are what my life is really all about, and I am thankful that real life so effectively has prevented this project from consuming me completely. After all, this is a job, not a passion. And in the end you do it to pay the bills, not to improve the world.

My brother, Anders Östman, would have turned thirty a few weeks ago. This book is written in the shadow of his absence and I dedicate it to his memory.

Örebro, August 2009

Johan Östman
1 INTRODUCTION

– You know, Johan, there are venomous spiders in Sweden.

I would not go so far as to call it arachnophobia, but Disa, my bonus daughter, is afraid of spiders. This was some years ago, when she was even more afraid than she is today. She had read a piece in the paper about these spiders and she was a bit upset about it. As it turned out, they had found a couple of specimens on the artificial island created when the Öresund Bridge between Denmark and Sweden was built. I remember trying to calm her by saying things like Malmö is a far away place, it is too cold here in Örebro for venomous spiders, and anything else I could come up with. Eventually, she sighed:

– This island, why does it have to belong to Sweden?

At first I did not pay much attention to it. I regarded it as an expression of the somewhat warped logic of a ten-year-old mind. It was kind of funny, I thought, that the national labelling of this artificial island by the tabloid Aftonbladet seemed to be the main cause of her worries. Sweden felt close to home, but venomous spiders in Denmark, by implication, would have been okay.

Of course, this seemingly inverted way of thinking did not have anything to do with Disa being ten. It was basically a case of the warped nationalist logic of news journalism transformed into an everyday conception of the world. This way of thinking informs adults and ten-year-olds alike but most likely in different ways. News journalism takes the nationalist logic for granted, makes it public to an assumed audience, and both appeals to and helps construct a tacit form of common sense knowledge that closes the world as we know it within national horizons. The present dissertation comprises an empirical study of such processes of meaning making.

It would have been neat if I was able to say that this was how it all started – that this was the Eureka moment that inspired me to do research on the relationship between nationality and news journalism by studying audience reception. But it was not. I was already working with the thesis at the time. Instead, the episode has served well as a motivator at times when the project seemed off track and, basically, esoteric.

After all, the study at hand takes its point of departure in a thirty-year-old theoretical framework (Encoding/Decoding) so heavily criticized and so widely regarded as crude, speculative, and historically specific that one may wonder what it could possibly be used for in the 2000s. It employs a methodology for studying audiences (reception analysis) which no one even seems to consider anymore, since it belongs to a first “phase” of audience research that merely an-
ticipated more valid ways of gaining knowledge about media consumption (see e.g. Alasuutari 1999). Furthermore, it studies elite print journalism. This is hardly the most attractive medium for contemporary audience researchers who seem more interested in “rethinking” received concepts such as “audience”, “medium” and “texts”. And all this for the study of a social form (nationality) proclaimed to be disintegrating so many times that one might easily think that the object of study itself has evaporated.

In such moments of doubt, it was reassuring to recapitulate my bonus daughter’s fear of Swedish (but not Danish) venomous spiders. It reminded me that the project is all but sprung out of theory alone. From the point of view of citizens, nationality is above all a question of basic assumptions about one’s place in the world. As such it may serve as a guiding principle for how we view and think about, even for how we feel about arachnids as well as about transnational politics and people of other nationalities than our own. As regards news, it is still widely consumed. And the fundamental properties of news journalism, for instance the news value of cultural proximity and its articulation with the nation-state, have hardly changed just because nowadays people can get access to it through the internet.

I leave it an open question whether the encoding/decoding framework and the reception studies methodology was the right way to proceed. It is quite possible that the seemingly peculiar character of Disa’s fear of spiders in fact provides a stronger piece of evidence than all the painstaking gathering and systematic analysis of news material and reception interviews in this study together.

The Problem

During the past century-and-a-half, the nation-state has been treated as a god and a demon; been declared born and dead many times; been regarded as a modern as well as a primordial form of social and political community; been conceived of as both a rational structure and an imagined/imaginary community […]. Yet, despite – or more possibly owing to – all this variation, the nation-state has somehow managed to present itself as a solid, stable and ultimately necessary form of social and political organization in modernity (Chernilo 2006:129).

Nations often, but not always, coincide with states (consider Scotland). Moreover, most nations are tied to a specific geographical territory and share a common language. But one does not need to look very hard on a world map to find that some nations have no marked space (Palestine, for example). Neither does a common language seem to be necessary (Switzerland). Furthermore, it is self-evident that people in many different parts of the world may share the same language (Spanish) without being members of the same nation. Some theorists have
tried to claim the existence of common “cultural” traits, “mentalities” (Daun 1998) or even “ethnic cores” (Smith 1986) as important foundations for nationality (cf. Segal and Handler 2006:57). These attempts are far from convincing. Ultimately, some people or characteristics will be excluded under any such description. Also, other possible logics of structuration (e.g. gender, class, ethnicity, regional differences and what not) may be illegitimately glossed over by such definitions.

To the extent that nationality proves impossible to derive from so-called objective criteria such as state, language, geographical territory, culture and ethnicity, an opposite alternative is a strictly constructionist conceptualization. That is, people belong to the national community that they identify as “their” national community, and that is the end of the story. This is possibly compelling. Actors’ identification is surely a necessary condition for any community to exist. But it is not a sufficient demarcation of national communities. If social analysis aims to be able to distinguish nationality from other forms of community it would be risky to exclude objective criteria, and their trajectories in history, from theoretical endeavours.

Taken together, the array of possible objective criteria stipulated above may provide a checklist from which any given nation imports a configuration of properties which is specific in its constitution. Arguably, not all of these properties can be removed from a community and leave it still remaining a national community.

In this context, however, the main point would be that nationality is an equally bizarre and intriguing socio-political form of organization whose persistence and dominant status are far from exhaustively explained by the social sciences. Above all, little is known about the mechanisms that reproduce the nation on a daily basis, structure experiences of social and political life in national terms, and render people’s identification with the nation possible.

The study of nationality touches upon fundamental concerns within the field of media and communication studies. To some communication theorists the constitution of community is intrinsic to communication in itself (Carey 1990). The study of nationality and mass mediated communications also relate closely to the historical study of nationalism, where the relationship between modern communications media, the emergence of mass culture and the constitution of nationality is widely acknowledged among established theorists and historians of nationality (e.g. Anderson 1991, Gellner 1990).

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of case studies of media output that are able to demonstrate manifestations of nationalism in a variety of areas. But as will be shown in the review of previous research below, taken together they leave some crucial questions unanswered. Above all, the virtual absence of the empirical audience in face of the employment of concepts such as “identity”
and “identification” – concepts which would certainly signify an interest in reception – needs to be addressed.

There may be several reasons for this relatively weak point within media and communication studies. It may be due to the tendency to take linkages between media and collective identities for granted, a slippage possibly even easier to make when it comes to nationalism in so-called established nations. It may be a readily available conclusion that if “explicit representations of national character are not all-pervasive [...] national identity no longer matters” (Brookes 1999:248). The opposite position has however been forcefully advocated by Billig (1995), who asserts that the ideological power of nationalism is derived from its status as deeply embedded in mundane practices and discourses – not from overt expressions of jingoism or xenophobia. Billig’s position is fully endorsed here.

Moreover, research on nationalism may certainly seem unfashionable in the context of a discipline in which the concept of globalization has been the buzzword during the last decades. According to a number of theorists of globalization and the media (Appadurai 1996, Morley 2000, Morley and Robins 1995, Tomlinson 1999) the processes of both migration and mediation in contemporary society make received notions of nationality seem obsolete. The composition of the social structure transforms with migration. Transnational electronic and digital media accompany this process by opening up new possibilities for representation and interaction, as well as for the constitution of communities that resist being contained in the geographical territory of the state. Some claim that the rise of post-modernity has produced instable, fragmented and multiple forms of identity that are not tied to given entities such as the nation (Hall 1992, Jameson 1991). Moreover, the international flow of capital and labour, and changing political structures, reduce the sovereignty of the nation-state as a locus for the exercise of formal decision-making power (Held 1995, Held and McGrew 2000). Politics cannot take the nation-state for granted any more. Neither can contemporary social science. Some media researchers have even found evidence that national identity is on the decline (see e.g. Rahn and Rudolph 2001).

My own position, taken in the context of this discussion, is fairly simple. The social processes of change and exchange usually referred to as globalization on the one hand and the status of nationality and the nation-state on the other are not to be conceptualized as dichotomous. Nationality does not compete with globalization in some kind of zero-sum game between different societal logics of organization. It is even hard to see any contradiction between them at all. As a form for socio-political, economic and cultural organization the nation-state is in fact, and always has been, a truly global (and inherently colonial) phenomenon. The extent to which the allegedly increasing “speed and scale” (cf. Appadurai 1996: ch. 2–3) of globalizing flows, or the allegedly increasing global awareness (cf. Hylland Eriksen 2007: ch. 1) in contemporary society makes it warranted to
speak of a new historical era – or of a serious challenge to general social theory – remains to be substantiated (Rosenberg 2002).

News journalism, the object of study in this dissertation, also provides a case in point here. As an institution of mediated quasi interaction it can be considered global in the sense that it can facilitate the symbolic participation of modern citizens in events all around the globe. Obviously, this is not even imaginable in a world in which such institutions do not exist (Thompson 1994:43–45). However, as an information-disseminating institution, news journalism is inherently national. News journalism is historically modelled upon the nation state (Anderson 1991, Carey 2007). As such it tends to employ networks of sources closely attuned to national elite institutions (Palm 2002, Lee et al. 2002). And above all, it targets an audience market that is national or local within a national context – which among many other things entails the perennial “domestication” of global events to suit this implied audience community (Gans 1980, Clausen 2004, Preston 2009).

Consequently, the present study deals with the national dimensions of news discourse and news reception, not its global aspects. It does so, not because the latter is denied or deemed irrelevant, but because the former in certain key respects remains an under-researched and under-theorized field of enquiry within this discipline.

**Aim of the Study**

This dissertation comprises an empirical enquiry into the role of news journalism in the constitution of nationality. As such it is to be regarded as part of a wider project within the social sciences, which, in a number of disciplines, aims at explaining the persistence and pervasiveness of nationality in the face of all the inconsistencies, paradoxes and instabilities inherent in the very idea of nationality as a social form.

Nationality is conceptualized as “one particular logic among others that organize economic, political, technological, and cultural territories and flows” (Crofts Wiley 2004:78). This logic, although it constitutes an established and central form for socio-political and economic organization, is for its existence dependent upon practices that bring about its continuous reproduction and transformation (Billig 1995, Jørgensen 1994). Such practices are conceived of as nationalism and nationalist closure. We know from previous research that news journalism, as an institutionalized form of mediated quasi interaction, is a potential arena and vehicle for nationalist representations of social reality. This research however tells us little about how news discourse can function symbolically in the moment of decoding to reproduce and/or transform nationality.
Against this background, the following two research questions are posed: What mechanisms and structures can be activated in news discourse to establish national frames of reference within which society is construed and imagined among citizens? How can news decoding function to contribute to such closure of meaning?

The research design of the dissertation facilitates an empirical investigation of such mechanisms and structures in two distinct but intertwined domains: news journalism as a form of discourse, or a textual system, and the moment of decoding as a form of social interaction between readers and news texts.

At the level of decoding, nationalist closure may both facilitate and delimit how social phenomena are made meaningful by audiences. The content, character and defining bases of nationalist closure on this level tend to be bound to concrete contexts of decoding. It will, however, be explored how these situated discursive practices result from general structures of news as a form of discourse, and from the basic conventions guiding processes of news decoding.

Empirically, a qualitative reception study of elite news journalism is conducted in an attempt to answer the research questions. The newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (Daily News, henceforth abbreviated *DN*) is taken to represent Swedish elite news journalism. *DN* is Sweden’s biggest selling morning newspaper, and it is widely regarded as an influential definer and agenda-setter in the news landscape of the country, not least since it constitutes one of only two elite papers with nationwide coverage (albeit with a slight bias towards the local context of Stockholm, the capital of Sweden).

Combining extensive and intensive news analysis on the one hand and intensive reception analysis on the other, one particular topic (news on illicit drugs and drug smuggling) is selected and held constant throughout the research process. In this way, the study can employ knowledge about the general character of a specific news theme to explore how it provides an input into processes of actual decoding.

The topic of illicit drugs provides a fruitful case because, first, in a Swedish context, it may give topical attention to wider questions of national differences in legislation and policy making, and about political sovereignty in general in the context of the European Union. Second, it represents the prevalent kind of topic in elite news of which audiences can be expected to have little or no personal experience. This feature constitutes a methodological advantage in reception studies, since it allows for a certain degree of isolation of the role played by media output in the decoding moment. Third, news on drugs is genuinely mundane. News about illicit drugs appears almost every day in Swedish local and national media. As an instance of the category of criminal reporting it constitutes one of the most frequent types of news items in journalism, both in paper format and on television (cf. Lewis et al. 2008, ter Wal et al. 2005). It is also mundane in the
sense that it does not very often contain overt expressions of national chauvinism, as for example can be found in the coverage of the Olympic Games or other extraordinary events – be they planned media events or unexpected natural disasters. In this way, the drugs issue may also be taken to represent some form of “news as usual” to the audience.

Scope

At least two remotely related questions are beyond the scope of the study. First, an analysis of the prerequisites for nationalist closure does not qualify the study to say much about the power of nationality relative to other social forms of community or relative to other processes that allegedly destabilize or challenge nationality as an organizing logic. Second, the project conceptualizes its object of study from a purely synchronic point of view. Thus it has little to say about the status of contemporary forms of nationalism relative to its historical functions and manifestations.

Rather, these questions have been answered at the outset, in the form of assumptions upon which the project as a whole rests. It is indeed assumed that the implications of national frames of reference may be far reaching in virtually all domains of contemporary culture and society – for example regarding the ways in which politics is conducted, the form of the education systems, the organization of cultural production, the aesthetics and ideology of cultural products themselves, how citizenship is defined by the political and juridical institutions, how people define themselves as citizens, and so on.

Moreover, it may well be that some of the mechanisms significant to the historical formation of the nation state as a dominant form for socio-political and economic organization from the 17th century onwards play important parts in the maintenance and reproduction of nationality even today. The assumption, however, is that “the history of the origins of nationality is not the whole story of nationality”1 (Jørgensen 1994:5). Nations are in other words not constituted once and for all, but the explanation of their persistence, reproduction and transformation needs to be carried out within contemporary conditions rather than being reduced to historical master causes.

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1 Quotes and extracts originally in languages other than English are translated by the author.
Structure

The remainder of this introductory chapter is dedicated to reviewing previous research on nationalism and the media. This review allows for an explication of the specific contributions of the study at hand.

Drawing on formal sociological theory (Jørgensen 1994), Chapter Two of the thesis offers a conceptualization of its object of study as nationalism and nationalist closure. On the level of substantive theory, Hall’s encoding/decoding model provides a framework for conceptualizing the role of institutionalized forms of mediated quasi interaction in the constitution of nationality.

Chapter Three considers the methodology and research design of the study. The empirical material is presented and the principles and procedures guiding the analysis are detailed. Questions related to methodological quality, generality and causality are given a prominent position in the discussion.

Chapters Four, Five and Six comprise the bulk of the book. Here, the results of the empirical studies are presented. The findings of the news study are presented in Chapter Four. The reception analysis is divided into two chapters. Chapter Five deals with some basic aspects and dimensions of news reception as a genre-specific interaction between texts and audiences, whereas Chapter Six specifically explores how these aspects and dimensions can function to establish nationalist closure.

The concluding Chapter Seven provides answers to the research questions and makes a number of suggestions for further research within the field of media and nationality.

Previous Research

Generally speaking, the empirical study of the relationship between nationality and the media, both within media and communication studies and neighbouring disciplines such as sociology and political science, seems to be an emerging field of research. During the last decade or so, the largely speculative theorizing about the role of the media in the constitution of nationality – or, indeed, its breakdown – seems to have been increasingly put to the test. The overview presented below identifies three main types of research in this particular area: the study of international news as “domestication”, case studies of banal-nationalist media discourse and audience studies on nationalism.

The overview is intended to be as comprehensive as possible, in order to spell out the specific contributions of the present project. It is, however, important to point out that the review has focused mainly on a) systematic empirical research, b) research that explicitly deals with nationality and the media, and c) studies that
deal with *contemporary* mechanisms and manifestations of nationalism. These criteria downplay the relative importance of, for instance, historical studies of public service broadcasting as a form of nation-building (e.g. Scannell and Cardiff 1991, Van Den Bulck 2001, Dhoest 2004, Löfgren 1990) and studies on media and racism and immigration issues (e.g. Jhally and Lewis 1991, ter Wal et al. 2005, van Dijk 1991). This does not mean that such approaches are deemed irrelevant to the present study or that, for instance, the relations between representations of ethnic minorities and the problematic status of nationality are ignored. Rather, it is the overall research interest in the ongoing constitution of nationality as a social form that has guided my carving out of a specific field of research within the discipline. Far from all studies of the role of the media in the representation of ethnic minorities, racism and immigration issues share this focal interest. Similarly, historical studies, for example of the heyday of nation-building through public broadcasting, pay only marginal attention to contemporary forms of nationalism, and are thus of limited immediate interest in this context.

**Foreign News and/as Domestic News**

The relatively long standing tradition of news studies comprises a rich source of studies on the relationship between news journalism and the nation-state. Nowhere, it seems, is the national logic more pervasive than in foreign news.

Although often assuming certain normative stances (Örnebring 2009), and often balancing on the border to speculation, empirical research on the (desirable) role of news journalism in the creation of a European public sphere repeatedly finds that “European political journalism is rooted in national agendas” (Tjernström 2008:517, see also Tjernström 2001). In a study on the relationship between journalists and news agents/sources, Palm (2002) finds that the structural and institutional imperatives behind EU-reporting produces a journalism that serves, not the citizens, but the market conditions of modern journalism and the interests of national-level politics. Such findings dovetail with many previous studies of international news. Time and time again, news studies find that foreign news as a textual genre – and international news as a specific mode of journalistic production – is inherently domestic and national (Gans 1980, Cohen et al. 1996, Riegert 1998, 2004, Lee et al. 2000, 2002, Clausen 2003, 2004, Hultén 2006, see also Roosvall 2005). This is also the case in studies where a theoretical globalization perspective is prominent, with its in-built assumptions about national destabilization (see e.g. Demertzis et al. 1999). Some fairly recent contributions are the textual studies of Ekecrantz (2004) and Lee et al. (2000), and Clausen’s (2004) study on the organizational level of news production.

Summarizing a number of studies of Scandinavian news representations of Eastern European countries, Ekecrantz (2004) finds startling continuities and similarities between the images provided by journalism in the 1920s and in the
According to Ekecrantz, “[t]here is a fixed, very narrow, and very stable repertoire of descriptive, discursive techniques when reporting from abroad” (p. 61). An “orientalist” model, he suggests, may in fact be inherent in foreign reporting as such. In an attempt to explain the constitution of this model he suggests, among other things, that the historical relationship between journalism and national elites is a decisive factor.

In their comparative textual study of the transfer of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, Lee et al. (2000) find that this media event was “given distinct media representations by various nations through the prisms of their dominant ideologies as defined by power structures, cultural repertoires and politico-economic interests” (p. 296). The authors use the concept of “domestication” to signify the process whereby international events, states or processes defined as news are adapted to the dominant interests and ideologies on the level of nation-states. This adaptation, they assert, leads to differences and ideological divides within nations being downplayed and “dwarfed by media differences between nations” (ibid.). Furthermore, “[f]oreign news agendas are even more closely attuned to elite conceptions of the world than are domestic news agendas” (ibid.). Accordingly, the authors claim that the characterization of the relation between journalism and the socio-political order as an essentially reproductive one emerges as all the more apparent when it comes to international news production.

By contrast, Clausen’s (2003, 2004) study of news domestication locates such processes more concretely on the organizational level of news production. Here, the concept of domestication does not primarily refer to “overt measures to protect national identity by controlling inflows of foreign information” (2004:29). Rather, she stresses the relative autonomy of the organizational and professional levels of news production when she defines the concept as “processes of making information comprehensible to audiences in a given culture” (ibid.).

Drawing on fieldwork from Japanese television newsrooms, along with comparative textual analysis of Danish and Japanese newscasts, Clausen is able to identify both global and local/national features of news production. Specifically, she finds that the general formats, “packaging strategies” and genre features of the different news programmes tend to be based on one of either the English public service style of the BBC or the main commercial broadcasting networks in the US. Consequently, the form of national news broadcasting tends to display universal traits.

Also universal however is the adaptation of content to the national socio-political context. Comparing the Japanese and Danish news stations’ coverage of the 1995 UN Conference on Women in Beijing, the national differences indeed “dwarf” the differences between commercial and public service stations within the countries – although these are not insignificant, especially in Japan (p. 37–40). Whereas the Japanese stations tended to relate the theme of the conference to the
structure of gender relations in Japan, the Danish stations “chose negative frames of reference for their stories” – expressing condescension for example about the fact that China was the host for the conference (p. 35). In the Japanese news-rooms, by contrast, “political and diplomatic relations were of great concern” (ibid.). In the end, Clausen suggests that although the formats, presentation and framing seem to belong to a universal language of news journalism, “the national positioning and involvement in world affairs as important factors in the choice of themes and actors indicates deliberate ‘domestication’ strategies by national broadcasters” (p. 36). These, Clausen suggests, should be viewed as strategies for adapting international information to the assumed needs and preferences of the national audiences. In the end then, domestication is to be seen against the rationale of the news industry’s business concerns. By means of the often very resource demanding domestication strategies, “national broadcasters, in spite of growing international competition, maintain a competitive edge” (ibid.).

**Banal Nationalism in Media Discourse**

Apart from the study of news, there has been a notable increase recently in the publication of case studies on “banal” forms of nationalism across many genres of media output. In one way or another, these studies probably all owe a great deal to Michael Billig’s polemical essay *Banal Nationalism* (1995). The argument of this widely cited piece is that nationalism tends to be neglected in established nation-states. However, this neglect does not mean that it is nonexistent. On the contrary, Billig argues that oblivion is one of the *modus operandi* of all dominant ideologies. In contrast to orthodox social and political theories, which tend to define nationalism as an extreme expression of patriotism or racism/xenophobia, he sees banal nationalism as a normal condition. Nationalism is imbedded in everyday life as well as in contemporary (un)consciousness, routine symbols and habits of language, and it constantly implicates the nation as a taken-for-granted identity. Launching the concept of banal nationalism, he proceeds to deconstruct “the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced” (Billig 1995:6) throughout the book.

Billig designates news journalism as one important source of banal nationalism. In “The Day Survey” an analysis is conducted of ten British newspapers on one and the same day (pp. 109–127). Not surprisingly, considering the overall argument of the book, he finds the nation to be subtly flagged in various ways: through the military metaphors of the sports sections, the overall division of news into “foreign” and “domestic”, and above all the explicit and implicit employment of deictic markers throughout the pages.

Billig’s book has been influential in a variety of contexts. In media and communication studies there has been a proliferation of case studies citing the book in
recent years. Virtually all of the studies cited below refer to the book, and a great number of them employ the concept of banal nationalism in their analyses.

The one-day news survey strategy has been adopted in more systematic ways by Yumul and Özkırımlı (2000) in Turkey, and by Law (2001) in the case of newspapers addressing a Scottish audience. By and large, the former study comprises a substantiation of Billig’s findings and arguments in a Turkish context. The authors conclude that the Turkish press is compliant with central propositions of a national ideology, and takes them for granted unless news journalism is confronted with anomalies that do not fit these propositions (Yumul and Özkırımlı 2000:801).

Higgins (2004) presents a study of the specific uses of “lexical location tokens” in the coverage of a domestic political event. Comparing the UK and the Scottish selection, he finds that lexical items signifying the category of Scotland are more prevalent in the Scottish newspapers than the categories of Britain and England in their British counterparts. Generally, the findings are in line with those of Law (2001), suggesting that the manifest uses of explicit references to the home nation are important components in the Scottish news discourse. These differences are to be seen in the context of Scotland being “a nation coming to political maturity” (Higgins 2004:645).

Partly expanding the notion of banal nationalism as the primary means of reproduction mostly in established nations, Frosh and Wolfsfeld (2006) argue that the Israeli case is slightly different. Being a nation “undergoing severe, protracted political and often military crisis” one finds a more demonstrative variant of banal nationalism here (p. 107). Radio and television in particular have developed specific audiovisual strategies for representing the resilience of everyday life from below. Close readings of news representations of Palestinian suicide bombings reveal, the authors argue, a number of discursive strategies, or “mechanisms”, by which the viewer is drawn into the represented national community as a “shared experiential space and common history” (p. 127). The authors launch “mediated civic nationhood” as a useful term for the version of banal nationalism propagated by Israeli news media in a situation where crisis and threat from Palestinian militants themselves are “banal”.

Studies of banal nationalism have also been carried out in the domain of popular culture. Aslama and Pantti (2007) and Dhoest (2005) find the nation (Finland and Flanders respectively) being subtly, and not so subtly, flagged in the production of reality television. Though hardly “banal” in expression and style, the relation between sports, media and nationality has been analysed by quite a few media researchers (e.g. Blain et al. 1993, Boyle and Haynes 1996, Alabarces et al. 2001, Jackson 2004, Tzanelli 2006, Eriksson 2006b). Questioning the assumption that the global sports and media circus transcends nationalism, Boyle and
Haynes (1996:549) argue that “mediated sport [is] a forum through which cultural and national identities are projected”.

As Phillip Schlesinger (1991) has remarked, the ongoing constitution of nationality works among other things through the recognition and construction of perceived external and internal threats (see also Balibar [1994:63] and Gans [1980:20–21]). Accordingly, Brookes (1999) has explored the nationalist implications of scaremongering news representations of the BSE/CJD (“Mad Cow Disease”) crisis in Great Britain, whereas Hughes (2005) has conducted a study which finds that the UK press frames the issue of genetically modified crops mainly as a foreign threat.

The references to a logic of national reproduction through the identification of external threats touch upon the field of research that deals with the role of the media in the representation and construction of immigrants and ethnic minorities in relation to “majority” populations. Although this rich field of research cannot be treated fairly in this context, it should be pointed out that the results from a vast number of research efforts within this area can be interpreted as indicating the prevalence of this logic in representations of ethnic minorities in news media (see e.g. ter Wal et al. 2005, van Dijk 1991, Eide 2002, Hultén 2006, Hussain 2003, Löwander 1997).

However, influenced by postcolonial theorizing and critique, some recent Swedish media studies of immigration and race/ethnicity issues (Hultén 2006, Brune 1999, 2002, 2004, Bredström 2002) may be regarded as more explicit justifications of Schlesinger’s observation above. Studying the media’s reporting and debate surrounding the “Rissne Rape”, a suspected multi-perpetrator rape that occurred in Stockholm in the year 2000, Bredström (2002) discovers that the interpretive framework of the media representations significantly alters as the immigrant backgrounds of the main suspects are revealed by the police. Up until then, a psychological framework dominated the media coverage, explaining the act of violent sexual behaviour with reference to individual pathologies, using the quasi-scientific language of “low self-esteem”, “lacking empathy”, “ego-deficiency” and so on. Following the disclosure, these explanations are abandoned. With few exceptions they are replaced by a familiar explanatory model of foreign patriarchal culture, transforming the female victim of non-immigrant origin into something like a symbol of the nation under attack from a male Other (Bredström 2002:196).

In a similar vein, Brune (1999) and Hultén (2006) find that Swedish news media participate in a double identity construction when covering issues of race/ethnicity and immigration. Drawing on postcolonial theories of stereotyping, Brune characterizes news discourse on immigration as replete with historically sedimented stereotypes of various kinds, all of which, at the same time as they construct Others, convey information about the very origin of the stereotype – or,
more precisely, about the desired self-image attributed to the implied community of readers of news journalism.

Thus, the discourse on sexual violence presented in the case above can be said to imply a notion of menacing foreign patriarchy. This notion is wholly contingent on the chauvinistic presupposition of its absent mirror image: Sweden, the “virginal” and gender-equal home territory. By excluding, at least temporarily, sexual violence from the nation, the community can emerge united regarding some self-evident assumptions about gender equality. In her study, Bredström (2002) interprets this logic of representation as an instance of “banal nationalism” as defined by Billig (1995).

In sum, the wide variety of case studies cited above seems indeed able to indicate that manifestations of nationalist frames of meaning are prevalent in contemporary media discourses. Moreover, these manifestations seem to come about in relation to the most disparate topics and genres – EU politics and immigration issues, and news journalism, sports culture and popular reality television, to name but a few.

There is a tendency among all the above studies of “banal-nationalist” media discourse only to a limited extent to relate their case findings to general institutionalized means of media production, or the standardized formats and basic properties of certain genres – for example the workings of the meaningfulness/cultural proximity news value of journalism (Galtung and Ruge 1965). Such inferences may arguably be able to explain the character and ideological implications of a certain way of representing nationality in, say, the reporting on genetically modified crops in the UK news press (Hughes 2005) or mad cow disease (Brookes 1999). Now, it is almost as if every new “topic” – that is, every new wave of BSE hysteria in the news, every European Football Championship, every new extensively covered “immigration problem” etc. – deserves its own discourse analysis, specifically targeted at uncovering banal-nationalist sub-texts.

The fundamental problem here, as I would have it, is not only that there may be a “relative paucity of recent research” on the relation between media and nationality/nationalism in terms of “specific case studies” (Brookes 1999:247). Indeed, I doubt that there in fact is such paucity in contemporary media research in the first place. At any rate, and above all, this research is under-theorized, in the sense that the leap between general social theory on nationality (e.g. Anderson 1991, Billig 1995) and identity (e.g. Hall 1992) on the one hand, and the empirical study of media discourse on the other, is not sufficiently substantiated by theories and conceptual distinctions specific to the main object of study within the discipline. Obviously, this critical point only applies if one is willing to concede that the main object of study for this discipline is mediated quasi interaction (Thompson 1994) as institutionalized means of discursive production and consumption rather than “topics”, “subject matters” or different types of configura-
tions of nation-states (Scotland/Great Britain and Catalonia/Spain constituting anomalous cases, the nation of Israel being banally reproduced despite its perennial state of crisis, and so on).

This also constitutes the decisive difference between the banal nationalism research and the domestication studies cited in the previous section.

**Nationalism and Audiences**

Empirical audiences are entirely absent from the media output studies cited above in the “banal nationalism” section. This hardly comprises a shortcoming in itself. However, the absence of a reception perspective becomes conspicuous as the obvious ambition of many of the studies in this section is to say something about national “identity”, “identification” or even the “construction” or “reinforcement” of national identity. Brookes, for example, cites Stuart Hall when claiming that “language is partly constitutive of cultural identity”. Furthermore, his study “uses textual analysis in assessing the role of newspaper reading in the process of national identity” (Brookes 1999:249). Terms and phrases like these (e.g. “reading”, “process”) certainly signify an interest in how the images of nationality identified may be received, interpreted and used by real people.

Still, insofar as there is such interest it is rarely put into empirical practice. As Alexander Dhoest, commenting on this lack puts it: “a major obstacle for such research is the challenge of investigating a concept as abstract and multilayered as ‘national identity’ in concrete, everyday media use”. When interested in this problem it seems obviously a whole lot easier to “reflect theoretically on the role of television in forming national communities” than “to locate this in actual viewing processes” (Dhoest 2007:56).

Noteworthy here is that the textual analysis of *Nationwide* (Brunsdon and Morley 1978) that anticipated *The ‘Nationwide’ Audience* (Morley 1980) in fact found that the ideological implications of the *Nationwide* television program could not be understood outside a national logic – in fact, the whole show may be said to presuppose the fundamental backdrop of a “nation of families”. Unfortunately, at least for my concerns here, the subsequent decoding study did not maintain the particular focus on how the reception of the *Nationwide* program might function ideologically in this respect. To my knowledge, no decoding study has retained such an analysis to this day.

There have been a few studies that focus broadly on the relation between the media and their audiences with a specific interest in questions of nationalism or national identity. None of these, however, investigates the specific relation between the moments of encoding and decoding of interest here.

First of all, Dhoest’s (2007) undeniably creative oral history study of elderly viewers’ memories of the Flemish public service television’s drama production deserves mentioning. Although partly adopting a historical perspective, the study
may indeed be taken as illustrative of the constitution of a “national mnemonic community” centred on a historical archive of common reference points in popular fiction.

In a contemporary Chinese context, Guo et al. (2007) have conducted an extensive face-to-face survey of 600 randomly sampled Shanghai residents. It focuses on the media’s impact on both “latent” (“banal”) and “manifest” forms of nationalism. The mass media, according to the authors, are engaged in “a constant reproduction of national identity” (Guo et al. 2007:470). Accordingly, the study takes as its point of departure a media influence model in which the dependent variables are latent and manifest expressions of nationalism, and the independent variables include the respondents’ patterns of media use, with a specific focus on local, national and international news consumption (p. 473). In addition, a set of intervening variables targeting the cognitive resources and capacities of the respondents are included in the model.

Employing statistical analysis the authors basically find direct effects of news consumption on manifest nationalism but only indirect effects on latent nationalism (p. 477). In the latter case, the intervening variables referred to as cognitive resources and capacities above seem to play a significant role as mediators of influence.

Of main interest here is that a study like this by necessity will have to be utterly reductionistic with regards to the independent variable – that is, media consumption as a form of social interaction between audiences and texts. The weakness of the extensive design is that it cannot explore how the national frames of news journalism can function in reception. It can only point towards possible sources of influence through a quasi-experimental design that isolates factors from each other and examines patterns of correlation. But by necessity it has to bypass the inherently symbolic process of making the nation meaningful in the concrete contexts of media consumption.

This weakness is however only partly related to the extensive (quantitative) design itself. Kiely et al. (2006) set out to explore the relationship between national identity and attitudes to the media in Scotland. Drawing on a qualitative interview study of people born in Scotland as well as English born people living in Scotland, they are able show that attitudes to the Scottish media vary with how the respondents view themselves in terms of national identity. In this way the study is taken as illustrating how national identity and attitudes to the media are intertwined with each other “in complex and diverse ways that we are only now beginning to comprehend” (p. 489).

Although the study allegedly “explores associations between how people use the media and how they make sense of their national identity” (p. 473) the specific character and properties of such “associations” become fuzzy despite the intensive design. The interview strategy actively puts nationality and the media
ont the conversation agenda, prompting the respondents to talk about their “at-
titudes” towards the media and national identity in a general sense. The interview
guide even contained a section in which the respondents were asked “whether
they were conscious about the differences in reporting in the media north and
south of the border” (p. 490 n6). In this way the “associations” discovered were
induced directly by the interview design, and they in essence consist of self-
reported “attitudes to the media”. One may suspect that these self-reported atti-
tudes differ considerably from concrete reception and consumption – whether
occurring in real life, or if researched employing a design in which a clearer dis-
tinction is made between interview questions and research questions. Again, even
this intensive approach in fact only seems to scratch the surface of how mediated
forms of symbolic interaction may contribute to notions of nationality.

The study conducted by Olausson (2005) comes very close to the specific di-
rection taken in the present project. Aiming to contribute to theories on citizen-
ship and globalization, the collective meaning-making surrounding three major
events, each of which was given extensive attention in Swedish mass media is ex-
plored.

The study identifies the discursive resources and repertoires employed in the
construction of meaning during focus group discussions about these events. It
also locates meaning making within the context of structural power relations.
Two main categories of identity constructions are discerned in the material (pp.
223–225). The nationalized identity is characterized by the constitution of a
community that functions affirmatively in relation to existing structures of state
power and in accordance with received notions of Swedish identity. This identity
tends to draw upon media discourses rather than interpersonal communication.

The sub-national identity is mainly expressed by ethnic minorities and political
activists in the focus group interviews. This identity construction draws almost
exclusively upon interpersonal communication, and it involves opposition both to
received notions of Swedish identity and existing structures of state power.

The first category, Olausson argues, is predominant. Thus, despite the global-
ization theorists’ insistence upon the possibility that mediated communication
may facilitate a global form of consciousness and identifications not bound by
nationality, Olausson concludes that the “case studies provide no indications that
a global community or transnational identifications to any significant degree are
in progress [...] at least not among the Swedish meaning makers” (p. 225). She
does however observe the possible genesis of such identifications for instance
among the respondent groups that comprise ethnic minorities and political activ-
ists.

Altogether, the findings in Olausson’s study constitute a forceful argument for
the relevance – and indeed the implications – of a national logic for meaning-
making. Above all, she is able to provide solid evidence to support the idea that
the character of the community that is articulated may be derived from the discursive repertoires – functionally related to self-identified social positions – which citizens bring into play in the collective construction of meaning.

Even in this study, however, the explanatory range does diminish when it comes to the actual relation between media representations and audience interpretations of and reactions to the three cases. Although the interview design facilitates some crude distinctions to be made, with regards to whether the object of focus group talk is the event itself or the media representation of the event, the specifics of this relation is to a large degree out of the study’s scope. Olausson herself concedes that “the term ‘media discourse’ is employed rather general in the study and it is not able to capture the role of specific media in the meaning making, nor how different program formats and genres interact in the meaning making” (p. 63). Broadly speaking, the pertinence of this relation to the articulation of national communities is demonstrated by the fact that national identities in the interview material tends to draw on mediated discourses rather than interpersonal communication – and the other way around (pp. 223–224). This relation does, however, beg further exploration.

**Contributions of the Study**

To sum up, previous research has made a number of important contributions to the area in question which can be incorporated into the present study. First, the research on international news points towards a logic of domestication that transforms international events into news consumption units for an assumed audience defined in national terms. Taken together, these studies provide strong indices that the news institution can be plausibly conceptualized as a national institution in certain key respects.

Second, the case studies of banal nationalism demonstrate (hardly surprisingly) that a variety of news topics can be represented within national frames of reference. Interestingly, a number of case studies in different national contexts identify a seemingly prevalent logic by which news journalism tends to depict phenomena defined as undesirable by common moral yardsticks as residing outside of the national community to which the news texts are addressed. This principle can apply to such diverse topics as genetically modified crops on the one hand, and male sexual violence on the other. This ultimately points towards a prevailing principle of national framing: negative identification as a subtle and submerged basis for granting the national community meaningful content. The national community, then, under normal circumstances being barely visible, can be delineated and defined by the very act of symbolic expulsion of undesirable elements.
Third, although they are few and far between, studies that focus empirically on the relation between audiences and the media do indeed seem to indicate that mediated forms of interaction may play a significant role in the constitution of nationality as it is subjectively experienced among people.

Three principal weak points can be identified in the previous research.

First, there is the apparent tendency among the single-case studies of banal-nationalist media output not to relate their findings to the fundamental properties and features of the institutions that they, in fact, study. “Nationalist” media content may appear in various genres, and with regard to many “topics” (sports, immigration, politics, pandemic diseases etc.). But how these topics relate, for instance, to the institutional conditions of news as a mode of production, or even its most basic genre properties, tends to remain largely unexplored.

Second, the ambition of drawing conclusions about the media’s “reinforcement” of nationality, or national identity, in a number of studies of media discourse renders the absence of empirical audience studies all too conspicuous.

Lastly, even when audiences/citizens are empirically present in studies on the relationship between nationality and the media, the research designs employed have not yet enabled media and communication research to exhaustively identify and explore how nationalist mechanisms may be active in the concrete interactions between readers and texts.

The aim of the present study is to address these weak points, the latter two in particular. It sets out to identify what basic properties and features of the genre of news journalism that can function to present national implications in their representations of social reality. It sets out to explore how such structures can function in the social interaction between news texts and empirical audiences to provide nationalist closure within which social reality is interpreted and imagined.
2 THEORETICAL POSITION

Crofts Wiley (2004) proposes an analytical framework for the study of nationality within media and communication studies supposedly well suited for the contemporary context of globalization. Nationality, he argues, should be viewed as “one particular logic among others that organize economic, political, technological, and cultural territories and flows” (p. 78). Thus the focus is shifted towards inductive analyses of a wide variety of spaces and contexts that may or may not be contingent upon the nation as an organizational logic. He argues for a project of mapping out, rather than presupposing, the relevance and implications of the national logic, “in such a way as to reveal and open up new articulations not apparent on the surface of an event or site” (p. 89). Similarly, Segal and Handler (2006) assert that a truly fruitful approach to the study of nationality is to ditch any ambitions to predefine it in such terms at all.

The present project certainly does not want to treat nationality as a taken-for-granted “container” of society (this seems to be the main concern for the authors cited above). However, the adopting of an entirely inductive approach to the object of study would make one oblivious not only to the findings referred to in the review of previous research above, but also to the objective existence of established nation-states.

The aim of the present chapter, then, is to offer a description of the object of study in theoretical terms, both on a formal and a substantive level. Relying upon the formal theory of nationality offered by Jørgensen (1994) reproductions and transformations of nationality are conceived of as nationalism and nationalist closure. Some time ago, Hall (1980) proposed a theoretical framework for the study of the constitution of dominant social forms through mediated quasi interaction. With a number of clarifications and complements the present study takes the baseline assumptions of this framework as a point of departure for the analysis of nationalism in the social interaction between audiences and news discourse.

A Theory of Nationality

To my knowledge, Marianne Winther Jørgensen’s (1994) dissertation in Danish, Forskel og enhed (Diversity and Unity), constitutes the only fairly recent attempt at a social theory on nationality that (1) does not contain a polemical agenda (as e.g. Billig 1995 or Miller 1997); (2) is abstract in the sense that it is not necessarily bound to specific empirical fields of study, and thus to some degree transcends
disciplinary divisions (as opposed to e.g. Crofts Wiley 2004); and (3) is a social theory rather than a historical account (as e.g. Anderson 1991).²

Developing the perspective largely from a critique of some of the established theorists of nationalism (Anderson 1991, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1990, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Smith 1991), Jørgensen retains their insights, while at the same time seeking to transcend what she views as some of their anachronistic and essentialist qualities. Instead of placing both the creation and reproduction of nations some two hundred years or so back in time (the advent of the national daily press, the consolidation of state apparatuses, the crisis of communities based on religion etc.) she prefers to view nationality as a never-ending project. Thus, both the processes of change and reproduction have to be studied within the same synchronic framework, since “the history of the origins of nationality is not the whole story of nationality” (Jørgensen 1994:5). In brief, Jørgensen defines nationality as the relationship between social reality (nationscape), cultural conceptions of reality (nation) and practices that generate correspondences between social reality and conceptions of reality (nationalism). Figure 2.1 illustrates the interrelatedness of these concepts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Area of inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationscape</td>
<td>Social structure, institutions (objectified social reality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>Culture (experienced social reality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>Closure (discursive and non-discursive practices that generate correspondences between nation and nationscape)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.1 The concepts of nationality. Source: Adapted from Jørgensen (1994).

**Nationscape**

The concept of nationscape covers those historically established institutions, laws, practices, knowledge and traditions in social and material reality that (1) exist independently of actors’ perceptions and conceptions, and (2) are tied to – but not equatable with – the established nation. The first and most obvious example is the institutional complex of the state. Others are educational systems, public

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² Calhoun (1997) could arguably fit these criteria as well. However, the simplicity and clarity of argument in Jørgensen’s dissertation, as well as the fact that it predates some widely recognized contributions to the field (e.g. Billig 1995) render it a natural point of departure for this study.
service broadcasting systems, and the geographical territory of the state. Less apparent examples are railroad systems and postal systems (though surely not commonly thought of as “national”) whose range and scope coincides with that of state territory (which is itself a crucial part of nationscape).

Jørgensen’s nationscape would also include institutions in the wider, sociological meaning of the term, such as sedimted practices, official language, official historical knowledge, nationally sanctioned literary canons, and commonalities of interest, that, by and large, are common denominators for members of a certain nation at a given moment in time. This is not controversial. The point, however, is that any attempt to objectively define the essence of a nation will fail in the sense that some people or characteristics will be illegitimately excluded from the community under any such description. Furthermore, any given piece of social reality described as “a nation” will always display inconsistencies, leakages and discrepancies with regard to, for example, ethnicity, class, region and gender. Thus, the italicized expressions above are what should be emphasized here. Or to be precise – it is the “largely”, “by and large” and “not equatable with” properties of nationscape that provide nationality with its dynamic qualities (Jørgensen 1994:62).

Nation

The nation, in Jørgensen’s view, comprises nothing more nor less than the implicit cultural meanings ascribed to nationscape. That is, the institutions, practices and commonalities in nationscape mean nothing in themselves, but become intelligible as the nation only through a sedimted “cultural grammar” conditioning the way social and material reality are experienced by people. To some extent, the specific contents and qualities of this grammar are questions for empirical research, but Jørgensen (1994:96–98) singles out some basic traits which would apply to most nations. The nation tends to be experienced as a community that transcends differences between its members. As such it is commonly regarded as natural and involuntary, as well as universal, since everybody must “have” a nationality. Moreover, this community may often be imagined as based upon some essential qualities (culture, ethnicity, language, “national character” etc.) supporting the logic of naturalness. Politically, the nation is closely tied to the idea of a sovereign state that governs itself through the will of the people. Finally, the nation is imagined as both limited and distinct from other nations. This is not merely a question of borders and geography, but also implies perceived qualitative differences – be they cultural, political, historical or otherwise – between nations.

The conception of the nation as a “cultural grammar” echoes, when applied to mass mediated communication, common themes in previous research into the history of public service institutions and/or “national media culture” (Scannell...
These histories, however, display a tendency to view the “national media culture” or “national public sphere” as a static entity shared by all the members of the nation (Morley 2000:113–127). By contrast, Jørgensen’s framework makes national culture contingent upon articulatory practices rather than essential characteristics (cf. Segal and Handler 2006).

**Nationalism**

If nationscape refers to the “dirty reality” dimension of nationality, and nation to an idealistic cultural grammar of “imagined community”, the question arises: What is the nature of the relation between the level of institutions/social structure and that of cultural meaning? The answer is contingent rather than necessary. Also, it is a highly political relation, since establishing a cultural grammar by which social reality is interpreted, experienced and lived involves power struggles (Jørgensen 1994:109–110). Jørgensen brings this political dynamic to the very heart of the questions of nationality.

Practices that establish nationality are best regarded as closures of social reality within national horizons. Jørgensen writes:

> In the [national] closure, elements in social reality are given specific relations to one another in terms of unity and difference. [...] The closure locks something out; it sets a horizon. The horizon is the border past which one cannot see in a distinct closure. Not all elements of social reality are contained within a given closure. The closure decides which elements are included, and how they are included (p. 112).

The “national communities are constituted in processes whereby other possible communities criss-crossing the nation are suppressed or ignored” (p. 110). This constitution is never to be seen as fully established, but as ongoing and temporary, since there is always the possibility of other commonalities and other cultural grammars of community (for example based on region, class, gender or race/ethnicity) being articulated in practice. Drawing on Ernesto Laclau’s (1990, 1996) terminology, Jørgensen describes the process of implying a community through action as *hegemonic interventions*. The dynamic process of establishing the nation through interventionist action is, finally, what Jørgensen terms *nationalism*.

It is through nationalism that various phenomena in social reality may come to present themselves as national. What constitutes nationalism (and does not) cannot be easily pinned down (cf. Hearn 2006). Nationalism includes all the practices and actions that imply the nation as if it were a perfectly transparent mirror-image of social reality. Practices that generate correspondence between culture and social reality can be carried out strategically, as for instance in institutionalized politics, as well as unintentionally in mundane contexts of everyday life (Jør-
Gensen 1994:134) (cf. Billig’s [1995] concept “banal nationalism”). The point, however, is that the very existence of nations, even of so-called established nations, is contingent upon the reiteration of such practices.

Two points are important to emphasize here, since they will have concrete implications for the notions of “reproduction”, “reinforcement” or “transformation” employed in the following.

(1) First, nationalism can in a sense involve ideological forms of representation of reality. However, “ideological” must not be understood as distortions of reality, since nations objectively exist as nationscapes. On the other hand, Jørgensen also argues that social reality does not determine what kind of articulations of community become established (remember the “by and large”-character of nationscape). However, in nationscape she finds a concept that can account for those “real” historically established institutions, commonalities and practices that may make closures of nationality more possible and probable than others (Jørgensen 1994:63, 112). Consequently, nationalist practices are to be conceptualized as totalizations of social reality.

Consider, for example, the statement “X is a wealthy country”. Such a statement is not necessarily false, since it is usually qualified in ways that are at least internally consistent (i.e. “Its GNP per capita is Y dollars for 2008”). What such a statement does, however, is to imply nationality as an exhaustive representation of social reality. As such it can potentially exclude other ways of assessing how wealth is distributed in society – for example along gender, regional or class lines. This exclusion, this way of establishing a horizon, does not render the proposition false, strictly speaking. It does however provide a totalized version of social reality which is incapable of including certain elements. In line with this reasoning, the validity of the GNP per capita measure is likely to be widely acknowledged and established at least partly because nationscapes objectively exist.

(2) In any given nationalist closure, possible differences are downplayed whereas similarities are put to the fore. However, the content or defining basis of a specific closure tends to be context specific (Jørgensen 1994:107). A given closure may define the nation directly (positively) or indirectly (negatively). The review of previous research indeed indicates that there are great variations in the defining bases of specific closures in news discourse. The nation may be granted meaningful content; for instance negatively by means of the representation of ethnic Others (Brune 1999, 2002, 2004, Bredström 2002, Hultén 2006) or

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3 Although ideology does not constitute a central concept in the study (hence the adjective form), it may be noted that the definition of the concept implied here is broader than those versions that relate the concept closely to the reproduction of, and resistance to, “systematically asymmetrical relations of power” (Thompson 1990, see also e.g. Fairclough 1995). Most likely, the post-Marxist concept of discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) is more to the point here. However, I see no benefits of venturing into the kind of conceptual, even metaphysical, discussions that a stringent application of this theoretical position would entail.
through the identification of genetically modified crops as foreign threats (Hughes 2005). Or it may be positively defined by means of the stereotyping of football styles in terms of national character (e.g. Alabarces et al. 2001, Tzanelli 2006). Apparently, the possibilities are almost endless. Or, as Calhoun has formulated this principle: “As a discursive formation, nationalism shapes the form of representation, not its precise contents or level of inclusion” (Calhoun 1997:124).

The upshot of context-specificity is that one cannot easily define nationalism as dominant or prevalent ways of defining for example “Swedishness” or “Englishness” in terms of national characteristics. A specific closure may recruit one of a multitude of elements. Stereotypes of national character comprise one such element. In other contexts, notions of ethnicity or even skin colour may be the defining basis of nationalist closure (see Jørgensen 1994:133–134). In yet other contexts the geographical territory of the state comprises the main element (as for instance in televised weather reports [see Lövgren 1990]), whereas strictly juridical aspects of citizenship can be recruited elsewhere. In brief, nationality may be reproduced and transformed in a multitude of specific ways in terms of unity and difference. Nationalist closures are by their very nature flexible, and this is what can make them so all-embracing and thus powerful. Or, as Bowman comments on the matter,

the concept of the nation retains its grip on the imaginary of its population precisely by remaining unfixed. In this way, a wide range of persons and collectivities can identify themselves as constituent parts of it without having their readings and their allegiances to it challenged or denied by particular and exclusionary definitions (Bowman 1994:144).

Consequently, the fact that it seems to be increasingly difficult to come to agreement as to the contents and character of national identities in contemporary public discourse does not necessarily have to be interpreted as a weakening of the nation-state form. On the contrary, the perennial search for such an essence may in fact function to reinforce nationality as a foundation for identification and sense of community (Miller 1997, Hutchinson 2005:ch. 2–4).

**Nationality and the Media**

I propose that three main lines of inquiry emerge within the discipline of media and communication studies as a result of the clarifications offered by Jørgensen’s theory on nationality. These are summarized in figure 2.2. As indicated by the figure, Jørgensen’s distinctions between nationscape, nation, and nationalism
spell out both actual and possible approaches to the study of nationality within media and communication studies.

The first line of inquiry comprises investigations of the institutional-geographical location and reach of media systems on a macro level. Structures of ownership and the composition of audience markets comprise the main areas of analysis here. The overall question posed would be whether, and to what degree the media as institutions may be considered to function according to a national logic (cf. Crofts Wiley 2004). As many of these accounts suggest, the expression “national media landscape” may once have been warranted, but these days the role of the media as a part of nationscape is highly ambiguous (Herman and McChesney 1997, Murdock 1990, McPhail 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Area of inquiry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationscape</td>
<td>Structures of ownership and production, composition of audience markets (e.g. Schiller 1992, McPhail 2005, Palm 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>National media culture (e.g. Lövgren 1990, Hanusch 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>Closure as the possible outcome of encoding and decoding (e.g. Clausen 2004, Brunsdon and Morley 1978, Olausson 2005)</td>
</tr>
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Figure 2.2 Principal areas of inquiry into the relation between media and nationality. Source: Adapted from Jørgensen (1994)

News journalism is, for example, historically modelled upon the nation state. Obviously, this does allow for “transnationality” in the sense that events from all around the world may find their way into the “foreign” sections of newspapers. It has been global to some degree in this respect for a very long time (Boyd-Barrett 2000). The structures of ownership in the production of news journalism may vary with regard to nationality. The main point in a macro analysis of news journalism’s institutional-geographical logic would likely be, however, that the audience markets of news journalism are almost exclusively defined in national terms. It employs networks of established sources that are basically national in scope, and politics tends to be defined primarily in national terms (see e.g. Palm 2002, Clausen 2004, Lee et al. 2002, Preston 2009). The same national logic would most likely be identified were the public broadcasting systems in Northern European countries to be analysed in this respect (see e.g. Van Den Bulck 2001).
On the other hand, if one adopts the domains of entertainment and popular culture – such as for example the movie industry, the video games industry, and music production – as units of analysis, systems of media production, distribution and patterns of consumption emerge that are not very national at all. Rather, the audience markets for their products tend to be Western, if not global in some instances. Concepts such as “electronic colonialism” (McPhail 2005) and “cultural imperialism” (Schiller 1992) signify the global relations of domination involved in the production and distribution of cultural material across the globe. In a similar fashion the ownership structures of the main players in the global media economy know few national boundaries. The main point here would be that most giant media conglomerates operate on a level where one can speak more accurately of a global capitalist system (Wallerstein 1979) than of nationality as the organizing logic.

Following Jørgensen, however, an institutional-structural analysis cannot exhaustively account for nationality, since institutions and nations rarely, if ever, coincide:

The “discrete units” that different institutional complexes delimit do not converge by necessity. [...] The mass media today ranges from the local newspaper, addressing a confined geographical area, to the satellite television channels, technically transmitting to a global audience. If the nation equals institutions exclusively, one will have considerable trouble locating the national units (Jørgensen 1994:67).

The second area of inquiry is the line chosen for example by Lövgren (1990) in his attempt to specify a historically constituted cultural grammar of Sweden – “what every Swede shares at a given moment in time” (p. 87) – in an analysis of the heyday of public service broadcasting. Similarly, Hanusch (2008), in a comparative study on the reporting on deaths in newspapers in Australia and Germany, suggests that certain objective traits of the countries’ respective “national cultures” may explain the differences identified. As stated a number of times previously, there are a number of problems involved in these kinds of endeavours. Above all, projects whose aim is to specify common cultural denominators on a national level will ultimately fail, not only because some people or characteristics will be illegitimately excluded under any such description, but also because there are always other possible common denominators criss-crossing the social fabric (e.g. gender, region, ethnicity, class) that may be equally plausible to appoint as underlying logics of structuration. Accordingly, to the extent that such approaches “succeed” in discovering objective cultural traits of different nations, they themselves risk becoming nothing more than just another nationalist closure

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4 The institutional complex of the state would be an exception here. States coincide more often than not with nations, though not by necessity (e.g. Catalonia–Spain).
that recruits the “national character” of this or that country as an element (this, I believe, is the crucial insight brought into the field of nationality theory by Jørgensen).

The third area of inquiry is where the present study finds its place. Here, the substantive task for the media and communications scholar is to investigate how institutionalized forms of (mediated) interaction can function to render nationalist closure possible. It leaves the content and level of inclusion/exclusion in particular contexts as a partly open question, and directs attention to the mechanisms by which institutionalized forms of discursive production and consumption may function to reproduce and transform nationality. Nationalist closure is thus studied in terms of how it may be the outcome of moments of encoding and decoding of mediated discourse. Research efforts in this area of study have been referred to in some detail in the previous chapter (e.g. Bredström 2002, Clausen 2004, Brunsdon and Morley 1978, Olausson 2005). The remainder of the chapter draws upon the theory of encoding and decoding (Hall 1973a, 1980). In my view, it offers a hitherto unsurpassed conceptualization of processes of reproduction and transformation of established social forms through mediated quasi interaction.

**Encoding/Decoding**

The encoding/decoding framework – originally proposed by Stuart Hall in a stencilled paper in 1973, and subsequently revised for publication in the collected CCCS working papers in book format in 1980 – remains a seminal text for media research in general, and for audience studies in particular. Written with a polemic thrust against the North-American tradition of effects studies, and comprising an indirect critique of Screen-theorizing, the encoding/decoding essay(s) is firmly embedded in a discussion within the emerging field of European media studies in the 1970s (Scannell 2007:204–214).

Subsequent attempts to piece together comprehensive frameworks for the analysis of the social implications of discursive practices have been made – perhaps most notably by Norman Fairclough in his more text-centred framework for the analysis of “communicative events” (see e.g. Fairclough 1992, 1995) and John B. Thompson’s (1990) media sociological agenda for the critique of ideology. These contributions bring in a number of important components from their disciplinary traditions (sociolinguistics and sociology), but in my view they add little to the baseline principles of Hall’s framework. Furthermore, because of its theoretical ambition, simplicity, and the seemingly perennial ability of the original texts to pinpoint problem areas of great pertinence to basic audience research
(Morley 2006), the encoding/decoding framework is taken as point of departure here.

Mass communication, Hall states at the outset, constitutes “a structure in dominance […] produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments – production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction” (Hall 1980:128). Framed by professional knowledge, technology, and economic conditions, the moment of production constitutes the first “meaning structure”, or the moment of “encoding”. Here, pieces of historical reality are transformed into meaningful discourse via rules of signification. The professional code employed in production enjoys a “relatively independent” position that “applies criteria and transformational operations of its own, especially those of a technico-practical nature” (p. 132). The important point, however, is that the professional code, though relatively autonomous, works within a dominant cultural order. Consequently, the production moment tends to inscribe this dominant cultural order into its products in the form of “preferred meanings”. “The domains of preferred meanings”, Hall writes (p. 135),

have the whole social order embedded in them as a set of meanings, practices and beliefs: the everyday knowledge of social structures, of “how things work for all practical purposes in this culture”, the rank order of power and interest and the structure of legitimations, limits and sanctions.

This is the crucial theoretical point in the framework where a constructionist take on language and signification joins forces with an Althusserian Marxist conception of social formation. Hall admits that the question of how media professionals are able to work both within a relatively independent code and reproduce the dominant cultural order “is a complex matter” (p. 137), but in the end, the Althusserian thrust of the argument tends to gloss over this complexity in the Encoding/Decoding essay.

In Policing the Crisis (Hall et al. 1978), one finds a more nuanced and elaborated theorizing of this relation with a specific focus on news journalism as a mode of discursive “encoding”. News is seen as the “end-product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories” (p. 53). Hall et al. single out two central structures at this stage: the bureaucratic and standardized organization of news production, and the professional ideology of news values. Starting from this point, they provide an account of how news journalism under these conditions may be active in the production of a dominant cultural order.

For Hall et al. news is basically all about the dissemination of common sense. The process of making the unexpected, unusual and unpredictable comprehensible draws upon already established “cultural maps” of the social world. “Things
are newsworthy” Hall et al. write, “because they represent the changefulness [...] and the conflictual nature of the world. But such events [...] must be brought within the horizon of the meaningful” (p. 54, see also Hall 1973b:126). At the same time as news constitutes the business of informing about “problematic events” that appear threatening according to common sense assumptions about good/evil, right/wrong etc., news journalism brings these events back within an established framework of understanding which reiterates the baseline assumptions about social and political life. Above all, the assumption of consensus constitutes the fundamental assertion of social and political life in news discourse.

While noting that the assumption of consensus is to a certain extent “an obvious truth” and “the basis of all social communication”, it is the authors’ view that the assumption of convergence of interests, values and perspectives performs ideological work. And while acknowledging that “differences of outlook, disagreement, argument and opposition” regularly occur, such differences tend to be “understood as taking place within a broader framework of agreement” (p. 56). Together with the over-accessing of elite actors in the news, as primary definers, the assumptions of consensus tend to serve the interests of the powerful by glossing over structural discrepancies based for instance on class relations of domination (p. 66).

Basically, then, news can be seen as a conveyor of a common sense moral order – that is, “how things work for all practical purposes in this culture” (Hall 1980:135, see also Hall 1982). This basic function of news is also fairly widely acknowledged among other commentators (see e.g. Gans 1980, Nylund 2000, 2006, Altheide 1997, van Ginneken 1998). Moreover it seems to apply no less to so-called investigative or “critical” forms of reporting which inevitably have to make value judgements based upon presupposed moral orders that the audience is expected to share (Ettema and Glasser 1987, Glasser and Ettema 1989).

In the last instance, however, decoding constitutes the decisive moment in the communication process. This is where the hegemonic struggle takes place. Hall’s conceptualization of this struggle as three ideal typical decoding positions – dominant/hegemonic, negotiated and oppositional – is well known. What eventually emerges from the encoding/decoding framework is a Marxist theory of mass communication without any “guarantees” that the dominant ideology (of capitalism) will succeed in its exercise of symbolic power. The moment of decoding is in essence a “struggle in discourse” (1980:138) which will have to be studied and analysed empirically.

The encoding/decoding model has been routinely criticized ever since its inception. I suggest that two main problem areas emerge as pertinent to address in this context. The first area of concern is the concept of preferred readings/meanings – both the very notion of such a concept as well as its relation to a “dominant cultural order” or “dominant ideology”. The second issue is related to the conceptu-
alization (or, rather, the absence of conceptualization) of the decoding moment in the original framework.

**Preferred Meanings**

For a number of reasons, the notion of preferred meanings has been highly controversial in audience studies. In fact, as Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) have suggested, the debates within the field – as to whether such “preferences” exist at all, and if so, where they might reside, how they relate to the dominant cultural order, or which moment that is to be considered determinative in the first or last instance – may actually be regarded as partly constitutive of the whole reception research tradition since the inception of Stuart Hall’s encoding and decoding model.

**Who Prefers the Preferred Meanings?**

In the encoding/decoding model, the notion of preferred meanings is absolutely central. This is exactly the point where the “dominant cultural order” appears in its concrete discursive form. Decoding, though a determinative moment in the “struggle in discourse”, is not conceived of as a co-creator in the production of meanings. Rather, the moment of decoding always has to deal with textual closures that are already inscribed. The notion of preferred meanings thus seems to point towards a determination “in the first instance”. The original framework is in fact quite clear as to where the preferred meanings reside: they are “materialized” in media texts.

Some critics, most notably those studying the reception and uses of popular culture and fiction, have raised strong objections to the notion of preferred meanings altogether (e.g. Bennett and Woollacott 1987, Fiske 1989a, 1989b). In an ambitious article, Schröder (2000) outlines a comprehensive, “multi-dimensional” model of media reception. The position taken on the issue of preferred meanings is, I believe, illustrative of the continued relevance of the concept. Although this is not his central aim, Schröder is forced to take a hands-on stance towards the question of preferred meanings (or readings). When doing so, he claims it to be “unrewarding for reception researchers to contrast actual readings with the so-called ‘preferred reading’ supposedly inscribed in the media text” (2000:246). Clearly wishing to jettison the concept altogether, he defines the act of basic textual comprehension as a dimension of reception in which readings can be either homogenous or divergent in comparison to each other – not to the text. In this way, the “preferred reading” becomes a property of the readings, not the texts. Any identification of a preferred reading/meaning by a researcher is reduced to yet another decoding in parity with those of the audience members.

Schröder cannot hold on to this position for long. He soon refers to the findings of previous reception research (e.g. Condit 1989) showing that in terms of
basic comprehension, readings usually tend to be fairly convergent, “although they may ‘commute’ into the ‘divergence’ side for the comprehension of specific textual details” (p. 246). Obviously, Schröder is the one who is labelling some textual properties as “details” here, not audience members. This labelling by necessity implies a corresponding notion of a textual “whole”. But a position that ditches any notion of a preferred meaning does in fact disqualify the researcher from even labelling some features as “textual details” and others as more “general” or “overarching” meanings. On the one hand, Schröder views comprehension as a free-floating process dissociated from the text. On the other hand, he must refer to “textual details” when he comments on seemingly deviant comprehensions. The position is, in other words, self-refuting, since readings and comprehensions logically presuppose the existence of independent objects (usually texts) to be read and comprehended (cf. Fetveit 2001:183–185).

Apparently, there is a confusion of methodology and ontology at hand here. Ontologically speaking, insofar as there are artefacts that we refer to as “texts” preferred meanings undoubtedly exist. As Fairclough (1995:16) points out, it is “self-evident” that the “range of potential interpretations will be constrained and delimited according to the nature of the text”. The nature of the text, in Fairclough’s sense, is congenial to the notion of preferred meanings. In essence, the acknowledgment of the existence of textual preferred meanings equals the acceptance of causality – that is, that texts can function to bring about certain forms of meaning but not others. Methodologically speaking, it is practically impossible to predict concrete audience responses from textual analysis. But this impossibility does not entail the ontological conclusion that textual devices, genre conventions and narrative structures also lack capacities of enabling and restricting the meaning potential in specific directions. In line with this reasoning, Schröder, along with other commentators (see e.g. Fiske 1989b) who are suspicious of the notion of preferred meanings, tend to jump to conclusions. (Issues related to causality will be discussed further in Chapter Three.)

The Preferred Meanings of News Discourse
Decades of journalism research have provided a solid body of knowledge about how news texts can generically be said to prefer certain meanings over others. At the most general level, news texts set out to provide objective accounts of a social, political or cultural reality external to, and independent of themselves. In other words, the overriding preferred meaning of news journalism is its referentiality. Basically, it offers assertions about reality and employs a standardized set of techniques for persuading the audience that these are true and reliable (van Dijk 1988:82–85). This basic feature applies at least to the serious or elite form of “journalism of information” (Ekström 2000b) that comprises the object of the present study. The means by which news journalism works towards referentiality
– that is, the routinized employment of a professional code whose aim is to render itself invisible – include among other things the practical definitions of “objectivity” (Tuchman 1972); the hierarchical valorization of different kinds of sources (Tuchman 1978, Hall et al. 1978); the rhetorical use of quotes (Nylund 2006); linguistic constructions of impersonality and “out-there-ness” (Potter 1996); the objectification of moral standards as yardsticks for critique (Glasser and Ettema 1989); the appeal to common sense knowledge by means of strategic absences of information (Fairclough 1995, van Dijk 1991); and the hierarchical arrangement of macro-propositions in thematic structures (van Dijk 1988) etc.

As Ekström (2000a:115) and others have pointed out, it is not always the case that a news or current affairs text clearly expresses one unified preferred meaning. Rather, different codes, perspectives and meaning systems operate at different levels. Some codes relate to form and others to societal values or ideologies. Yet others may be contingent upon the communicative conditions specific to the particular medium in question. The position taken in this study is that it is quite possible to delineate a range of preferred meanings in news discourse – that is, a number of more or less coherent propositions about social reality and a number of genre and medium related characteristics that have certain functions as regards the relationship between production and consumption. Accordingly, the preferred meanings of elite news discourse represent the text’s contribution to the “range of interpretive possibilities” (Corner 1991:269) in the moment of decoding.

Methodologically, the present study takes a few general points of departure from critical discourse analysis and subordinates them to the encoding/decoding framework proposed. Fairclough (1995:17–18, 58) suggests that texts of any kind simultaneously perform two constitutive functions: the “ideational” and the “interpersonal”.5 The ideational function generates representations of the world. Among other things, critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995, van Dijk 1988, 1991) directs attention to how news discourse, through linguistic devices such as implication and presupposition, can routinely attribute common sense knowledge to its readers (see e.g. van Dijk 1988:64, Fairclough 1995:107–109).

The interpersonal function generates specific constructions of the identities of, and relationship between, the author and the reader. This also includes the definition of the social relations established in news texts between the implied audience on the one hand, and actors (such as institutional representatives or lay people) present in the text on the other. Following Fairclough (1995:17), an important but often missed factor of the wider social impact of the media in general is its power to define such social identities and their interrelationships.

5 Fairclough draws upon the functional grammar of Halliday (1978). Halliday employs a slightly different enumeration of communicative functions. And to be sure, Fairclough in fact asserts that texts function (1) to depict reality, (2) to construct identities, and (3) to establish relations between these identities. The latter two are abbreviated in this context to the “interpersonal function”.
Thus, the “domains of preferred meanings”, as suggested by Hall (1980) do not merely consist of particular representations of the world; they also contain propositions about how the identity of the audience is related to other institutions in society such as the police, the social authorities, politics, and not least, the institution of journalism itself (cf. Petersson and Carlberg 1990, Ekecrantz and Olsson 1994, Ekström 2000b, Eriksson 2002).

**The Text or the Dominant Cultural Order?**

Hall, and subsequently also Morley (see e.g. 1992:123), actually refer to preferred meanings as residing both on a concrete textual level and on a societal/cultural level. As shown earlier, Hall tends to presuppose that the “dominant cultural order”, on an overarching societal level, normally tends to be inscribed in concrete media texts through the apparently autonomous professional codes of media production. Arguably, it is this conflation of the textual with the societal that has caused such a great stir within the field of reception studies, rather than the notion of (textual) preferred meanings in itself. The equation of the textual level with the societal in fact constitutes a fallacy with serious implications for concrete research. These implications have been explored in detail by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), Lewis (1991), Schrøder (2000), Ross (2008) and Ekström (2000a) among others, and they have been (plausibly I think) interpreted as illustrative of the necessity of a dissociation of the notion of preferred meanings from the concept of the dominant cultural order. In the present context it would however be negligent to view the relationship between the nation (as one dominant cultural order) and preferred meanings as an entirely open empirical question.

Although one cannot presuppose that every aspect of the institution of news journalism works towards closing the world within national horizons all the time, previous research has demonstrated that a number of historical (e.g. Anderson 1991), structural (e.g. Palm 2002), organizational (e.g. Clausen 2004) and discursive (e.g. Ekecrantz 2004) features are constitutive of such tendencies. In these respects, news is to a significant degree a national institution, a part of *nation-scape* (Jørgensen 1994). At the concrete level of news texts, this general inclination may be counteracted by other elements working towards provisional expansions of the range of preferred meanings in other directions (see e.g. Berglez 2008). This does not however necessarily mean that such structuring capacities and overarching tendencies do not exist.

**Marxism and the Dominant Cultural Order**

The theory of Encoding/Decoding has been formulated in a certain historical context and is inscribed in a specific theoretical framework. The Marxist underpinnings of Encoding/Decoding tend to conceive of all relations of domination in the social formation as deriving from class relations. In light of more sophisticated
theories of distribution of power and logics of domination in contemporary social science (see e.g. Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Fraser 1995) such a privileging of class seems increasingly inadequate. The social formation is, in essence, overdetermined by a multitude of forms of domination. The upshot of overdetermination is that it becomes hard to characterize outcomes of the “struggle in discourse” in the moment of decoding as either “dominant” or “oppositional” since the opposition to one specific type of social domination (e.g. class) may in fact constitute a reinforcement of another (e.g. gender). To be sure, however, these Marxist underpinnings remain rather non-fundamentalist in the texts considered here (Hall 1973a, 1973b, 1980, 1982, Hall et al. 1978), and there is no principal theoretical obstacle to the encoding/decoding model, in its original form, recognizing the overdetermination of the social formation. In this way, the notion of “the dominant cultural order” in the original texts need not automatically be taken to mean “the dominant cultural order of capitalist class exploitation”.

Although in theory it seems reasonable to expect that nationality can be articulated with class (and other structural asymmetries) in a variety of ways in different contexts, the question of how, if at all, nationalism may function to reproduce or transform social class relations (and other relations of power) is basically extraneous to the present study.

Moreover, the Hall perspective entails a notion of the “dominant cultural order”, or “the dominant ideology” when referring to the preferred meaning system allegedly operating on a societal level. The problems involved, both theoretical and methodological, in identifying the key components in such a dominant cultural order, or ideology, have been insightfully explored elsewhere (Abercrombie et al. 1980, see also Billig et al. 1988). The simple general position taken up in this study is that, on a societal level, different “value and meaning systems may compete against each other in a way that implies that the hierarchies between the dominant and subordinate are uncertain” (Ekström 2000a:115). However, this is not the same as saying there are no overarching meaning systems, or ideologies, at a societal level. Nationality is one of these systems, as Jørgensen’s (1994) concept of the nation as “cultural grammar” evinces. Furthermore, elite news journalism may, as argued above, quite plausibly be considered a nationscape institution.

Decoding: From Texts and Readers to Interpretive Repertoires

The encoding/decoding model implicitly locates the hegemonic struggle at the level of the social interaction between audiences and texts (Alasuutari 1999). The original model, however, remains completely silent on the complex processes involved in the moment of text–reader interaction. In fact, it is merely the ideological implications of a presumably unambiguous outcome that attract Hall’s interest (hypothesized as “dominant”, “negotiated” or “oppositional”). The theoriz-
ing of this substantial area of inquiry remains a largely disorganized and inherently unfinished project.

Based on empirical reception research, there has been an ongoing discussion about how the complexity of reception may be dealt with by identifying the key dimensions of audience reception. A crucial distinction, for instance, is that between comprehension and evaluation, or positioning (e.g. Condit 1989, Fetveit 2001, Kitzinger 1998, Schröder 2000). Fairly recent contributions to synthesizing and systematizing endeavours in this context are Schröder (2000) and Michelle (2007). But as Schröder (2000:242) concedes, his “multidimensional model is interested in categorizing the readers’ actualized interpretations irrespective of how they came about”. Thus, such endeavours provide concrete guidelines, categorization tools or a common vocabulary rather than a theory of the structures and mechanisms that can facilitate and impede meanings (cf. Ross 2008:56 n5).

Rather than acknowledging complexity, other researchers have in fact tried to short-circuit apparent ambiguities by means of a stringent focus on the object of reading and its functional orientation (Jakobsen 1960). Audience members may for instance treat texts as mere windows onto reality, or focus their interest on the text as a linguistic and/or semiotic construction (these are also included as “dimensions” in the models referred to above). A number of previous research efforts have found that audiences tend in practice to oscillate between these positions (Richardson and Corner 1986, Corner et al. 1990, Ekström and Eriksson 1998, Eriksson 2002). In their Dallas study, Liebes and Katz (1990) employ this distinction as a methodological tool for characterizing readings as dominant, negotiated or oppositional in Hall’s sense – referential readings being inherently dominant and metalinguistic readings carrying oppositional potential. Subsequent reception research has, however, been able to point towards the tendency of such equations to violate the complexity of empirical readings (see e.g. Livingstone and Lunt 1994).

Yet other reception research efforts have conceptualized the moment of decoding as an interaction between genre conventions and processes of audience interpretation, evaluation and consumption (see e.g. Radway 1991, Höijer 1991, 1995). Other researchers (e.g. Ekström 2000b) have presented a perspective which points towards a theory of reception based at least partly on the communicative features inherent in the structure of the medium itself. In these latter approaches, the boundaries of the concrete stratum of audience–output interaction are partly pushed towards a more holistic conceptualization of the decoding moment as embedded in the structures and routines of everyday life (see e.g. Lull 1980, Morley 1986).

The present study conceptualizes the moment of reception as concrete interactions between readers and news discourse. This is the main focus of the methodology employed, and it is at this detailed level that the empirical analysis is car-
ried out. The structuring properties of genre conventions and medium-specific conditions are crucial elements in this interaction. However, the study has no immediate ambition to contribute to a systematic and comprehensive theory of news reception in general. Apart from fairly pragmatic applications of the distinctions referred to above in the present study, it seems that the concept of interpretive repertoires provides a fruitful way of relating reception to the higher stratum of social reproduction and transformation without dodging the complexity of processes of reception.

As Justin Lewis (1991:119) argues, it is the task of reception research to “discover those resources of meaning a TV viewer draws from his or her cultural environment, in order to interpret what he or she sees or hears”. In the concrete process of reception, indices of such “resources” will assume various forms – “a chaotic patchwork of ideas” – which the researcher may employ as clues for characterizing how the cultural environment is brought into play in the moment of decoding. Lewis loosely and interchangeably labels such resources “discourses” and “ideological repertoires”. Discourses, in this sense, are evidence of “cultural commonalities and ideological unities” (p. 120) that transcend the discreteness of both individuals and individual texts. They provide a backdrop without which no reception process can be adequately understood. In this sense, they are indispensable since they allow for the moment of reception to be regarded as a form of social interaction rather than discrete text–reader encounters.

A notion of such communicative resources very similar to Lewis’s “discourses” is central to the discourse psychology proposed by, among others, Potter and Wetherell (1987) (see also Wetherell and Potter 1992, Edwards and Potter 1992, Billig et al. 1988). In a study on racial and racist everyday discourses in New Zealand, Wetherell and Potter (1992) introduce the term “interpretive repertoires” to conceptualize the flexible resources employed in social interaction. Interpretive repertoires are relatively loosely defined as clusters of concepts, descriptions and ways of talking that are centred on established metaphors and conventional imagery (Wetherell and Potter 1992:90). Accordingly, the concept refers to established ways of describing pieces of social reality. In concrete social interaction, a given interpretive repertoire can be used in various ways in different interactional contexts. They do, however, display a certain degree of coherence, and, following Wetherell and Potter (p. 92), the strength of the concept resides in its recognition that ways of constructing reality may both be established – that is, relatively independent of the setting in which they occur – and flexibly employed according to situational expectancies and norms, other competing interpretive repertoires and so on.

The concept of interpretive repertoires has been fruitful for those versions of reception studies that aim to transcend a narrow conceptualization of decoding as discrete encounters between readers and texts. Following Jensen (1991:138) the
concept, as a heuristic device, has been able to pinpoint apparent mechanisms in reception processes that “appear to crisscross, to a degree, standard socio-economic categories, hence mediating the further impact of media in ways that are only beginning to be explored in empirical research”.

The notion of interpretive repertoires is, for instance, central to Schröder and Phillips (2004, 2007) in their reception research on the interplay between media and audience discourses on politics. Drawing upon qualitative analysis of focus group interview studies and discourse analysis of media output, the study is able to identify six intertwined but analytically separable interpretive repertoires that taken together “represent the limits of what we can say and do in relation to ‘politics’” (Schröder and Phillips 2007:901). And, as the authors point out, the “definitional power” of these repertoires “consists not only in the articulation of repertoires but also in the absence of certain interpretive repertoires” (ibid.). Accordingly, in their case, any radical economic critique of corporate power was by and large excluded from the definition of politics preferred by both media and citizen discourses.

The position taken in this study, then, is that certain established frameworks for construing socio-political reality can be activated and drawn upon in the moment of decoding. The content, character and possible sources of such interpretive repertoires must be explored inductively through the study of news texts and audience discourses as they interact in the reception process. The concept of interpretive repertoires is in essence an attempt to operationalize the constitutive character of common sense knowledge within the decoding of news journalism. Insofar as common sense knowledge may be a vital element in nationalist closure, it should be possible to identify this form of knowledge as specific interpretive repertoires that are invoked in the interaction between readers and texts.

Although interpretive repertoires are often conceptualized as loosely rooted in the background experiences of audience members’ social position (cf. Fish’s [1980] notion of “interpretive communities”), it is precarious to regard such experiences as some sort of pre-discursive or media-free zones that audiences somehow “possess” (cf. Kitzinger 1998:210). Thus, news discourse itself can also function to provide and to activate specific interpretive repertoires through thematic associations and textual devices (cf. Lewis 1991:138–145).

Finally, by now it should be clear that the position implicitly taken in this study on “audience activity” and “audience autonomy” is that this autonomy must be understood as overdetermined rather than undetermined – that is, it must be located in relation to a multitude of structural, situational and discursive limitations and possibilities (cf. Ang 1989, 1994). This entire chapter has in a sense been devoted to the endeavour of conceptualizing these conditions.
Summary

The theoretical position put forward in this chapter is summarized in four points below.

(1) Jørgensen’s (1994) theory on nationality regards the nation as an objective existence – i.e. as historically established ways of structuring socio-political, cultural and economic reality through particular institutional arrangements (nation-scape). To persist, this already structured reality must however constantly be defended against inherent inconsistencies and other competing structures. Such practices are conceptualized as nationalism. Nationalism provides more or less stable closures of social reality within national frames of reference. Nationalist closure can exclude alternative ways of representing reality. The content, character and bases of inclusion/exclusion in particular closures tend to be context-specific.

Nationalism is theorized in terms of possible outcomes of encoding and decoding structures and practices of news discourse. A number of qualifications, adaptations and clarifications of the original Encoding/Decoding framework have been suggested.

(2) The necessity of the concept of preferred meanings is emphasized. Thus, the original argument in Hall’s framework is accepted, despite its controversial status within the theory and practice of reception research. The preferred meanings of the elite form of journalism of information (Ekström 2000b) comprise the presentation of true, reliable and relevant assertions about social reality to audiences (cf. van Dijk 1988). As communicative events, the preferred meanings of news texts can function both to provide a representation of society and to position the audience within this society (Fairclough 1995).

(3) As previous research has demonstrated, news journalism is a national institution in several respects. As such, it may be regarded as an institution of nation-scape. Accordingly, the preferred meanings of news journalism tend to equate society with the nation-state, and address the reader as a national citizen. Insofar as news journalism can contribute to a dominant cultural order, in Hall’s (1980) sense of the term, nationality is hypothesized as a dominant cultural order of news discourse.

(4) The moment of decoding is defined as the interaction between audiences and texts. As such it can be structured by genre conventions, established common sense frameworks of knowledge (interpretive repertoires), and the social-structural position of readers. It is within these confines that audience autonomy must be conceived.
3 METHODOLOGY

Given the fairly straightforward encoding/decoding approach adopted, the concrete empirical work to be done is comparatively unequivocal. Four tasks are to be completed. First, the structuration of the range of preferred meanings has to be identified and conceptualized – both as it operates on an aggregate level in news representations of the topic at hand and how it can be concretely brought into play for an implied audience in the texts eventually selected for the interviews. Second, empirical readings have to be gathered by staging reception interviews. Third, the empirical readings must be related to the structure of preferred meanings. The interpretive repertoires invoked in the reception moment must be identified and their significance explored. Fourth and finally, the study will move towards answering the research question by identifying the mechanisms – both of news discourse and news decoding as a form of social interaction – that may be generative of closure of the social within national frames of reference.

The present chapter describes the arguments, considerations and rationales behind the choices and decisions made to carry out this work.

An Explanatory Approach

Generally speaking, the methodology employed for studying audiences in this study may be regarded as sorting under the “public knowledge project” of reception studies. The public knowledge project, as described by John Corner, “is concerned primarily with the media as an agency of public knowledge and ‘definitional’ power, with a focus on news and current affairs output and a direct connection with the politics of information and the viewer as citizen” (Corner 1991: 268).

Following Corner, questions of reception are moreover concerned with, or should be concerned with, providing answers to “why” these meanings rather than others are produced by specific audiences from the range of interpretive possibilities, and “how” these activities might relate to ideas about the power of the media and about the constitution of public knowledge, sentiment and values” (p. 267).

This position contains two key implications which will be pursued in this study. First, the why in the citation above suggests that reception studies may approach the complex relationship between media discourses and audience interpretations as involving causality. While posing the question of causality is anything but a straightforward endeavour in this context, the study has no choice but to
ask what mechanisms may bring about that meaning takes place within national frames of reference in news decoding.

Second, the explanatory ambitions of reception studies are not necessarily restricted to the relations established between media discourses on the one hand, and audience reception on the other. The how question suggests a more ambitious employment of the approach – namely as a means for answering research questions pertinent not only to the limited field of media and communication studies, but to social and cultural analysis in a more general sense (cf. Livingstone 1998:199). It is the ambition of this study to contribute to the social analysis of the reproduction and transformation of nationality as a social form. Thus the present study is not only, perhaps not even mainly, about audiences or media consumption as such despite its empirical focus on the reception of news discourse.

The Layered Social Reality of Media Consumption

In any given situation of media consumption the reception may be the outcome of a multitude of conditions and circumstances. And where does reception begin? Where does it end? Surely, media consumption cannot be reduced to a series of once-off encounters between texts and readers.

The piece of social reality that reception research enters is an essentially messy reality. In addition, it often enters into it solely equipped with textual analysis and post-exposure interviews as the tools of choice – while maintaining the presumption of saying something about “why these meanings rather than others are produced by specific audiences from the range of interpretive possibilities” (Corner 1991:267).

Eriksson’s (2006a) work on the generalization problem in qualitative audience studies provides a good starting point for a discussion on the possible reductionism involved in an encoding/decoding approach. From Layder (1993) he imports and proposes a “research map” to conceptually deal with the fact that media consumption involves an essentially layered (or stratified) set of social practices. The map is reproduced in figure 3.1.

Critical commentators (Alasuutari 1999, Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998) have objected to the downplaying of element 2, as reception research often focuses exclusively on element 3. A sole focus on element 3, the argument goes, is not able to cover the complexity of contemporary media use. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) object to the tendency within reception research based upon the encoding/decoding framework to illegitimately reduce media consumption, text interpretation and meaning making to mechanisms deriving from audience’s dif-
different positions in the social structure and/or the incorporation of, or resistance
to, “dominant ideologies” (element 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research element</th>
<th>Research focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) The overarching societal context</td>
<td>Media consumption as part of more overarching social structures and power relations. The media as mechanisms for reproducing different social forms (class, gender, ethnic relations etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Immediate context of everyday life</td>
<td>The immediate environment of media consumption as a social (and routinized) activity taking place in everyday life. The media as mechanisms structuring everyday (family) life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) The dynamics of texts/genres</td>
<td>The dynamic relationship between text and reader in the process of media consumption. The texts/genres (with their different textual structures) provided by the media function to establish different ways to interpret and understand social phenomena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) The dynamics of mind</td>
<td>The mental processes of interpretation involved in media consumption. Individuals or groups of people and their more general mental/cognitive frames involved in the interpretive process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1 Research map for qualitative media audience research on media consumption. Source: Eriksson (2006a:40) and Layder (1993:72)

As aggressive proponents of a paradigm shift in audience studies, Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) argue that the increasingly complex audience practices in contemporary society have rendered media consumption mundane. Today, not only is everyone a member of various audiences all the time, reception and consumption of media products also tend to be increasingly integrated into production and performance activities. In this way, they come to the conclusion that a reception studies approach to audiences is no longer a reasonable way of gaining valid knowledge about media consumption. In essence, this is because the immediate social context of everyday life (element 2) will ultimately tend to nullify the effects of both social structure (1) and text–reader interaction (3) on media consumption. Hence, they proclaim the death of the “Incorporation/Resistance Paradigm” (IRP).

This line of reasoning actually seems to disqualify not only the encoding/decoding framework, but the very focus on the interaction between texts and read-
ers that constitutes reception research as such. The present project has an exclusive empirical focus on how the dynamics of texts and genres may facilitate and impede meaning among readers (i.e. element 3 in figure 3.1). It is not denied that the theoretical and methodological critique of the reception approach to audiences has pinpointed important limitations. The basic argument – that the complexity of audience practices seems to deserve a treatment that is more holistic than a semi-experimental reduction of these practices to discrete text–reader encounters – is plausible. So, what counter-arguments may justify yet another encoding/decoding study?

The general primacy of the immediate social context, as for example Abercrombie and Longhurst would have it, is an overstatement fuelled by an unwarranted inflation of the importance of entertainment and popular culture to audience practices. It is not coincidental that the research they cite as providing good examples of the new “paradigm” of audience studies that they launch deals exclusively with entertainment, fan culture and sports. Their “Spectacle/Performance Paradigm” (SPP) remains tellingly silent on how a “public knowledge project” – as it is identified by Corner (1991), with an interest in the mediation of politics, the constitution of public knowledge and values, and the audience as citizens – could gain from the ethnography of media consumption following the canon of SPP.6

As for the outdated status of the incorporation/resistance question – allegedly the main concern of reception studies – it seems in fact more to concern the Marxist theoretical luggage and less the explanatory focus on research elements 1 and 3 in itself (the ambition of many reception research efforts to relate practices of meaning making to structures of power). Thus it seems as though the alleged theoretical “ineffectivity” of the IRP’s Marxist underpinnings calls not only for a more sophisticated conceptualization of power and domination, but in addition necessitates a methodological turn towards the ethnography of everyday life. In my opinion, this is overkill.

Recognizing the complexity of media consumption is one thing. This is a rather trivial argument after all (what social practices are not complex in this respect?). But there is no need to jump to the conclusion that this complexity must be methodologically catered to by each and every audience study. In fact, one of the great strengths of the reception approach to audiences arguably resides in its explanatory power. That is, the reduction of complexity involved in the research

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6 I am not hereby denying that there are tensions and interplay between the domains of popular culture and public knowledge in contemporary media culture (see Corner 2009). Nor am I entering the heated debate on the general political value of different approaches to audiences (see Corner 1991, Philo 1990:189, Philo and Miller 2000, Gray 1998, Morley 2006:103–104). Rather, my objection concerns the totalizing accounts of commentators such as Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) and Alasuutari (1999) in which reception research is viewed as a first “phase” in audience studies – a phase which merely anticipated an audience research that came to maturity and generated more valuable knowledge when it began employing, for instance, ethnographic methods.
design allows for the employment of audience studies in part for wider purposes than merely accounting for audience practices alone. Of course, this argument can only be accepted if one also endorses the assumption that people in fact possess discursive competencies, codes of language and repertoires of interpretation that are relatively independent of the concrete social settings in which they are employed (Morley 1992, Lewis 1991:89, Schröder and Phillips 2007:894, Corner 1991, see also Wetherell and Potter 1987:90–92). If anything, previous reception research has in my view demonstrated the relative solidity of such interpretive repertoires.

Generality and Causality

The aim of this study, as in all science, is to produce general knowledge. In the crudest sense, claims of generality involve saying something that applies beyond the empirical data concretely studied. The foundation for such claims in qualitative reception research seems quite unforgiving. For practical reasons (time and resources) each individual research effort is able to accommodate only a few interview subjects or focus groups. This renders representativity problematic (see Höijer 1990:18).

These are limitations built into the approach. And when measured against the yardstick of population representativity, the present study, with its 16 interviewees, two sets of texts and 32 interviews, does not constitute an exception in this respect. It simply cannot measure up.

The problem of “saying something that applies beyond the empirical data concretely studied” does not, however, necessarily have to involve statistical representativity. From the position of critical realism, Danermark et al. (2002:76–82) distinguish between empiricist and realist notions of generality. Empiricist generalizations extrapolate knowledge of a few instances to larger populations. Realist generalizations infer the contingency of events, states, processes or whatever the empirical objects under study may be, to general structures and mechanisms. Structures, such as the wage labour system, patriarchy, or why not the generic properties of news journalism as a form of public discourse, have powers inherent in them. These powers may or may not be actualized, as mechanisms, in specific contexts (Danermark et al. 2002:55).

Any empirically observable event is seen as the result of “a complex compound effect of influences drawn from different mechanisms, where some mechanisms reinforce one another, and others frustrate the manifestation of each other” (p. 56). The events comprising the empirical objects of this study are audience receptions of texts, as they are expressed by respondents in interview situations. The analytical task of the present project, in other words, is to uncover what mecha-
nisms in the relationship established between news journalism and audience reception render nationalist closure possible.

Investigating which mechanisms are active in generating a given set of events or states is thus, in essence, a causal analysis. For the critical realists, causal explanations are to be viewed neither as statistically significant correlations between variables, nor as predictions based upon universal laws (e.g. of text interpretation) (Ekström 1992). Instead, causal explanations are understood in this context as the identification and conceptualization of the basic structures of the interaction between readers and news discourse. This position asserts that these basic structures (e.g. properties of the news genre, textual devices, established interpretive repertoires, the social contexts of media consumption, social stratification among audiences) possess inherent powers that may make some meanings more likely than others (cf. Eriksson 2006a). Such an analysis defines causality as tendencies rather than universal laws, since there is no way of predicting exactly which of these structures that will be actualized in specific contexts of decoding.

To the extent that the analysis is able to uncover the workings of these general structures – how in concrete instances of news reception they may be active in facilitating some readings while impeding others – general knowledge is in fact produced. Note that it is not a question for this study how often or how likely it is that nationalist forms of meaning making take place in audience reception of news journalism. Rather, the research question directs attention towards the prerequisites for such forms of meaning. In this way the question of the number of interview persons or news texts used in the study becomes of secondary importance compared to the design strategy of the project. The question is whether or not the strategy allows the study to identify how general structures of news discourse and news decoding may act as mechanisms in the establishment of nationalist closure.

According to Danermark et al. (2002:105), comparison of different cases constitutes a powerful strategy for any research effort that wants to “distinguish the necessary, constitutive conditions from mere accidental circumstances”. The present study employs a research design based on the comparative strategy of relating the structure of preferred meanings to actual decodings of news discourse. The specifics of this strategy, and the rationale behind it, are dealt with in the following sections.

**Principles of Comparison**

There is as of yet no coherent theory of the interrelationships between meanings, social structure and properties of media discourse from which hypotheses on this particular research topic may be derived. Rather, different research designs are
biased in particular ways towards exposing certain mechanisms while reducing the visibility of others. I suggest that the variety of options may be organized along two sets of choices.

First, the question is whether the aim of the study and its explanatory ambitions would best be met by a design that attempts to mimic “natural talk” as it might have occurred during secondary reception – that is, when people engage in talk about what they have heard, read or watched – or by taking an interest in first-hand interpretations and reactions produced by the reader’s encounter with the text(s) in question.\(^7\)

Second, there is the question of what type of relation that is to be analysed. To put it crudely, the first way is to ask questions about how the social backgrounds of the interviewees may make some meanings more possible than others, and the second option is to ask questions about how properties of media output may facilitate certain readings and impede others. The first option focuses on social structure and the second option puts media influence at the centre of attention. The first option employs, using the terminology of quantitative methodology, social structure as an independent variable, whereas the second option employs media output as an independent variable.

There is a point in emphasizing this basic distinction here. It is my impression that some previous reception studies efforts have displayed an ambiguity with regard to the specific direction taken on this issue. Quite often, reception research sets out to explore both textual influence and social structural influence without adequately recognizing the difficulties involved in the methodological management of even only one of these two strategies.

Eventually then, four ideal typical options emerge. These are illustrated in figure 3.2. In terms of methods and data gathering, the first quadrant signifies an approach that uses one-on-one interviews to search for elaborate accounts of one particular reading at a time, and explores media influence by “testing” different textual entities on the same interview subjects. The third quadrant describes an approach with the same interest in media influence, but in which the interest is directed towards a secondary level of reception – that is, the level where meanings can be mediated through a social network of friends or family. The designs in both these quadrants involve the comparison of different structures of preferred meanings to actual decodings as they are made by the same (or similar) respondents.

The second quadrant describes an approach that tries to determine social structural influence on text interpretation. It does so through a careful selection of interviewees who are assumed to represent different positions in the social

\(^7\) In addition, a “thematic” type of reception studies may be discerned as a third option here. Such studies (e.g. Olausson 2005, Schroder and Phillips 2007, 2004) methodologically downplay the importance of media discourse even further by staging focus group discussions on wide ranging content themes rather than the reception of specific media texts.
structure (e.g. based on gender, class, generation etc.). The fourth quadrant is essentially the same, albeit the focus is directed towards meaning as it may be collectively produced rather than first readings/interpretations. As focus groups are often partly created by the researcher on the basis of background characteristics, a departure is made from the naturalistic ambitions behind the employment of natural groups so that greater explanatory power may be attained. Both the second and the fourth quadrants involve the comparison of the respondents’ actual decodings to each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanatory strategy</th>
<th>Media influence</th>
<th>Social structural influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Textual proximity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close: primary reception</td>
<td>1. One-on-one interview. Textuality as independent variable. Social position held constant. E.g. Lewis (1991)</td>
<td>2. One-on-one interview. Social position as independent variable. Textuality held constant. E.g. Ross (2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2 Typology of principal design alternatives for reception studies.

Figure 3.2 may illustrate the principal sets of choices for any reception studies project. However, the ideal typical character of this typology must be emphasized. Although it may best be regarded as an instance of the fourth quadrant, the *Dallas* study conducted by Liebes and Katz (1990), for example, employs natural groups (family and friends) of interviewees as if they were focus groups representative of different cultural segments of Israeli society. Studies may even be designed to render visible both media influence and social structural influence. Höijer’s (1995) study of the influences of genre conventions on audiences’ interpretation of televisual texts, based on one-on-one interviews, seems to fit neatly into the first quadrant. In addition, however, she also focuses on how educational level and gender among her interviewees influence the readings delivered.
The design strategy chosen for the present study belongs within the first quadrant of figure 3.2. It puts media influence at the centre of attention, and it takes an interest in first-order readings as they are delivered in one-on-one interviews.

The reason for the media influence design is partly methodological. As Eriksson notes, “it is important for research to be well defined, and try to focus on mechanisms on one level” (2006a:39). In a critical post-script to his *Nationwide* study, Morley himself identifies some serious problems with the twin focus on both the interaction of texts/readers (element 3 in figure 3.1), and the influence of social structure (element 1 in figure 3.1). Morley notes a “tendency towards sociologism – [...] the attempt immediately to convert social categories (e.g. class) into meanings (e.g. ideological positions) without paying due attention to the specific factors in this ‘conversion’” (Morley 1992:90).

Following Morley, one cannot *a priori* assume that the possible differences of interpretation which occur in the material really arise from social factors without paying attention to “the specific mechanisms through which social factors are articulated into discourses” (ibid.). Thus, the *Nationwide* study was only able to scratch the surface of “the task of investigating the complex pattern of relations between structural factors and cultural practices” (1992:125). At the heart of this problem lies, in other words, the methodological difficulty of identifying and analysing generative conditions of meaning making when these actually seem to operate at different layers of social reality. The same goes for Liebes and Katz’s well-known *Dallas* study (1990), in which the authors claim to have discovered cultural differences while presenting hardly a shred of evidence of exactly how these culture-specific traits were productive in the concrete processes of decoding (as discernable in focus group talk).

In practice, it is reasonable to assume that the structures with the potential to facilitate and limit the possibilities of meaning are more accessible for empirical analysis when they are focused upon in media output compared to when they are searched for in social structure. The textual properties are always in close spatial and temporal proximity to the reading (they belong to the same empirical object of research) – for example when delivered by a respondent during a reception interview. Social structure is not necessarily brought into play in the same way.

More importantly, however, the aim and research questions of the present study are actually formulated against the backdrop of an interest in how news discourse might make nationalist closure possible. No specific interest is at the outset formulated regarding how various communities of people – political, ethnic or otherwise – may interpret and articulate compliant, negotiated or opposed versions of nationality possibly based upon their location within the social structure.

Although it is obvious that different interview types produce empirical data that is in part dissimilar, it is not easy to predict the specific impact that a certain
choice will eventually have on the results within the confines of any given research project. The one-on-one interview, according to Justin Lewis, concentrates on “the viewer’s first reading of the television message”. It “allows us to explore a particular reading in some detail”. Furthermore, it “gives us the opportunity to develop and clarify points without pausing to consider the effects of a particular set of group dynamics in the formulation of that reading” (Lewis 1991:89). The one-on-one interview does not necessarily treat its subjects as individuals. Rather, in accordance with the arguments made previously, people are assumed to bring with them socially constituted repertoires of interpretation that may be articulated in relative independence of concrete social settings. As Lewis argues in his discussion of the one-on-one interview, “[s]ociety’s presence, in other words, does not necessitate the presence of other people” (Lewis 1991:88–89).

As I see it, the choice between the one-to-one interview on the one hand, and the focus group or natural group interview on the other, is a trade-off between interviewer and textual influence on the one hand, and group dynamics on the other. Both can be compromising with regard to validity (cf. Fürsich 2009:243) (see also the empirical observations made at the end of Chapter Six). The one-on-one option was chosen mainly because of the media format, print news. The assumption is that the act of reading – more so than for example the act of watching television – is an activity that requires a high degree of concentration. As such it is normally performed independently of the presence of other people because otherwise we are not able to read at all. This is obviously not to deny that during secondary reception, press material can feed into other contexts of social interaction (e.g. talk among peers and family) as much as any other media output. But the very act of reading is normally performed in relative privacy.

**Research Design and Empirical Material**

The entire layout of the research has an experimental rationale behind it. First, the subject matter (illicit drugs) was chosen because it is assumed that people have little personal experience of such issues, at least as they are commonly represented by news journalism (as criminality). In addition, it was hypothesized that this particular subject matter could provide indirect topical attention to questions about nationality without deviating from the ambition to select cases reasonably representative of the genre of elite news journalism as such. The topic at hand seemed in many respects a perfect fit to these criteria.

Second, the subject matter of illicit drug abuse and drug smuggling was held constant, in a broad sense, so that the functioning of an even wider array of textual devices and formal properties of news journalism could be rendered visible without being forced to consider topical differences in the analysis.
Third, each respondent was interviewed twice with at least three days between the first and second interview occasion. The reading order was varied in each of the four different clusters into which the 16 respondents were grouped. This was done in order to exert some degree of control over possible influences of the first interview on the second (see table 3.2 below).

Fourth, and intimately related to the choice of subject matter, the recruitment of respondents was strategic in the sense that people who could be assumed to have experiences that may significantly influence the reception process of the specific texts chosen for the study were avoided. Specifically, this meant that people of Eastern European and Somali origin were not recruited. The same goes for police officers, prison guards, journalists, politicians and social workers.

Previous reception research (see e.g. Eriksson 2002) as well as the pilot interviews conducted for the present study demonstrate that specific personal experiences of the issue that is depicted can in some instances lead to a situation in which the interviews drifts into discussion of these experiences rather than the reception process. This recruitment strategy was implemented with full awareness that the sociological validity of the study was traded off in favour of purposeful reception interviews. The latter was deemed more important than the former – partly due to the difficulties referred to above with conducting sociologically valid reception interview studies at all, partly related to the aim and research questions of the study.

News Material
The analysis of the constitution of preferred meanings draws upon, first, a descriptive content analysis of news on drugs in the Swedish elite morning newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (*DN*), and, second, an analysis of the texts selected for the reception interviews. From the extensive corpus of news items, the two sets of texts eventually selected for the reception interview had to meet a number of requirements. First, they had to be, as much as possible, timeless. This is because the reception interviews could for reasons of practicality not be conducted within a timeline sufficiently narrow to focus on some particular recent news events. Finding timeless texts can certainly seem like an impossible task considering the ephemeral character of news items. However, news on drugs, it turned out in the extensive study, comprises an essentially repetitive business where themes appearing in e.g. 2002 or 2004 can reappear in 2006 devoid of any historicity outside the particular event(s) or state(s) reported on. Also, they had to pay topical attention, preferably in different ways, to questions of nationality. Furthermore, for reasons of practicality, they could not be too brief, as they were the only point of reference for the reception interviews. This in fact turned out to be in congruence with the timelessness requirement. The two pieces eventually selected are sets of

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8 This occurred in one of the pilot interviews in which a prison guard participated.
articles that belong to a sub-genre designated as Assessments in the extensive content analysis. Relative timelessness and “weekend-length” texts comprise two of their characteristics.

Eventually, two sets of texts were selected. From here onwards they are labelled the Kat texts (16 and 17 June 2002), and the Eastern Europe texts (17 May 2000).

**Reception Interviews: Selection, Recruitment and Procedure**

The interviews were conducted from November 2007 to April 2008. The strategy of selection was to achieve some variation in age and education/occupation. As noted earlier, ambitions of population representativity are rather futile when dealing with only a few interview persons. Instead, the selection strategy should be regarded as a “control device” – a measure to make reasonably sure that the character of the readings does not result from structures and mechanisms to which the reception interviews grant little or no access (i.e. social structure). Or, in other words, the rationale behind the selection strategy was to make reasonably sure that insofar as the readings display similar features and traits, this cannot easily be seen as the result of the respondents having identical social background characteristics. Although it remains uncertain due to the usually low numbers of respondents, and/or the inherent difficulties of examining what in fact produces differences, previous reception studies seems to indicate variations along gender and education lines (Höijer 1991, 1995). Consequently, the respondents were recruited in order to achieve variation among these characteristics. A presentation of the respondents is provided in table 3.1.

The respondents were grouped into four clusters based on age, sex and occupation/education. Each respondent was interviewed twice. The respondents read one of the text sets at each occasion. The reading order was varied within each cluster of interviewees (see table 3.2).

The recruitment of the respondents took various forms. Initially, postal contact was taken with a number of athletics associations, trade unions, workplace organizations, Örebro University student organizations, and educational associations. These were followed up by telephone contact and, in a few instances, a presentation of the project on location prior to the interview subjects finally being recruited and scheduled for the interviews.

About half of the interviews were conducted at the respondents’ workplaces, the other half at the University campus. After a cup of coffee or tea and some snacks, the subjects started to read the articles. The reading took between 7 and 21 minutes, and the subsequent interviews lasted between 34 and 75 minutes (the median length was 56 minutes). Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, though without typographical notation of lengths of pauses, simultaneous talk, onomatopoetic expressions etc.
Table 3.1 Basic characteristics of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>Maintenance industry foreman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Assistant in welfare service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Child minder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Assistant nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>ICT technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>High school teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>Assistant librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Reading order based on clustering of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Age cohort</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Reading order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>White collar</td>
<td>30–40</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1: East 2: Kat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>White collar</td>
<td>30–40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1: Kat 2: East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Blue collar</td>
<td>40–60</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1: East 2: Kat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Blue collar</td>
<td>40–60</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1: Kat 2: East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Blue collar</td>
<td>40–60</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1: Kat 2: East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Blue collar</td>
<td>40–60</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1: East 2: Kat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>White collar</td>
<td>40–60</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1: East 2: Kat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>White collar</td>
<td>40–60</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1: Kat 2: East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>White collar</td>
<td>40–60</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1: Kat 2: East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>White collar</td>
<td>40–60</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1: East 2: Kat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>White collar</td>
<td>40–60</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1: East 2: Kat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>White collar</td>
<td>40–60</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1: Kat 2: East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>20–30</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1: Kat 2: East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>20–30</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1: East 2: Kat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>20–30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1: East 2: Kat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>20–30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1: Kat 2: East</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interview strategy employed can be described as standardized with questions of an open character. The theoretical focus on nationality was not disclosed. Leading questions were consistently avoided, and the interviewer assumed the role of an active, confirming listener.

Throughout the interviews, one principle was of utmost importance: the questions must not be posed so that a particular mode of reading was encouraged. A basic issue for an analysis of the relation between the preferred meanings offered through the texts and the empirical readings delivered by the interviewees is whether the text is related to as a reflection of reality or as the expression of some discursive or ideological code. This refers to some of the basic communicative distinctions originally proposed by Jakobson (1960) and subsequently employed in audience research by Liebes and Katz (1990) among others. During the interviews it would have been possible for the interviewer to induce referential accounts of “the drug problem in Sweden” by posing the questions in a certain way. Other modes of reading could just as easily be invoked. This being said, it should also be pointed out that once a respondent had introduced a reading that implied a certain direction, the interviewer often actively encouraged him/her to elaborate the particular position. The interviewer did not however deliberately introduce such positions on his own.

The interview guide was designed with the aid of six pilot interviews conducted with three interviewees during spring 2006 (they are not included in the study). The final version consisted of four main sections.

In the first section the aim was to retrieve the interviewee’s unprompted understanding of the texts (relatively speaking, that is, since the whole situation involves prompting the respondents to speak about their reception). This was done by posing the question: “What spontaneously comes to mind now that you have read these articles?”. Depending on the answers, the interviewee was then asked to expand on the topics and thoughts introduced – either by the researcher simply repeating what the interviewee had just said, or by explicitly asking for more elaborate accounts.

The second section was a more guided variant of the first. Here, pre-selected parts of the text were referred to by the interviewer, and the interviewee was asked what she thought about while reading these particular elements. The idea behind this strategy was to invoke interpretations and reactions that may otherwise remain unarticulated due to the possibly tense interview situation or perhaps the very nature of short-term memory. Quantitatively speaking, this section comprised the bulk of the interviews.

The third section consisted of one leading question. All the interviewees were asked: “What do you as a Swede think about what you just have read?” The use of this question constitutes an active positioning of the respondent as a “Swede”. As such, this speech act may give access to ideas about nationality in relation to
the articles just read which would not otherwise have surfaced during the interviews. In the worst case, however, the answers produced by this question are solely products of the interview situation as such. But, as I argue in the analysis, when considering the context of each interview transcript, it is possible to determine whether the answers to this question can in fact say something that for example expands on, or otherwise connects to, what has been said earlier, or whether they are to be considered mere routine ways of coping with the perceived expectations of the interview situation itself.

Finally, the interviewees were asked circumstantial questions about how they had experienced the interview situation, how they had read the texts, and whether they had encountered similar stories in the news media prior to this occasion. All the second interviews concluded with the researcher requesting the interviewee to compare the two sets of texts, and comment upon similarities and differences. When responding to this question, they did not have access to the texts read on the previous interview occasion.

Principles of Analysis

The following sections detail how the empirical material has been processed and analysed in the study. More specific information can be obtained by consulting one of the interview guides and the coding descriptions included in the Appendix.9

The Text Analysis

The quantitative content analysis is descriptive and the unit of analysis is the single news item. The material was gathered, coded and analysed during the fall of 2006. The study includes all news items about narcotics in DN during the years 2000, 2002, 2004 and the first half of 2006.

The material does not include editorials, essays or commentary texts, but all other types of items presented as providing objective statements about a reality external to journalism. The material was obtained through the online press database service presstext.se, using the truncated search string “narcotic* OR drug*”10 on the entire text archive for DN. These searches produced about 250–500 hits per year. The analysed corpus of texts, however, only includes pieces that are mainly about narcotics. The strategy for determining whether a piece is “mainly about narcotics” was to approach the headline, the lead and the first

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9 The interviews were conducted by the author. The same goes for the transcription and coding of the interviews as well as for the coding work done in the quantitative content analysis. Inter-coder reliability has not been tested in this study.

10 Original Swedish: “narkotika* OR knark*”.
sentence or sentences of the body text with the counterfactual question: Is it reasonable to expect that this piece had been published were it not for narcotics? If the answer seemed to be “no”, the item in question was considered to be mainly about narcotics. This strategy corresponds to the assertion made by van Dijk (1988) that news texts conventionally highlight certain propositions and marginalize others in thematic and schematic structures. In this standardized practice, what is considered to be the most important information is summarized in the headline, the lead and the beginning of the body text. This is also taken to correspond to what readers interpret as the most salient pieces of information (cf. Ekström et al. 2006:299).

When this selection was made, all in all 626 items remained to be coded and analysed. This amounts to an average of one piece every other day in DN during the research period. The extensive analysis provides a broad overview of what kinds of sources are drawn upon in news on drugs, what the items deal with in terms of content, and the principal types of items (defined as sub-genres), their length and relative occurrence. In this way, some aggregate-level properties of the elite news discourse on drugs are identified.

The analyses of the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts are oriented towards identifying the key elements in the textual propositions presented to the reader. The texts are analysed using the concepts and theories of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995, van Dijk 1988, 1991). The purpose of this intensive textual analysis is twofold. First, the textual analysis constitutes a first moment in the project of identifying and conceptualizing the mechanisms by which news journalistic texts can establish a certain way of interpreting and understanding social phenomena. The concrete workings and effects of these mechanisms can be exhaustively identified and explored only after the reception analysis is conducted (cf. Schröder 2000:241, Lewis 1991:117–118). Second, the analysis served the initial pragmatic purpose of directing the construction of the interview guides for the reception interviews.

Categorization and Counting
The analysis of the reception interview material employs both quantitative and qualitative tools. The quantitative part draws upon the referential–metalinguistic distinction. Russian linguist Roman Jakobson (1960) identifies six general functions of communication. Mainly drawing on two of these – the referential and the metalinguistic – such a conceptualization of the moment of decoding has been successfully employed in empirical reception research that deals with news journalism and actuality programming (Richardson and Corner 1986, Corner et al. 1990, Ekström and Eriksson 1998, Eriksson 2002) as well as with fictional genres (Liebes and Katz 1990). Inspired by these previous contributions, the interview
material was categorized using a model displayed in tables 5.1 and 5.2 (see Chapter Five).

The unit of analysis in the coding and quantification of the material is the reading statement. For a proposition made by the respondents to constitute a reading statement, two basic conditions must be met: it has to be a reading and it has to be unprompted. This excludes possible instances where a respondent wanders so far off topic that the talk produced becomes difficult to see as even remotely related to the texts, or to the issues they introduce (this however rarely occurred). It also excludes all possible instances where the interviewer introduces a particular way of relating to the text – for instance by mistake (this was also atypical), or when posing the “as a Swede”-question.

Reading statements are then defined as the smallest unit that implies a coherent and meaningful proposition. Accordingly, the units are identified and delineated on the basis of their content, rather than formal properties (e.g. conversational turns). Typically, reading statements and conversational turns coincided. However, some reading statements spanned several conversational turns, whereas a single turn also occasionally contained several reading statements. Consider the abridged extract from the second interview with respondent 4 below:

01 I: [...] You said earlier that this thing about the youth problems came to mind also.
02 R: Yes that’s, if you are to believe this article there are lots [of drugs] among youth. Young people are easily manipulated so there’s probably some truth to this... You have your idols around you and then... you easily follow along. If you read the scandal and gossip sections they tell about these things all the time with hashish and that they smoke and... [...] Then you can... how come young people get drawn into these things? Is it a cry for help, or? You could reflect upon a lot of things here. A protest or revolt against the status quo that they don’t think they fit into? [...] Why you start doing these things. [...] (4:2 [Eastern Europe] Male child minder, 49)11

Clearly, the respondent assumes a referential position towards (specific elements of) the Eastern Europe texts here. In lines 02 to 06, he provides an incorporation of the proposition that drug use among young people is increasing. Furthermore, he poses the question as to why young people do drugs (lines 06-09).

Consequently, this particular excerpt contains two reading statements as defined above. The first was coded into the confirmation/incorporation sub-category of referential readings. The second statement was coded into the further questions sub-category (see Chapter Five, esp. tables 5.1 and 5.2).

One more thing should be noted here. It was often the case in the interviews that respondents initially provided a number of brief reading statements in a row.

11 The expression inside parentheses at the end of the interview extracts should be read as follows: (Respondent 1–16: Interview occasion 1 or 2 [Text label] Gender, occupation, age).
that were later, one at a time, elaborated upon during the course of the interviews. The analysis was careful not to double-code such instances.

In sum, this way of analysis provides an aggregate-level characterization of the reception interviews with regard to the basic reading positions that were adopted by the respondents. It may thus indicate to what extent the claims of truth, reliability and relevance made by news journalism were incorporated and accepted by the respondents (in the example above these claims are accepted).

A second stage of the coding process aimed at establishing a connection between the macro-propositions (cf. van Dijk 1988) made by the texts and the reading statements provided by the interviewees. Every reading statement that could be assigned to a specific proposition identified as a part of the text set’s range of preferred meanings was pinpointed as an instance of this proposition. The grounds upon which reading statements could be related to macro-propositions varied. Most often, discussion of macro-propositions was initiated with the interviewer referring to textual elements that the analysis had identified as generative of specific macro-propositions. In other instances the respondent provided reading statements that used words or lines of reasoning which could be identified as similar to key elements of the news texts. In this coding procedure, each reading statement that was thus pinpointed was categorized as referential or metalinguistic.

On an aggregate level, some important indications are indeed provided by this exercise. It can designate which propositions the respondents tend to incorporate, and which propositions come to light as problematic or even provocative.

**Exploration**

Reception, as argued in the previous chapter, cannot be reduced to discrete encounters between readers and texts. Consequently, the analysis of the interview material proceeded, in the third stage, to explore the relations between the reading statements provided by the respondents and the interpretive repertoires employed in the reception process. The endeavour of identifying interpretive repertoires comprises a highly interpretive labour. Two general criteria were however used in the process.

First, interpretive repertoires were identified on the basis of their being transcendent in relation to the macro-propositions in the texts, or otherwise not restricted to particular textual elements. Reading statements in which respondents assumed a referential and generalizing stance comprised a common source of identification of specific interpretive repertoires. This is because reading statements of these types tend to invoke themes that are at least partly external to the specific topics introduced by the texts. Second, such statements had to be unquestionably present among the accounts provided by at least four respondents to be considered solid as interpretive repertoires rather than mere idiosyncratic associa-
tions. Accordingly, the interpretive repertoires identified provide backdrops without which quite a number of highly significant reading statements cannot be adequately understood.

**Asking Why**

The last stage of the analysis sets out to identify the mechanisms active in the production of reading statements. It asks why some meanings are produced and others not. Specifically, it wants to know what basic properties and structures that have the capacity to produce nationalist closure. This is a form of causal analysis that some critical realists (e.g. Danermark et al. 2002) would label “reproduction”. The research design of the present study allows the analysis to search for such mechanisms in news as a form of discourse (as they are manifested in specific news items), the aggregate news representation of the subject matter at hand, the basic features of news decoding as a form of social interaction, and in the interpretive repertoires identified in the decoding process. It does not, however, enable any valid analysis of how the social positions of the respondents may come into play in the reception process.

The previous stages provide a number of potential clues that may be used in a retroductive analysis. For instance, why are some textual propositions wholly bought into by most respondents whereas others are controversial? How come the same respondent can be critical to the *Eastern Europe* texts while accepting similar propositions launched by the *Kat* texts? How do the tendencies in the reception material relate to the textual mechanisms identified as generative of the range of preferred meanings? How are interpretive repertoires employed by the respondents? What may plausibly be the sources of specific repertoires? How are potentially controversial readings justified?

In other words, the analysis asks which elements are fundamental to the relation under study – and, conversely, which moments are coincidental to the solidity of nationalist closure. The outcome of such an analysis comprises, in essence, possible answers to the research questions posed by the study about the possibilities and prerequisites of nationalist closure in the decoding of news discourse.

**Methodological Quality**

**Reliability**

There are essentially two versions of the reliability criterion that may be applicable in the context of research employing textual analysis and qualitative interviews as primary tools for gathering and analysing empirical material. The first version, reliability as *replicability*, is a strong demand. It essentially entails that other researchers should be able to follow identical procedures and eventually
reach the same conclusions. Replicability is strictly speaking not attainable in qualitative interview studies since the researcher and his/her subjects are involved in a largely unpredictable and essentially non-standardized interaction process that in itself constitutes the empirical material of the study.

Instead, the line chosen in this study has been to reach a high level of reliability as transparency. Transparency is basically to be understood here as: (1) clear argumentation and solid empirical support for any interpretations made and conclusions drawn, and (2) a presentation of the material that is generous enough to provide a sufficient basis for a critical reviewer of the study to potentially reach alternative conclusions.

The first aspect rarely constitutes the major problem in qualitative reception studies. The second aspect is more difficult to attain. The interview material, for instance, comprises approximately 350 pages of interview transcripts. Common strategies for transparency, in the second sense, predominantly are: the display of lengthy quotes, reproduction of interview transcripts in extenso, inclusion of coding facsimiles that show the original coding procedures, quantification (both formal and informal), and the inclusion of coding schemes along with detailed descriptions of the categories used. Each of these strategies has its pros and cons.

Although necessary, especially for key parts of the argument put forward, a generous display of quotes is undesirable for reasons of readability and textual economy. Furthermore, selected quotes do not, despite their being lengthy, display the majority of the material nevertheless omitted from the selection. The in extenso reproduction of an interview transcript may indeed provide the critical reviewer a sufficient basis for exploring the possibilities of diverging interpretations and conclusions, but this strategy is obviously even less economic and readable than bulky extracts. Furthermore, as Höijer (1990) notes, the strategy effectively shifts the burden of interpretation wholly onto the reader of the presentation.

Virtually all intensive (qualitative) reception studies quantify their interview material in some way or the other. Quite often, this is done in an informal manner with the employment of vague numeral words such as “most of the respondents”, “all”, “some”, “many” etc. Formal quantification strategies are also employed, for example by Liebes and Katz (1990), where reading statements are categorized. Needless to say, the problem with the informal way of quantification is that it is impressionistic (cf. Höijer 1990). Formal quantification has the advantage of effectively allowing some form of numerical description of the interview material in its entirety.

The transparency strategies employed in this study include formal quantification, the display of lengthy quotes where deemed necessary, and the inclusion of coding categories and coding descriptions as appendices, along with the texts used for the reception studies translated into English. Vague numeric wordings
are admittedly used fairly often in the presentation of results in Chapters Five and Six, but this is done mainly for reasons of readability and to provide interpretive guidelines (i.e. to suggest how the numbers should be interpreted). It should however be emphasized that features of the interview material can also be significant for other reasons than the fact that many (or few) of the respondents express them.

**Validity**

Validity basically concerns the question of “whether a measure properly captures the meaning of the concept or construct it represents” (Gunter 2002:212). First, there is the question of the *internal* relation between theory and the methodological operationalization of concepts on the one hand, and the object of study on the other. Second, there is the *external* relation between the research design and the object of study. Accordingly, a study is valid if (1) the theoretical concepts used represent the phenomena of interest, and (2) they are empirically studied in a way that grants access to these in particular, and not phenomena extraneous to the research question.

One aspect of the internal relation between the theoretical concepts and the phenomena of interest concerns the relevance of the very object of study, nationalist closure, to decoding practices in everyday life. That is, does the study set out to explore the constitution of something among audiences that is not really relevant to the reception process? Does the theoretical conceptualization do violence to the object of study by instilling structures in such practices that are not really there? The short answer is “no” (which the analysis will demonstrate).

It is, however, worth emphasizing here that, in a sense, this whole study provides a fundamentally poor mirror image of the generation of nationalist closure as it may occur in real news consumption. In actual reception, the constitution of nationalist closure most likely is an essentially mundane, tacit and deeply ingrained affair that only surfaces when occasionally challenged in some way or another (see e.g. Billig 1995, Edensor 2002). The task is to be able to access these submerged elements without overly alienating the empirical study from actual reception practices. Accordingly, the texts used in the reception study were strategically selected to bring nationalist implications to the interaction between readers and texts. The research design employed “real cases where mechanisms manifest themselves in a purer form than usual” (Danermark et al. 2002:105). Accordingly, both the *Eastern Europe* texts and the *Kat* texts were selected because they clearly establish positions vis-à-vis nationality whose significance cannot reasonably be expected to remain ignored or untouched by any reading. But it is important to point out that the news texts embody properties and structures that apply more or less universally to news as a textual system, as documented by previous research (e.g. van Dijk 1988, 1991, Hall et al. 1978, Ekström 2000b, Glasser and
Ettema 1989). The analysis of the reception interview material then specifically targets the moments in which the constituent properties of nationalist closure become particularly visible and thus accessible to empirical analysis.

The status of the external validity of reception methodologies has been widely debated within the field ever since its inception. At the heart of the matter lies the question of whether the artificial construction of reception situations necessary for researching “readings” can say something about reception processes outside the interview setting at all.

Although the qualitative research interview in itself entails that the researcher constructs his/her own material (cf. Höijer 2008:277), the reception interview must in addition involve a moment of simulation that is specific to this interview type. The respondents are asked to read or watch something as if it were not for the interview situation. More often than not, in practice this semi-experimental design feature means that respondents are recruited to read texts that they in fact would not have read were it not for the particular situation. In the present study, for example, only three out of the 16 respondents said that they would have read the Eastern Europe texts had they encountered them outside the interview situation. For the Kat texts, the numbers were a bit more inspiring: nine (or possibly 11 with the help of benevolent interpretation).

The possible upshot of semi-experimentalism is that the reception interview comprises a poor tool for accessing the phenomenon under study. There are two counter arguments to this undeniably justified critique. One is a pragmatic argument, and the other is ontological. As Eriksson (pragmatically) argues, “reception studies must be evaluated against the methods we know of” (2002:87). And when it comes to the study of the interaction between readers and texts, we simply do not know of any better alternatives.

The ontological argument has been referred to previously. The reception studies approach can only be justified as a methodology able to transcend the concrete research setting if we accept the notion that people possess and are able to invoke discursive competencies and interpretive repertoires that are relatively independent of situational factors. However, even if this assumption is accepted, the integrity of these interpretive repertoires may be compromised by a number of factors.

Some problems specific to the present study emerge as relevant to comment on here. First, I suspect that the reading statements produced in this study were, at least to a degree, guided by the respondents’ notions of political correctness. Among other topics, the texts deal with drug abuse and the issue of racism against people of Somali origin living in Sweden. These are two potentially value-laden topics. For instance, rejecting the idea launched in the Kat texts, that people of Somali background are victims of racism, may have been uncomfortable to some respondents because they would not want to reveal themselves as racist. In
general, impression management vis-à-vis the interviewer may have been decisive on many occasions during the interviews. Although it is sometimes possible to identify obvious instances of political correctness and self-presentation by scrutinizing inconsistencies in the accounts, this is a weakness built into the research interview as a methodological tool.

Another potentially compromising feature was the identity positioning question at the end of each interview. This question was placed at the end of the interviews in order not to direct the respondents’ interpretations of the text towards nationality from the start. However, since every respondent was interviewed twice, the question posed in the first interview may have influenced the respondents’ reception in the second round of interviews – though this is at least partly neutralized by the employment of a varied reading order. Given that the question should be used, one possibility considered was the recruitment of different respondents for the two sets of texts. In this way, the inclusion of the question would truly be uncompromising. Also, this would have doubled the number of respondents to 32. On the other hand it would have removed any possibility of comparing the reception of the two sets of texts. All told, and with the benefit of hindsight the present strategy proved fruitful. The identity positioning question was indeed able to render some highly significant responses. Significant, not to say crucial for the study, are also the possibilities for comparison opened up by the chosen design.

Yet another potential validity problem was the apparently outdated status of the articles. They were in fact published some six and eight years prior to the interview occasions. This, however, turned out to be a minor issue in the reception interviews. The pieces belong to a sub-genre which is relatively timeless. Also, news on drugs comprises an inherently repetitive business. It was significant, then, that during the period of the reception interviews, the Kat texts in particular gained increased relevance to the respondents through the attention given to kat use in the local public service radio station in Örebro. A series of in-depth features on the issue provided a virtually identical image of kat use among people of Somali backgrounds as the Kat texts published six years earlier in DN. None of the respondents noticed their date of publication. The Eastern Europe texts, published four years before the eastward expansion of the EU and some two months before the completion of the Öresund Bridge, may possibly be embedded in such a modern historical context. There are, however, no references to such future events in the texts. In a sense, there is nothing in the texts that directly indicates their being bound to a particular time context. (Indirectly, it may however be inferred by the reported statistics.) Furthermore, similar pieces appear in DN also in 2004 and 2006. The stability of the theme of the threatening East, as identified in previous research (Ekecrantz 2004), inspired me to test the seemingly outdated Eastern Europe texts in the pilot interviews. As the pilot interviews were success-
ful, at least in the respect that these respondents’ readings were not impeded by the date of publication (in fact, none of the respondents even noted it) it was decided to use the texts in the study. As it turned out, only two respondents in the study (respondents 8 and 9) mentioned the date of publication at the very end of their Eastern Europe interviews.

Given the inherent limitations of the reception studies methodology, and given the scarcity of alternatives for studying audience readings and evaluations, I would argue that the present study can indeed transcend the concrete interview setting and say something about how the respondents invoke and apply established interpretive repertoires in their readings of the texts.

The final issue for a discussion of external validity must necessarily involve the question to what extent the results and conclusions produced by the present study may also be applicable in other contexts. Insofar as the study is able to uncover and identify the fundamental properties operating in this social interaction, I would suggest that its results are in fact possible to apply in other situations or settings, however with appropriate qualifications for context-specific mechanisms. Concretely, this could mean that, given that the textual mechanisms identified in this study are constitutive properties of news journalism as a genre or a textual system, one may expect that they would also apply to news on television, though with due consideration given to the communicative conditions specific to the television medium (mechanisms belonging to the immediate social context of viewing, the specific interactional conditions of audiovisual discourse etc.). Similarly, given that some interpretive repertoires identified in the study prove widespread, solid and powerful among the readings, one may expect that they are likely to also be applied in the reception of other media genres, other topics, and possibly also by other audience members. (The concluding Chapter Seven elaborates on these and related issues in detail.)

Obviously, this is not to deny that further research in the form of specific case studies would be able to empirically validate the specific operations and fundamental/necessary character of such mechanisms. Deliberately excluded already at the outset from the explanatory range of this study, are the possible effects of social structure on reception. The reception interview comprises a rather poor method for making visible the workings of social-structural mechanisms. However, a selection of groups of respondents, for instance to vary their ethnic backgrounds, would most likely bring social position into the reception process when specific closures of nationality are purveyed by media texts (cf. Olausson 2005). In essence, the present study cannot say anything about the workings of social structure on the moment of decoding. However, a study designed with this target in mind could begin the project envisioned by Morley (1983) and Jensen (1991, 2002) of mapping the interrelatedness of specific interpretive repertoires to different social groups.
4 PREFERRED MEANINGS

The present chapter sets out to delineate the range of preferred meanings in the
texts selected for the reception study. In order to do so, the analysis draws upon,
first, an extensive study of elite news on the particular topic in question: illicit
drugs. Second, it explores the construction of meaning as it is concretely pre-
tented to audiences in the *Kat* and *Eastern Europe* texts. This combination allows
both for a comprehensive empirical account of prevalent themes and common
institutional actors on the news topic at hand, and an in-depth exploration of
how these features can be manifested in concrete textual devices and strategies of
representation.

The qualitative study explores two sets of texts, seven news items in total. The
extensive study is limited to a specific topic in one Swedish elite morning newspa-
paper. Neither the specific texts nor the subject matter can be considered representa-
tive in any straightforward statistical sense of the term. It will however be argued
and shown that the combined studies are able to highlight certain fundamental
features that are constitutive of news journalism as a textual system. These fea-
tures can in specific instances operate in conjunction to produce certain images of
the nation to a nationally defined audience market.

The analysis reveals how a range of preferred meanings can be constituted in
news discourse by means of (1) conventions related to the elite form of “journal-
ism of information” (Ekström 2000b); (2) tendencies inherent in news as a “prob-
lem-generating machine” (Altheide 1997, Nylund 2006); (3) the foregrounding
and downplaying of topics in thematic structures in news texts; (4) linguistic
strategies that invite audiences to construct coherent and meaningful texts by fill-
ing in missing information (van Dijk 1988, Fairclough 1995), in accordance with
established forms of common sense knowledge and value judgements (Glasser

Specifically, it is shown that these general properties of news discourse can
establish a range of preferred meanings that exclude from the Swedish national
community phenomena and practices deemed undesirable by the prevailing moral
position on the topic at hand.
Extensive Analysis

News Journalism as a Compound Genre Structure

In practice, news constitutes a compound textual system comprised of various sub-genres which display great variations in conditions of production, style, truth claims, treatment of sources, degree of involvement with the reality reported on, and so forth. What is needed, in other words, is a basis for distinguishing different types of items from each other that goes beyond the classification made by DN itself (i.e. in terms of sports, culture/entertainment, politics, foreign/domestic and so forth).

In the present material of 626 items on the particular topic of illicit drugs, three basic features were inductively identified as decisive for any news text: its origin, the nature of its object of knowledge, and the relation between the object of knowledge and mode of representation, in terms of degree of involvement.

(1) The origin of the item in terms of conditions of production. I suggest that the generative circumstances behind the publishing of any given item may be distinguished according to whether it (a) is the result of an established actor saying or doing something, (b) originates from occurrences or events deemed newsworthy, or (c) may be considered a journalistic initiative. These conditions are not directly available through the items themselves. And, obviously, occurrences and events do not speak for themselves; they too are provided by a source of some sort. I would however assert that this rather rudimentary distinction may indeed be made on the sole basis of the texts. Accordingly, the distinction between (a) and (b) is made considering the visibility and role of the sources/actors in the published item. Journalistic initiatives (c) are identified on the basis of their being relatively timeless and protracted.

(2) The object of journalistic knowledge. This varies greatly in news representations of drugs. The reporting on a crime almost always begins and ends with the particular event in question (i.e. the Event Report), whereas pieces surveying the present conditions of the drug problem set out to describe a state or a situation (Assessments). In-depth interviews on the careers of drug users are intended to describe the subjective experience of being addicted (Human Interest Stories), whereas reports on the latest political, medical or social engineering initiative in the battle against drugs say something about strategies and/or policy initiatives (Work in Progress).

(3) The relationship between the journalistic representation and the object of knowledge in terms of degree of involvement. Obviously, the genre conventions of news journalism prescribe objectivity and stylistically formal neutrality. But there are variations even here. On one side of the continuum, the reporting of, for instance, a crime incident normally provides a totally disengaged account of the event itself, in which journalism assumes the position of a completely neutral and
distant observer of what has happened (Event Reports). On the other side, the depiction of a junky’s career (Human Interest Stories) demands that journalism be sensitive to detail, and involve itself with the object of description, thus explicitly recognizing journalism’s own existence. Those items in which drug-using subcultures are the object of journalistic knowledge (Sneak Peeks) comprise anomalous cases. The result is often a delicate balancing act between distance and involvement, so that neither the institution of elite journalism nor the implied community of readers will be exposed to moral contamination (cf. Giulianotti 1997:417).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-genre</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Object of knowledge</th>
<th>Journalism–object relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event Report</td>
<td>Event driven</td>
<td>The event</td>
<td>Distant and silent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Actor/journalism driven</td>
<td>General situation</td>
<td>Distant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in Progress</td>
<td>Actor/journalism driven</td>
<td>Strategies/policy</td>
<td>Distant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Interest</td>
<td>Journalism driven</td>
<td>Personal experience</td>
<td>Involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneak Peek</td>
<td>Journalism driven</td>
<td>Sub-communities/“the underground”</td>
<td>Both distant and involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigative Endeavour</td>
<td>Journalism driven</td>
<td>Alternative/ emancipatory perspective(s)</td>
<td>Both distant and involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1 Properties of the sub-genres in DN’s reporting on drugs

Thusly conceptualized, six distinct sub-genres in news representations of drugs emerge, as illustrated in figure 4.1. The articles were coded as belonging to one of these sub-genres. Their relative distribution is displayed in table 4.1. It clearly shows the predominance of the Event Report (57.5 percent), whereas the more unconventional types Human Interest (3 percent), Sneak Peek (2.5 percent), and Investigative Endeavour (0.5 percent, only four pieces in total) are in fact very rare.

A reasonable assumption is that the respective frequency of each discourse type is unrelated to the present subject matter. Rather, their distribution can be de-

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12 The general applicability of the three basic features identified remains an open question. The specific configuration of six main sub-genres is hypothetically specific to criminal news.
derived from conditions of production and consumption. That is, sub-genres such as Human Interest, Sneak Peeks and Investigative Endeavours demand a great deal of journalistic manpower compared to the Event Reports, the bulk of which probably consist of slightly rewritten and/or supplemented press reports from established sources (cf. Lewis et al. 2008). In routine reporting, the frequency can thus decline as production costs increase. Similarly, a paper consisting only of lengthy pieces would be hard to fit into the breakfast routines of news consumers.

Table 4.1 Distribution of items among the sub-genres (percent) (n = 626)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-genre</th>
<th>Event Report</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Work in Progress</th>
<th>Human Interest</th>
<th>Sneak Peek</th>
<th>Investigative Endeavour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Properties of the Sub-Genres

Henceforth, the analysis will focus on the three most prevalent sub-genres. The Event Report assumes a maximum of distance to its object (i.e. the event). This detachment is achieved by two means: its silence in terms of the virtually absent quotes and reported speech, and the downplayed textual role ascribed to various actors/sources. Things just happen. Legal actors, for instance, are often transformed into impersonal and passive institutions (e.g. “the leader was sentenced by the district court of Malmö”). The role of journalistic practice and possible intermediating interpretations in the Event Report are reduced to a minimum; it is as if the event itself was speaking to the audience. The predominance of police actors and various other representatives of law and law enforcement is unambiguous. The police are present in 62 percent of the items, legal actors, such as prosecutors and lawyers, figure in 34 percent. The customs authorities alone populate no less than ten percent of the items (see table 4.2).

The brief character of this sub-genre is illustrated by table 4.3. Nearly three fourths of the items are in the Small category. This item size only allows for the most basic questions to be answered: What happened? Where? When? Who did it? And as table 4.4 shows, the Event Report deals almost exclusively with crime incidents. Taken together, the main content categories Smuggling, Crime general and Verdicts account for no less than 83 percent of the Event Reports.
Table 4.2 Types of actors by sub-genre (percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-genre</th>
<th>Event Report</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Work in Progress</th>
<th>Total ¹³</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social authorities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Several types of actors coded for each item

Table 4.3 Length of items by sub-genre (percent) (n = 626)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-genre</th>
<th>Event Report</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Work in Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹³ The totals column also includes the actors in the unconventional sub-genres.
¹⁴ The categorization of an item as Small, Medium or Large is identical to the one used by press-text.se. It gauges the size of an item based upon number of characters.
Table 4.4 Main content themes, by sub-genre (percent) (n = 626)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-genre</th>
<th>Event Report</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Work in Progress</th>
<th>Total(^\text{15})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insider’s perspective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting worse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting better</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smuggling(^\text{16})</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime, general</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal matters</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research/science</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verdicts</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Assessment sets out to provide “the latest” comprehensive overview of the current situation in the battle against drugs. What is it that we have to deal with, it asks, thereby providing what the Event Reports actually seem to suggest by the very frequency of their publication: a problem area, identified, explicated and defined as such.

\(^{15}\) The totals column also includes the main content themes in the unconventional sub-genres.

\(^{16}\) Obviously, in the real world, smuggling is a category subordinate to criminality. But in news journalism they are not related in this way. Items about criminality are almost always vague and general in their descriptions about the specific transgressions. When they are not, several transgressions are mentioned, whereas e.g. the specifics of police work tend to be foregrounded. Smuggling stands out in the material as the only specific type of incident that tends to be foregrounded (in contrast to other possible types, e.g. dealing, manufacturing, illegal use etc.).
Figure 4.1 shows that Assessments may be both actor driven and journalism driven. Differences in origin are actually significant to the form of Assessments. Instances where Assessments are initiated by journalism almost always take the form of a series of articles centred upon an area defined as pertinent, such as smuggling, youth issues or a specific substance. Journalism-driven Assessments are often the result of fairly labour-intensive journalistic work, drawing upon several actors and bodies of source materials. Furthermore, they may even be authoritative, in the sense that they may provide – though this is actually quite rare – explicit criticism without ascribing such statements to external actors.

By contrast, actor-driven Assessments typically constitute one-off pieces in which results from an inquiry or a survey are presented (cf. Hall et al. 1978:69). Here, the formal role of journalism is, again, reduced to the role of relaying information. As table 4.2 shows, representatives of the law and law enforcement are prominent actors even in Assessment pieces, however not to the same extent as in Event Reports. Assessments also see the introduction of another set of actors – Political, Social and Medical – suggesting that the police are not granted a monopoly status in the moment of problem definition. However, together with the customs authorities, (the boundaries between these institutions are not always clear-cut) they are still present in 50 percent of the pieces. Remarkably, the overarching main theme in Assessment pieces is that things are getting worse (see table 4.4).17

The Work in Progress story has, in essence, statements about intentions as its object of knowledge. Action oriented – towards new measures, changed policies, reworked strategies or novel prioritizations of certain areas – these initiatives come mainly from politicians (56 percent), actors within the social services/authorities (27 percent) or the police (20 percent) (see table 4.2).

In actor-driven Work in Progress pieces, journalism generally assumes a distant role towards its objects, and does not play a visible part in their construction. By contrast, the journalism-driven Work in Progress pieces in this material tend to assume an explicitly interrogative stance towards actors in positions of responsibility – for instance by asking questions about what measures are to be taken in the light of a previously published Assessment. Journalism-driven Work in Progress articles tend in other words to be critical to a greater extent than all the other types of pieces.

17 Assessment pieces usually cover a variety of themes (e.g. youth issues, smuggling etc.). When no prevailing theme could be distinguished, the coding procedure directed attention to the overall framing and argument put forward by the item. In 33 percent of the items, then, the overall argument is in fact that things are getting worse – in many areas simultaneously (e.g. increase among young people, increasing influx, diminishing opportunities for receiving rehabilitation etc.).
Critique

To what extent is critique of national policy voiced in the different types of items? Some initial clarifications must be made about the meaning of critique. First, items in which criticism is launched in journalism’s own name can be separated from items in which actors express criticism. It is the latter that is of interest here. Second, criticism must not be confused with whether an item reports on an event that is framed in a positive or negative way. All items in the material at hand are negative in this respect.

The coding distinguished between two principal forms of criticism when posing this question. These two forms are, in essence, diametrical. The first, labelled critique of execution of policy, typically involves actors expressing frustration with limited resources – in terms of time, funding or legal constraints – for carrying out ambitious political visions. This form of criticism is actually highly restricted in reach, since it ultimately presupposes compliance with the foundations of existing policy.

The second form of critique is directed towards the ends of this very policy as it is politically formulated and practised in contemporary Sweden. The direction and prioritisations of this policy were operationally boiled down to three properties which, according to criminological research (Johnson 2005, Tham 1996, 1995, Tops 2001, Boekhout van Solinge 2004, 2001) distinguish Swedish drug policy from those of many other European countries:

1. Overall political vision: “A Society without Drugs”;

2. All handling of illicit drugs, including personal use, constitutes criminal activity. No distinction exists in principle between “hard” and “soft” drugs, neither in formal legislation, nor in police work and legal practice;

3. Restricted employment of harm-reduction strategies. This includes the limitation of needle-exchange programs; the restricted use of chemical addiction treatment programmes (such as methadone and subutex); total abstinence as a requirement for receiving rehabilitation etc.

Accordingly, pieces in which actors level criticism against these or closely related policy characteristics were coded as expressing critique of the ends of national drug policy.
Table 4.5 The presence of critique of national policy, by sub-genre (percent) (n = 626)

| Sub-genre                  | Event Report | Assessment | Work in Progress | Total  
|----------------------------|--------------|------------|------------------|-------
| **Means of national policy** | 2            | 9.5        | 19               | 8     |
| **Ends of national policy** | 0.5          | 2          | 10               | 4     |

Studying table 4.5, it is not very surprising to find that the Event Report grants very little space to either of the two types of critical voices (2 percent for critique of means and 0.5 percent for critique of ends). By contrast, the Work in Progress discourse type gives, relatively speaking, great weight to critical voices of both kinds (19 percent and 10 percent). Assessments, by contrast, do not express criticism to the same degree. This is especially the case with regard to the more far-reaching form of critique of ends of policy.

Due to the low number of items, it is difficult to say anything conclusive about the presence of criticism in the three more unconventional discourse types in the material. Obviously, the Investigative Endeavour is an anomaly in this context, since it not only grants space to challenging statements, but has criticism as its very object of knowledge. Thus, in these instances the criticism is partly ascribed to journalism itself in contrast to the other sub-genres. All in all, it can however be concluded that news on drugs in DN is more likely to express the restricted form of critique of means (8 percent) than its more far-reaching counterpart, the critique of ends (4 percent).

The Moral Position

I venture to suggest that what emerges from this descriptive overview of elite news journalism on the issue of drugs in DN is as follows. In essence, it comprises the discursive construction of a social problem. As such, it is defined as both serious and pertinent to the audience. Four features of the corpus of items analysed here may be identified as generative of such an appeal to the implied readership.

First, there is the abundance of items – roughly one piece every other day during the research period. It is hard to obtain valid comparisons to other topics in print journalism that would be immediately relevant to news on drugs; they would be doubtful due to methodological disparities among other things. Never-

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18 The totals column also includes the occurrence of critique in the unconventional sub-genres.
theless, one may arguably consider one piece on drugs every other day to be a lot. From an audience perspective, the amount of material is in itself significant for how relevant and important an issue or a topic will be regarded (see e.g. McCombs and Shaw 1972, 1993).

A second key feature is the valence of the items. Obviously, there are no weekend pages for the drug connoisseur which would correspond to the wine tips occasionally published in DN and in other media contexts. It can easily be concluded that every single item selected for the study presupposes a negative image of illicit drugs. The closest one gets to neutral representations of drugs in DN are a handful of items in the culture/entertainment section that deal with celebrities’ drug use. As self-evident as this may seem, it must be underscored.

Third, and perhaps more importantly, there is the prevailing definition of drugs as a criminal problem. This definition can be identified both directly and indirectly. One direct indication of this criminalizing imperative is the prevalence of various representatives of the law, mainly in the three most common sub-genres (the Event Report, the Assessment and the Work in Progress). Consequently, this dominance is also discernible in the main content themes in these types of stories (see table 4.4).

The indirect indication of the prevalence of the criminal framework is the virtual absence of critique. Let me elaborate on this point. First, we may for the moment disregard the Event Report, since it would indeed be too much to ask for this type of item to grant space to critical voices. This leaves us with Assessments and Works in Progress, the sub-genres that can work towards providing definitions of the social problem of drugs – and suggesting solutions. We may also disregard the more restricted form of critique – the critique of means – since such accounts are better regarded as ideological support for the existing order of things. Remaining in the Assessment and the Work in Progress pieces are then 2 percent and 10 percent respectively. These numbers signify the share of the items in which at least one actor levels criticism at the ends of Swedish drug policy as defined above. Bearing in mind that these two sub-genres, both in terms of space and in terms of genre conventions, indeed are principally open for critical voices, these numbers must be regarded as meagre. Meagre too are the number of investigative pieces which level ends-related criticism towards national policy: two items in all. Again, this observation is made despite it being hard to find any topic of comparison that may be immediately relevant to the issue of drugs. The point, at any rate, is that the evident shortage of critique may indicate that the drug issue is not a politically controversial subject even in the sub-genres conventionally dedicated to the publishing of such controversies. This is despite the comparatively notable presence of political actors, 56 percent, in the Work in Progress items. This is most likely a reflection of the character of the issue in political life in Sweden. Drug policy is one of the areas in which there is a broad consensus
among all the established political parties, both on national and regional levels. Similarly, the criminalizing imperative in DN may accordingly be said to align closely with the US-inspired, prohibition-based political “drug control system” that distinguishes Sweden’s (and Nordic) drug policy in a European perspective (Boekhout van Solinge 2004, see also Tops 2001, Tham 1995).

The significance of the prevalence of a criminal framework of drugs – as opposed to, say, a framework of political contestation or a medical/public health framework – is, basically, that the character of the issue emerges as uncontroversial. Rehabilitation or prevention may be justified, or one may have opinions about the how’s and why’s of their implementation. But when it is defined as criminality, the range and scope of possible opinions about the issue become considerably narrower. Obviously, no one could plausibly wish for anything but for it to simply disappear. Or, as Hall et al. (1978:69–70, cf. Reiner 2002:407) has suggested:

[O]ne of the areas where the media are most likely to be successful in mobilising public opinion within the dominant framework of ideas is on issues about crime and its threat to society. This makes the avenue of crime a peculiarly one-dimensional and transparent one so far as the mass media and public opinion is concerned: one where issues are simple, uncontroversial and clear-cut.

The fourth and, I suggest, final feature in the constitution of the issue as a serious and pertinent social problem, is the overall argumentative logic that can be identified in news on drugs. Taken together, 93.5 percent of all the items belong to one of the three most prevalent types of items: Event Reports, Assessments and Works in Progress. These three sub-genres can be considered a chain of arguments.

In the Event Report, drugs constitute an unambiguous law-breaking problem, in the form of numerous events that breach the consensually agreed norms of society (cf. Hall et al. 1978:66). Accordingly, the Event Report may be said to constitute a brief tale of law and order, seemingly transmitted from reality itself onto the margin of the pages of DN. These tales of law and order remind the reader almost every third day of the societal presence of illicit drugs.

Assessments, as it were, sum up the events and measure the gravity of the situation, often in accordance with dystopian visions. Accordingly, the Event Report and the Assessment serve as the two first steps in this problem construction – i.e. they provide the very definition of what is not acceptable. At this stage the problem is essentially defined in criminal terms by law enforcement actors. Work in Progress items then suggest ways to tackle the problem. 19 Here, the initial problem definition provided by Event Reports and Assessments is gradually ex-

19 It is in fact not unusual that Assessments are followed up, either in direct connection, or a few days later, by Work in Progress pieces.
tended to comprise youth issues, prevention, rehabilitation, legal matters, EU politics, and so forth.

In this chain of argument, the Assessments may import credibility from the essentially mundane character of event reporting on drugs. Similarly, the Work in Progress can entirely presuppose the very existence of the problem since the Event Reports and Assessments have already provided a predefined foundation upon which calls that measures be taken emerge as inherently plausible.

In sum, then, the possibility must be seriously considered that these four features taken together – the abundance of items, their negativity, their criminalizing (and thus consensual) imperative, and their overall argumentative structure – may comprise a potential mechanism in the reception of news on drugs among news readers. As such it can propose a broad “preferred meaning” that may work towards the recognition of drugs as a social problem that is serious and pertinent in a profoundly simple and uncontroversial way. This is the prevailing moral position of the elite news representation of the issue at hand. In the intensive analysis, it will be shown how this moral position in concrete news texts can be connected to symbolic national borders.

**News as a “Problem-Generating Machine”**

In accordance with the above, the analysis shows that the representation of illicit drugs in *DN* displays a number of features that may be distinctive for the particular topic in question. There are however also a number of reasons to consider these traits as expressions of more fundamental properties of news as a textual system and as a particular mode of discursive production.

The prevalence of crime in news is not specific to the topic of drugs. As Hall et al. (1978) note, criminality does not only fit very well into the general structure of news values. It is also both relatively uncomplicated and cheap to produce (p. 67). It conforms to and confirms the moral boundaries by reporting transgressions, and its primary sources (the police, Home Office statistics and court findings) rarely ever need fact-checking, since the experts on crime (i.e. the criminals themselves) “[b]y virtue of being criminals, […] have forfeited the right to take part in the negotiation of consensus about crime” (p. 69).

In a recent extensive study of the role of news sources and PR agencies in news production, Lewis et al. (2008) find that between 20 and 26 percent of all the news items during one week of 2006 in the UK elite press and television could be categorized as criminal news. This made criminal news the top category in the study, outranking both political and business/consumer news (p. 5). (A news content analysis by ter Wal et al. [2005] finds similar results in a Dutch context.) Furthermore, the authors note that an overwhelming majority of items in this
category comprise reporting of single events rather than surveys of trends or issues (p. 4). Accordingly, these findings dovetail with the dominance of criminality in the present material, though it seems to appear in a purified form regarding the specific topic of drugs. (Here, 74.5 percent of the items comprise event reports and, of these, 83 percent deal with criminality in some form or another. On the whole, 56 percent of the items have criminality as their main theme.) Although these studies are conducted in different national contexts than the present one, it is reasonable to regard this pattern as deriving from the transfactual conditions of news selection and news production, as outlined by Hall et al. (1978).

As for the argumentative logic identified in the present study – i.e. the rhetorical interaction between Event Reports, Assessments and Work in Progress pieces – it is not specific to this topic. Hall et al. (1978:69) note a similar pattern in news on crime in general, in which the “staple diet” of event reporting is complemented by evaluative statistical measures that various established spokespersons interpret in order to define the “state of the war against crime”. Indeed, insofar as such argumentative logics work towards the definition of societal problems of public significance, this may be taken as illustrative of news in general. Following Altheide (1997) news is in essence a “problem-generating machine” (cited in Nylund 2006:161). According to Nylund, “news reporters and news sources co-construct our everyday problems, and, occasionally, provide solutions to them” (Nylund 2006:161). In this way, such rhetorical logic may point towards the ways in which purportedly neutral and objective news journalism routinely appeals to and reproduces moral positions (cf. Glasser and Ettema 1989, Nylund 2000). Although this feature may be especially prominent in crime news, and is possibly even more magnified in news on illicit drugs, it emerges as a tendency inherent in news journalism rather than in this specific topic.

Moreover, the apparent absence of critique and the virtual non-existence of investigative pieces in news on drugs (only four items out of the total of 626) may also be seen as characteristics of news in itself. Recent studies have confirmed not only the relatively meagre number of traditional investigative pieces in news output (Ekström et al. 2006:301). Furthermore, the dependence of news on “primary definers” – i.e. established sources and news agencies – is well documented (Hall et al. 1978, Manning 2001, Lewis et al. 2008). On a general level, this tendency can be assigned to the tight economic conditions under which news journalism operates.

It might however also be assigned more specifically to the fundamental journalistic imperatives of non-advocacy, amplitude and elite-centeredness. According to Lau (2004) news journalism may be biased towards the perspectives and definitional frameworks of institutional elites not because of some arbitrary, self-derived journalistic code. Rather, it makes use of the knowledge and perspectives of established and resource rich actors because journalists themselves are not
“knowledgeable analysts” who can evaluate, more than to a very limited extent, the credibility and/or socio-political impact of alternative voices vis-à-vis institutional representatives. Or, as Lau puts it, “[a] president’s statement is generally privileged over statements of small pressure groups because, if for no other reason, of their differential impact” (2004:704). Putting greater expectations of analytical initiatives upon news journalism would be equal to expecting it to be something else (i.e. social science) (ibid.). Reporting what established actors say, and, if they disagree, reporting disagreements, seems in other words to be a necessary feature of humdrum journalism.

And insofar as these general conditions apply to the reporting on drugs in DN, the lack of critique may be explained by the consensual nature of drug policy among the established political parties in Sweden, as well as the marginal status of alternative lobby groups on the particular issue (see Boekhout van Solinge 2004:174–185).

However, one thing cannot be explained with reference to general economic conditions, and the universal news values of non-advocacy, amplitude and elite-centeredness: that news on drugs in DN tends to be a “non-advocate” in relation to Swedish (i.e. not Belgian, European or otherwise) drug policy. Instead, this must be explained with reference to elite news journalism being an institution of what Jørgensen (1994) labels nationscape. That is, the composition of its readership, its advertising market, and the network of established sources normally recruited in everyday reporting by and large coincide with the institutions of the nation-state. These basic conditions tend to produce an inherently national perspective on issues such as the present one if no other factors come into play.

In these ways, I conclude that the analysis shows how structures and tendencies of a more general kind are manifested. In comparison however, with this particular topic, there are some indications that these tendencies gain almost unreserved expression; to the extent that news is a politically dependant “problem-generating machine” as outlined above, these features seem distilled, magnified and even caricatured in news on drugs.

Intensive Analysis

The remainder of this chapter focuses on how genre properties and textual devices concretely operate both to facilitate and to narrow down the ranges of possible meanings. The analysis explores how these properties can generate specific directions for the construction of meaning in the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts. In contrast to the quantitative study, the unit of analysis is not the single item here, but all seven items that comprise the sets of texts in question.
The close analysis focuses on both the ideational and the interpersonal functions of news texts.

The ideational analysis employs the model for news analysis launched by van Dijk (1988, 1991). In accordance with this perspective, the analysis locates the construction of meaning at the global (textual) as well as the local level of sentences. At the global level, any news text is seen as embodying particular schematic structures and particular ways of arranging its constituent elements in the form of thematic structures. In news texts, there is a fairly fixed regime as to how these elements are ordered into conventional categories – including headlines, leads, layout sections and paragraph structures.

The interpersonal analysis focuses on how particular relations between the participants in the communicative event are set up (Fairclough 1995:17–18). This function can generate specific relations between the institution of journalism and the implied reader, as well as between actors present in news texts, and their relationship to the reader (cf. Eriksson 2002, Ekström 2000b). An important feature in this context is how news represents itself as a knowledge-disseminating institution by means of various factuality strategies (van Dijk 1988).

Another central principle here is the notion of discourses as “proverbial icebergs” (van Dijk 1988:62). In news discourse – as in all discourse – only a limited amount of the information is presented in an explicit fashion. Different types of implicitness can be identified. Van Dijk (1991) for example distinguishes between vagueness, over-completeness, presupposition and implications (or implicatures). These forms of implicitness can be conceptualized as rhetorical devices that in various ways function to attribute common sense knowledge and moral value judgements to the public community to which it is addressed (cf. Fairclough 1995:106–109, Glasser and Ettema 1989). Implicitness resides at the micro-level of news discourse.

The following analysis identifies how thematic structures, factuality strategies and implicitness function in the Eastern Europe texts and the Kat texts to constitute a range of preferred meanings that ultimately can serve to define the nation in specific ways. It is important to point out that the analysis considers both global and local levels of the texts, but that neither of these levels can be comprehensively accounted for in this context.
Figure 4.2 The Eastern Europe texts, item 1, 2 and 3
Figure 4.3 The Kat texts, item 1 and 2
Thematic Hierarchies

As van Dijk (1988:31, 41) points out, news texts organize their topics in specific configurations of macro-propositions, or themes. Moreover, “[t]he topics of news discourse are not simply a list; they form hierarchical structures” (1988:41). In this hierarchy, certain macro-propositions are highlighted whereas others are downplayed. In this section, then, the global level of organization of macro-propositions is considered. The main topics, themes and arguments are identified, as well as themes that are downplayed (but could have comprised main topics) in the hierarchy constructed by the texts. For this purpose, some background characteristics of the texts used in the reception study must first be provided.20

The Eastern Europe texts were the top pieces of news on the day of publication (17 May 2000), with a preamble at the front page. They are the first set of articles in a series of three focusing on drugs under the label New Wave of Drugs (“Ny knarkvåg” in Swedish). In the paper, on page five, the three main items cover virtually the whole page.

Front page, headline: “Wave of Cheap Drugs”
Lead: “Threat from Eastern Europe. The Supply Leads to Extremely Low Prices on ‘the Standard Drug’ Amphetamine” (not reproduced as facsimile)

Item 1, headline: “The Drugs Pour in from the East” (Assessment)

Item 2: “Amphetamine New Party Drug” (Assessment)

Item 3: “‘They’ll Take Anything’” (Assessment)


The Kat texts were published on two successive days, the 16 and 17 June 2002. They are placed in sections of the paper labelled Insidan (“Insider”) and Fokus (“Focus”), special sections dedicated to longer feature pieces. Two items are published on Saturday and two more on Sunday. The Saturday pieces cover nearly a whole spread. The Sunday pieces cover nearly one page.

Item 1, headline: “Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England (Sneak Peek)

Item 2: “Unequally Harmful in Different Countries” (Assessment)

Item 3: “Men Who Chew Kat Stop Striving” (Assessment)

20 The texts are provided in English translation in the Appendix.
Item 4: “The Police Do Almost Nothing?” (Work in Progress)

Illustrations to items 1 and 2: Four captioned photographs and a facts section about the drug kat. The first major photograph shows a Somali kat user in London, and the second displays a hand holding a bunch of kat. The other two show a customs officer next to a kat seizure, and a black male kat dealer working at a wharf in London.

Illustrations to items 3 and 4: One medium-distance photograph of Sahra Bargadle, a quoted civil servant of Somali background. Facts section from Saturday reproduced (slightly abbreviated).

In simplified form, I suggest that the thematic structures of macro-propositions in the *Eastern Europe* texts and the *Kat* texts can be represented as in figures 4.4 and 4.6. The left columns in the figures identify the macro-propositions that are given prominent positions in the texts; elements of these particular propositions appear in headlines and leads, and are given relatively ample space in the body texts. The right column lists the macro-propositions that are brought up by the texts but are downplayed in the hierarchy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foregrounded macro-propositions</th>
<th>Downplayed macro-propositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Event</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The police are taking measures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing influx of amphetamine from Eastern Europe into Sweden.</td>
<td>Influx from Belgium and Holland: “the classic route” into Sweden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequence 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased supply and price drop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequence 2</strong> (weakly implied)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase of drug use among young people.</td>
<td>Drug use among young people at a fairly constant level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequence 3</strong> (weakly implied)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normalization of drug use: amphetamine the new party drug, the abuse transgresses class.</td>
<td>Drug abuse is class-related.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextualization</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-1989 collapse of the Eastern Bloc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.4 Thematic structure of the Eastern Europe texts
Figure 4.5 The Kat texts, item 3 and 4
Specifically, downplayed propositions (1) are given little space in the body texts relative to the foregrounded propositions; (2) tend to be ascribed to quoted actors without additional support and/or elaboration from the author; and (3) are not referred to in the top levels of the report (headlines and leads) but are embedded more deeply in the body texts.

Accordingly, the Eastern Europe texts foreground the new routes of amphetamine smuggling into Sweden rather than the “classic” route from Belgium and Holland via Denmark. Moreover, emphasis is put on the proposition about the normalizing tendencies of amphetamine abuse rather than the class related character of the consequences of drug abuse. The former macro-proposition is substantiated by various references, perhaps most notably by some quotes from a social service representative. An example:

– We consider amphetamine the standard drug. This is typically Swedish. We have caviar, herring and snaps, crisp bread and we have amphetamine. There is a long tradition and lots of knowledge about how to use amphetamine, says Sven-Erik Eriksson at Maria Ungdom [rehabilitation centre for youth located in Stockholm]. (Eastern Europe, item 1, “The Drugs Pour in from the East”)

Significantly, parts of this quote are also reproduced in the front page preamble. The latter proposition, about class determination, is ascribed to an actor in the body text but is otherwise left uncommented. Accordingly, the matter is made a national concern rather than a class issue. In a similar fashion, the proposition about the increase of use among youth is based upon two substantial pieces of evidence: statistics annually recorded in comprehensive military draft surveys, and quoted experts from the social authorities. Significantly, the numbers could just as well be interpreted as indications of stabilization. Such an interpretation also forms a proposition in the texts. It is however downplayed when the social authorities are granted space for their views on the matter; they provide support for the interpretation that use is increasing instead. Finally, there is a brief mention of the historical and political context in the Eastern parts of Europe since 1989.

Although the main event of the Kat texts consists of the increasing influx of the drug into Sweden – along with police reports about the escalating problem among Somali people – this macro-proposition merely sets the stage for what is to come. In fact, the entire first item is by and large a background piece. This structure is atypical for humdrum news reporting, in which background information assumes a marginal position in relation to the main event(s). On the global level the macro-propositions function in the background (1) to put to the fore the negative consequences of kat use, while downplaying positive opinions about the drug; and (2) to designate kat use a major reason for the problems facing Somalis living in Sweden, thus downplaying other possible causes referred to but not elaborated on (e.g. unemployment).
Main Event 1
Increasing influx of kat into Sweden.
The abuse is an escalating problem.

Background
Kat is a narcotic substance.
Kat causes misery among Somalis:
it destroys the prospects of integration
and reinforces patriarchal structures.

Contextualization
Legislation/policy differences in a
European perspective.
Sweden’s drug policy is better than
other European countries’ (weakly implied).

Main Event 2
Critique of police inaction regarding
kat abuse: discrimination/racism

Other forms of discrimination than
lack of law enforcement measures.

The macro-proposition about police inaction comprises a critique of how the institution prioritizes its efforts. Explicit charges of racism and discrimination are foregrounded as an explanation of this inaction. In item 3, the allegation is introduced in an interview with a Somali born civil servant. In item 4, the charges about police inaction and racism comprise the guiding macro-proposition (the “angle”) of the entire piece, headlined with the quote “The Police Do Almost Nothing”. The first two paragraphs of the item accordingly read:

The Swedish authorities do not care about the serious problems that kat use causes among Somalis in Sweden, and this passivity amounts to a form of discrimination that borders on racism – it’s just Somalis who are affected.

This is the opinion of Stefan Kalmán, police officer, and for the past six years drug investigator in Rinkeby, Tensta and Hjulsta in north-western Stockholm. (Kat, item 4, “The Police Do Almost Nothing”)

The macro-proposition about police inaction defines racism as the outcome of various structural and ideological factors. It targets among other things the allegedly discriminatory, or racist, effect of partly unrelated rules and regulations that decide which criminal activity should be prioritized in police work. Moreover, it incorporates passivity and inaction into the definition. In this way it departs from other (lay) definitions of racism/discrimination as individually held attitudes,
prejudices and more or less intentional discriminatory actions. In essence, it is a radical social scientific version that is being proposed (cf. Jefferson 1993, Kamali 2005), possibly illustrating an awareness of the issue in European news media (ter Wal et al. 2005:948). As an auxiliary to this proposition, the “Swedishness” of the problem is actively propagated by the employment of quotes from the police officer Stefan Kalmán, and civil servant Sahra Bargadle:

– Many police officers and prosecutors think that this is a Somali problem and isn’t that important – it doesn’t hit Swedes. And it’s true that it’s only Somalis who chew kat: the risk that other groups of people will start abusing kat is small. But I think this attitude is degrading and inexcusable. […] (Kat, item 4, “The Police Do Almost Nothing”, quote from Stefan Kalmán)

– […] More and more kat is being smuggled into Sweden; people in areas like Tensta and Rinkeby are struck harder and harder and sooner or later this becomes a serious problem for the entire Swedish society! (Kat, item 3, “Men Who Chew Kat Stop Striving”, quote from Sahra Bargadle)

The macro-proposition also functions to downplay the possible exploration of other forms of discriminatory (in)action and structures affecting Somalis living in Sweden than merely the lack of law enforcement measures. Such forms (i.e. discrimination on the labour market) are mentioned in item 3, but remain unelaborated.

Finally, the texts put the kat issue in a European context of policy and legislation differences. This is also the theme that is taken up in the main headline to items 1 and 2: “Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England”. The overall implication of the macro-proposition about European-wide differences is that Sweden sets a good example in such comparisons.

The foregrounding and downplaying of macro-propositions in the texts serve the overall function of downplaying ambiguity so that contradictory themes, tendencies and facts do not interfere with the main thrust, the “angle”, of the texts. Accordingly, the stabilization of levels of use among youth, class determination, and the “classic” route in the Eastern Europe texts are put in the background as they otherwise would interfere with the features that are defined as making the items newsworthy. Similarly, the Kat texts downplay propositions that would render racism/discrimination the main issue of the texts (rather than the kat drug) and gloss over the complex issue of state classification of substances and national differences in legislation on a European level.

I will return to a detailed exploration of how key moments in the launching of the macro-propositions are linguistically constructed.
Factuality Strategies

News texts not only function to generate specific representations of the world, they also tend to establish certain identities for and relations between third party actors that appear in the texts. Moreover, they establish relations between production and consumption. The question for this section, then, is how these functions find concrete expressions in the news texts.

According to van Dijk (1988), news is persuasive. News provides assertions to readers. As propositions, they are designed to be “noticed, understood, represented, memorized, and finally believed and integrated” (p. 84). As a commodity on the media market news provides the appearance of truth, reliability and plausibility. What van Dijk is primarily referring to here is a “journalism of information”. Ekström (2000b) identifies three modes of communication in contemporary journalism: the journalism of information, storytelling and attractions. In information journalism is in the business of supplying true, reliable and relevant information to knowledge-seeking citizens. Journalism assumes the role of a neutral information provider and the third parties are typically recruited as expert sources of knowledge. By contrast, the modes of storytelling and attractions have other intentions, provide other bases of audience involvement, and establish different kinds of roles for the participants in the communicative event. Tabloid journalism may for instance be at least partly premised upon an attraction mode, in which journalism becomes an exhibitor of spectacular persons/events, whereas the audience is positioned as voyeuristic spectators.

The dominant mode of communication in the news texts is the journalism of information. This applies not only to these specific texts, but can be considered a fundamental property of Dagens Nyheter as a well-known and respectable institution of elite journalism in Swedish society. Specifically, the operations of an information mode can be identified by exploring what strategies are employed in the texts to achieve factuality.

Factuality strategies, van Dijk concludes, constitute the most pertinent rhetorical devices employed by news journalism (of information) to enhance the market value of its assertions about reality (1988:86). Factuality is typically achieved through the use of established sources (professionals and institutional representatives); the signalling of exactness (e.g. the employment of numbers for persons and time); the use of eyewitness reports; or even direct description. By these means, news advertises the truth value, the plausibility and the acceptability of its assertions.

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21 The modes are identified in relation to the television medium specifically.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walter Kegö, police, head of the narcotics division</td>
<td>Expert knowledge (increasing influx from the East)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulf Guttursson, social authority, CAN (Swedish body of drug and alcohol information)</td>
<td>Expert knowledge (increase of drug use among youth)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sven-Erik Eriksson, social service, Maria Ungdom (youth welfare institution)</td>
<td>Expert knowledge (increase of drug use among youth)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olof Bäck, health-care, head of the Karolinska Hospital drug analysis laboratory</td>
<td>Illustration (drug use as normalized)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.7 Actors and their functions in the Eastern Europe texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per Corsing, customs, the town of Helsingborg</td>
<td>Expert knowledge (establishing the problem)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefan Kálmán, police, drug investigator</td>
<td>Expert knowledge (establishing the problem)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilyas Ali, lay person, kat user, London</td>
<td>Illustration (kat causes misery)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous x 3, Ali Farah, Saed Hershí, Ali Jama, lay people, kat vendors, London</td>
<td>Illustration (kat causes misery)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conny Eklund, health-care, Medical Products Agency, Sweden</td>
<td>Expert knowledge (Sweden is better)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ibrahim” (anonymous), lay person, Sweden</td>
<td>Insider knowledge (kat causes misery)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahra Bargadle, social service, civil servant in municipal administration, Sweden</td>
<td>Insider/expert knowledge (kat causes misery, structural racism)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefan Kálmán, police, local drug investigator in Tensta (Stockholm suburb)</td>
<td>Expert knowledge (structural racism)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.8 Actors and their functions in the Kat texts
Both texts rely heavily on established sources. An overview of the actors/sources employed in the texts is provided by figures 4.7 and 4.8. The “actor” column names the actors as they are presented in the texts. The “function” column identifies what type of knowledge or information that is provided by the sources – which in turn indicates what roles and status are ascribed to them. (The specifications in brackets signify which macro-propositions they are recruited to substantiate.) This shows that the bulk of the knowledge and information presented to the audience in the texts come from established sources, such as the police, the social services and the social authorities. They are employed and orchestrated in a certain way by the texts to produce and/or substantiate specific macro-propositions about reality. An interesting feature is that lay people are entirely absent from the Eastern Europe texts – even the young people who are allegedly at risk – whereas in the Kat texts they serve illustrative purposes.

Both texts also employ exactness strategies, primarily the display of numbers. In the Eastern Europe texts amphetamine prices are carefully specified by weight. The reader is provided clinical details about the drug, among other things that a normal dose ranges from 0.05 to 0.1 grams. Statistics are reported about the numbers of amphetamine seizures per year, and the annual percentage of young people who have tried narcotics at least once. Even regional differences in Sweden are specified. In a similar fashion, the Kat texts are replete with numbers signifying, among other things, the weight of single and combined seizures, pricing in England and in Sweden, and the number of bunches of kat that a consumer of kat would normally need in one night.

A common feature of Assessment-oriented journalism is the separation of certain elements in the layout of the items. Both texts accordingly sum up clinical facts about the drugs in separate facts sections. Furthermore, the Eastern Europe texts contain a graphic image representing “Amphetamine Routes into Sweden” on a map of northern Europe, whereas the “kat trade” is accounted for in another facts section of the Kat texts. What these layout choices indicate is that these particular aspects of the story comprise “the hard facts”, the most important things to keep in mind, should the reader not bother to read through the body texts. Accordingly, the hard, undisputable facts in the texts constitute the narcotic nature of the substances in question and the specifics of the smuggling enterprises.

Both texts employ eyewitness reports that strengthen the assertions being purveyed in certain key respects. In item 3 of the Eastern Europe texts, one Olof Bäck, drug analyst at a laboratory that allegedly analyses 60000 suspected drug samples every year, says that young people “seem to take anything” and that they often “say they’ve bought it on the Internet”. According to how the quote is framed, he can allegedly “confirm the image that amphetamine and other synthetic drugs have been on the march” in recent years.
Item 1 of the *Kat* texts even constitutes a lengthy *direct description* of ongoing events. The reporter undertakes a quasi-ethnographic study of a kat-using Somali community in England: “Southall in western London, a poor suburb where very few Englishmen live – but all the more Somalis, Indians and Jamaicans”. The reporter talks to users and dealers, gathers impressions and maps out the English base of the kat enterprise. The setting is described in naturalistic detail, as are the minutiae of kat-chewing practices:

> It [the kat club] is located in a backyard full of car wrecks and engine parts, construction scrap and rotten garbage. A plank made out of a discarded radiator leads up to two rooms and a toilet. There is no furniture in the rooms.
> 
> [...] They pick on their sprigs, chew the bitter-tasting sprouts and leaves, swallow the drug-containing vegetable sap and gather the cellulose to a ball inside the cheek.
> 
> When the cheek pouch gets too stretched they spit out the ball in a plastic bag. (*Kat*, item 1, “Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England”)

“‘I have seen it with my own eyes’ is the ultimate warrant of truthfulness” van Dijk comments (1988:86). Again, in the rhetoric of news it is not so much the “real truth as the illusion of truth that is at stake” (ibid.). Both eyewitness reports and direct observation provide concrete, and therefore also imaginable, descriptions of events, in contrast to more distanced forms of representation. Therefore, they tend to speak in a more immediate way to the cognitive processes of readers. In these ways, the macro-proposition about both the increase and normalization of synthetic drug use can be substantiated by the interview with the drug analyst in the *Eastern Europe* texts. (Atypically, the source is in this instance recruited both as an expert and as a direct witness.) In the *Kat* texts, the reporter’s first hand Sneak Peek into the Somali community in London provides an abundance of materials and arguments for considering kat use as a practice with harmful, even detrimental, social consequences.

To sum up, it can be concluded that the news texts comprise instances of a journalism of information that purports to provide true, reliable and relevant information to an audience defined as knowledge-seeking citizens. The actors in the texts are treated as sources of knowledge, except for the lay persons, who are recruited to illustrate facts and arguments that originate from elsewhere. As problem-bearers and moral transgressors, young people and Somalis are not granted such positions. They merely function as evidence of the magnitude and consequences of consumption of illicit drugs. The texts employ strategies for giving the appearance of factuality that are constitutive of the news genre as such.
Implications and Presuppositions

The construction of macro-propositions is not merely a matter of hierarchical foregrounding and downplaying in a schematic structure. Nor is it merely a matter of recruiting sources for substantiation. Above all, it is a question of how news texts can employ absences of information strategically to establish certain representations of reality.

At both local and global levels of news texts, the possibility of comprehension and, indeed, communication, is contingent upon socially shared knowledge and familiar repertoires of interpretation. Implied forms of meaning are central to the analysis of news discourse because they can reveal what knowledge, beliefs and moral positions that are assumed to be socially shared (van Dijk 1988:64). As such, implicitness in news texts has the potential to attribute common-sense assumptions to their readers. Such assumptions can provide a foundation for normative stances to be actualized and incorporated in the moment of reception.

Specifically, the present section will explore how the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts employ strategic absences of information, implications and presuppositions, at key moments in their ideational construction of a particular representation of reality. According to van Dijk (1991:183), presuppositions are a variety of implicitness in which news discourse “may indirectly and sometimes rather subtly state things that are not ‘known’ by the readers at all, but which are simply suggested to be common knowledge”. Presuppositions basically depict potentially controversial assertions as unproblematic “matters of fact”. A common way of doing this is to employ a definite article (e.g. “the crisis of democracy” or “the escalating drug problem in Sweden”). Presuppositions thus require that the reader incorporate these matters of fact in order to accept other pieces of (explicit) information that build on this “common knowledge” (cf. Fairclough 1995:107).

Implications work by inferring information from (attributed) “previous knowledge and beliefs” in combination with “information actually expressed in the text” (van Dijk 1991:181). In contrast to presuppositions, implications are weaker in the sense that the reader is not required to perform the interpretive work in order to incorporate other pieces of information. It is also inherently defensive since news discourse can simply juxtapose two or more pieces of fact, and tie them together with a conjunction that vaguely suggests a relation between them but whose specific content must be inferred by the reader (e.g. “she is a mother of three, but she’s always had high aspirations as a researcher”). In this way, implications can invite the audience to make inferences in directions that must not be explicated by journalism itself. Far from claiming to be a comprehensive linguistic account of implicitness in the news texts in question, the analysis below provides significant examples of how these strategies can function to facili-
tate and restrain the range of possible meanings in certain directions in the texts at hand.

**Inviting the Reader into the Nation**

A key moment is the positioning of the reader as a national member. In newspapers, this positioning is usually hardly visible at all. As Billig (1995:94) points out, “[t]he crucial words of banal nationalism are often the smallest”. Consider the following excerpts:

- Threat from Eastern Europe. *(Eastern Europe, lead to front-page preamble, emphasis added)*
- The Drugs Pour in from the East *(Eastern Europe, headline to item 1, emphasis added)*

The underlined deictic markers *from* and *in* are vague. The only specification provided is that the space they imply (“Eastern Europe” and “the East”) is literal (geographical) rather than figurative. The *from* presupposes a *to* or an *into*. In turn, *in* requires of the reader, first, to identify what kind of geographical space is referred to and, second, to recognize herself as residing in this space. That the space in question constitutes the nation of Sweden is specified later. It goes to show, however, that the initial absence of “Sweden” illustrates the taken-for-granted character of national-reader positioning in conventional news discourse. It is, basically, an undisputable matter of fact, a presupposition.

By contrast, the *Kat* texts – the first two items in particular – cannot employ deictic markers in the same way, because they deal with kat use in England and contextualize the issue within European level policy differences. Accordingly, the issue is anchored *explicitly* in a Swedish context in the lead to item 1:

- **Kat.** The illegal import of the Eastern African drug kat into Sweden has multiplied since the middle of the 90s. Kat is classified as narcotics in Sweden, whereas in Great Britain among others it is considered just another vegetable *(Kat, lead to item 1, “Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England”)*.

This explicit anchoring is, however, not without significance. According to the very same principle as the presupposed positioning of the reader as a Swede in the *Eastern Europe* texts, it implies that the meaningfulness, relevance and cultural proximity of the issue may be enhanced by relating it to the national context to which the reader is assumed to belong.
Eastern Europe: Establishing the National Threat

Above all, the Eastern Europe texts depict a “threat” to the national community to which the reader is assumed to belong. Dealing mainly with a supposedly familiar narcotic substance, amphetamine, the judgements about its harmful and undesirable character are submerged within the texts – and implied by means of its status as the top story of the day. No appeals to normative yardsticks are made, not even the law; the presupposition is simply that the audience has the “common decency” (cf. Glasser and Ettema 1989:10) to share the moral position that an increasing influx is negative. The only direct reference to such external yardsticks is a brief facts section that provides five technical details about the substance itself.

Instead, what is at stake in the Eastern Europe texts is the construction of the magnitude of the problem, the severity of the “threat” posed to the nation. Globally, the “threat from the East” is constructed by means of an assumed causality between all the foregrounded macro-propositions (see figure 4.4). This causality is weakly implied by means of the juxtaposition of all the items under the same typographical umbrella in the physical newspaper. It is also underscored in the summarizing front-page preamble (not reproduced as facsimile), which employs a complex set of implications to this end:

Cheap amphetamine from Eastern Europe and the Baltic States overflows the Swedish narcotics market. The extremely high supply [1] means that prices have dropped [2] to a fraction of the levels of the 1970s. The police report that one gram of amphetamine, which is enough for several doses, today costs no more than 70 crowns on the street.

– Talk about a bargain sale, says Sven-Erik Eriksson at Maria Ungdom, who is very concerned about the price development. He labels amphetamine “a standard drug”, and considers the abuse as something typically Swedish.

– We have caviar, herring and snaps, crisp bread, and we have amphetamine, he says.

Among young people narcotics abuse today is as widespread as it was during the record years of the 1970s. [3, 4, 5] The police and customs have instituted a Nordic cooperation to deal with the smuggling. The new threat comes from the Baltic States. In Finland 90 percent of all amphetamine already [6] comes from Estonia. (Eastern Europe, front page preamble, “Wave of Cheap Drugs”, emphasis and numbers added)

The underlined parts of this excerpt highlight the key elements of the causality as it is constructed. First, it is implied that the increasing influx of amphetamine to Sweden from Eastern Europe leads to (1) high availability and (2) a drop in prices. The plausibility of this implication will ultimately rely upon the readers’ common sense knowledge about economic laws of supply and demand. Sven-Erik
Eriksson is finally allowed to comment on “the price development” in determinate form, as if it were an established fact.

In the last paragraph of the excerpt young people are referred to. Among them, “narcotics abuse today is as widespread as it was during the record years of the 1970s”. Accordingly, (3) an increase is implied by means of the reference to the 1970s. The relation between the influx/supply/price proposition and the reference to young people in the next paragraph – to the extent that there is one – is not signified in any way. I would however suggest that it is weakly implied that the influx/supply/price of amphetamine has (4) caused the increase of use among youth. Furthermore, this specific paragraph (5) drifts from a specific substance (“amphetamine”) to “narcotics” in general. Lastly, Finland is referred to. The use of the temporal conjunction already weakly implies that (6) the same developments can be expected also in Sweden. Here, causality drifts into prediction.

This goes to show that the whole is more than the sum of its parts here. In itself, each of the moments 1 to 6 in the excerpt above would not be very newsworthy. Now, they are juxtaposed and form an invitation to the reader to participate in the formulation of a theory of the epidemic spread of drug abuse. Following Ettema and Glasser (1987), the generalization of single cases comprises a common strategy for investigative journalism when seeking to establish problematic issues to expose. Here, generalization works both by transforming “amphetamine” into “narcotics”, and by constructing causality and predicting an undesirable but likely future for the nation.

Accordingly, the nation – anthropomorphized into its younger generations – is defined as being under threat, and the reader is positioned as a national citizen. The downplaying of the macro-proposition about the class-related consequences of drug abuse is consistent with this “angle”.

**Kat: Establishing Harmfulness**

One key moment in the Kat texts is the construction of the macro-proposition about the harmfulness of kat. From the standpoint of journalism, launching this proposition is not unproblematic. First of all, the drug is assumed to be relatively unknown to the readership. Thus, evaluations about its harmful character cannot remain submerged, as in the Eastern Europe texts, but have to be shown. Moreover, as the headline to item 1 makes abundantly clear (“Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England”), kat is in fact legal in Great Britain. Thus, no appeals to universal law can be made either. The kat texts solve these problems by implying, in a variety of subtle ways, the harmfulness of kat without stating it straight out. This is done entirely by means of various appeals to “common decency” (cf. Glasser and Ettema 1989:10) in the first item. Consider, for instance, the following excerpt, a caption to the main picture:
Chewing kat. Saed Hershi owns a kat club in London where Somalis gather every night. “You become smart and concentrated by chewing kat. You write fantastic poetry!” he says. He himself does not consume more than one or two bunches a night. Yet he is often so psyched up when he gets home that he has to smoke some marijuana to be able to go to sleep. (Kat, main picture caption, item 1, “Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England”, emphasis added)

First, the employment of the underlined conjunction yet is grammatically confusing. It suggests that the last sentence in the excerpt contains information that contradicts previous sentences. But what is it that is being contradicted? That you can “write fantastic poetry” under the influence? That Saed Hershi “does not consume more than one or a couple of bunches a night”? I suggest that the yet refers to both of them. Both are implicitly positive descriptions, and the characterizations following the yet are negative – at least according to the conventional wisdom, the “common decency”, that is appealed to when the need “to smoke some marijuana” is introduced into the description. By using the conjunction yet in this way, the reader is invited to share these assumptions.

Secondly, and even more significantly, it is merely the implicitly positive descriptions that are put inside quotation marks. Thus, it appears as if the author of the text possesses knowledge that the quoted person does not. In other words, the employment of quotation marks signals that Saed Hershi is unaware of the (negative) consequences of his own kat-chewing habits. According to conventional wisdom, again, being unaware of or denying one’s own addiction can in fact constitute evidence of the very severity of the addiction.

A similar strategy is used when the author of the text juxtaposes generalizing and vivid descriptions about the consequences of kat use to brief portraits of ordinary people:

They lose both their job and their family, become skinny and manic, poor and aggressive: in recent years it has become more and more common that emaciated Somalis with dead eyes wander about in London’s poorer districts.

It has not gone this far for Ilyas Ali. He works as an airplane cleaner at Heathrow and he often goes to Saed Hershi’s club. For him, as for most Somali men, kat is first and foremost a social drug. (Item 1, “Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England” emphasis added)

The underlined sentence refers unambiguously to the description of “emaciated Somalis” in the paragraph above. The employment of the perfect aspect is significant here. Had the sentence been in the simple past tense (“It did not go this far for Ilyas Ali”), the meaning would have changed radically. Then Ilyas Ali would not have been included in the pack of “skinny and manic” Somali men “with
dead eyes” who “wander about” in London. But now he is, because in its perfect aspect, one word is omitted but implied: “It has not gone this far for Ilyas Ali yet”. The underlined sentence accordingly invites the reader to share the assumption that this is the way things also are going to end for this particular Somali man. Again, the person in the text remains unknowing, whereas the implied reader is attributed knowledge about what things are “really” like. This is further underscored by a number of quotes in the body texts that voice positive opinions about the drug. For instance:

– Kat grows under God’s free heaven and harms no one – on the contrary! he [Saed Hershi] says. In my home country we have been chewing kat for thousands of years. Everybody’s doing it. It makes you concentrated and crystal clear in your head. […] I’d rather my children chew kat than drink alcohol – you don’t get dead drunk or aggressive. (Item 1, “Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England”)

The implication of these devices is that a distribution of knowledge between the author and the reader on the one hand, and the actors in the texts on the other hand, is established. This knowledge hierarchy is reinforced throughout the first item of the Kat texts. The author and the reader are assumed to know that kat is harmful, while it is implied that Somali people remain unknowing. In the context of item 1, quotes like these thus tend to say more about the persons voicing the positive opinions than about the kat drug. Basically, they say that kat users are more or less full-fledged addicts of narcotic substances.

On the global level of the relationships between items, the macro-proposition about the harmfulness of kat also provides a key argumentative foundation for other macro-propositions. First, it can serve as a necessary condition for the allegations about Swedish police inaction as a form of discrimination against Somalis living in Sweden. With the harmfulness established in this way, inaction and lack of harsh measures may come to appear as even more conspicuous and questionable. Second, it can function to underscore what is implied in item 2: that Sweden did the right thing by deciding to classify kat as narcotics and not as a vegetable.

**Kat: Inviting National Chauvinism**

The second item of the Kat texts provides a European policy and legislation context to the issue of kat use. In general, the project of formulating a pan-European drug policy is presupposed to be a failure:

The confusion surrounding kat effectively illustrates Europe’s lack of a comprehensive drug policy. (Kat, item 2, “Unequally Harmful in Different Countries”, emphasis added)
The genitive marking (“Europe’s”) of the alleged “lack” makes it grammatically definite. Accordingly, it signals that it is beyond dispute that Europe should have a common drug policy. In isolation the sentence could be interpreted as an instance of a “Europeanizing” tendency in the relationship of news journalism to national and European level politics (cf. Statham 2008). However, this interpretation does not hold when the rest of the text is considered. In fact, the text invites the reader to consider the Swedish (and Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and French) decision to prohibit kat use as the only reasonable decision. The failure of a common policy allegedly has to do with the tendency of national representatives to report “embellished and incomplete” statistics in these political contexts. In general, Swedish drug policy is characterized as a good example in a European context. This representation is achieved both by means of implications and presuppositions. An example of the former:

– The rationale [for the Swedish classification] was that kat contains substances that had already been classified as narcotics, says Conny Eklund at the Medical Products Agency.

But the majority of the countries of Europe allow kat use. (Kat, item 2, “Unequally Harmful in Different Countries”, emphasis added)

The underlined words in the quote are vague as regards agency. It is not clear whether the “already” classified substances were classified as such by Sweden alone, or if these “already” narcotic substances were also classified as such by “the majority of the countries of Europe” that “allow kat use”. However, the conjunction but signals that the reader is expected to be surprised by the decision of the “majority” of European countries compared to the information that is provided by the first sentence (the quote from Conny Eklund). Had this conjunction been omitted, any relationship of the “majority” of European countries to the “already” recognized substances would disappear. Now, the overall implication is that these “already” narcotic substances are widely recognized, even by the majority of European countries, but are nevertheless ignored. Accordingly, the majority of European countries are implicitly characterized as irrational.

In a very similar fashion, the irrationality of Holland is suggested when the text considers national differences in measures of levels of consumption and of risks:

In Sweden a heart attack suspected to have been preceded by narcotics abuse can be classified as drug related. In other countries it can simply be registered as a “heart attack”.

Therefore according to official statistics Sweden paradoxically has more drug related deaths than Holland, with its decidedly higher narcotics consumption. (Kat, item 2, “Differently Harmful in Different Countries”, emphasis added)
In the first paragraph, the pronoun it refers not only to heart attacks, but heart attacks “suspected to have been preceded by drug abuse”. This reference implies that “other countries” also have such suspicions but that they deliberately do not bother to document them. The simple implication is that Sweden does things better than “other countries”.

The next paragraph, then, explores the allegedly contradictory consequences of these differences. This is an example of how presuppositions can function. First, the information about Holland is placed last in the sentence, in a subordinate clause. Second, the clause delivers this piece of information beginning with the possessive pronoun its. In this context it functions, again, much like the employment of a definite article (“the”). Both these choices indicate something quite significant as regards the assumptions about previous knowledge that is attributed to the reader: Holland’s “decidedly higher narcotics consumption” is presupposed to be an uncontroversial, possibly even well-known fact of life that neither needs to be foregrounded nor substantiated.

The combined implication of these two paragraphs is that “other countries” deliberately conceal information in order to appear in a favourable light in comparison to their European neighbours. By contrast, the direction taken by Sweden on these issues is guided by higher political and moral standards because Sweden does not care about how its official statistics may come across to other nations. Relying upon the reader’s presupposed knowledge, Holland exemplifies these “other countries” in the extract.

**Morality and Nationality**

As the previous sections have shown, both sets of texts variously presuppose (Eastern Europe) or actively construct (Kat) moral positions about the issue being represented. These positions align with the general preferred meaning on drugs as a serious societal problem identified in the extensive analysis.

Glasser and Ettema (1989) and Gans (1980) argue that investigative forms of news journalism both assume and help contribute to the contours of dominant moral orders in society. Other commentators extend this defining feature to news in general. As Nylund (2006:160) stresses, “the very concept of news presupposes a moral stance”. And following Hall et al. (1978:56–57), news by definition constitutes the threat of violations to presupposed consensual norms. Problematic events are routinely brought back into the “framework of the familiar”, thus reaffirming the moral contours of society (p. 68).

Glasser and Ettema (1989:17) emphasize that journalism does not merely “reflect” or “convey” an external moral order when performing its critical tasks. Rather, prevailing values are “renewed or realigned in the attempt to apply them to new and ever-changing conditions”. Both sets of texts may be regarded as in-
stances of such a general tendency. Specifically, I wish to propose that the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts may be taken as concrete illustrations of how news journalism may offer nationalist closure to their readership by means of the alignment of prevailing moral orders with (symbolic) national borders.

The “problematic event” in the Kat texts is perhaps not mainly people of Somali origin – neither as victims nor culprits. Rather, it is the drug itself, and, above all, the failure of society (other specific nations and Europe at large, as well as the nation of Sweden) to address it in accordance with moral standards that journalism itself applies to the issue. Kat, then, is “brought back” within a framework of the familiar as it were – i.e. within the framework of narcotics, abuse, marginalization and criminality – when its harmful character is forcefully (albeit subtly) demonstrated by the texts.

The “problematic event” in the Eastern Europe texts is not a specific substance. As shown above, no effort is made to bring back amphetamine within a familiar moral framework. As an “old” illicit drug whose detrimental effects are assumed to be well-known to the audience, it is, as it were, already there. Furthermore, it is also present within an equally familiar framework of the concern for future generations. Instead, the “problematic event”, or state of affairs, in the Eastern Europe texts comprises the contemporary European context in which goods, people and political ideas tend to move more freely across national borders. The texts merely imply this problematic state of affairs by referring specifically to the consequences of post-1989 political developments in Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. The persuasive efforts are mainly directed toward constructing the magnitude of the threat posed to the national readership. As such it may be said to align with prevailing themes in Swedish and Scandinavian news discourse that tend to depict the Eastern parts of Europe as an inverted image of the nations to which these images are addressed (see e.g. Ekecrantz 2004, Riegert 2004).

In a fairly similar fashion, the Kat texts tend to bring the problematic issue of kat back within a geopolitical framework of interpretation where national differences on a European level are viewed solely with a Swedish outlook. In this outlook, Sweden emerges as an exemplary nation in comparison with other countries. Not all nations, it is implied, are as meticulous and firm in upholding principles as Sweden. Holland is employed here as the epitome of an extreme laissez-faire drug policy gone astray.

Accordingly, a changing European geopolitical context tends to be invoked as a backdrop to both sets of texts. The moral condemnation of narcotics is realigned against this backdrop. And the overall implication is that illicit drugs tend to be represented as something inherently external to Sweden as a nation: the sources, causes and character of illicit drugs as a social problem are essentially located outside of Sweden (in Eastern Europe, among Somalis, as a result of drug
policies of “other countries”). This may be seen as an expression of a broader tendency in news on this particular issue. It may be worth recapitulating the significance of the smuggling theme in DN here. This type of legal transgression stands out in the material as the only criminal incident that is treated fairly distinctly. And with its total share of 15 percent, it comprises the second most common main content theme in the material overall, outranked only by the general crime category (see table 4.4 on p. 82).

In line with the above, these two specific sets of texts can be considered concrete instantiations of what previous research has identified as a nationalist tendency in news discourse. Nationality can be constituted and reinforced by means of the recognition and construction of externally defined threats (Schlesinger 1991). In such constructions, undesirable phenomena are basically defined as residing outside of the national community to which the news representations are addressed. A number of previous studies have identified such a principal logic as generative of the news coverage in a wide variety of areas – for instance in representations of ethnic minorities and of racism (e.g. Bredström 2002, Brune 1999, 2004, Hultén 2006, Löwander 1997) or in representations of environmental issues (e.g. Hughes 2005, Brookes 1999).

In the final analysis, these news texts on drug smuggling and drug abuse comprise manifestations of the same logic when they symbolically exclude from the Swedish national community phenomena deemed undesirable by the moral order. This tendency, identified in the present analysis as well as in a number of previous news studies, can be referred to as the conjunction of morality and nationality in news discourse.

Conclusion: The Range of Preferred Meanings

As news texts, Kat and Eastern Europe make assertions about social reality. They carry implications for the establishment of certain interpretations and evaluations in the moment of decoding. In this way, they can be conceptualized as potential mechanisms for establishing a range of preferred meanings that work towards facilitating and restraining the possibilities of meaning making.

Figure 4.9 sums up the main findings of the analysis of preferred meanings in this chapter. Specifically, the Eastern Europe texts propose that (1) drug use is becoming normalized in Sweden. This is because (2) the increasing influx of amphetamine from the East causes (3) more young people to use drugs. The Kat texts propose that (1) Kat is a socially and biochemically detrimental drug for the Somali community, and that (2) Sweden is doing the right thing by classifying it as narcotics. However, (3) Somalis living in Sweden are victims of state racism since the issue is nevertheless ignored by the responsible authorities.
The analysis has shown how the formation of the range of preferred meanings is derived from a number of structures and properties that are fundamental to news as a form of discourse, as well as some patterns characteristic of the topic in question. Moreover, on the concrete textual level devices are brought into play, some of which are not fully reducible to news as a form of discourse. In essence, then, the range of preferred readings is conceptualized as consisting of several levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Preferred meanings</th>
<th>Structuring properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The journalism of information</td>
<td>Truth, reliability and relevance. The reader as citizen.</td>
<td>Formal neutrality, utilization of authoritative/established sources, factuality. The status of DN as a reliable journalistic institution in society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News discourse on drugs in DN</td>
<td>Moral position: drugs constitute a serious social problem.</td>
<td>Amount of coverage, negativity, overall argumentative logic, the criminalizing imperative, political consensus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Eastern Europe texts</td>
<td>1. Normalization of drug use. 2. Increasing supply from the East. 3. Increase of use among youth.</td>
<td>Thematic hierarchy. Implications and presuppositions. Critique based on presupposed moral orders and value judgements (appeals to “common decency”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kat texts</td>
<td>1. Kat causes misery. 2. Sweden is better. 3. Police inaction, racism.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalist implication</td>
<td>The reader as a Swedish citizen. Drugs as non-Swedish.</td>
<td>Conjunction of moral boundaries and national borders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.9 The range of preferred meanings as manifested in the Eastern Europe texts and the Kat texts.

At the most general level, news is a national institution, a part of what Jørgensen (1994) labels *nationscape*. Concretely, it addresses a readership that is national or local within a national context. It presents circulation figures to advertisers interested in reaching out to national consumers. On the specific topic analysed here, it accordingly tends to define neutrality vis-à-vis controversies and disagreements between stakeholders *within* the nation-state rather than between nations. In sum, the default perspective of news tends to be national. Previous research (Clausen 2003, 2004, Palm 2002, Lee et al. 2002) provides good reasons to believe that this is a general tendency of news as a mode of discursive production.
Although the institutional level has not been empirically studied here, the implied positioning of the readership as Swedish citizens in the texts may plausibly be conceptualized as deriving from the institutional location of news as a national institution.

News journalism may also be characterized as a problem-generating machine (Altheide 1997). As such it can both presuppose moral orders and contribute to the establishment of moral positions (Hall et al. 1978, Nylund 2000, Glasser and Ettema 1989). In the extensive analysis, the broad contours of a prevailing moral position on this particular topic were identified as the status of drugs as a serious societal problem defined mainly in criminal terms.

On the concrete level of the news texts the analysis showed how various factuality strategies related to an elite form of “journalism of information” were employed. They function in the Kat and the Eastern Europe texts to offer true, reliable and relevant information to audiences defined as knowledge-seeking citizens. Such factuality strategies can be considered derivative of news journalism as a textual system in general, and of DN as an elite journalistic institution in Sweden in particular. One prominent factuality strategy in both texts is the heavy reliance upon institutional representatives from the police and the social authorities.

Furthermore, the close textual analysis revealed how the hierarchical organization of macro-propositions can function to reduce ambiguity and complexity. Thus, the national threat in the Eastern Europe texts is refined and magnified partly by downplaying the proposition about the class logic of drug abuse. Similarly, the racism and discrimination issue is represented solely in terms of (the lack of) law enforcement measures with regards to kat use in the Kat texts.

The employment of strategic absences of information – implications and presuppositions – was identified as a decisive and potentially powerful means by which the news texts can involve their readers in specific constructions of meaning. It was shown how news discourse can attribute common sense knowledge and moral judgements to its assumed readers by employing such devices (Fairclough 1995, van Dijk 1988). Apart from being concrete expressions of the prevailing moral position, it was also demonstrated that these devices can function to establish moral boundaries between the reader as a citizen, and third parties (youth, people of Somali origin and “other” countries) as problem-bearers.

Finally, the analysis has thus far been able to identify some of the generative moments in the construction of a broad nationalist implication. It is suggested that the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts can act as mechanisms for nationalist closure of social reality in the moment of decoding. It must be underscored that the nationalist implication does not reside in Kat and Eastern Europe as single texts. Rather, it is conceptualized here as the combined effect of all the structuring properties on different levels that have been identified and explored in this chapter. It is specifically hypothesized that the texts can constitute vehicles
for the conjunction of morality and nationality in the moment of decoding. They can be expected to function to establish nationalist closure, first, by addressing the reader as a national citizen, and second, by excluding from the national community behaviours and phenomena deemed undesirable by the established moral position on the news issue at hand. And by expelling these elements from the national community there is a possibility that these can be pinned down to other countries and people of Somali origin in the moment of reception.

At the textual level, the proposition about police inaction as a form of racism or discrimination can be seen as an expansion – or rather, as an accentuation – of the limits of the Swedish welfare state so that it is defined to also include people of Somali origin. As such it may be seen as an assertion that can potentially oppose possible received ways of defining who is Swedish and who is not. The extent to which this specific proposition may challenge the general thrust of the overall conjunction of morality and nationality remains an empirical question for the reception study.
In accordance with the journalism of information (Ekström 2000b), the texts at hand address the reader as a citizen. They set out to offer information that is true, reliable and relevant to this assigned position. Moreover, they presuppose and even actively construct – as all news does more or less – moral positions which the reader may have to accept if she is to participate in the reception on the terms stipulated by the range of preferred meanings. Theoretically, it seems plausible that news journalism must be accepted as a legitimate knowledge-disseminating institution before it can function as a national knowledge-disseminating institution.

Reception interview accounts rarely follow such logical stipulations (cf. Schrøder 2000, Lewis 1991). It is a reasonable guiding hypothesis, however, that there may be a relation between the respondents’ willingness to accept the moral position outlined (that illicit drugs constitute a serious societal problem) and their willingness to incorporate the national implications being offered (that the sources of the problem reside outside of the Swedish nation). And the truth value, reliability and relevance of the texts, as experienced by the respondents, may also have consequences in this respect.

Therefore the reception analysis must begin by exploring some of the fundamental prerequisites and preconditions for news decoding as a specific form of social interaction between texts and readers. Specifically, the first question for this chapter is whether the respondents found the texts relevant, reliable and true. The second question is to what extent they accepted the normative points of departure of the texts. In brief, the object of this chapter is to investigate how, if at all, the respondents’ reception of the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts conforms to the conventions of a journalism of information and to the contours of the prevailing moral position on this particular subject matter.

**Dimensions of News Decoding**

The textual system of news journalism sets out to provide representations of events, states and processes in a reality external to itself. Its dominant function is referential. Accordingly, a referential mode of reading seems to be a necessary condition for a reception that conforms to the basic tenets of a journalism of information. Conversely, metalinguistic modes of reading can provide grounds for distanced and critical evaluations since they by definition do not treat textual rep-
resentations as a mirror onto reality, but interpret them as constructs. Metalinguistic readings thus indicate possible failures from the viewpoint of the intentions of the journalism of information. It must however be emphasized here that the distinction between metalinguistic and referential modes of reading is basically unrelated to whether a particular reading may be considered “dominant” or “oppositional” in Hall’s (1980) sense of the terms (cf. Livingstone and Lunt 1994:87–91).

Various sub-categories of the conceptual distinction between referential and metalinguistic readings were identified in the interview material, partly based on previous research (Liebes and Katz 1990, Ekström and Eriksson 1998, Eriksson 2002). Each reading statement was coded into one of these sub-categories. This procedure provided a quantitative account of the relationship between different modes of reading in the interview material in its entirety. Before turning to the outcome of the analysis of reading statements, the following two sections will detail and exemplify the coding procedure.

**Referential Readings**

In the corpus of transcripts, some of the respondents’ referential reading statements, for example, simply confirmed or acknowledged the accuracy and plausibility of a macro-proposition in the text (i.e. the sub-category incorporation in tables 5.1 and 5.2 on pp. 124–125). Reading statements in this sub-category often spelled out meanings left implicit in the texts, either when the interviewer posed questions about specific passages, or without prompting. An example of the former:

01 I: “Kat grows under God’s free heaven and harms no one – quite the opposite” he says here. Do you remember reading this?
02 R: Yes, I remember reading it. And then I sort of think that you could say this about lots of things, that… lions too are under God’s free heaven. They’re dangerous you know. There are lots of things that are dangerous. Fly agarics are kind of dangerous too. So all things that are natural aren’t harmless.

(15:2 [Kat] Male student, 24)

The respondent assumes a critical stance towards a quote in the texts when emphasizing that the argument for the harmlessness of kat is guided by a skewed logic (lines 03–06). However, as the textual analysis in the previous chapter has shown, the employment of this specific quote (line 01) comprises one of many implications that invite the reader to draw conclusions about the harmful conse-

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22 The procedure permitted statements to be coded into several coding categories if appropriate. This was, for example, the case if a respondent drew upon his/her own experience to question the truthfulness or accuracy of a textual macro-proposition.
quences of kat consumption. Hence, this reading statement is incorporative in relation to the text’s range of preferred meanings.

Other readings of the referential kind not only confirmed the image of reality as proposed by the text, but applied the propositions to other areas of social, political or everyday life – or indeed expanded on the subject matter itself, for instance by providing reflections upon causes and effects (generalization). An example:

I: "Unequally harmful in different countries" it says here, and I think you mentioned this earlier, that you came to think about this spontaneously. What did you think about that?
R: Yes, well, you know this illustrates a problem, or a challenge we have in Europe. You know now that we’re supposed to, well being in the EU and no borders so to speak. Norms. And of course this is a concern you know, and we have to...And of course this applies to a number of different areas. It becomes really evident here. That’s... what comes to mind. There are other things that are important to us and in a way self evident so to speak. I mean the principle of public openness and these things you know. But these aren’t at all as important in some other countries. These things are a part of it too. And then of course when it comes to both alcohol and drug questions there are different... norms so to speak,

(8:1 [Kat] Male priest, 59)

The respondent clearly thinks that the specific issue in question represents a wider set of political problems. It gives topical interest to more overarching questions of national differences within the European Union. In this transcript, he begins to explore these topics, and they form an interpretive backdrop to his reading of the Kat texts. Generalizing reading statements can in this way indicate how established interpretive repertoires were invoked into the reception process by the respondents.

Another type of referential readings occurred when the respondents expressed a desire to know more about the reality depicted by the text (further questions). Lastly, the respondents also related the subject matter to their own experience – or, more frequently, their lack thereof (personal experience).

Metalinguistic Readings
Focusing on the texts as construction, the concrete interpretive objects of metalinguistic reading statements, for instance, comprised specific wordings, the choice of headlines compared to the content of the body text, or generic evaluations of particular items as “boring” or “interesting”. Such rather restricted reading statements were coded under the text sub-category.
More elaborate variants related the textual constructions to how journalism works (journalism). An example:

01 R: But otherwise I can think that the wording is... the question is whether the
02 person really has said that, maybe he has. Because he wants to... well not
03 dramatize it but show how serious it is. But that's something that the media is
04 quick to pick up.
05 I: Yes, you mean that they pick it up?
06 R: Yes, it could've been the headline. If it were a tabloid I'm sure it would have
07 been, I think.
(7:2 [Eastern Europe] Male ICT technician, 53)

Respondent 7 reacts to a quote in the Eastern Europe texts, in which a social service representative comments on the “normal” and “Swedish” character of amphetamine use. Although he is not willing to go so far as to express doubts whether the quote is accurate (lines 01–02) he does attribute the decision to include the quote as an instance of how “the media” work (lines 03–04). When the focus of reception is directed toward how journalism employs certain means for constructing a particular version of reality, the factuality strategies of news journalism are indirectly questioned. Significantly, the quote is regarded as a “tabloid” quote by the respondent (lines 06–07). In the end, I would argue that the significance of metalinguistic readings in this category is that they carry the potential to question the reliability component of the journalism of information – that is, to critically relate the way in which journalism works to the character of the textual representation so that the status of the text as a mirror-image of reality is destabilized.

Some metalinguistic reading statements tended to treat elements of the text as downright misrepresentations of reality (veracity):

01 I: You are a little sceptical?
02 R: Yes I am... But I do know that it’s cheap these days. But not if you start
03 thinking about the amounts too... I don’t know, it’s hard... Hmm, it said here
04 too: “It’s sold in bags of 0.1 or 0.2 grams” you know. If one gram costs 70
05 crowns. You know, then one bag would be... well it’s really tiny. And
06 then I think “yeah right” [ironic][laughs]
07 I: Yes, seven crowns.
08 R: Yes exactly. Then I get even more like “this cannot be true” [laughs]
(5:1 [Eastern Europe] Female assistant nurse, 54)

The laughs in the transcript above (lines 06, 08) indicate that the respondent does not seem quite comfortable questioning the truth value of the fact section of the Eastern Europe texts. But this is precisely what she does. She does not find the prices reported on amphetamine to be reasonable. The significance of metaling-
guistic reading statements in this category is obvious. Whereas *journalism* statements express doubts as regards the reliability of news journalism (for instance by questioning the accuracy of specific quotes, the exploration of journalism’s intentions of attracting readers etc.), *veracity* statements carry the potential to resist the claims of news journalism to provide *true* assertions in a more categorical way. In this sense, then, metalinguistic statements in the *veracity* category are potentially even more damaging to the fundamentals of a journalism of information, since they in addition can imply a rejection of the sources employed by the text in question.

Another sub-category explicitly identifies the text, or elements thereof, as linked to ways of representation that view reality from a certain standpoint (*ideology*):

01 R: [...] And then I can think that this fuss about Eastern Europe and everything that comes from the East, you know, in the newspapers and stuff, then I think that it often gets like… ehm like really dangerous [ironic] you know.
02 I: So you recognize it from other contexts?
03 R: Yes, when it comes to other media and such, TV and papers, then I think that, in a way, as I experience it, that it’s almost as if some journalists want to make people in Sweden scared of all things that are foreign you know. They sort of uphold a bit of racism and a bit of… and everything that’s foreign is a bit dangerous. [...]  
(11:1 [Eastern Europe] Female nurse, 51)

*Ideology* statements not only tend to reject news journalism as a knowledge-disseminating institution. As becomes obvious in this transcript, metalinguistic statements in this sub-category can also explicate and reject the *national implications* offered by the text’s range of preferred readings. Basically, respondent 11 sees the *Eastern Europe* texts as instances of journalistic xenophobia.

The last type of metalinguistic readings directed attention towards how the respondent herself reacted to the text – or alternatively how other people might experience the text in question (*first person effect* and *third person effect*). An example of the former:

01 Well… it’s written in such a way that this “Wave of Cheap Drugs” and “The Drugs Flow in from the East” and “New Party Drug”… These things very much alluded to, they want you to react and maybe think that it’s awful and dread these things and so on. But I don’t. I don’t feel that way. About the text, you know.  
(9:2 [Eastern Europe] Female librarian, 36)

First, the respondent identifies the strategies of the authors of the *Eastern Europe* texts (lines 01–04). She then goes on to tell the interviewer that she does not react...
according to these intentions (lines 04–05). What this excerpt indicates, then, is that the texts fail to involve her according to their (perceived) intentions. In this way, the tendency is that metalinguistic statements in the first person effects category indicate instances where news journalism fails to be relevant to the audience. (It should however be pointed out that this category also contains reading statements that signalled the opposite.)

**Referential Predominance**

The relative frequencies of referential and metalinguistic modes of reading in the reception interview material are displayed in table 5.1. The number of respondents who provided different modes of readings is displayed in table 5.2.

The first thing to note is the overall preponderance of referential modes of reading relative to metalinguistic readings. The total percentage shown in table 5.1 displays this feature of the material relatively clearly. However, not all metalinguistic modes of reading are of the same status. The three first subcategories, *journalism*, *ideology* and *veracity*, constitute the most elaborate and potentially critical ways of relating to the news text as a construction. As shown in the sections above, they carry the potential of breaching the very communicative contract that the journalism of information seeks to establish with its audience. The other three categories (*text, first person effect* and *third person effect*) are weaker in this respect.

| Table 5.1 Relationship between referential and metalinguistic reading statements (percent) |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| **Text**                                      | **Kat**          | **Eastern Europe** |
| Referential readings                          |                   |                   |
| Incorporation                                 | 66               | 55               |
| Generalization                                | 33               | 27               |
| Personal experience                           | 23               | 18               |
| Further questions                             | 7                | 7                |
| Metalinguistic readings                       |                   |                   |
| Journalism                                    | 34               | 45               |
| Ideology                                      | 5                | 7                |
| Veracity                                      | 6                | 3                |
| Text                                          | 3                | 7                |
| First person effect                           | 10               | 14               |
| Third person effect                           | 8                | 11               |
| Total                                         |                   |                   |
| Number of classifications                     | 549              | 502              |
| Percent                                       | 100              | 100              |
As shown in table 5.1, the total share of the three elaborate modes of metalinguistic readings is 14 percent for the reception of the Kat texts, and 17 percent for the Eastern Europe texts. This proportion is anything but insignificant. But in contrast, all of the referential sub-categories (with the exception of only a few personal experience cases) include instances where the respondents unambiguously treat the texts as mere windows onto reality. Accordingly, a comparison between 14 and 17 percent and the total referential shares of 55 (Eastern Europe) and 66 percent (Kat) probably constitutes a more accurate way of displaying the relative weight of the relationship between referential and metalinguistic readings.

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<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Kat</th>
<th>Eastern Europe</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Referential readings</strong></td>
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<td>Incorporation</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>Generalization</td>
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<td>Further questions</td>
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<td><strong>Metalinguistic readings</strong></td>
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<td>Journalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
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<td>Text</td>
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<td>First person effect</td>
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<td>Third person effect</td>
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Table 5.2 shows that the four sub-modes of referential readings are more widely dispersed among the respondents than the three elaborate modes of metalinguistic readings. All of the respondents provide confirming or incorporative readings of both texts (i.e. incorporations). And all respondents, with the exception of two respondents’ reception of the Eastern Europe texts, even offer generalizing readings (generalizations being the most elaborate and strong variant of referential readings). Elaborate forms of metalinguistic readings are typically offered by just over half of the respondents.

Statements that tend to question the truth value of the texts, veracity-statements, are relatively widely dispersed among the respondents: four respondents for the Kat texts and 11 respondents for the Eastern Europe texts. These are, however, almost exclusively restricted to particular elements of the texts (for instance the price of amphetamine) rather than key assertions.
It must be acknowledged here that the interview situation itself produces metalinguistic statements. This is for example the case for many statements in the text category. In the interview situation, the respondents read the texts from A to Z. This obviously departs from ordinary reading practices where the reader jumps from article to article, from headline to headline, before deciding what to read – and then perhaps stops reading half way through. The conventional newspaper is partly designed for this kind of browsing. Not surprisingly, many respondents complained about repetition and redundancy, and these complaints were filed under the text category of metalinguistic readings. Also, the relative importance of the first person effect category is likely related to the interview situation. Arguably, the presence of such self-reflective thoughts about one’s own reading technique and reactions is inflated in an interview setting compared to ordinary processes of reception.

An even more important principal shortcoming of this kind of aggregate analysis is that it fails to recognize that “the topography of meaning is not flat” and that “some meanings are bigger than others” (Lewis 1991:118). In this inevitably decontextualized quantification exercise, hierarchies between different statements provided by the respondents do not show. One significant feature of the reception interviews was that metalinguistic readings tended to be local, whereas referential readings tended to be global. That is, while elements of the texts were often related to as particular constructs, this rarely meant that their representation of reality – and even less so the normative/moral positions upon which the representations are contingent – was challenged to any significant degree. The very moment of quantification therefore overestimates the role played by metalinguistic modes of reading in the reception of the texts.

The findings, along with the qualifications made above, indicate a general solidity of the referential function of news journalism in the moment of decoding. The dominance of forms of referential readings in news reception compared to other genres of media output has been observed in previous reception studies (see e.g. Höijer 1991, 1995). The present findings are largely in line with these results. On an aggregate level, the findings accordingly provide indicative evidence that the respondents, on the whole, tend to accept the claims made by news journalism to be a knowledge-disseminating institution, and their attributed role as knowledge-seeking citizens. Above all, the wide dispersion of referential statements in the incorporation and the generalization sub-categories among the respondents (see table 5.2), and the sizable total share of these statements (see table 5.1), along with their global character, provide evidence of such acceptance.
The Involvement Failure Paradox

The local character of metalinguistic readings and the global character of the referential modes in the present material dovetail with previous reception research. In a reception study of news and actuality programming on television, Ekström and Eriksson (1998:125) find that while a fair amount of critical metalinguistic readings are made by respondents in relation to specific textual elements and devices, the overall truth value of journalism’s assertions tends to remain untouched by this critique (cf. also Lewis 1991:151–157). The tendency is furthermore for the moral positions that journalistic texts take as points of departure to reside far beyond such critical evaluations.

In the present material this is a prominent feature. It is in fact so prominent that it could be warranted to speak of a paradox. As such I suggest that it may be conceptualized as the contradiction between an apparent failure of the journalism of information to involve the respondents according to its intentions to provide stories that are relevant, and its equally apparent success at establishing certain moral assertions. The following sections explore how “involvement failures” could be expressed in the reception process, however without seriously threatening to breach the overall communicative intentions of news journalism.

Involvement Failure

The involvement failure paradox is expressed in the reception of both texts. As regards Eastern Europe, it is obvious that the texts far from always engage, absorb, or “connect with” the readers to any significant degree. Several respondents seemed blatantly bored with the texts, and many readings were of the “cooler” kind, even when affirmative in character. Very few of the respondents (3 out of 16) reported that they would have read the entire articles were it not for the interview situation. In fact, a large number of interview accounts (13 out of 16) contains comments and evaluations that more or less point towards a fundamental failure of the texts to connect with the concerns and interests of the respondents in any way at all. This feature of the material confirms findings made in previous studies of news reception (Lewis 1991:151–155). On some occasions the detachment was indicated by quite self-aware comments by which the respondents seemed almost to excuse themselves for not expressing a more genuine concern about, and interest in the subject matter. An example:

01 I: This headline on the front page. And the sub-heading: “Wave of Cheap Drugs.
02 Threat from Eastern Europe” and so on. What did you think about when you
03 first read them?
04 R: Well, what am I supposed to say? I didn’t think that much about it, it was
05 more like “Ok, this is how it is” and… I wasn’t surprised. I don’t know why I
06 wasn’t surprised [laughs].
I: Then there’s a quote here too, one that I think is repeated further in the text. This one: “We have caviar, herring and snaps, crisp bread…”
R: Yes, “and amphetamine”, yes. I remember that. And it appears later on as well.
I: What did you think about that?
R: … Well. No, but I guess it expresses that they consider it to be, yes it’s considered usual and… yes, maybe for some people it’s a normal Swedish thing to have fun with it. Like you have fun with those other things.
I: Yes
R: Ehm, yes. I thought, “ok, that’s not good”. I don’t know why I don’t react. I should be more upset maybe. But [laughs]…

Admittedly, it is easy to mistake hesitation in an interview situation for disinterest. The somewhat hesitant streak in this extract (lines 04–06, 12–14) may just as well be attributed to the fact that it is excerpted from the beginning of the interview. Such hesitation, however, does not even remotely characterize this respondent’s first interview, after reading the Kat texts. Therefore it is worth noticing that the respondent clearly recognizes the intentions behind the text – i.e. that he is “supposed” to think that the state of affairs constitutes a serious societal problem – though he himself does not react accordingly (lines 16–17). Basically, he does not find himself being the concerned citizen he is addressed as by the texts.

Such recognitions are indicated throughout the interview accounts. Other respondents (1, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 13) further specify and elaborate their feeling of detachment in terms of the drug domain itself belonging to a “world” with which the respondents have little contact – and, it may be added, a world to which the Eastern Europe texts seem to grant a minimum of access. The tendency is that these critical evaluations are articulated together with expressions that clearly signal the respondents’ awareness of how they are “supposed” to react when reading a news text of this kind. Taken together, these features of the interview material must be interpreted as a comparatively widespread failure of the relevance component of the journalism of information.

This generally detached position is closely related to more elaborate and qualified criticisms regarding how the reality is presented to the reader. By some respondents, it tends to be expanded and elaborated into an approach that is more stringently metalinguistic in its focus. Common objects of such evaluations are the choice of headlines and the employment of quotes. As table 5.2 shows above, no less than ten of the respondents made metalinguistic readings that targeted the journalistic handicraft operating in the construction of the Eastern Europe texts. As such they tend indirectly to question the reliability component of news journalism.
The reception of the *Kat* texts did not contain reading statements that questioned the relevance of the texts to the same extent as the *Eastern Europe* texts. On occasion, however, the journalistic handicraft also was the object of metalinguistic reading statements in these interviews. As table 5.2 shows above, five respondents made metalinguistic comments in the *journalism* category in the *Kat* interviews. Respondents 13 and 15, for instance, distrust the facts section about kat, and interpret its allegedly exaggerated negativity as an expression of the intentions behind the text rather than as facts about the harmfulness of the drug. Respondent 13 finds the information that kat abuse has led to suicide “in documented cases” particularly unreliable. In the end, she ascribes it to a preventive intention on the part of news journalism (line 05):

01 Yes, but hey, why would you commit suicide because of that? Ok, you may
02 get depressed and all that, but ehm maybe it’s not the drug itself that makes
03 you kill yourself. So I don’t think they should blame these things on drugs.
04 Sure, it may contribute, but ehm, something must have been wrong before...
05 They just do it as a deterrent.
(13:1 [Kat] Female student, 23)

Some metalinguistic readings even go so far as to seriously threaten the validity of the entire assertion being presented. This was especially the case in the *Eastern Europe* texts. In the account provided by the same respondent as above, the critical streak of her reading is expanded throughout her second interview. At the end she is asked to compare the *Eastern Europe* texts to the *Kat* texts, and this question seems to open a Pandora’s Box. Initially, she characterizes the former as being all “into the scaremongering style” without success. The *Kat* texts, in contrast, were reportedly experienced as much more credible and interesting by the respondent in this respect. She also conveys doubts regarding some expressions used by the texts (such as amphetamine being a “standard drug”). Eventually she turns her attention to the conflation of amphetamine with narcotics in general, when saying that “it doesn’t feel like they stick to the subject the whole time, they don’t stick to amphetamine”:

01 R: [...] Sometimes it says like “the proportion of young people who have used
02 narcotics at least once”. It says nothing about how many people that have done
03 amphetamine... so they, it feels like they’ve tried to exaggerate the whole thing.
04 Then it maybe sounds worse than it is.
05 I: Ok, you think of it like that?
06 R: Another angle would have been to talk about the increasing drug abuse,
07 because it feels like that’s more to the point. Rather than amphetamine.
08 I: Ok, ok, you feel that it’s blown up, right?
09 R: Yes, exactly. Instead of writing one article about amphetamine and one
The respondent is able to disentangle the causality implied by the texts between increasing supply / falling prices of amphetamine and increasing drug use among young people. The entire strategy of enhancing the combined news value of the single items is deconstructed in this excerpt when the interviewer instigates the respondent to clarify what she means (lines 08–11). Consequently, this illustrates a form of critical readings in which the entire communicative contract between the institution of news journalism and the audience is at risk (from the viewpoint of the former).

However, the overall tendency is that critical readings do not necessarily lead to an overall rejection of the assertions made by the texts. The contract is rarely breached. Rather, the truth value is often restored in some way or another before the readings take the final step towards a total rejection of the communicative contract. These “reinstatements” of the credibility, or at least the authority, of the texts are interesting in themselves. One strategy of reinstatement that occurs in some accounts is the privatization of the metalinguistic remarks – which essentially means that they are reduced in scope, and directed towards the personal reasons behind the respondent’s own reactions and evaluations rather than towards the overall truth value of the texts:

In the transcript above, the respondent downplays his critical reaction to the quote about the “normal” and “Swedish” character of amphetamine use (lines 06–08). Thus he seems to leave open the possibility that he might have reacted otherwise were it not for his lack of experience on the matter.

In a similar fashion, respondent 11 invokes her working experience as a high school nurse when responding critically to the very same quote. Clearly questioning the truth value of specific quotes and choices of wording in the headlines, she nevertheless concludes her critical remarks by saying “and this is a reflection I
make, even though I think it is serious that it has become so cheap and easily available and all that”.

In these ways, then, the critique reaches an end. The overall truth value is reinstated, and the moral position remains intact (as explicitly emphasized by respondent 11). And although the respondents can remain detached, disinterested and profoundly unengaged, news journalism still tends to be reinstated as a knowledge-disseminating institution – and the respondents accordingly tend to reposition themselves as knowledge-seeking (or at least knowledge-receiving) citizens.

To sum up, the involvement failure streak of the interview accounts tends to be most prominent in relation to the relevance and reliability components of the preferred meanings and institutionalized position of the journalism of information. The truth component is only to a very limited extent the object of critique among the respondents in the study – despite many instances in the reception that question the truth value of specific elements.

The Preventionist Repertoire
I suggest that the real significance of the involvement failure paradox emerges when attention is directed to how the respondents relate to the moral positions established by the texts.

Usually, normative standpoints become most clearly visible when they are violated. Thus it would perhaps suffice to say that the moral positions established or presupposed by the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts remain virtually untouched by the respondents, specific involvement failures notwithstanding. There is, however, a prominent feature of the interviews that could be taken as illustrative of the solidity of the moral order as it is established in the reception of the texts. This feature, equally present in the reception of both texts, is basically that some respondents provide interpretations and evaluations based upon the texts’ hypothetical ability to achieve beneficial social effects. When encouraged to tell the interviewer about her thoughts about the facts section in the Eastern Europe texts, one respondent complains about a piece of information that she thinks is missing:

01 R: So that’s just a thing that I think they’ve missed.
02 I: U-hum, ok, that you could develop a tolerance and such?
03 R: Yes. […] Ok, most people maybe already know that you get addicted but it actually says nothing about it here from what I’ve seen. That you get addicted.
04 I: No, you’re right.
05 R: Most people know about it, but you can’t assume that everybody knows.
06 Some people might be influenced here: “Ok, a new drug! And it’s cheap too!”
07 Then maybe somebody, somebody might actually think that he wants to try this out. Because it doesn’t say that you can get addicted, but it does say that you can get high.
11 R: They just point out that some people are addicted, and then you think “yes, but that’s just the junkies downtown, who gives a damn about them?” So it’s a little bit like… I think it’s described a little bit too positively.

(14:1 [Eastern Europe] Female student, 20)

In her second interview, the same respondent holds on to this yardstick when criticizing the Kat texts for allowing space for positive opinions about the drug. Accordingly, a preventionist interpretive repertoire is invoked in the reception of the texts. This interpretive repertoire is present in one way or another in the readings provided by six of the 16 respondents (3, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 16). There are some variants to this theme. A few respondents (11, 13 and 16), like the one quoted above, tend to formulate these observations and thoughts with regard to how specific properties of the texts may influence a third person reader in the wrong direction. Others, for example respondents 10 and 3, evaluate the texts with regard to their perceived utility for worried teenage parents. In this respect respondent 10 is particularly critical of the Eastern Europe texts:

01 You know, this is an uninspiring article that just tells it like, eh “well now it’s like this in Sweden”, but what can we do about it? […] Why don’t they say that there are parents’ associations you can contact, “you can call this number”?
02 […] What’s the purpose of this? Is the sole purpose that you should get worried when you sit there not knowing to whom you can talk? Or is the purpose that you’re supposed to get involved, that you as a citizen feel that you can do something about it and that you don’t just sit there helplessly and think “ok, here it comes”?

(10:1 [Eastern Europe] Female high school teacher, 59)

Despite the variations among the respondents who formulate evaluations from this interpretive repertoire, the core concern is identical: the preventive potential of the texts.

The presence of this preventionist repertoire can also be substantiated by considering the readings provided by respondents 13 and 15. When asked to comment on the facts sections of the Kat texts, they evaluate these from an essentially inverted standpoint. Paradoxically, to these respondents the facts sections comprise manifestations of the very preventive purpose that the respondents referred to above in fact call for (but do not get enough of). To respondents 13 and 15 the perceived preventive purpose constitutes yet another overambitious and untrustworthy expression of anti-drug propaganda. In other words: regardless of whether the preventionist framework is presupposed or explicitly recognized (and criticized) in the reception process it is plausible to assume that both positions
point towards its existence as a shared repertoire for news interpretation and evaluation of this news issue.

All remarks and reflections formulated from a preventionist repertoire of interpretation assume a metalinguistic position when evaluating the properties of the texts deemed relevant by this yardstick. They also explicitly express negative criticism of the texts in this particular respect. But the question remains: in what respects can a preventionist framework of meaning be considered “critical”? What I suggest here is that remarks produced within this framework must be considered in relation to the prevalent moral position on the topic.

The textual analysis in the previous chapter identified the concrete instantiation of such a position as a general preferred meaning in news on drugs in *Dagens Nyheter*. According to its broad contours, the issue in question is defined as a serious social problem defined mainly in criminal terms. As such it can also be conceptualized as an instance of a broader tendency inherent in news journalism as a “problem-generating machine” (Altheide 1997, Nylund 2006) that continuously serves to reaffirm the normative contours of society by reporting transgressions and suggesting solutions (Hall et al. 1978).

Although preventionist remarks display a critical attitude towards specific properties of individual news items, they appear quite uncontroversial as against the general notion of drugs as constituting a serious social problem. Within the preventionist framework, drugs are in fact regarded as so serious that it is deemed almost self-evident that journalism on this particular issue should perform public information tasks. This apparently idealistic view of how journalism works, or should work, stands in sharp contrast to the abundance of more cynical characterizations of journalism expressed elsewhere – characterizations that are in fact provided by the very same respondents who make preventionist remarks.

The somewhat peculiar implication is that the truth criterion tends to be judged as subordinate to the beneficial consequence criterion within this interpretive repertoire. This subordination of truth to consequence is merely implied by the reading statements referred to above. It is however made fairly explicit by respondent 16 in his *Eastern Europe* interview, when he asserts that “particularly when reporters write about drugs […] they should slant it a little more negatively than it is” and “perhaps include some numbers of how many people are suspected to have deceased per year and stuff”.

**Common Sense Morality**

Overall, the involvement failures in the reception process tend to target the relevance and reliability components of the news journalism. On the other hand, the overall truthfulness of its assertions and the plausibility of its moral position are unambiguously reproduced in the reception process.
I propose that the question must be posed as to how this double-edged character of reception is possible at all. How is it that the truth aspect of the information contract and the moral position can be internalized by the respondents despite their expressed detachment and sometimes even highly critical evaluations?

When making similar observations in their reception study, Ekström and Eriksson (1998:135) suggest that even critical, or “investigative” journalistic texts tend to “be based upon values that have the character of common sense, that are shared by the viewers to the extent that they do not find any reasons to discuss them”. News journalism, in other words, tends to take common sense points of departure which appear inherently uncontroversial to audiences in terms of moral position and overall veracity. Lewis (1991:151–155) provides comparable explanations in his study. Along similar lines, Hall et al. (1978:69–70) have asserted that crime news in particular possesses a significant potential of “mobilising public opinion within the dominant framework of ideas” by defining threats to consensual moral norms.

Therefore it seems plausible to suggest that the reproduction of truth and normativity may be explained by the uncontroversial character of news journalism on this specific topic, as it was identified in the textual analysis in Chapter Four.

Accordingly, in the reception of the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts some specific properties and features of the news texts tend to be rejected by the respondents as journalistic strategies for attracting readers, scaremongering etc. However, a stringent rejection of the truth value and moral position of news journalism in these instances actually seems to involve higher stakes than a mere repudiation of single news texts. In addition, such rejections are required to argue against the thrust of a totality of news representations that define the issue at hand in very similar terms (i.e. as a serious societal problem defined mainly within a criminality framework). A rejection of journalism in this respect tends to involve a rejection of common sense morality. This amounts to a laborious task, which most respondents in the study do not seem ready to perform. This morality, as it is expressed through the general preferred meaning of news on drugs can therefore act as a regulating structure in the reception, and it tends towards neutralizing even some of the more elaborate critical readings.

In the end, then, I suggest that the Kat texts, and even more so the Eastern Europe texts, could be considered boring, sensationalist and formulaic – and be treated as if they had something true, pertinent and morally self-evident to say – for the very same reason. The respondents have heard about it, read about it and seen it many times before in roughly the same way; the message is, broadly speaking, one and the same: drugs constitute a serious societal problem. And as such, its prominence in public discourse is self-evident.

What must also be taken into consideration here is that “political correctness” may have exerted an influence in the interview situations. That is, notions of the
“right way” to respond when reading news pieces on illicit drugs may partly be
guided by perceived expectations of what the interviewer wants to hear. In the
interview situation, it is quite reasonable to assume that such notions may have
contributed to statements that recognize the drug problem as a serious and perti-
nent societal issue. In fact, respondent 10 raises this question herself at the end of
her first interview. Generally expressing a great deal of interest into the re-
searcher’s project, she poses various questions about the design, research ques-
tions and theories of the study. She also reflects upon her own (in some respects
highly critical) reading and asks how others have responded:

01 R: But what if someone doesn’t… Well, someone who thinks that drugs are
02 quite all right. Do you think that this person would say so here? I mean that is
03 one… source of error, you know. Would they really say so?
(10:1 [Eastern Europe] Female high school teacher, 59)

It is difficult to ascertain the degree to which expectations of this kind have pro-
duced politically correct statements during the interviews. However, to the extent
that they might have, this alternative explanation would actually be consistent
with the one preferred above. The politically correct way to respond to news on
drugs coincides with the moral position implied by the generally preferred reading
in news on drugs in DN.

Other People’s Problem

According to Fairclough (1995:17–18, 63), communicative events can function to
establish the identities of the reader, the author and the “third parties” that may
be represented in the text. The reception analysis has hitherto been able to iden-
tify the relation established between the reader and the “author”. According to
the analysis, it can be conceptualized as a relation between news as a knowledg-
disseminating institution and the reader as a knowledge-receiving citizen (Ek-
ström 2000b).

Specifically, previous sections have shown how the claims of truth and moral-
ity – necessary components for a journalism of information to function according
to its communicative intentions – tend to be accepted by the respondents. In this
way, journalism as a knowledge-disseminating institution is reproduced in the
reception process.

As the intensive textual analysis in Chapter Four demonstrated, the Kat texts
and the Eastern Europe texts recruit institutional representatives as knowledge-
providers, “experts”, in their depiction of reality. These experts mainly represent
the police and the social authorities. As a consequence, to the extent that the re-
spondents accept their role as knowledge-seekers, it is from the institutional perspectives of the police and the social authorities that knowledge about social reality is construed.

The textual analysis also showed that young people and people of Somali origin – that is, the people whom the societal problem allegedly concerns – were not recruited as experts in this way. Instead, they were represented as anonymous statistical measures (Eastern Europe) or deployed as a rhetorical means for the demonstration of the severity the problem (Kat). This feature illustrates the assertion made by Hall et al. that in news journalism “crime is less open than most public issues to competing and alternative definitions” (1978:69). “By virtue of being criminals”, Hall et al. write, succinctly pinning down the main reason for the closed character of crime news, the experts on crime “have forfeited their right to take part in the negotiation of the consensus about crime” (ibid.).

Although the identities of the actors in question, young people and people of Somali origin, are not unambiguously defined as criminals, they reside very far from the position of being legitimate knowledge providers. Rather, they function in the texts as problem-bearers – an attribution that aligns closely with what previous research has identified as common positions for these particular types of actors in news journalism (cf. Löwand 1997, ter Wal et al. 2005, Wayne et al. 2008). As such they are implicitly defined as distinct and remote from the position of the reader as a knowledge-seeking citizen, whose perspective coincides with the police and the social authorities via the institution of news journalism. This remoteness erects moral barriers between the implied reader and the problem-bearers.

By and large, the respondents accepted their attributed positions as knowledge-receiving citizens on the terms stipulated by the texts. Now, the question is whether this acceptance also meant that the implied position vis-à-vis young people and people of Somali origin was reproduced in the reception process. Did the respondents incorporate the position as knowledgeable citizens vis-à-vis the problem-bearers? There is no straightforward way of answering this question. There are however a number of indications that strongly suggest that the respondents in fact reproduced the identities and relations being offered in this respect as well.

A neat illustration of how the respondents tended to accept their implied position as knowledgeable citizens can be seen in the interviewees’ responses to a kat-using Somali man in London who is quoted saying: “Kat grows under God’s free heaven and harms no one – quite the opposite!”. As the textual analysis showed, this particular quote constitutes one of a number of implications in the texts that suggest the harmfulness of kat by recruiting a “native’s point of view” in the reporter’s quasi-ethnographic venture into a London suburb.

All the respondents were asked about their thoughts when reading this quote. The responses of no less than half of the respondents (1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 and
15) in fact followed a blueprint that was perfectly identical in the sense that it went immediately for a literal evaluation of the skewed logic of the “natural equals harmless” argument in the quote. An example:

01  R: That’s why I remember it [the quote] because I sort of thought that… well,
02  it’s a way for them to legitimize their own drug that they’re very fond of, you
03  know.
04  I: Yes.
05  R: And that they think that just because it grows… like “everything that grows
06  is vegetables” as it were [laughs]. Or that it’s healthy just because it grows, sort
07  of. And you can’t think like this if you’re, eh, well educated and understand what
08  it’s all about. I mean then you could say that opium is really healthy because it
09  grows too and so on. […]
   (11:2 [Kat] Female nurse, 51)

The respondent in this transcript is vaguely characterizing kat-using Somalis as uneducated (lines 07–08). The implication is that she, by contrast, is “well educated” and does indeed “understand what it’s all about”. In a similar fashion, respondent 9 says that she thinks “it’s a little annoying that the Somalis, you know, that they protect it so much, that they don’t want to admit that it’s really a drug” whereas respondent 1 reacts with great indignation to the notion that kat does not harm anyone.

As the textual analysis shows, the first item in the Kat texts provides a number of linguistic implications that function in this way. The respondents who did not take the opportunity to assume the knowledgeable position in relation to this particular quote did it instead when they were asked about their thoughts on the fact section about the kat drug (3, 4, 5, 8, 13 and 16). Yet other respondents (6 and 14) reacted to the caption to the main photograph:

01  I: […] Did you look at this picture and caption?
02  R: Yes
03  I: Do you remember thinking anything in particular about it?
04  R: Well I thought about it like this, because ehm… he chews kat and then I
05  thought, you know, that he had to smoke marijuana to be able to sleep. I kind of
06  thought that he doesn’t seem to realize what he’s doing because… he thinks
07  that he becomes smart and concentrated by taking this drug. And then he has to
08  take another drug to be able to go to sleep [laughs]. He doesn’t realize that he’s
09  totally addicted to drugs. So I thought he seemed a bit… cut off from reality.
   (14:2 [Kat] Female student, 20)

Respondent 14 takes up and fully incorporates the invitation to side with the perspective of the news institution when interpreting the caption as a piece of evidence that “he’s totally addicted to drugs” without realizing it (lines 08–09). A
contract is established between the respondent and the news institution from which the actor quoted in the text is excluded. All 16 respondents assumed this knowledgeable position in one way or another in relation to kaut use among people of Somali origin. The significance of this uniformity of responses is not only that it illustrates the persuasive power of implications as a linguistic device and the effective invocation of “common decency” (Glasser and Ettema 1989:10). It also goes to show that responses like these can establish a relation between the reader as a knowledgeable citizen and certain (Somali) actors in the texts as ignorant, obstinate and self-destructive problem-bearers.

In the Eastern Europe interviews, a number of respondents assumed a similarly knowledgeable position in relation to young people as problem-bearers. Generalizing referential reading statements about “the youth of today” were made by respondents 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 12 and 14. These assumed a variety of specific forms, although I would suggest that all of them can be broadly considered as deriving from an established interpretive repertoire that tends to generalize negatively about the attitudes, behaviours and manners of younger generations – mainly from a middle-aged, middle-class (quasi)intellectual perspective (see e.g. Frykman 1988). Some respondents reflected widely upon likely causes of the current state of affairs, whereas others focused on possible effects. When reflecting upon causes, one interviewee (3) for instance refers to the absence of government sponsored campaigns against drugs in light of the apparent success of such information against smoking. Another respondent (7) denies the importance of information, but reflects upon generational changes in norms and notions of normality:

01 [...] But I think that... sort of, you know, youth in general know more today I think. But then from the point of having some, ehm, knowledge and intellectual insight to the point of caring or whatever. I mean, take smoking as an example.
02 It doesn’t matter where in life you are, even a person who is 72 knows
03 that this is absolutely lethal, but I can’t quit anyway. [...] But the difference is
04 probably more the social surroundings. How strong the resistance is... what kind
05 of labelling that’s involved in doing certain things. What kind of label do I get if
06 I do a certain thing? Do I get labelled or don’t I?
(7:2 [Eastern Europe] Male ICT technician, 53)

Along similar lines, when asked to comment on the contemporary rates of drug use compared to the 1970s, respondent 5 claims “that it’s higher today” – despite the text’s referring to the contemporary levels being “almost” as high as in the 1970s. Referring to societal changes in norms, and the impact of youth culture and celebrities such as Britney Spears, she expresses certainty of the generally more widespread and “socially acceptable” character of drug use these days. By contrast, she says, “in the seventies you were ugly if you did drugs; it was terribly dirty, you know”. Two other respondents (4 and 2) speculate upon the increase
in terms of the criminal activities that arise to finance the abuse, whereas respondent 12 considers the internet a risk to be reckoned with in the future.

In the Kat interviews, generalizing reading statements by some respondents (4, 9 and 11) tend to inflate the consequences of kat well beyond the limits of what is proposed in the texts. Respondent 9 reflects upon the “devastating effects” of kat on the integration of Somali people into Swedish society and thinks it is “tragic, when you imagine that there is a direct cause” of their problems in this respect. Respondent 11 thinks that “vigorous efforts to deal with this” would “benefit their cause”, since “they would be able to work more and manage to apply for more jobs […] and then also be able to keep their jobs […] if they didn’t stay up all night and chew kat”.

One respondent even relates kat use among Somalis, however vaguely and implicitly, to a concrete incident in Vivalla, a suburban district of Örebro, in the fall of 2006 in which a young man was knifed to death. (This particular district is among other things known for its housing of many residents of Somali background.)

As this transcript shows, the respondent clearly seems to occupy a position from which it is permitted to talk about the Somalis as problem-bearers in an apparently knowledgeable way. He speculates widely (and vaguely) about possible consequences of kat use among male Somalis – the knifing incident is suggested as one such particular consequence (lines 05–07) – and how this may affect the allegedly patriarchal family relations in Somali settings (lines 09–12).

Obviously, there are wide variations as regards the specific contents of the statements about the problem-bearers referred to in this section. The point, however, is that they all illustrate how a structure of identities and relations between the participants in the communicative events can be reproduced in the reception process. In the reception of the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts, then, it
may be concluded that the reproduction of news as an institution has the baseline consequence that the respondents tend to assume a position from which it is legitimate to talk about Somali people and young people as problem-bearers in a wide and general sense (i.e. as drug addicts or potential drug addicts, as unemployed or even as potential criminals). In this way, I suggest that the analysis has demonstrated that the texts can function to establish moral boundaries between the readers and the actors defined as problem-bearers in the texts. Young people (potentially) and Somali people (some of them) are implicitly defined as residing outside of the normative contours of society. The respondents, on the other hand, recognize and occupy their place within these contours. From this position they are accorded a sidewalk sociologist position where speculations and generalizing reflections upon the social issues at hand, and their bearers, can be expressed.

In the end, I propose that the analysis has illustrated how news journalism, through its textual devices, its orchestration of knowledge hierarchies between actors/sources and its presupposition of common sense morality, can function to sanction and facilitate such a position for the audience.

It must also be pointed out that the specific problem-bearing actors in the texts, young people and Somali people, represent groups of people which according to a number of previous studies (e.g. Löwander 1997, Wayne et al. 2008, ter Wal et al. 2005) tend to be more associated with criminal events and negative news topics than other categories. Insofar as these groups of people are connected to prevailing criminalizing tendencies in news journalism, it is reasonable to expect that the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts import this tendency into the reception process. If so, the texts’ ability to establish the structure of identities and relations identified above should come as even less of a surprise in this context.
The previous chapter focused on the journalism of information and the moral order as two fundamental aspects of the social interaction between readers and news texts. The analysis demonstrated that the reception of the news texts, on the whole, tends to reproduce news journalism as a knowledge-disseminating institution. This reproduction can take place even though the texts routinely fail to engage the respondents in the way they intend and even though they are fairly often targets for elaborate forms of critical (metalinguistic) evaluations. The news institution’s basic claims to truth and moral accuracy tend to reside beyond such evaluations.

The analysis was also able to demonstrate that the reproduction of the basic claims of news journalism can in turn function to establish moral boundaries between the respondents as knowledgeable citizens on the one hand, and young people and people of Somali origin as norm-transgressing problem-bearers on the other.

The textual analysis identified the national implications of the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts as the connection between the moral order and symbolic national borders. As such, the preferred meanings of the specific texts import structures and properties deriving from the aggregate character of news reporting on the specific issue as well as from news as a form of discourse. The particular texts are accordingly conceptualized as manifest expressions of a general tendency in news discourse that can lead to the conjunction of morality and nationality (cf. Bredström 2002, Brune 1999, 2004, Hultén 2006, Löwander 1997, Brookes 1999, Hughes 2005). The guiding question for this chapter, then, is how, if at all, morality and nationality were also conjoined in the reception process. How, if at all, did the respondents incorporate the national implications offered by the range of preferred meanings?

In brief, the analysis will show that morality and nationality conjoin in two specific ways in the respondents’ reception of the news texts at hand. First, morality is articulated in terms of the geographical and political borders of Sweden in the reception of both the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts. Through the invocation of established interpretive repertoires, Sweden is situated in a contemporary geopolitical context where goods, people and political ideas know few borders. When the readings are carried out against such frameworks of interpretation, the tendency is that the respondents view Sweden as in various ways superior to the context in which it is situated.
Second, the prevailing moral position is connected to ethnicity in the reception of the *Kat* texts. Somali people tend to be viewed as both moral transgressors and non-Swedes. This viewpoint becomes particularly visible when the respondents’ reception of the macro-proposition characterizing police inaction as discrimination/racism is scrutinized in detail.

Following Jørgensen (1994), nationalism represents social reality as if the nation were a perfectly transparent mirror image of that reality. In any given closure, “elements of social reality are given specific relations to one another” (p. 112). And although a given closure cannot contain all elements of social reality within its horizons of reference, it gives the appearance of in fact doing so. In this way, nationalist closures always block something out; they tend to *totalize* reality so that alternative structures and extraneous elements are rendered less visible or entirely invisible.

It will be shown how both the ethnic and the geopolitical conjunction of morality and nationality can function to symbolically exclude elements from the nation and thus indirectly (negatively) define its contours and character. It will be demonstrated that such exclusion in news decoding processes constitutes a subtle and submerged form of nationalism, in Jørgensen’s sense of the term.

**Geopolitical Closure**

As it is articulated in the reception interviews, the geopolitical closure comprises two main components: contextualization and evaluation. The respondents recognize the *Kat* texts and the *Eastern Europe* texts as instances of broader tendencies in contemporary political, social and cultural life. In brief, they interpret the issues depicted by the texts as guided by something that closely resembles rudimentary definitions of globalization, e.g. as offered by Giddens (1991:63) as “the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”. The respondents grant meaning to the texts by invoking notions of the European state system as an ever more integrating entity in which goods, people and labour move increasingly freely between the member states of the EU, and in which “nation-states [...] are becoming progressively less sovereign than they used to be in terms of control over their own affairs” (Giddens 1991:64). The contextualization component of the geopolitical closure thus situates the nation of Sweden within a framework of globalization, and above all, its more concrete and palpable incarnation, Europeanization.

The second component in the geopolitical closure is the evaluation of this established conception of how social and societal relations are constituted in the contemporary European socio-political system. Basically, this comprises the per-
ceived negative consequences of the emergence of the openness referred to above. The implication is that the national community which the respondents recognize as theirs has everything to lose in this contemporary Europeanized and internationalized context. This is basically the “closure” part of geopolitical closures.

In the reception of the news texts, the two components have the capacity to delineate the Swedish nation, and both directly and indirectly characterize it as better than the context in which it is situated. Accordingly, the geopolitical closure corresponds closely to the conjunction of morality and nationality identified in the analysis of preferred meanings in Chapter Four.

Contextualization and Evaluation

In principle, the contextualization of the issue as outlined above can involve transcendence of exclusively national frames of reference of the issue at hand. But since the respondents tend to assume the position of Swedish citizens when evaluating this context, the cross-border connectedness comes to be viewed from the sole outlook of the national community. The geopolitical closure can thus be said to contain a descriptive and a normative element where the latter is decisive, because it tends to be firmly articulated with nationality as a yardstick.

Although they by no means constitute mutually exclusive categories, three broad themes can be identified in which the contextualization and evaluation components are connected in the reception of the texts. First, some respondents evaluate the context as a geographical and political threat to Sweden. Second, there are the downright chauvinist assertions of Swedish supremacy in comparison to other European countries when it comes to the area of drug policy. Third, there are the widespread and routine references to Eastern Europe and the Netherlands as particular “trouble spots” of Europe.

Examples of all three themes will be given below.

The Geopolitical Threat

Some respondents elaborate on the “new” openness of Europe as posing a threat to Sweden as a nation. An example:

01 I: When you read this first headline, “Wave of Cheap Drugs” and then “Threat from the East” […] Did anything in particular come to mind when you read it?
02 R: […] Well, I really don’t know how I reacted but that’s… I guess that it’s a part of EU [laughs].
03 I: Ok, you thought of it like that?
04 R: Yes, that’s how I thought about it, you know that… there are more ways into Sweden now, quite simply because it used to be a lot harder to get in via the Eastern countries. You know it was harder to smuggle. Today it’s a lot easier.
05 I: Yes
06 R: Then I don’t know if it’s manufactured in the Eastern countries. It’s a
synthetic substance. There could be factories in the East where they make it. And then they open up for the EU... And now from the 1st of January 2008 there aren’t even any checkpoints for checking passports any more, you don’t have to show your passport if you come from the Baltic countries and so on.

I: No
R: And that makes it even easier. Then they don’t have any restrictions on that either. Instead it’s just like come and go completely freely.
I: So that’s how you think about it?
R: Yes I think so. The supply... that it is there but it gets so much easier for us since they’ve opened up. You know it’s not as much work as it used to be to travel from the Eastern countries into Sweden [...]

(3:2 [Eastern Europe] Female welfare service assistant, 46)

The respondent seems more than willing to expand on issues merely implied by the Eastern Europe texts. She begins by invoking the trend towards a new and borderless Europe as an interpretive backdrop (lines 03–08). She is then able to use this context as an explanation of the increasing threat Eastern drugs pose to Sweden (lines 10–21). This goes to show that the acknowledgment of the increasingly open character of Europe is employed merely as an element in the overall evaluation of the possible negative consequences this openness may have for Sweden.

Along similar lines, respondent 8 suggests in his Kat interview that the contemporary European openness poses “a serious challenge” to Sweden’s sovereignty with regards to the issues of drugs and alcohol in light of the differences in “norms” that apply in a European context. Respondent 4 ties the European openness to communication technologies:

[...] And then, I don’t know how it works, but if you look at this openness with the EU and all, how they... It’s so easy these days to order things over the internet for example. This is a thought. [...] It’s yet another way to get it in.

(4:2 [Eastern Europe] Male child minder, 49)

In both of the extracts above, there are indications that the respondents implicitly recognize themselves as members of the community to which this contextual threat is aimed. Although the referents of pronouns such as “we”/“us” and “they” are inherently vague in language use, they quite unambiguously refer to the nation-state in these particular extracts from the interviews with respondents 3 and 4. Likewise, the deictic markers “in” and “into” in both extracts are articulated from the standpoint of a speaker who is situated within the borders of Sweden as a nation-state.

Two of the respondents (2 and 12) show a tendency to draw out the implications that might be contained within this kind of threat depiction to fairly explicit
political standpoints about border security. Respondent 12 thinks that “it’s a little too easy and too open these days” and “of course you want to protect your country”. Respondent 2 thinks it would be a good idea to “tighten things up” some at the borders of Sweden. Similar interpretations are provided by respondents 13 and 14.

The common denominators for all the responses referred to in this section are, first, that they invoke a Europeanization context to depict and situate the problematic issue at hand. Second, they evaluate this context in terms of its negative consequences. Third, the respondents recognize themselves as members of the nation under threat when connecting context and evaluation in this way. The overall implication of the threat-theme is that nationality and morality conjoin so that Sweden, as a nation, is both delineated and indirectly defined as the absence of illicit drugs. As such, the nation has everything to lose in a Europeanized context in which goods, people and labour move more easily across territorial borders.

Chauvinism

Outright assertions of Swedish superiority to other European countries were provided by 12 respondents in their Kat interviews (all except respondents 1, 9, 10 and 15). When asked about the main headline, “Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England”, five respondents (2, 3, 6, 8 and 11) took it up almost immediately and declared rather spontaneously their forthright opinion on the national differences in drug policy – in Sweden’s favour. An example:

01  I: […] When you read this headline, “Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England”, did you think anything particular about it?
02  R: … No not like in particular. Not more than that I thought it was good.
03  I: So, what did you think was good? The headline or…
04  R: Yes, well, that we classify something as narcotics that they in England see as a vegetable.
05  I: Ok, I see.
06  R: That’s what I thought.
(3:1 [Kat] Female welfare service assistant, 46)

In item 2 of the Kat texts, a European policy and legislation context is provided regarding the issue of kat use and its status in different countries. The interviewer referred to the description of national differences in item 2 at all interview occasions. Six of the respondents (2, 3, 5, 6, 14 and 16) immediately responded by providing more or less downright chauvinist responses. Respondent 5, for example, refers to the state of research and Swedish meticulousness:
I: It also says in the text, I don’t know if you remember reading it, but it says that “different countries provide different answers, since the methods of measuring so-called drug related deaths vary greatly”.

R: Yes, but you know that’s because in some countries, like in Sweden, a heart attack that is thought to be preceded by drug abuse, is drug related. Whereas in other countries it’s just a heart attack. You know, it’s just a heart attack. Well, I’m not surprised. I suppose we have more research maybe, and we’re better at this and... well, perhaps more observant when people come in, and we take samples and such to find out what’s in their bodies. [...]

(5:2 [Kat] Female assistant nurse, 54)

This extract illustrates how the notion of Sweden’s superiority on the issue is profoundly self-evident and submerged to the respondent. The interviewer cites a quote in the text (lines 01–03). Formally speaking, the quote is completely neutral. “Different countries provide different answers” it says, but it does not explicitly state which alternative is the most accurate. The person being interviewed almost seems to correct the interviewer when responding “but you know that’s because in some countries, like in Sweden, a heart attack that is thought to be preceded by drug abuse, is drug related” (lines 04–05). The interpretation of this must be that the respondent spontaneously reacts to the formally neutral stance of the text as the interviewer cites it; her evaluation of the text has already moved beyond this point to the normative conclusion preferred by the text’s implicit meaning.

Similarly, respondent 16 takes for granted that the differences are due to the fact that that “they [other countries] perhaps aren’t so open about it” whereas, on the other hand, the openness in Sweden may yield “us bad publicity”. Other respondents (3, 6, 7 and 11) explicitly contrast the policy of other countries with “the kat facts” (as reported by the Kat texts) – with clear implications that the policies of these other countries are wrong. Respondent 14 elaborates extensively on the absurdity of the liberal position taken in the Netherlands.

As the textual analysis in Chapter Four was able to show, the contextualization of the issue in a European legal and political context contains a number of invitations to the reader to evaluate the national differences as evidence that other ways than the Swedish way are morally questionable. The specific direction of possible evaluations of national differences is attributed to the reader through implicitness strategies (implications and presuppositions) that subtly assert Swedish supremacy on the issue at hand. The widespread and uniform character of the chauvinist responses, then, effectively renders visible how implications and presuppositions can function as successful invitations to the audience to share certain kinds of common-sense knowledge and to incorporate value judgements which appear inherently self-evident into the prevailing moral position on the news topic at hand. As invitations, these instances of implicitness can function to establish a
connection between the moral order and Sweden as a nation in the moment of decoding.

**Eastern Europe and the Netherlands as Trouble-Spots**

In both the Kat interviews and the Eastern Europe interviews, the respondents liked to talk about other countries. This talk consisted of vague references that were often made in passing.

In some of these references, Eastern European nations cropped up as a source of contagion – not only from drugs, but organized crime in general (this occurred in the Eastern Europe interviews of respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11 and 14). Generally, the Eastern parts of Europe – particular countries such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, along with Poland and the Czech Republic – were characterized as dirty locations where drugs, prostitution and organized crime thrive.

The Netherlands however emerges as the most significant trouble-spot in the interview material. No less than eleven of the respondents (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14 and 15) refer to it, in some way or another, as a trouble-spot in either or both of their interviews. A few examples:

01 Imagine that, that they have kat clubs. That they really have that, you know. It’s a bit like in Holland, with the coffee shops.
(10:2 [Kat] Female high school teacher, 59)

03 But it’s obvious that Holland, where they are positive to drugs […] that they aren’t eager to blame it on the drugs.
(13:1 [Kat] Female student, 23)

05 It’s still, it comes in via those countries. And it’s manufactured in these countries.
(3:2 [Eastern Europe] Female welfare service assistant, 46)

07 I don’t think this is desirable. And we’ve seen this before, they write here about Holland and Amsterdam and their coffee shops with drugs – not coffee but drugs – and so there they think, there they’ve made it clear that this is okay
(6:1 [Eastern Europe] Male accountant, 47)

The point of reproducing these extracts is not merely to illustrate the obvious: that the readings of the texts tend to induce negative or possibly stereotypical depictions of other nation-states. Attention must also be drawn to how these references are made in the context of utterance. The extracts above show the ways in which references to the Netherlands as harboring the infamous “coffee shops” (lines 02 and 08), as being “positive to drugs” (lines 03 and 09), or as being “the most drug-liberal country” (line 06) are incorporated into the respondents’ recep-
tion. They are made in passing, almost as if it were a matter of course, in a topic of conversation like the one at hand.

Basically, the respondents assume that the interviewer thinks the references to trouble-spots are self-evident, and as such, need little clarification. There is a point to emphasizing that the reception interview situation not only stages an interaction between respondents and texts, but the interviewer is also involved in this interaction. Insofar as accent, skin colour, eye colour and such can function as indices of national belonging in such situations, the respondents in this study have few reasons to believe that the interviewer is not a member of the same national community as they are. Obviously, this basic condition does not only apply to these particular instances. It becomes particularly evident, however, when the respondents refer to the trouble-spots of Europe.

An example may serve as an additional illustration of these conditions. In the following extract, respondent 1 has been asked about a headline in the *Eastern Europe* texts in which the “new” practices of using amphetamine as a party drug is asserted (“Amphetamine New Party Drug”).

01  R: It’s a little bit unreal to me you know... You live kind of a sheltered life.
02  I: Yes, I understand.
03  R: Yes... My mother would surely... she works with addicts and stuff so she would surely have another opinion on the matter... Also, she lives in Oxelösund, you know, a coastal city. It’s a shitty place [laughs] so to speak. Boats come in from Poland. There are lots of drugs there, she says [...].
(1:1 [Eastern Europe] Male self-employed, 33)

The respondent has little to say about the alleged new practices of party drugging among young people (line 01). He instead quickly refers to his mother who “works with addicts and stuff” in Oxelösund. Note how the respondent, in another topical context, shifts the focus and infers a connection between three separate items in lines 03 to 06: 1) Oxelösund being “a coastal city”, 2) Oxelösund being “a shitty place” and 3) “boats” that “come in from Poland”. The relation of “coastal city” to “shitty place” is a causal relation. The relation of boats from Poland to Oxelösund being a “shitty place” vaguely refers to the Eastern source of inflow into Sweden as it is asserted by the *Eastern Europe* texts.

In fact, there are remarkable amounts of information that remains implicit between these items. The point I wish to make here is that it is significant that the respondent, without clarification, simply presupposes that the interviewer is able to comprehend the full meaning of the proposition. The interpretation must be that the respondent regards the connections between the three items (coastal city, shitty place, boats from Poland) as a form of common-sense knowledge in this context – a common-sense knowledge that the respondent also assumes that the interviewer shares with him.
Insofar as the trouble-spot references are built upon presupposed knowledge, the extract from the *Kat* interview with respondent 8 may render this feature even more visible, since this respondent is somewhat more reticent in this respect than the examples reproduced above:

01 I: This headline, “Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England”, did you read it?  
[...]  
02 R: Well I think that it’s... a good summary of an important problem with this,  
03 you know. We see it as serious and they don’t look at it that way you know.  
04 It’s interesting that the different... cultures and attitudes within the EU too, you  
05 know, that they can be so different. And that’s a thing to ponder over... what  
06 the consequences are, to what extent we affect each other, so to speak. Are they  
07 influenced by the Swedish attitude in other countries? Well, for example, you  
08 know.  
09 I: Or the other way around?  
10 R: [laughs] Or the other way around. Yes, that’s right, it could... well, it sounds  
11 kind of worrying if that were the case [laughs]  
12 I: [laughs]  
13 R: It brings this whole issue to the fore, about the relationship to drugs in the  
14 Netherlands on the whole in comparison to... us. The Netherlands is mentioned  
15 quite a lot too. I haven’t thought about England in these contexts, these drug-  
16 liberal...  
(8:1 [Kat] Male priest, 59)

The first thing to note is that the respondent immediately brings European level politics to the fore. Initially, he characterizes the national differences in this respect as plainly “interesting” because “we” may “affect each other” (lines 04–06). He then moves on to reflecting upon the possibility that other countries may be “influenced by the Swedish attitude” (lines 06–07). When instigated by the interviewer (line 09), the respondent simply regards the prospect of other countries influencing Sweden’s attitude as a joke, despite the initial reference to mutual influence.

When assuming that the interviewer was joking about the matter, the respondent reveals his own opinion about the prospect of other EU countries influencing Sweden. The interviewer laughs too (line 12). In the next turn (lines 13–16), it appears that this laughter functions as a signal that the interviewer shares the opinion that it would be “worrying” if other countries were to influence Sweden. It is significant, then, that this brief constitution of consensus is immediately followed by the reference to the Netherlands. The reference is implicitly pejorative. And, again, the status of the Netherlands as a metonymic marker for undesirable drug liberalism becomes similar to how it is employed by the other respondents referred to above.
Now, the difference between this extract and the previous ones is that respondent 8 does not immediately assume that the interviewer shares this tacit knowledge – nor his moral position on the matter. Therefore the consensus (the mutual laughter in lines 10 to 12) functions in the interaction to make it permissible and thus possible to utter the reference to the Netherlands as an implicit trouble-spot. I would argue that this particular excerpt reveals the respondents’ considerations underlying the references to trouble-spots in all interviews where such references occur. Even though these considerations only become visible in this particular extract, the routine-like character of the references in fact necessitates the assumption that the interviewer will possess the tacit knowledge needed to acknowledge their plausibility and self-evident character as trouble-spots. Basically, what I wish to propose here is that the interview setting, at least in these instances, tends to form national interpretive communities in miniature.

A possible objection to this interpretation would be that the respondents know that the interviewer has also read the texts. Therefore it should come as no surprise that the respondents assume that the interviewer is also familiar with what the East and the Netherlands stand for in this context. However, this is not sufficient as an explanation. The texts clearly assert many other specific things (e.g. the class-related consequences of illicit drug use, the police inaction regarding ket use). None of these assertions is so commonly referred to in passing and so self-evidently presupposed to be conventional wisdom by the respondents. Moreover, the references to the Netherlands are widespread despite their barely being mentioned in the Kat texts (one reference in passing in item 2) and in the Eastern Europe texts (referred to in the map representing “Amphetamine Routes into Sweden”).

To sum up: the respondents assume that the interaction takes place in a national context occupied and shared by both them and the interviewer – and, as a Swede, you are assumed to share the tacit knowledge about what Eastern Europe and the Netherlands, as symbols, stand for concerning the issue at hand. The dirty corners of Europe, the trouble-spots as it were, are widely referred to by virtually all of the respondents in either one or both of their interviews. They are all employed in a way that suggests that they constitute a form of common-sense reference points to the respondents.

Basically, then, it is shown how the texts can facilitate a position from which it appears inherently uncontroversial to refer pejoratively to other countries as dirty corners of Europe. In the end, the talk about the trouble-spots of Europe emerges much like a subtle and submerged variant of the downright chauvinist assertions considered in the previous section.
Interpretive Repertoires and the National-Citizen Position

The geopolitical closure descriptively opens up the nation of Sweden to a Europe-organized context. Normatively, it closes this opening by depicting a situation in which Sweden as a nation has everything to lose in this contemporary context. It does so specifically by defining the EU as a geographical and political threat, by chauvinistically asserting Swedish supremacy, and by appointing some regions and countries as trouble-spots of Europe. Accordingly, the geopolitical closure has the potential to define the nation negatively by symbolically expelling undesirable elements from the confines of the nation.

How is the geopolitical closure rendered possible? What are the specific mechanisms that have the capacity to produce this closure? I would propose that the analysis exposes how established interpretive repertoires can be invoked into the reception of the news texts. These repertoires cannot be reduced to text-reader relations as isolated encounters. Nor can they unambiguously be inferred from the background experiences or characteristics of the respondents. The references to the EU as a threat, the East and the Netherlands as the trouble-spots of Europe, and the chauvinist evaluations of Swedish drug policy in comparison to “other” countries (such as the trouble spots) are made by all the participants in the study. Moreover, the ways in which these themes are invoked within the reception – and indeed within the interview situation – strongly suggest that they comprise a form of common-sense knowledge that the respondents take for granted that the interviewer also shares.

The tendency is that the interpretive repertoires are invoked precisely at the points where the texts go silent, and invite the reader to fill in the implications and presuppositions with previous knowledge. The *Eastern Europe* texts say virtually nothing about the Eastern parts of Europe. Neither of the texts says much about the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the respondents talk widely on these themes. When no other resources are available, such diffuse and superficial frameworks can be invoked in the decoding to make sense of what is going on in the news (cf. Lewis 1991:143–148)

Furthermore, it can be instructive to point out that the interpretive repertoires about the context in which the nation of Sweden is situated resonate with prevalent images of Eastern Europe in Swedish (and Scandinavian) news representations (see e.g. Riegert 2004, Ekecrantz 2004). They possibly also align with prevalent images of Dutch drug policy in a Swedish context – given the vast differences between the countries in this area (Boekhout van Solinge 2004).

It can only be speculated whether such possibly prevalent themes in news representations in fact provide sources for these interpretive repertoires or not (although the respondents often base their references to the trouble spots upon what they have “heard in the media”). At any rate, when they are invoked in the reception process, the analysis has shown that these repertoires can be recruited to
connect morality with nationality. They do so by providing a constitutive “outside” against which Sweden is negatively defined. Thus they contribute to nationalist closure by filling the nation of Sweden with specific contents.

Even more importantly, the analysis furthermore provides a strong illustration of how the structure of identities and relations established by news journalism can function to conjoin morality with nationality. As the analysis in Chapter Five demonstrates, the reception of the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts reproduces the basic relations between the news institution, the respondents and third party actors in the communicative event. In accordance with this structure of identities and relations, news journalism is attributed the status of a legitimate knowledge-provider. The police and the social authorities are granted expert roles, whereas the respondents assume the position of morally concerned citizens. As such they can position themselves as profoundly distinct from young people and Somali people, because these actors are violators of the normative contours of society, the moral order. It was shown that this structure can function to establish moral boundaries between the respondents and the problem-bearers. It was possible to infer the existence and functioning of such boundaries from the ways in which the respondents liked to talk about the problem-bearers in a knowledgeable and morally concerned way.

The constitution of the geopolitical closure shows that the reception of the texts also can function to erect moral barriers between Sweden and other countries as sources, origins or dirty harbourers of illicit drugs as a societal problem. News journalism is, in other words, able to sanction a particular citizen-position for the respondents. They are granted legitimate status as knowledgeable and concerned citizens – both in a moral and a national sense. From this position, it becomes legitimate to talk about outside locations (i.e. Eastern Europe and the Netherlands) as dirty corners of Europe. The respondents are encouraged to compare the policies of different nations (to their own nation’s advantage), and they are encouraged to evaluate the negative consequences of the European Union for the national community that they recognize as theirs.

Ultimately, then, the reproduction of the structure of identities and relations offered by news journalism emerges as a necessary prerequisite for the geopolitical closure in the interaction between the news texts and the respondents.

The Context Evaluated
It must be acknowledged that a certain fragility characterizes the geopolitical closure. Comparatively often, the respondents turn the very interpretive repertoires by which contextualization is established into objects of evaluation in the reception process. That is, they tend to evaluate the contextualization metalinguistically rather than as direct (referential) descriptions of social reality.
Six of the respondents (1, 5, 6, 9 and 10) provide readings that evaluate the contextualization repertoires metalinguistically. Typically, these respondents move back and forth between referential and metalinguistic positions (an inconsistency that may partly be related to the inherently unfinished character of the reception process, as the methodology at hand is able to capture it). A few examples will be given in the following.

For respondent 9, the reports on national differences and the European context in the Kat texts bring a quite self-aware response into play:

01 I: It says in this article that, ehm, I’ll read aloud, that “different countries provide
different answers, since the methods of measuring so called drug-related deaths
vary greatly”
02 R: You know, you do get the impression that Sweden is right. That we’re the
one that should like be the norm.
03 I: Uhum.
04 R: Because we have like a... ehm... well, we could, what did it say here, “in
Sweden a heart attack that is suspected of having been preceded by drug
abuse...”. You know, it sounds so unbelievably correct to... think along these
lines. So... I don’t know what to say about it but...
05 I: You think it sounds kind of reasonable, do you?
06 R: Yes, it sounds very good. At the same time it’s quite annoying that we have
this big brother mentality, or this holier-than-thou mentality.
07 I: Yes, ok.
08 R: But it’s... it’s safe living in Sweden [laughs].
(9:1 [Kat] Female librarian, 36)

The respondent explicitly recognizes the chauvinist thrust in the texts. Her initial “impression” is that “Sweden is right”. At the same time, she is evidently bothered by this impression. Eventually, her response is only partly resolved. On the one hand, she wants to incorporate the chauvinist proposition (lines 04–05, 12). On the other hand, she also says that the “holier-than-thou mentality” is “annoying”, and more than a slight sense of doubt can be discerned when she refers to it sounding “so unbelievably correct” (line 09). This response illustrates the virtual dead end established by the texts in the moment of reception. Either you incorporate the preferred meaning and become an unreasonable national chauvinist, or you oppose the moral order which the texts presuppose and appeal to – but then you risk coming across as stupid or as an amoral drug libertarian, since all the “facts” point toward Sweden doing things better than other European countries. Obviously, as shown above, not all respondents in the study seem to mind coming across as national chauvinists in the interview situation, but to respondent 9 this dead end certainly seems to cause tensions in her reading. The point is that the geopolitical closure becomes essentially incomplete in this reading, because
the respondent does not fully incorporate the concerned national citizen position that she is attributed by the texts. Instead, she views it as an expression of Swedish smugness.

The second example is an excerpt from the *Eastern Europe* interview with respondent 10, where she has been asked to share her thoughts on the proposition about the increasing influx of amphetamine from the East:

01  R: Mmm, ehm... I do know about this from before, that it comes from there.
02  Because I come from Finland and we often travel to Estonia, you know there are
03  ferry connections and so on. So I have, you know... A lot [of drugs] has come
04  from Russia and now it's Estonia and... ehm, then they mentioned Poland too.
05  But I had no feelings you know that "ok, now there are new countries
06  and new routes" but... yes.
07  I: But you've heard about it before, it was nothing new to you, then?
08  R: No. And I didn't react like “Oh, Eastern Europe, help!” or anything like that.
   (10:1 [Eastern Europe] Female high school teacher, 59)

The respondent is possibly careful to present herself as a knowledgeable and media-critical person to the interviewer. In doing so, she assumes a referential position when she characterizes the proposition as merely old news – to her (lines 01–03). However, I would suggest that her spontaneous reaction when the interviewer sums up and repeats what she has said constitutes a brief but telling rejection (line 07). Arguably, the respondent counters perceived expectations of how one should react when reading texts about a threatening Eastern Europe.

This reaction targets the interpretive repertoire of the East as a trouble-spot or a national threat, not the reality reference itself (which the respondent has already acknowledged). What remains seems to be a literal comprehension of the headline – i.e. that drugs increasingly come into Sweden from the East. Paradoxically, this seemingly “down to earth” comprehension in a way demands a greater interpretive effort than the ones that associate the proposition with established interpretive repertoires about Eastern Europe and the negative consequences of the EU. This is because the literal comprehension seems to require an active and critical “stripping down” of the interpretive baggage supposedly inscribed in the invocation of the East. The referential readings do not have to perform critically in this respect – on the contrary, the invocation of these repertoires comprises the default mode, the preferred meaning, of the *Eastern Europe* texts (cf. Lewis 1991:143). In any case, the point is that this particular respondent also refuses to occupy the national citizen position that she is attributed by the texts.

Respondents 5, 6 and 7 provide elaborate metalinguistic readings of the *Eastern Europe* texts as expressions of a discourse about “the fear of the East” whose historical roots date back to the Cold War. A long extract from respondent 7 is given as an example:
I: What came to mind when you read this headline and sub-headline: “Wave of Cheap Drugs” and then “Threat from Eastern Europe”? Yes, well… I mean on one level you can see that… [laughs] it’s a little bit of that old fear of Russia that has come back [laughs]. This concept of Eastern Europe and all that, you know. If you just read that part. But eh… otherwise I wasn’t thinking anything in particular other than that… it’s an assertion that lots of stuff is coming in from there and that it’s very cheap obviously. Or rather, there is so much stuff coming in that it’s becoming cheap.

I: Yes. But you also think of that old fear of Russia too?
R: Yes, a little bit of… you know the military’s image and those things you’ve been… fed, well maybe you can’t say fed, but it did certainly exist when I was a kid. Back then it was the East against the West very clearly you know. And I mean, what was it that our military was equipped against? It was to protect us against the East. There was never any threat from the West, at least not as we’ve experienced it.

I: Yes, ok, you mean like during the Cold War and such?
R: Yes exactly. A little bit like that, when you highlight it like that, “the threat from Eastern Europe”, then I can feel “yes”. Because somewhere there is, I can experience sometimes that… ehm a way of thinking, and perhaps I have that because I have a background, that it is kind of special. They [the East] are close to us geographically, but it’s a lot more special. You know Finland is ok, but Estonia and these others further away, and Poland and such – it’s a lot more special than if you’re talking about Norway for instance.

I: Yes, ok, I see
R: You know Norway and Sweden are… and Finland too, it is, it was basically us you know. There is a mentality there. And I think this still remains among a generation who has experienced this… rhetoric […] (7:2 [Eastern Europe] Male ICT technician, 53)

First, the respondent relates to the proposition as an instance of a historically established discourse about “the East” when he invokes the metalinguistic “level”, as he himself labels it (lines 03–04). When prompted by the interviewer (line 09), he then expands on his own childhood experiences of the cold war-rhetoric (lines 10–15). Moreover, he displays a pronounced self-awareness of how his experience from this discourse even today might structure his sense that the Nordic countries comprise us, whereas the Eastern bloc still remains “special” in his view, despite their geographical proximity (lines 17–23, 25–27).

To be sure, the respondent in fact moves on to the referential level for a brief acknowledgement of the literal meaning of the headline and sub-heading, when saying that “there is so much stuff coming in that it becomes cheap” (lines 06–08). In the next turn, the interviewer admittedly blocks out any immediate elaboration of a referential reading. Instead, the respondent is encouraged to expand on “that old fear of Russia” (line 09). Nevertheless, the “old fear of Russia” is
obviously invoked by the respondent, not the interviewer, and there are no other reasons to believe that the interpretive repertoire introduced represents anything other than a sincere account of the respondent’s personal experience.

Along the very same lines, respondent 5 reflects upon the effects of the historical fear-of-the-East discourse when asked whether she has read similar news stories previously. A more contemporary version of the fear-of-the-East discourse is consciously invoked by respondent 6, when he is asked about the “Threat from the East” headline of the Eastern Europe texts. He relates this headline to what he remembers as the prevailing themes in the debates of the beginning of the 1990s – i.e. mass immigration and criminality.

It was argued previously that interpretive repertoires about Swedish welfare supremacy, European trouble-spots, and the European Union as a national threat can act as mechanisms in the constitution of geopolitical closures. In combination with other mechanisms – the reproduction of the structure of identities and relations of criminal news journalism – they can be active in the constitution of geopolitical closure. These very interpretive repertoires are also invoked in the responses accounted for in the present section. Here they are, however, treated and evaluated as interpretive repertoires. The workings of the other mechanisms can in other words be frustrated by the metalinguistic stance taken by these responses. Basically, it impedes the national citizen-position offered by the structure of identities and relations of news journalism. Consequently, the geopolitical closure becomes incomplete and “unfinished” as the mode of reading is switched in reception.23

The comparatively widespread character of the metalinguistic evaluations of these interpretive repertoires suggests two things. First, the possibility that the geopolitical closure is essentially fragile must be considered. Second, the fact that these metalinguistic evaluations in fact seem to target interpretive repertoires that are perfectly identical to their referential counterparts may constitute a substantiation of theoretical assertions of the relative independence of preferred meanings to empirical readings (cf. Philo 2008, Fetveit 2001, Kitzinger 1998, Condit 1989). Both these possible implications will be explored further at the end of this chapter, when it is also possible to extract relevant evidence from the constitution of ethnic closure in the reception process. Here, some critical cases will also be attended to in order to explore these features in greater detail.

23 It is not possible to explain why some respondents relate to given elements of the news texts metalinguistically and others do not. Among the 16 participants in the study, both older and younger respondents did both. The same goes for respondents with both high and low levels of formal education, and for both women and men. In any case, there are too few respondents to say anything about the significance of possible correlations. And, to be sure, even if such correlations did exist, the “why” question would be hard to answer unless the respondents’ social position somehow gets articulated into the reception. This observation also applies to other differences between individual respondents in the study.
Ethnic Closure

In the ethnic version of nationalist closure, people of Somali origin constitute the key element. The closure functions in the reception to exclude people of Somali origin from a Swedish nation whose contours and boundaries emerge as a result of this very exclusion. This feature becomes prominent in the critical responses to the macro-proposition about discrimination and racism in the *Kat* texts. This is the only proposition that is the object of systematic rejection by the respondents. In fact, no less than half of the respondents make strong reservations about this particular assertion. This is especially relevant here, because this is a proposition that can be conceptualized as having the potential to challenge possible received notions of what constitutes “Swedish people” and thus also to counteract the overarching national implications, as they are expressed in the texts.

It should be noted initially that the widespread rejection of the proposition is significant, if for no other reason, because of situational factors. In the interview situation, the “political correctness” factor should have played a part. Strongly rejecting a proposition about racism and discrimination made in such a context may be disturbing to some respondents as they may want to avoid appearing as racist themselves.24

One thing must, however, be clarified here. To theorists of racism (see e.g. Miles 1989, 1993) institutions’ or individuals’ routinized *denial* of racism and/or discrimination in fact constitutes one of racism’s dominant forms of operations in contemporary Western societies. The present reception-interview material cannot be unambiguously employed to substantiate the possible operations of racist logics of meaning. Additional empirical evidence would be required to pursue such a line of inquiry. Rather than focusing on the rejections in themselves, I suggest that the real significance of the matter emerges when the reasons for the critical responses are scrutinized. Accordingly, it will be demonstrated that it is the *logic and rationale behind the rejections* of the proposition about racism that can show how morality is conjoined with ethnicity in the reception process. First, however, another possible explanation of the critical character of the responses will be briefly explored.

Definitional Incommensurability

The concepts of racism and discrimination are brought up explicitly in the *Kat* texts. One possibility is that the respondents may have reacted to the possibly controversial connotations associated with these concepts in lay usage. The incorporative reading made by respondent 9 provides a case in point here. In the transcript below, she has previously been asked about another part of the text:

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24 This is in fact explicitly hinted at by respondents 1 and 16 who are critically inclined towards this proposition.
R: [...] But I also think what they have to say is interesting too, that if Swedish families had been affected by it, then they wouldn’t... Well, then they would do something about it.

I: What do you think about that?

R: Well, I think that, well, if you stretch it, it’s racist.

[...]

Hmm, and racism doesn’t have to be, well you surely can... I can imagine that they think that it’s a cultural thing and that it’s something that we shouldn’t stick our noses into.

I: Yes, ok.

R: But ehm... and that, I can think that this is racist. Because then you have in a way decided that this... “it’s none of our business”. And then you have in fact left people to their fate.

(9:1 [Kat] Female librarian, 36)

The respondent thinks that the proposition is “really interesting”. There is however a sense of struggling with the definition of the concept of racism here. Although she clearly treats the counterfactual example of “Swedish families” as revealing (lines 01–03), she is only prepared to accept the notion of racism “if you stretch it” (line 05). Later, in the last two turns of the quote, it is as if she modifies her own previous definition by offering a notion of racism that also includes more latent attitudes and ideas – that is, “something that we shouldn’t put our noses into” and “it’s none of our business” – possibly in addition to more overt expressions and intentional discriminatory actions. Eventually she seems ready to label such attitudes as “racist” but the hesitant streak in her account implies that this definition may be an expansion of a previously held notion of what constitutes racism. A similar struggle over the definitions of racism and discrimination can be found in the affirmative responses provided by respondent 7.

Now, what this seems to suggest is that the definition of racism and discrimination offered by the Kat texts – that is, as the structural outcome of a multitude of practices, partly unrelated regulatory policies, and prevailing ideologies – constitutes an essentially different definition than the lay version of the concepts. The definition of racism offered by the Kat texts is, in essence, a radical social science version (see e.g. Jefferson 1993). Thus, even respondents who may be positive towards the general thrust of the proposition need to have their previous definitions reworked. Such alterations may be laborious and unlikely to occur during the brief course of an interview. However, as it turns out, the significance of the rejections is basically unrelated to questions of semantics.

The respondents who reject the macro-proposition about racism/discrimination do not restrict their evaluations to the employment of these concepts alone. In various ways, they also reject the general argument about unequal
treatment by the police, regardless of whether the racism concept is used to label this asserted inequality or not. To respondent 14, for instance, the alleged state inaction basically represents a matter of priority that she regards as reasonable. She vaguely suggests that Somali people just invoke the racism concept strategically to “get the all the resources that they want”. But to her, it is merely a matter of priorities, and accordingly, “you have to accept, as a citizen, that they prioritize the way they do”. The writing off of “their” employment of the racism concept as a strategy allows her to make the kat problem relative to other problems demanding police resources. In this context the kat problem appears to be justly dealt with to the respondent, since she is “certainly” prepared to “trust that the police do the right thing”. It goes to show that such a rejection of racism goes beyond mere semantics.

The interview material also demonstrates that it is perfectly possible to reject the structural definition of racism/discrimination and still be affirmative towards the general implications of the propositions (unequal treatment by the state). Respondent 13, for example, reports being tired of what she perceives to be an excessive use of these concepts. On various other occasions during the interview she, however, firmly acknowledges the plausibility of the general arguments of unequal treatment without using the racism concept. Similarly, respondent 5 retains an individual-attitude notion of racism while repeatedly relating the alleged state inaction to a general logic of class relations.

And, to be sure, respondent 8 is evidently familiar with radical versions of the definitions of racism and discrimination, as he even introduces the official Swedish state terminology of “structural discrimination” (see e.g. Kamali 2005), but nevertheless expresses doubts as to whether it applies to the case at hand. For these reasons, then, the widespread character of the rejections cannot be explained by the incommensurability between radical social science versions and everyday notions of the concepts of racism and discrimination.

Analytical and Substantial Rejections
I propose that the critical readings of the racism/discrimination proposition can be grouped into two categories based upon the reasons behind the rejections and their implications: analytical rejections and substantial rejections.

Analytical Rejections
The analytical rejections basically constitute metalinguistic readings of how the Kat texts work to help construct the proposition. Compared to the substantial rejections, the analytical ones are not overtly ideologically invested. They make judgements regarding the truth value of the assertion only to a very limited extent. They do however evaluate the assertion as an expression of news journalism as an institutionalized mode of discursive production.
Two respondents, 8 and 15, provide such accounts of their reception. Respondent 15 makes a remarkably disinterested reading, focusing on how journalism is able to employ the same types of sources for different means in the different items of the text set. Comparing the first item to the fourth, he observes that at the outset the former makes use of border police sources to establish the problem as acute. “But”, he adds, the quotes could as well have “been used to say that the police are doing a good job, just look at how many shipments we seize”. In the fourth item however, he notes that quotes from the very same police officer (Stefán Kalmán) are employed to put forward the image of a police force “doing nothing”. He is moreover fairly convinced that this particular police officer was consciously recruited to say exactly those things that could confirm the structural discrimination proposition. In the end, he remains ambivalent about the whole thing:

01 I: Yes, right, you think of it as heavily edited?
02 R: Yes, it surely is. Or maybe it’s like they say it is and then it’s awful, of course.
03 But I don’t buy into the image of it just because I’ve read it in the paper, you know. It’s not like I’m going to write an angry letter to the police after reading this article: “Why don’t you do anything about the kat merchandise among the Somalis?”
(15:2 [Kat] Male student, 24)

Similarly, respondent 8 says he would like to see a perspective in which the politicians responsible for the legislation and rules and regulations are questioned by the journalists. Only then, he suggests, “do you get closer to this question of whether there is some kind of… well, structural discrimination here”. In these ways, then, the analytical rejections remain at the textual level, observing how journalism works (or ought to work) to construct a particular version of reality.

**Substantial Rejections**
The substantial rejections by the other critical respondents (1, 2, 6, 11, 14 and 16) directly target the truth value of the proposition. Obviously, even stringently metalinguistic modes of reading can indeed be interpreted as indications of such doubts. However, there are decisive differences between the detached objections referred to above and their substantial counterparts. The latter leave the textual domain and venture into critical evaluations of the racism assertion that engage an entirely different set of arguments.

Broadly speaking, three main lines of reasoning are employed by the respondents who express substantial criticism of the proposition about police inaction as racism in their reception of the Kat texts. First, they make use of a pragmatic political framework that questions the magnitude of the problem in comparison to other societal problems. Second, they renounce the (Swedish) societal responsibil-
ity for the issue when defining the ownership of the problem as Somali. Third, they invoke a definition of Somali people as non-Swedes. Not all of the three lines of reasoning appear in all critical responses. Moreover, they rarely appear in their pure form, but are often intertwined in concrete responses, especially the latter two. They may however be initially separated in this way for the purpose of overview.

The pragmatic political framework views the issue at hand as a basic matter of allocation of resources in society. According to this frame, the problems described as specific to Somalis living in Sweden emerge as essentially marginal considering other narcotic substances as well as other social problems. In the extract below, respondent 1 has been asked about the racist allegations formulated by the municipal administration employee (Sahra Bargadle):

01 I: Well, you mean that it’s something other than racism, as I get it?
02 R: Yes, and that’s perhaps a naïve thought that you can assume that authorities
03 are not racist you know, that there are no such values in prioritizing different
04 things. You may think that there are other areas in society that constitute bigger
05 problems, and that’s where they put the resources… And then it’s always, for
06 the ones who are affected, you know, you’re always mostly concerned about
07 yourself. You’re always the one who’s affected the most you know. And you
08 have no… you have a hard time understanding it, if you don’t get help.
09 I: Yes right.
10 R: It’s like being at an emergency ward you know. The one whose arm is
11 broken, or a finger, they’re always the ones who feel most sorry for themselves,
12 but it’s no emergency if someone comes in with a heart attack you know.
(1:2 [Kat] Male self-employed, 33)

Clearly, the respondent is defensive and reticent; he leaves alternative standpoints fairly open by implying that he himself might be “naïve” when thinking about it the way that he does (lines 02–04). However, when making the allegorical reference to emergency-ward work (lines 10–12) the moral of his evaluation seems eventually to be that Somalis suffer from broken arms or fingers rather than heart attacks – and possibly also that they try to claim their rights to see the doctor ahead of more severely injured patients.

“When reading an article like this isolated from other social problems”, respondent 6 says, “you think that it’s just about getting to work and stopping this misery”. The resources of the police force, however, are not endless and “there are”, according to the respondent, “other things to do too”. Similarly, respondent 14 claims that “every authority has to prioritize. And the police have done it in this way because they want to focus on the worst and most widespread drugs”. Respondent 11 acknowledges that there is a lot more to do regarding the kat problem, but she is not prepared to agree to its privileged status compared to the
drug problem in general. Rather, she thinks that “there are a whole lot of drugs that they don’t do anything about in Sweden”.

The second and third lines of reasoning more or less blatantly tend to define Somali people as essentially non-Swedes, and furthermore more or less blatantly tend to define the issue as outside of Swedish concerns. The account provided by respondent 16 briefly indicates both these lines of reasoning when provoked by the interviewer to respond “as a Swede”. When answering this question he says that the first thing that comes up is that “it’s typical that they should bring their problems into Sweden”. When respondent 6 is asked about his thoughts in relation to the Somali born civil servant’s (Sahra Bargadle’s) introduction of the racism allegations, he is willing to agree that it is racism – however only from “her point of view”. As refugees, the respondent elaborates, Somali people have been “offered what Swedish society” has to offer. Consequently, “it’s up to them to accept this offer.” Should they “choose to abuse kat, then we can’t do much about it”. In this way, the problem is by implication considered an ethnic problem for which the Swedish state should assume no responsibility. Rather, it is up to “them” to set things straight.

The reading provided by respondent 2 is even more explicit in his demarcation of Sweden as a distinct national community – with Somali people being merely one example of a variety of foreign elements whose presence in this community nowadays he strongly objects to (e.g. mosques, the English language on the software he uses at work etc.). In the end, the problematic issue of kat abuse is something that Somalis will have to solve on their own. In the extract reproduced below, he is asked to comment upon the proposition about racism/discrimination:

01 I: Here it says, it’s spelled out here, there’s an interview with a policeman here
02 R: U-hum
03 I: Ehrm and… he, Stefan Kalmán I think his name is, do you remember…
04 R: U-hum, yes right, I do.
05 I: He says there is a good chance of making Sweden more or less free of kat.
06 R: U-hum
07 I: But he says that there’s no ambition.
08 R: Yes, but he also says that many policemen think that kat is a Somali problem
09 that isn’t that important. It’s not impacting Swedes. It’s almost only Somalis that
10 chew this. Ehm… and that’s… I think it’s quite disturbing you know…
11 [...] They say it’s a Somali problem but the Somali people must realize that if we
12 come to Sweden this is illegal, so we have to quit.
13 I: Yes.
14 R: And then they have to put an end to it. They’ll have to bring this Somali
15 ambassador here, or the consul or what he’s called. I mean, put them together,
16 take some of their leaders and apply some pressure.
17 I: U-hum.
R: That’s how you must do it. So I don’t agree that it’s just a Somali problem. It becomes our problem too, when they live in our country.
R: Yes right.
R: Because in the long run there is a risk that they’ll lure us into it too.
(2:2 [Kat] Male maintenance industry manager, 59)

The respondent reacts to a quote from the police officer in item 4 (Stefan Kalmán) (lines 09–10). But the apparent agreement with Kalmán’s position turns out to be superficial at most. According to the respondent’s interpretation, the kat problem is a Somali problem for which the Swedish state should assume no principal responsibility. Rather, it is a matter for Somali people to solve themselves (with the possible aid of an “ambassador” or a “consul”) (lines 15–16). Should the Swedish police bother about it, it can only be justified by the threat of contamination posed to native Swedes (line 21). This is a radical reinterpretation of the texts’ assertion that the definition of the issue as a problem exclusive to Somali people constitutes discrimination.

The distinction made by some respondents between Swedes and Somalis (as non-Swedes) may also be discerned elsewhere in the interview material. All the respondents were asked to compare the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts at the end of their second interview. Four respondents (1, 4, 14 and 16) provided answers indicating that the critical respondents tend to recognize their own societal position as very distant from the Somali people reported on. An example:

R: No, but I kind of think that it, it’s far away. Because I’m Swedish you know.
I: Is it hard to identify then, or to relate?
R: You can’t identify with it. And it’s really hard even to relate to. You know, this is really not my department.
I: No, I see.
R: You know, well... The first time, when I read the other one [Eastern Europe], then it was more like this drug was used by the middle and the upper classes. It felt kind of closer to me. Because this is where I come from. But this just feels like it’s... immigrants from the suburbs. And I can’t identify, with either immigrants or suburban people. Because it’s so far away from my reality.
I: Yes, I see what you mean... It’s hard to feel like it’s close in any way?
R: Yes. Those things it said about England, they were easier to take in in a way because it wasn’t anything that’s happening in Sweden, it happened some
place else. I can realise that it’s happening in other places. But it gets kind of surprising when it happens in Sweden and it still doesn’t get me to... relate to it in any way.

(14:2 [Kat] Female student, 20)

In this excerpt it is noteworthy that the respondent already at the outset distinguishes between Somalis and Swedish people like herself (lines 01–02). It is also interesting that when the texts deal with kat use in England she reports being able to “realise that it’s happening in other places” (lines 14–16). However, when the kat problem is situated in Sweden she finds it “surprising” that it “still doesn’t get [her] to... relate to it in any way” (lines 16–18). The obvious interpretation of this evaluation must be that she spontaneously locates the kat problem within a community to which she does not belong. And as long as the outlook of the texts is “foreign news” this is no problems. But when the texts propose a perspective on the kat problem as “domestic” she does not incorporate this notion since it appears anomalous to her own experiences of being “Swedish”.

Respondent 1 again responds somewhat reticently to this question and provides lines of reasoning very similar to respondent 14, although he seems careful to ascribe these impressions to how a third person reader (“an ordinary person”) might evaluate the texts in this respect.

Similarly, respondent 4 (though affirming the racism proposition) responds to the question by characterizing the Eastern Europe texts as concerning “the whole society” whereas the Kat texts represent more of an ethnic problem.

Respondent 16 reports that he felt uninformed and “isolated” when reading the Kat texts compared to the Eastern Europe texts. When prompted by the interviewer to elaborate on this point, he states that while the texts were interesting, he “would’ve cared more about it if it were about Swedish people”. However, since “it deals with Somalis almost exclusively” he faces obvious problems in relating to the texts. On the other hand, had the texts provided any illustrations of a “Swedish man who has a family”, but who “got divorced”, who was working at “Volvo”, perhaps a “union guy” – then he “would have related to it more”. What these metonymic markers suggest is that, again, ethnicity – or, rather, as it were, its absence – emerges as an important prerequisite for the respondent to be able to relate to the problem as relevant to him. And again, the reservations expressed by respondent 16 concerning the proposition about structural racism/discrimination seem perfectly rational against this backdrop.

**Paradoxical Reproduction of News Journalism**

The analytical rejections referred to above constitute metalinguistic readings that target the way news journalism works to construct the proposition of police inaction as racism/discrimination. As such they are critical evaluations, not directly of
the proposition itself, but of journalism as a reliable knowledge-disseminating institution, at least in this particular instance.

The substantial rejections referred to above strongly question the truth value of the racism/discrimination proposition. When scrutinizing the interview transcripts, it becomes evident that no less than six of the respondents (1, 2, 6, 11, 14 and 16) rejected it in this way. Together with the analytical evaluations, the assertion about racism/discrimination emerges as the most controversial of all the textual assertions in the study. In sum, no less than eight respondents resisted the assertion. However, when measured as the occurrence of metalinguistic reading statements directed at the “Police inaction, racism”-proposition, this extent of criticism does in fact not show in the analysis provided in table 6.1. With 11 metalinguistic reading statements made by 4 respondents, it appears as no more controversial to the respondents than other macro-propositions in the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts.

Table 6.1 Overview of the relationship between macro-propositions and reading statements (number of statements/number of respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Referential Statements</th>
<th>Referential Respondents</th>
<th>Metalinguistic Statements</th>
<th>Metalinguistic Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use normalized</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing supply</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from the East</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase among youth</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat causes misery</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden is better</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police inaction, racism</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The explanation of this apparent paradox is the overall tendency that substantially critical responses – as becomes evident in all of the extracts referred to in the sections above – are not explicitly directed at the texts as constructions. They are not, formally speaking, metalinguistic readings. This is however not merely a conceptual issue. On the contrary, the implication of their referential stance is that they systematically and unambiguously reproduce the fundamentals of the information contract. That is, they tend to be formulated in an unmediated and direct engagement with the statements by people quoted in the texts (Stefan Kalmán and Sahra Bargadde) which are recruited to substantiate the assertion. Accordingly, the substantial rejections can in fact preserve the information con-
tract of news journalism despite their being evaluations that strongly question the truth value of a proposition that runs through two items of the Kat texts.

Specifically, the proposition is interpreted by the critical respondents as if it originates from these specific spokespeople in the text rather than from its authors. The implication is that news journalism, as an institution, is not regarded as standing behind the proposition. As such it tends to be viewed as partial and biased. The critical respondents can direct their rejections towards these speakers rather than towards news journalism. Another extract is reproduced below to illustrate how this could be concretely manifested during the interviews. Here, the respondent is asked about his thoughts on the lead to items 3 and 4, where the allegations about police inaction are introduced (among other things):

01 I: [...] What did you think when you read this lead?
02 R: Well, it does seem strange that they [the police] can allow it to be sold so openly. That they more or less share space with other market traders selling ordinary vegetables... “The Police Do Almost Nothing”. Yes, but then they do nothing themselves either, I would think. You know, then they have a part in it. I mean, then they could try to convey that it’s not acceptable to sell it or use it. I mean, it’s got to come from the inside as well.

(6:2 [Kat] Male accountant, 47)

On line 04, the respondent pauses to think for a while. He reads the headline to item 4 out aloud and then reacts critically to what he has just read. Clearly, the respondent’s employment of the pronoun “they” on lines 05–06 does not refer to the authors of the texts. Nor does it refer to the police. It refers to “the inside”, which implicitly means the Somali community. It goes to show that the respondent contests the claims as if they originate from Somali people rather than from journalism.

Similarly, respondent 11 expresses strong doubts as to the trustworthiness of the police officer (Stefan Kalmán) whose presence functions as a textual substantiation of the allegations of police inaction and discrimination. The respondent thinks it is “paradoxical” that the very police officer who works in the area in which kat is said to be prevalent complains about nothing being done. She wonders “why he’s not doing anything himself” to set things straight, and expresses doubts as regards his own effort on the problematic issue at hand. Consequently, this respondent also regards the racism assertion as coming from a person who is biased and possibly also has a hidden agenda. Even here, then, the institution of news journalism is not viewed as a neutral supporter of the assertion.

In Chapter Five it was shown how a structure of identities and relations between the news institution, the respondents and third party actors is established in the reception process. In accordance with this structure, news journalism is attributed the status of a knowledge-provider. The police and the social authori-
ties are granted the role of experts, whereas the respondents assume the position of morally concerned citizens vis-à-vis young people and Somali people who are positioned as transgressors of the normative contours of society. It was argued that this structure functioned to establish moral boundaries between the respondents and the problem-bearers.

Consequently, it is suggested that the substantially critical responses not only preserve the information contract of news journalism by formulating the rejections in this way, but even more significantly they reproduce and reinforce the moral boundaries between the respondents and the problem-bearers.

**Ethnicization and Criminalization**

I propose that the analysis reveals two principle presuppositions that make critical responses to the proposition about police inaction and discrimination possible. The concluding arguments in this section are summarized and illustrated in figure 6.1. The argument according to the (textual) preferred meanings appears in the left column for comparison, while the chain of arguments in the rejections appears in the right column. The presuppositions are referred to as *ethnicization* and *criminalization* in the right column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presupposition 1</th>
<th>Somali people living in Sweden are Swedes</th>
<th>Somali people living in Sweden are non-Swedes (ethnicization)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presupposition 2</td>
<td>Societal blame: social problems can be caused by institutional action and inaction</td>
<td>Individual blame: problem-bearers are morally culpable (criminalization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary proposition (in item 1)</td>
<td>Kat causes misery</td>
<td>Kat users are criminals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for police inaction</td>
<td>More or less deliberate</td>
<td>Scarce resources, plausible prioritization of means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome (empirical reading)</td>
<td>Racism or discrimination</td>
<td>No racism or discrimination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.1 Substantial rejections of racism as a corollary of ethnicization and criminalization

The figure does not represent qualities that were empirically manifested in all of the critical responses. Rather, it explicates the logic and rationale upon which the
substantial rejections are based, and it is used here as a heuristic device to be able to explain how they are made possible.

First, I suggest that all substantially critical responses rest upon the common baseline assumption that the problematic issue at hand (specifically defined as child abuse) is confined to Somali people. Somali people are predominantly viewed as non-Swedes by the critical respondents. (They are possibly viewed in this way by other respondents as well but if so, this is not apparent in the other reception accounts.) As such, the problem is regarded as a distinct issue, not as a comprehensive societal problem. And furthermore, its magnitude, scope and severity can be measured against other social issues (other, more widespread substances, the “majority” of the people) in terms of proportionate allocation of resources in society. Accordingly, the analysis shows how the notion of Somali people as a community distinct from Swedish society is invoked in the reception process and forms an interpretive repertoire against which critical responses can be formulated. Even though not all critical respondents explicitly distinguish between who is Swedish and who is not, all substantial rejections necessitate this interpretive repertoire.

In itself, this repertoire has the capacity of nullifying one basic prerequisite for any argument about structural discrimination or racism: that the victims of such structures of (in)action are members of the political community in which discrimination is said to take place. In this instance of social interaction between readers and news texts, the repertoire functions to exclude Somali people from the respondents’ nationally defined community – a community that the exclusion itself serves to delineate.

The second presupposition is the notion that people of Somali origin are themselves responsible for being in the problematic situation depicted. This notion is a function of the structure of identities and relations set up in the reception process (documented in Chapter Five). As shown in the section above, the substantially critical responses reproduce this structure by interpreting the proposition as biased accounts from actors in the texts rather than from its authors. The implication is that Somali people cannot be regarded as victims of state racism because, by virtue of being transgressors of the normative contours of society, “they have forfeited their right to take part in the negotiation about the consensus about crime” (Hall et al. 1978:69). Accordingly, substantially critical responses also reproduce the prevailing moral order of crime news journalism.

The establishment of moral boundaries between the respondents and the problem bearers has the capacity to nullify another prerequisite for any argument about structural discrimination or racism: that structures, rules and regulations, the routine operations of institutions such as the police – in brief, “society” – can cause social problems. By contrast, the moral boundaries established by news re-
ception can introduce an individual blame component that renders the problem-bearers morally culpable for being in the problematic situation at hand.

This also illustrates the conflicting nature of the structuration of the range of preferred meanings of the Kat texts. Although the texts, at the surface level, in a sense “prefer” a notion of Somalis as both Swedes and victims of neglect and discrimination, the criminalizing imperative of the prevailing moral position on the topic at hand is imported through the backdoor. In essence, this consequence is the flip-side of the appeal to common decency when the texts set out to document and provide evidence of the harmful consequences of kat use (in item 1). As the textual analysis in Chapter Four was able to demonstrate, on the surface level, the texts say that kat is harmful. But by implication, what they in fact tend to show is that people of Somali background are transgressors of the normative contours of society. To several of the respondents, Somalis are not common, and they certainly are not decent.

To sum up, it has been shown how the national implications identified and described in the textual analysis in Chapter Four are activated and brought to life in the critical responses to the proposition about police inaction and racism/discrimination. The incorporation of the national implication is not related to the rejections per se. Rather, the rejection of racism merely comprises the empirical manifestation of a nationalist closure that contains two specific elements: criminalization and ethnicization.

A vast number of previous studies, in a variety of different national contexts, have recurrently found that news representations of ethnic and immigrant issues tend to emphasize attention to problems, threats and criminality, both in qualitative and quantitative terms (see e.g. van Dijk 1991, ter Wal et al. 2005, Bredström 2002, Brune 1999, 2004, Hultén 2006, Löwander 1997, Hussain 2003). As ter Wal et al. (2005:948) argue in their study of Dutch news output, it is the over-representation of ethnic minorities in crime news and in generally negative contexts – not ethnicity itself – that determines negative portrayal.

In relation to these findings, the analysis at hand is able to show two things. First, it demonstrates that the moral boundaries between the implied “majority audience” and the problem-bearing minority that are derived from the structure of identities and relations of the news institution can be effectively reproduced in news reception. Second, it shows that this establishment of a moral order can function in news reception to delineate and implicitly define a national community by way of symbolic expulsion of undesirable elements.

In the ethnic closure, these undesirable elements are narrowed down to people of Somali origin. In turn, this assignment is derived from an association of ethnic minorities with criminality which may partly originate from the domain of news discourse itself.
Nationality Ditched: Critical Cases

Critical or “pathological” cases, according to Danermark et al. (2002:104) are instances “where social conditions and mechanisms [...] are challenged and the mechanisms disturbed”. The significance of such deviations is that they can reveal how the objects whose constitution we wish to explain work under more normal conditions and circumstances.

Critical cases in the present study are instances where the respondents actively deconstruct and reject what they see as the nationalist implications of the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts. In the present material, such deconstructions can be identified by two characteristics. First, such responses constitute metalinguistic evaluations of the texts, or elements thereof, as manifestations of particular ideological standpoints. It has previously been shown how some respondents turn the very interpretive repertoires invoked in the constitution of the geopolitical closure into objects of evaluation. This is, in essence, what this first characteristic refers to.

However, in addition to reading textual elements as ideological expressions, the deconstructions of the nationalist implication explicate and specify the functioning of these ideological standpoints. That is, the standpoints which constitute the targets of metalinguistic evaluations were explicitly interpreted by the respondents as nationalist standpoints, from the outlook of a framework of reference other than the national community.

The features of the critical cases are identical to an oppositional mode of decoding which, according to Hall’s definition, includes the possibility “for a viewer perfectly to understand both the literal and the connotative inflection given by a discourse but to decode the message in a globally contrary way”. Accordingly, the reader who provides nationalist deconstruction in this context basically “detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference” (Hall 1980:138).

The significance of the nationalist deconstructions in this context is that they can provide additional evidence as to the constitution of nationalist closure. Specifically, they can be analysed as instances where the mechanisms recruited in the closure are made explicit and are actively opposed by the respondents. In so far as these mechanisms resemble the ones identified hitherto, they may accordingly be regarded as additional substantiations of their generative character. If not, they may provide clues as to whether other possible conditions may be active in generating nationalist closure.

To recapitulate, it has been tentatively put forward that nationalist closure can be produced by certain mechanisms in the moment of decoding as a social interaction between readers and news texts, as well as basic structures of news journalism as a form of discourse.
The analysis shows that the geopolitical closure, in the moment of decoding, is constituted by means of the invocation of interpretive repertoires that function to contextualize, delineate, and evaluate the national community of Sweden as antithetical to drugs. The ethnic closure seems to be contingent upon the invocation of interpretive repertoires that serve to criminalize and ethnicize the issue at hand.

As a form of discourse, the structure of identities and relations set up by news journalism between itself, the implied audience and third party actors, functions to establish moral boundaries between the respondents on the one hand, and the problematic elements (other European countries and Somali people) on the other. In this structure of relations and identities, the reader is positioned and addressed as a national member – which we assume is a result of the institutional location of news journalism as a part of nationscape (Jørgensen 1994).

The question, then, is whether these preliminary conclusions hold when they are confronted with the critical cases. Is it the mechanisms outlined above that the critical deconstructions seem to challenge, or do they challenge conditions previously not identified?

The Relative Independence of Closure Mechanisms
It should first be noted that the constitution of the two versions of closure are constituted somewhat differently from each other. The ethnic closure is only made visible when the respondents reject the proposition about police inaction and discrimination of the Kat texts, whereas the geopolitical closure is based upon incorporative readings. Hence, the ethnic closure can be considered to be submerged in comparison to the geopolitical closure. It is also different in character because this very proposition can in itself be seen as a deconstruction of possibly received ways of defining what constitutes “Swedish people” (and what does not). Consequently, the eight respondents who in some way or another responded affirmatively to this proposition provide readings that can be characterized as deconstructions – although they are, as it were, assisted by the textual-level preferred meaning in this respect. However, these cannot be employed to test the plausibility of the conceptualization of the ethnic closure here, because they do not constitute readings that have to challenge anything explicitly.

Three reception interviews of both the Eastern Europe texts (11:1) and the Kat texts (10:2 and 15:2) contained readings that, in line with the characteristics identified above, may be regarded as deconstructions of the geopolitical closure. Two Kat interviews (9:1 and 15:2) contained critical evaluations that went for a deconstruction of the ethnic closure. Without exception, all of the respondents who deconstruct and reject the nationalist closure target their metalinguistic evaluations precisely at the conditions and mechanisms outlined above. Examples from two interviews (11:1 and 15:2) will be given to illustrate this observation. Below
I: Well... Ehm, this headline, “Wave of Cheap Drugs”, and then the sub-headline “Threat from Eastern Europe”, you’ve kind of mentioned it already, what did you think about when you read those?

R: What I first thought about was that it is very easy to bring in drugs when you take ferries and such over from Tallinn and Finland and such. These are more open borders perhaps. Everywhere – which is positive in many ways, obviously, that it’s open. I mean, this is not something that I think is bad. But at the same time it makes it easier when you come from Denmark over the [Öresund] bridge, and you know that there is no customs check. By that I mean that I am all for the EU, I think that it’s a good thing. And the bigger the EU grows, the more people have the possibility to exert influence and the more opportunities to cooperate. And then I can think that all this about the Eastern Europe and everything that comes from the East you know, in the newspapers and stuff, then I think that it often gets like... ehm like really dangerous [ironic]

I: So you recognize it from other contexts?

R: Yes, when it comes to other media and such, TV and papers, then I think that in a way, as I experience it, that it’s almost as if some journalists want to scare people in Sweden away from everything foreign you know. They sort of uphold some form of racism and a little bit of... and everything that’s foreign is dangerous. And this I can think generally if I refer to this “Threat from Eastern Europe” here, it can make people think “ok, now there are even more bad things coming from over there and we in the West are great” sort of. It’s a little bit like that you know. It’s a bit like that [...]

The first nine lines of this excerpt constitute a referential reading of the textual elements referred to when the respondent is asked by the interviewer about the headline. Furthermore, when the respondent refers to ships from “Tallin and Finland”, the Öresund Bridge and the notion of “open borders” she employs the same interpretive repertoires as the other respondents. However, from line 12 this backdrop itself becomes the focus of her critical evaluation. She begins by observing ironically that “everything that comes from the East [...] in the newspapers” is portrayed as “really dangerous”. When encouraged by the interviewer to elaborate, her evaluation turns into something that closely resembles a critique of ideology. The proposition about the increasing influx is interpreted by the respondent as an expression of a journalistic xenophobia which ultimately serves to reproduce the favourable national self-image of Swedish and Western European people (lines 16–23).

Obviously, this extract could be taken as an illustration of how reception is a discursive practice that tends to move back and forth between referential and
metalinguistic modes of reading (cf. Schrøder 2000). The main point here however would be that it illustrates how the geopolitical deconstructions in fact presuppose a basic comprehension of the texts that is identical to the readings that incorporate the preferred meaning in this respect. This overall concurrence also includes a critical evaluation of the very same interpretive repertoires about the East as a European “trouble-spot” by which the geopolitical closure can be established.

Already at the very beginning of his second interview, respondent 15 introduces a deconstruction of the chauvinist thrust of the Kat texts, and the two first items in particular. Further on, the respondent identifies and explicates the functioning of the implications by which the texts assert the superiority of Sweden. In the following extract, the interviewer has referred to item 2 of the Kat texts (“Unequally Harmful in Different Countries”):

01 R: Yes, it’s there I said they... [laughs] there they wrote ”In this respect, Sweden’s very good”
02 I: Okay, you think of it like that?
03 R: Yes, in this respect, Sweden’s very good, because other countries... They have different attitudes about this, even in the EU, and there is no common drug policy really. Then they say that the reason for this [lack] is that Sweden is so much better at this. That’s what they say when they write about the risk of dying when you use a certain drug. “Different countries provide different answers, since the methods of measuring so-called drug-related deaths vary greatly”. “In Sweden a heart attack” they say, they can see that [cites the text] “a heart attack that is suspected to have been preceded by drug abuse is classified as drug related”. And in other countries they’re just heart attacks. Hence, we are more thorough about this than in other countries. This is why things are the way they are.

(15:2 [Kat] Male student, 24)

As becomes evident in lines 08–13 in the extract, the respondent locates the textual construction of national chauvinism in the very elements that the textual analysis in Chapter Four identifies as generative of the preferred meaning. Moreover, the respondent’s metalinguistic interpretation of what the texts “really say” is identical to the reading that is unanimously shared by the respondents who incorporate the preferred nationalist reading as a component in the geopolitical closure.

The extract below (from the same interview) shows how respondent 15 moves on to expose and deconstruct the very ethnicization and criminalization devices that were identified as generative of the ethnic closure. When we enter the interview, the respondent has been asked to comment on the facts section:
R: Yes you know… […] It’s typical that when it comes to drugs it’s always, in these drug descriptions, that they are always described as something very, very bad. You know, from this description it doesn’t sound like something that you would want to take. [laughs]

I: [laughs]

R: You know, it says, ok there is a sentence that says “you feel exhilarated, strong and smart”. That’s one sentence. The rest just goes on about how bad it is, that you get dilated pupils, higher heart rate, faster respiration and your blood pressure and body temperature rise. Is it this that is, like… the reason for taking it? It sounds weird. […] And from higher doses you get this: “headache, nausea, palpitations, hallucinations, anxiety, confusion, irritability, restlessness”. That’s like not good. “Sleeping disorders”, they just keep coming, one after another.

 […]

R: […] Then of course, I read something else into it too, when they write like this, that “in Somalia they consider this to be…”. You know, they write so much about this misery that you get kind of full of this misery, like in the headlines and so on […] And then, finally, you get to this: [cites the text] “Kat is by Somali tradition considered a harmless drug. Many people who chew the bunches do not know how dangerous it is”. You know, there aren’t two sides of it that are brought up here, but it’s more like they’ve put all these facts in a row about these stupid Somali people

(15:2 [Kat] Male student, 24)

At the beginning of the extract, on lines 01–04, the respondent interprets the facts section as an expression of the preventionist repertoire identified previously (see Chapter Five). Possibly encouraged by the interviewer’s acknowledging laughter, he goes on to exemplify how this is concretely manifested in the text on lines 06–13. The last eight lines of the extract (14–21) show how the reading takes a significant turn. Here, the respondent reads “something else” into the Kat texts’ assertion about the harmfulness of the drug. Basically, he reacts to the consequences that this assertion may have for the image of people of Somali origin. At the end, he thinks it is “like they’ve put all these facts in a row about these stupid Somali people” when juxtaposing their allegedly traditional view of the drug with the facts about its social and biochemical effects.

Basically, this deconstruction is able to disentangle the connection between ethnicization and criminalization. By exploring the effect of the harmfulness assertion on the image of Somali people, the reading explicates and rejects the moral boundaries between the implied reader and the problem-bearers built into the knowledge hierarchy set up by news journalism. Basically, the respondent identifies how the texts implicitly tend to define them as residing outside of the normative contours of society.
Further on in the reception interview, this deconstruction proves to have de-
stabilized the whole constitution of the ethnic closure from within. Eventually, it
falls apart completely, which can be illustrated by the extract below.

01 R: [...] You... we see that it's kat, the specific drug that's the problem. It's not
02 marginalization and all these other things. Because again, you could say that
03 it's the same as with alcohol, it's exactly the same phenomenon. I guess that's
04 where you can get sort of annoyed with the articles.
05 I: You think it's a bit too fixated on kat?
06 R: Yes, I think so. [...] I mean there are people who are active against alcohol
07 too, there's a big movement against that, so it could come across like “alcohol
08 destroys people and families”. You could switch it. [...] So maybe they've found
09 the wrong culprit in the articles.
10 [...] Because I'd bet they wouldn't say the same thing in Somalia. There they
11 wouldn't say that their problem is that they take too much drugs but that they...
12 are marginalized from society, they're outsiders. In Sweden they aren't let in,
13 that's why they have these problems. There's no emphasis on that. Or at least very
14 little emphasis. It's all about... them not seeing the reason why they use this.
(15:2 [Kat] Male student, 24)

On lines 01–09 the respondent makes the text’s specific focus on kat relative to
culture-bound conceptions of acceptable and non-acceptable drugs. Basically, kat
constitutes “the wrong culprit in the articles”, which prevents the journalists from
“seeing the reasons why they use it” (line 14). In this way, the entire angle of the
Kat texts is viewed as a narrow way of reducing a complex set of problems in-
volving multiculturalism and social marginalization to a fixation on particular
substances. In the end, the focus on kat as a culprit is viewed by the respondent as
an expression of what “we” – the Swedish national community – “see” as the
problem.

To sum up, the excerpts from these two interviews illustrate how the decon-
structions of nationalist closure may be regarded as substantiations of what the
analysis hitherto has identified as the mechanisms and conditions upon which the
closures are contingent. Accordingly, these mechanisms can be conceptualized as
relatively independent of empirical readings; that is, we have fairly strong evi-
dence at hand that the preferred meanings of news discourse exist regardless of
whether empirical readings comply or not. This evidence can be interpreted as a
substantiation of previous empirical research on news reception (see e.g. Philo
2008:537). The full implications of this for the theory of news reception will be
explored in the concluding chapter.
The Fragility of Geopolitical Closure

At the end of each interview, all the respondents were asked one leading question, which was a variant of the following: “What do you, as a Swede, think about these things that you’ve read about”. Judging from the responses, the positioning question seems to have functioned as a watershed in the Eastern Europe interviews. Seven of the respondents provided a basically augmented nationally framed reading when responding. Five of the respondents in contrast provided responses which clearly tended towards an expansion of the national horizons preferred by the texts. These respondents offered further reflections upon issues raised by the Eastern Europe texts in a way that directly or indirectly challenged the national framing of the subject matter. In the Kat interviews, however, the identity positioning question generated more variety and complexity.

Before it is possible to evaluate the implications of the responses, their general status as “readings” must be briefly discussed. The rationale behind the inclusion of the identity-positioning question in the otherwise open interview design was that it would, hypothetically, encourage the respondents to formulate ideas and draw upon interpretive repertoires that previously had remained unarticulated during the interviews. With some qualifications, this is still how I believe that the responses to this question should be interpreted. However, the posing of the question in the context of the reception interviews constitutes an active positioning of the respondent as “a Swede”. Clearly, such a strategy serves both to delimit and to facilitate the range of possible responses by explicitly putting nationality on the agenda in the interview situation.

One possible objection towards this strategy immediately arises. This undeniably provocative question merely induces routine ways for the respondents to cope with and adapt to the perceived expectations of the interview situation itself. The respondents tend to say what they believe is expected of them. In this way the responses to this particular question constitute “readings” of these perceived expectations rather than the texts. Such an objection does find some support in the interview material. The Kat interview with respondent 16 provides a case in point:

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25 The differences between the Kat interviews and the Eastern Europe interviews – that is, both the fact that more respondents provide meaningful responses in the latter, and the higher degree of variety in the former – are related to textual differences. In the Kat texts, there is in fact a variety of different stances to be taken “as a Swede” when considering the representation of reality being presented. The Eastern Europe texts, by contrast, do not contain a multitude of possible stances in the same way. In essence, then, I suggest that the identity-positioning question does not mean the same thing in the Kat interviews as it does in the Eastern Europe interviews. All things considered, it is hard to find any overall pattern in the positioning responses during the Kat interviews other than that the respondents – or, to be precise, eight of them – took the opportunity to clarify or elaborate on issues previously brought up, or to introduce new ones which had not yet been covered by the interviewer’s questions.
I: What do you think as a Swede, when you’ve read all this?
R: You know ehm... before you asked the question I didn’t think anything in particular but now that you say so, I think more like “well it’s typical that they bring their problems into Sweden” you know. Ehm... well, that’s the first thing that comes up.

(16:1 [Kat] Male student, 23)

Another fairly common feature was that the respondents expressed uncertainty before responding to this question. In essence, they more or less explicitly tried to find out what the interviewer “meant”. In some cases, these moments of negotiation balanced on the border of awkwardness. For example:

I: If you consider these all articles together, what do you think of them as a Swede?
R: Hmm, what? Can you be more precise as to what you mean?
I: Well, I’m interested in knowing what you think, as a Swede, about all this you’ve read. But then of course, it could be that you don’t think anything in particular as a Swede either.
R: No, I don’t know exactly... I guess I think that there probably are more people doing drugs than you might think... well more, you know, but... As a Swede, you know, I don’t understand how I’m expected to think as a Swede... [laughs].
I: Well that’s a question where [laughs]... I thought you could get to decide what thinking about it as a Swede means. […]
(14:1 [Eastern Europe] Female student, 20)

Accordingly, in four of the Eastern Europe interviews (4, 10, 14 and 15) the question was either left unanswered or responded to by largely meaningless talk that obviously served the purpose of mainly giving the interviewer something other than silence or “I don’t know”. Respondent 14’s rather hesitant attempt at answering the question in the quote above is an illustrative example of such responses (lines 06–07). However, in the other 12 interviews the respondent and the interviewer were able to negotiate beyond any awkwardness, and the respondents often provided elaborate answers that are hard to dismiss as purely induced by situation coping. In the Kat interviews, eight interview persons (1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12 and 13) provided responses that must be more-or-less interpreted as mere situation coping, leaving the other half of the respondents for whom the question seemed to represent something at least fairly meaningful – meaningful, that is, outside the context of interaction in the interview situation.
The remainder of the present section directs attention toward the 12 respondents who in their *Eastern Europe* interviews tended to either reinforce or actively deconstruct the geopolitical closure when put in the “Swede”-position by the interviewer. Three respondents (10, 11 and 15), provided deconstructions and rejection of the geopolitical nationalist closure unprompted by the interviewer in either one or both of their interviews. In addition, however, five more respondents (6, 7, 9, 11 and 16) assumed a similar position when put in the “as a Swede” situation by the interviewer. They responded by expanding the geopolitical frames in ways that sometimes even contradicted statements delivered previously in their interviews. By way of contrast, seven respondents (1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 12 and 13, all in their *Eastern Europe* interviews) reacted to the question by providing a strengthened geopolitical closure by talking about, among other things, the importance of taking stricter measures at the borders, the consequences of the EU and the drug policies in other European countries (the Netherlands or, on occasions, Denmark). In essence, these responses tended to move towards the intensification, and possibly also the explication, of a geopolitical closure that had previously been more loosely articulated in the interviews. It usually went like this:

01 I: But, if I put it like this: What do you think as a Swede about all you’ve read  
02 R: … Well, you know, if this is how it is, then it’s awful. It’s just awful, you know. You barely want to bring children into this world. And you know… that  
03 you can buy a gram of amphetamine for 70 crowns, it sounds terrible. And that  
04 it’s just flowing into Sweden from the Eastern States… Here you’ve got to be  
05 much stricter, I mean the customs must try to stop it, stop the import… And  
06 make the sentences harsher for those people who bring it in. That’s what I think.  
07 But I’m not surprised, because there’s a lot of this… from the East, you know, lots  
08 of things come in from there. It’s criminality, and it’s… well, drugs. […]  

(5:1 [Eastern Europe] Female assistant nurse, 54)

All in all, none of the intensified responses to this question constitute a surprise in the context of the interview accounts of these seven respondents as a whole. Rather, they display as much coherence as one might expect in this context.

The provocative question directly led two of the respondents (6 and 16) to partly revise their previously reported interpretation of the texts. In the account provided by respondent 6, it is actually possible to trace how the provocative question induces an ongoing dialogue with the representation provided by the *Eastern Europe* text – a dialogue that appears to end up with him questioning his own initial reading when he emphasizes that it is merely “portrayed as if it comes into Sweden from other countries” whereas “it’s most certainly produced in Sweden” as well. According to the respondent, “these are articles that you surely would have read when they were in the paper” but, normally, he elaborates, “you just go on as a Swede with what you do every day”. By contrast, “now we’re
staying with it and discussing it”, which in itself, the respondent implies, can inspire such wider reflections on the matter at hand. In the Eastern Europe interview with respondent 16, his critical evaluation tends to be induced by the provocative question along very similar lines. Even here, the reflection provided ends up with an implicit criticism of the particularity of the text, and an explicit revision of what the respondent has said previously.

When faced with the provocative question, respondents 7 and 9 find an opportunity to explicate and elaborate on themes previously merely hinted at on occasion during the interviews. Thus, the question seemed to have functioned as the kind of catalyst that it was intended to be in the design of the interview guide. An extract from the interview with respondent 9 illustrate this:

01 I: Now I’m going to pose the same question as the last time, what do you think about this as a Swede? If you have any such thoughts, that is to say?
02 R: Hmm… Well, it’s probably that thing about, that it’s got to be people here that receive it. I mean there has to be a lot of… ehm, what’s it called… I mean, it’s got to be organized here as well. But they don’t bring this up here, it’s more like it’s pouring in. You know if you should be a little unforgiving you could point out that “pouring in”, those are clearly negative words.
03 I: Yes they are.
04 R: They’re negative you know. “From the East”, it becomes… well, everything that comes from the East you know, in a way.
05 I: Yes, ok, you think of it like that?
06 R: Yes, and also that, well we’re not that goddamn innocent we Swedes you know. I mean, it’s as if we were merely sitting here and sort of… yes, all passive and defenceless.
07 I: Hmm
08 R: And that’s not the way it is. There are people, as I’ve said… people who receive… and distribute and all that...
09 I: Yes, ok, you mean that it is...
10 R: cooperation. It’s cooperation. It’s not just one-way. And then you can’t say that it “pours in” […]

(9:2 [Eastern Europe] Female librarian, 36)

This rejection is aimed at the concrete textual construction of reality. Specifically, her “Swedish” reading directs attention toward, first, how the texts selectively omit and include topics when observing that the authors do not include how the logistics of distribution, selling and smuggling are organized domestically (lines 03–06). Second, she explores the implications of linguistic choices when dwelling upon the notion that drugs “Pour in from the East” (lines 06–07). According to the respondent “it becomes… well, everything that comes from the East you know, in a way” (lines 09–10). Arguably, this remark seems to suggest that she identifies, although not in a very detailed manner, the reference to the East as part
of a prevalent Swedish image of this location as a trouble spot. Third, she also refers to and rejects the implied image of Sweden as an innocent victim of drugs from the outside when emphasizing the collaborative work likely to be involved in this kind of business (lines 12–14, 16–17, 19–20).

Similarly, the reading delivered by respondent 7 clearly breaks out of the national confines of the texts when he is positioned as a Swede by the interviewer. Rather than directing his critical attention internally, towards the textual construction of nationality, his stance is referentially aimed at rendering the social, political and economic realities of the drug business more complex than the Eastern Europe texts are able to acknowledge. The respondent says that he does not think that “the location of the goods” is very interesting at all. He further refers to cocaine production in Colombia and says that it is “really easy to just sit here moralizing and saying that they should not grow it”. And accordingly, in the context of Eastern Europe, he concludes sarcastically that there “could be moral qualms over there too” if they had “other possibilities of making a living”.

To sum up, three points can be made about the responses to the provocative question. First, in addition to the critical cases attended to previously, they provide yet another substantiation of the relative independence of closure mechanisms from empirical readings. Insofar as the provocative question has proved to be a catalyst in the interview situations, it is merely a catalyst in relation to the conditions previously identified. In the interview situation, the question could clearly function to explicate the nationalist implications of the texts (the Eastern Europe texts in particular) and put them on the agenda of conversation. When explicated in this way, some respondents rejected the geopolitical closure previously articulated while others reinforced it. But regardless, the conditions exist independently of the empirical interpretations and evaluations.

Second, more than anything else, the provocative question tended to lead to rejections and deconstructions of the geopolitical version of nationalist closure. Although these rejections were more or less direct consequences of a question that actively put the issue of nationalism on the agenda of conversation, the possibility must be seriously considered that the geopolitical closure can be essentially fragile when it is exposed to even the slightest intellectual challenge in contexts of social interaction.

Finally, this forces us to consider the possible limits of the methodological approach of the study. Insofar as nationalist closure can be fragile when intellectually challenged in contexts of conversation, the present research design – from the choice of obtaining primary readings in one-on-one interviews, to the open questions and the passive role of the interviewer – is not able to capture and reveal this fragility more than intermittently. It is possible that a focus-group or natural-group design would have provided a different body of material in this respect.
7 CONCLUSIONS

This closing chapter consists of three sections. First, the results of the empirical studies are summarized and concluding answers to the research questions are formulated. Second, some general theoretical and methodological implications for reception studies will be explored. The final section considers a few shortcomings of the study and outlines suggestions how to rectify them in future research into the relationship between mediated communication and nationality.

The Constitution of Nationalist Closure

Contemporary social theory emphasizes that nationality, as a form for socio-political organization and cultural community, is contingent upon ongoing practices that bring about its reproduction and transformation (Jørgensen 1994, Billig 1995, Calhoun 1997, Hutchinson 2005). Theories about nationality also underscore the importance of symbolic and discursive mechanisms for reproduction and transformation (Calhoun 1997). In the context of globalization processes, nationality has been conceptualized as “a porous, perhaps precarious, organization of economic, demographic, and cultural flows that must constantly be redefined and reinforced in the midst of a fluid geography” (Crofts Wiley 2004:90).

Accordingly, the theoretical position of the thesis is that nationality cannot persist without nationalism. Jørgensen’s (1994) theory of nationality conceptualizes nationalism as practices that function to provide closure of social reality within national horizons of reference. Nationalist closure implies viewing the nation as if it were a transparent mirror-image of society. As such, it involves a totalization of reality so that extraneous elements are rendered less visible or entirely invisible (p. 112). In any given closure, the nation is constructed as a configuration of inclusion and exclusion – unity and difference – that can recruit a variety of elements to this end.

Far from being an inadequate illusion of social reality, nationalist closure is in part made possible by the objective existence of structures in society that provide an institutional landscape (nationscape) and cultural codes (nation) that lend legitimacy to, and create compatibility with nationalist practices. And although the specific contents and defining bases of any given closure can be context-specific, its form and function tend to derive from such institutionalized structures and cultural codes (pp. 117–120).
News journalism is conceptualized as a nationscape institution. Its structural location in society, it is hypothesized, can carry tendencies of reducing the inherently “fluid” and “precarious” nature of nationality as a form for social organization and cultural community. Previous research has demonstrated that news journalism employs a network of sources that more than anything else are national; that its definition of politics tends to be national in spite of the increasing power of supranational political structures such as the EU (Palm 2002, Tjernström 2008, 2001, Preston 2009); that it is historically modelled upon a readership that is national or local within a national context (Anderson 1991); and that it can reduce the global character of transnational flows by means of domestication strategies intended for audiences defined as national members (Lee et al. 2002, Clausen 2004).

Previous research has also provided a fairly solid body of evidence suggesting that the institutional location of journalism can materialize as national framings of a variety of specific issues as they are represented in news discourse. Taken together, a number of empirical studies demonstrate that news journalism can function to offer nationalist closure to audiences by conjoining nationality with morality; that is, by representing phenomena deemed undesirable to the moral order as residing outside of the national community to which the representations are addressed (Bredström 2002, Brune 1999, 2004, Hultén 2006, Löwander 1997, Hughes 2005, Brookes 1999).

The present study has attempted to explore how news discourse can function as nationalism among citizens. Targeting the concrete level of news reception, it posed the question of what properties and structures – of news discourse as well as of news decoding as a specific form of social interaction – that can provide nationalist closure within which social reality is granted meaning.

We are now equipped to formulate answers to these questions. Figure 7.1 summarizes the conclusions that are drawn from the results of the empirical studies. The analysis has identified two particular versions of nationalist closure in the material. They have been distinguished based on how certain key elements are configured in terms of inclusion and exclusion. In the geopolitical closure, the nation of Sweden is located in a contemporary Europeanized context in which goods, people and political ideas move more freely than before. The overriding implication is that Sweden, as a nation, has everything to lose in this context. Accordingly, the nation is delineated and defined as distinct from the rest of Europe. In the ethnic closure, Sweden is indirectly defined as distinct from people of Somali origin living in Sweden. People of Somali origin constitute the key element in this version.

It is crucial to point out that the two versions of closure are empirical manifestations of one and the same underlying principle: a conjunction of nationality and morality that functions to expel undesirable phenomena and elements from the
confines of the nation. In the reception process, the nation is subtly delineated and defined precisely at the moment when the undesirable elements are identified and ejected. Concretely, both closures function to expel illicit drugs from the nation. In the geopolitical closure, the sources, causes and harbouring of illicit drugs are attributed to “other” European countries, such as the Netherlands and the Eastern European states. In the ethnic closure, they are imputed to people of Somali origin. Accordingly, as an absent mirror-image, the nation of Sweden is indirectly (negatively) defined as the opposite of the undesirable elements (cf. Brune 1999, Bredström 2002).

It should be underscored that innumerable other specific versions of closure are imaginable in other contexts of news and media reception. However, the findings of the case studies of news output referred to above suggest that it is possible that also other particular versions would follow the principles of conjunction of morality and nationality and negative identification.

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Figure 7.1 Constitution of nationalist closure through the conjunction of morality and nationality

It is proposed that nationalist closure according to these principles is to be seen as the empirical outcome of a number of general mechanisms and structures. These are schematically displayed in figure 7.1. A basic analytical distinction is made between the ideational and the interpersonal dimension. The point of distinguishing between the two dimensions is to highlight that certain decoding mechanisms function to fill the nation with specific contents whereas others function to establish specific identities and relations between the parties in the communicative event. The distinction is, in other words, modelled upon Fairclough’s (1995) proposition that communicative events can serve both to establish representations of
society and to position the audience within this society (which includes the definition of the identities of other actors and institutions and their interrelationships).

In the moment of decoding, closure can be established by the invocation of interpretive repertoires. In the geopolitical closure, these repertoires function to characterize the nation of Sweden in relation to other European countries. In the ethnic closure, they function to define people of Somali origin as non-members of the nation and as moral transgressors. Basically, the interpretive repertoires serve to fill the nation, and, above all, its constitutive outsiders (“other countries” and Somali people) with pejorative content. It is accordingly proposed that ideational mechanisms derive from certain patterns and conditions of news decoding as a form of social interaction. Ultimately, it is suggested that this form of interaction in certain respects tends to be inherently asymmetrical, in news journalism’s favour, and that it is this very asymmetry that makes the invocation of established interpretive repertoires possible.

The interpersonal mechanisms are mainly derived from certain properties of news as a form of discourse. Specifically, the analysis has shown that two basic properties of news journalism tend to be activated in the constitution of nationalist closure. First, news journalism is modelled upon a structure of identities and relations that can function to ascribe undesirable phenomena to certain actors and entities while dissociating them from other actors and entities. The tendency is, ultimately, that news journalism facilitates a position for the audience that is profoundly distinct from the actors and entities that are defined as residing outside of the normative contours of society. This position is ultimately made possible by the normative presuppositions built into the structure of news values itself. Second, the analysis has shown how news journalism can establish a position for audiences that is essentially national. It is only from this position that statements about constitutive outsiders – in this study, other European countries and people of Somali origin – can be uttered. The establishment of this position can be conceptualized as an effect of the structural location of news journalism as an institution of nationscape (Jørgensen 1994).

When nationalist closure is constituted in news reception the ideational and the interpersonal dimensions are connected so that (1) the nation is granted meaningful content by drawing upon established interpretive repertoires, and (2) a position is established for the audience as citizens (in a moral sense) and as national members (in a geopolitical or an ethnic sense). The dimensions are in other words relatively independent of one another, but their joint articulation is a prerequisite for the constitution of this kind of nationalist closure. In the two sections that follow, additional qualifications and arguments for the plausibility of this explanation will be provided.
The Ideational Dimension: Invocation of Interpretive Repertoires

Employed as a heuristic device, the notion of “interpretive repertoires” can undeniably pinpoint those significant dimensions of the interaction between readers and texts in which it becomes all too obvious that the meaning produced cannot be reduced to either of these entities. Suggesting that interpretive repertoires are invoked is equal to suggesting that the moment of reception draws upon discourses and frameworks that transcend the particular interaction setting; basically, it points toward the presence of “society” and “culture” in the interaction between readers and texts (cf. Lewis 1991:119–121).

This presence of “society” in news reception, as noted by Jensen (1991:138) in his summary of the field of reception research, seems to be able to cross standard categories such as age, class and level of formal education. The present study constitutes a substantiation of this observation. As the analysis has been able to indicate, the respondents’ reading accounts display moments of both uniformity and decisiveness that are striking in certain key respects.

Let us just list a few of these moments for the sake of recapitulation. The repertoires by which Eastern European countries and the Netherlands are characterized as European trouble-spots were drawn upon by virtually all participants in the study, in either or both of their interviews. Similarly, the notion of people of Somali origin as being non-Swedes was invoked in the reception of the Kat texts by more than a third of the respondents. This was despite the texts’ explicit assertion of the opposite. Moreover, with the employment of a preventionist repertoire the texts were evaluated by seven respondents against an idealistic yardstick whose invocation is significant because, if for no other reason, of its apparent contradiction of more cynical evaluations of the news genre in the reception accounts.

No specific pattern can be discerned as to which respondents invoke certain repertoires; they were applied equally by younger and older respondents, men and women, and regardless of whether they had a university degree or not. Furthermore, the moments of uniformity apply even to those readings which in some way or another assume a critical distance to the elements in question by providing metalinguistic evaluations. As the analysis shows, these metalinguistic evaluations in fact tended to target the very repertoires by which the referentially inclined readings were carried out.

Moreover, their necessary status for the constitution of nationalist closure can be substantiated by the critical cases in which the closure was deconstructed partly by means of the explication and evaluation of interpretive repertoires identical to the ones employed in the geopolitical or the ethnic closure.

So far so good. But when we want to know what can bring about certain forms of meaning, evidence of solidity, uniformity and necessity will not do, although these features do indicate transcendence of the social backgrounds of in-
individual respondents as well as of the immediacy of the interview setting. When we want to explain how nationalist closure can be facilitated in the interaction between readers and texts, references to interpretive repertoires as an explanation would amount to little more than asserting that interpretation brings about interpretation. The notion of “interpretive repertoires” is, in other words, essentially muddled. What is an interpretive repertoire? What is it that lurks behind their invocation in processes of news decoding?

Basically, I venture to suggest that the interpretive repertoires invoked and recruited in nationalist closure at least partly originate from the range of discourses offered by news journalism itself. This is a feature that reveals a specific form of asymmetry, or dependence, in the relation between the decoding process and elite news journalism. There are a number of indicative pieces of evidence that strongly suggest the plausibility of this explanation.

The analysis in previous chapters briefly related specific repertoires to prevalent themes in news output. First, it was suggested that the preventionist responses can be considered in relation to the prevailing moral position on the topic in elite news journalism (as it is identified in the extensive analysis of the coverage in DN). Ultimately, these seemingly critical responses merely provide expressions of the very same common-sense morality upon which news on illicit drugs is premised.

Second, the interpretive repertoires by which “outsiders” were constituted and pejoratively referred to by the respondents display a broad resemblance with the results of a variety of news studies on related issues. A number of case studies (see e.g. Riegert 2004, Ekecrantz 2004) of news representations of Eastern Europe and the Baltic states can confirm the distinct status of these regions in Swedish and Scandinavian news journalism. Similarly, European level politics tends to be reported as if it belonged to the domain of foreign politics in Swedish elite news, thereby reflecting a deeply rooted national agenda of political reporting (Palm 2002) that may render the theme of the European Union as a national threat readily available to the respondents.

Third, the problematic actors in the texts, young people and people of Somali origin, represent actor categories that tend to have a significantly marginalized status in news representations. A number of studies in various national contexts find that both groups of people tend to be associated with criminality more than other groups (e.g. Wayne et al. 2008, van Dijk 1991, Eide 2002, Brune 2004, Bredström 2002, Löwander 1997, ter Wal et al. 2005).

It is reasonable to assume that the apparent congruence between the interpretive repertoires invoked by the respondents on the one hand, and the character of news output on the other, is not coincidental. Obviously, with the research design and the empirical material at hand, the attribution of the employment of specific interpretive repertoires to prevalent themes in news output must remain specula-
tive. There is, however, other evidence available which can be interpreted as suggesting that news reception, in a more general sense, under certain circumstances can be inherently dependant on the discursive resources provided by the news institution.

As Lewis (1991:141) has demonstrated in his reception studies on television news, the meaning of news is “contingent upon the semiological or ideological resources available to the viewer”. However, the capacity of audiences to employ such resources seems to be severely circumscribed in news reception. The topics introduced by the *Eastern Europe* texts and the *Kat* texts represent the prevalent kind of news representations which by their very nature seem to occupy places very far from the everyday concerns of news consumers. Previous reception research has documented the inherent difficulty for audiences to interpret and critically evaluate such representations employing discursive resources *external* to the domain of the news (Lewis 1991:151–152, see also Ekström and Eriksson 1998). It has also been argued more generally that such resources in fact usually originate from the domain of news discourse itself rather than from experiences more tangibly related to the everyday lives of news consumers (Kitzinger 1998:210, Lewis 1991:143).

In various ways, the present study can support this observation on a general level. Here, it was conceptualized as the paradox of involvement failure. Respondents fairly often expressed criticism that was directed internally towards questioning the relevance, reliability or truth value of specific elements in the news item. They also fairly often refused to assume the citizen position attributed to them by news journalism on the grounds that it was not able to engage them or involve them according to its perceived intentions. This however rarely led to any elaborate rejections of the overall veracity of the texts – and even less so of their moral standpoints.

Moreover, it is significant that the respondents in this study who provided the most far-reaching critical readings in fact also tended to be caught up in the range of discourses offered by news journalism. The elaborate metalinguistic deconstructions, for instance, rarely ever transcended the discourses by which nationalist closure was offered through the texts. What they did was to identify and explicate their ideological effect.

As an explanation, Lewis has suggested that the *absence of narrative* in the structure and composition of television news can produce fundamental comprehension gaps between encoding and decoding. Such a gap, it is argued, “forces viewers to draw more actively upon their own ideological resources to make sense of what is going on” (Lewis 1991:142). Lewis furthermore suggests that the “fragmented narrative structure of news means that the ‘preferred meaning’ of a news item is usually limited to these moments of discursive and ideological resonance” (p. 143).
The communicative conditions of news in print and news on television differ; insofar as narrative tends to be, as Lewis suggests, a prerequisite for viewer comprehension, it is unlikely to assume an equally crucial role for the comprehension of print news. However, the present study has clearly shown that also print news relies upon implicitness and presupposed forms of knowledge. As such, even printed news pages “involve oft-repeated sets of simple association rather than any more complex histories” (Lewis 1994:25). In the reception of the texts at hand, the respondents draw upon rather superficial and vague interpretive repertoires about Eastern Europe and the Netherlands when responding to such absences; they invoke an association of ethnic minorities with criminality that is able to turn the assertion about police discrimination entirely on its head; and they view the behaviours of young people “nowadays” as a challenge to notions of normality and decency. In brief, the results of the present study clearly dovetail with the findings made by Lewis, though the explanation suggested by him merely seems to be part of the truth.

What all these pieces of evidence seem to suggest is that news audiences tend to be in an inherently subordinate position vis-à-vis the news institution on topics such as the ones introduced by the texts in the present study. Insofar as the texts can function to inspire to particular reflections (critical or not) we have provided a fair amount of plausible indications and arguments above that they tend to be derived from news journalism – rather than being related to some pre-discursive “background experiences” of the respondents (cf. Kitzinger 1998:210). In any case, this is a substantiation of Lewis’s (1991:141–157) suggestion that the power of news over its consumers is not so much about the rhetorical persuasiveness of single news items, as it is about thematic associations within the news domain on a more general level.

If the evidence about news discourse as an important provider of thematic associations in the moment of decoding is accepted, we may assert, then, as a first conclusion, that the invocation of established interpretive repertoires in the interaction between audiences and news texts can act as a mechanism for the constitution of nationalist closure. It can provide specific contents and characteristics to the nation by providing prevailing themes and associations from within the news domain and by integrating them into the decoding process. Ultimately, this is made possible by a relationship of dependence of news consumers to news journalism as a knowledgeable institution.26

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26 This relationship of dependence can most likely be counteracted in secondary reception (discussions among friends, colleagues, family etc.), where news material may be evaluated and reinterpreted by means of discursive resources and political frameworks external to the news domain (cf. Olausson 2005).
The Interpersonal Dimension: The National Citizen

The invocation of interpretive repertoires is not sufficient for the constitution of nationalist closure. As the analysis showed, unless the reader incorporates specific positions vis-à-vis the representation of social reality to which these repertoires contribute, the closure remains incomplete.

The Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts offer nationalist closure in accordance with the principle of the conjunction of morality and nationality. Consequently, closure will ultimately be contingent upon audiences assuming the position of being both citizens (morally speaking) and national members in the moment of decoding.

Specifically, nationalist closure entails the reproduction of the moral boundaries offered by the texts. The moral boundaries, it has been argued, are a manifestation of a general structure of identities and relations of news as a form of discourse. They can lead news consumers to recognize themselves as residing within the normative contours of society while problematic entities and actors are located outside these contours. Furthermore, the closure requires the audience’s incorporation of the national position offered by the news texts. The addressing of the audience as national members, it has been argued, derives from news journalism’s structural location in society as a nationscape institution.

Now, the question arises as regards the general character of these basic properties of news journalism. The second of these, the structural location and functioning of the news institution, is rather uncontroversial. An abundance of previous studies supports this assertion, for instance the studies of “domestication” practices in news organizations by Clausen (2004).

A few possible objections may however arise as to the generality of the structure of identities and relations that can function to establish moral boundaries between the audience and the problematic elements. Is this structure a general feature of news journalism, or do the texts used in the present reception study bring factors into play that are extraneous to news as a form of discourse?

First, the subject matter of illicit drug use and smuggling may be considered particularly prone to normative evaluation, and as such it cannot adequately be said to render visible how news discourse functions in this respect. Second, it may be objected that the Kat texts and the Eastern Europe texts represent a particular category of news reporting, criminal news, rather than news in general. In criminal reporting, it could be said, moral boundaries are merely the logical consequences of certain things being illegal while others are not. Other conditions therefore apply to other categories of news output.

I would argue that the structure of identities and relations – and its moral implications – derives neither from the subject matter, nor from the specific category of criminal news. Criminal news is by no means a marginal category in news output overall, which can be confirmed quantitatively by recent content studies.
(Lewis et al. 2008, ter Wal et al. 2005). Even more importantly, criminality fits very well into the basic structure of news values itself (Hall et al. 1978), as well as into the economic conditions of news production. Criminal news may accordingly be considered an integral feature of news as a whole rather than a particular category.

Regarding the topic, the extensive news study in Chapter Four was able to show that although the criminalizing and moralizing traits are possibly especially prominent in relation to illicit drugs, the pertinence of moral standpoints is by no means restricted to this topic. Rather, moral evaluation is intrinsic to the very definition of news and the structure of news values itself, as argued by a number of researchers within the field (e.g. Hall et al. 1978, Glasser and Ettema 1989, Nylund 2000, 2006). Judging something to be newsworthy is judging it to be salient in relation to a normal state of affairs. This normality can be descriptive (what usually happens / does not happen), prescriptive (what, according to presupposed moral positions, should happen / should not happen), or they can coincide. In any case, moral evaluation is a necessary property of news selection and news production rather than a feature specific to certain topics but not to others. And the baseline assumption in all news is that the news consumer resides on the “right” side of the moral boundaries established or reproduced. (This is not to deny that the handling of the topic in the research design is debatable. I will elaborate further on this in the final section of this chapter.)

All told, it may be asserted, as the second and final conclusion, that the study has demonstrated with plausible clarity that the configuration of identities and relations of news as a form of discourse, and the structural location of the news institution as a part of nationscape, can function to establish a national citizen position for its audiences. When these structures are activated and integrated into the decoding process, they can contribute to nationalist closure by according the audience a position which, though it is profoundly particularistic (national and normative), appears as if it facilitates an exhaustive and neutral outlook from which “society” can be construed.

On Preferred Meanings

It has not been the immediate aim of this dissertation to contribute to the general theorization of news reception. The empirical studies have, however, made one issue immediately topical to this field of research.

According to the conclusions formulated above, nationalist closure can be made possible by a structure of identities and relations in news discourse that function to address the audience as moral citizens and as national members. In the interaction between readers and news texts, invocation of established inter-
pretive repertoires, derived from the news domain itself, can function to assign certain qualities and characteristics to the nation. This is an assertion that conceptualizes the structures and mechanisms of nationalist closure as relatively independent of empirical readings. As such, it has some general implications for the notion of preferred meanings in the theory of news reception. The contribution of the study at hand to this theoretical discussion can be summarized as follows.

A number of reception researchers have, recently as well as not so recently, suggested distinguishing between two key dimensions of reception that may be of central significance: comprehension and evaluation (see e.g. Philo 2008, Fetveit 2001, Schröder 2000, Kitzinger 1998, Condit 1989). Different authors use slightly different concepts in these discussions. Schröder (2000) for instance distinguishes between comprehension and position, and Condit (1989) separates polysemy from polyvalence. They refer however to the same basic distinction between (1) audience members’ recognitions of what the text means and (2) possible opinions about and attitudes toward that meaning. According to this distinction, the latter is less determined by preferred meanings than the former, and more related to the knowledge and discursive or cultural resources of audience members.

So far there is some agreement. The disagreements occur regarding whether the comprehension dimension is a property of textual preferred meanings or the property of empirical readings. Among the researchers referred to above, Schröder (2000) tends to assume the latter position whereas the others side with the former (though I must admit that I am not entirely certain about Schröder’s preferred meaning on this issue, see esp. pp. 241 and 246).

Basically, the present study may be viewed as a substantiation of the former position. There is however at least one possible anomaly at hand which must be taken into account here before such a conclusion can be drawn. As the analysis has shown, the six respondents who expressed substantial criticism of the proposition in the Kat texts about police inaction and discrimination/racism in fact did not understand the proposition as originating from the institution of news journalism; rather, it was interpreted as if it came from sources quoted in the texts (Stefan Kalmán and Sahra Bargadle). The implications of this understanding have been explicated in full detail previously, so let us just briefly repeat them here. The proposition was regarded as originating from partial and biased actors. And as such, the substantial rejections of racism were able to both reject the proposition as false and preserve the structure of identities and relations offered by the institution of news journalism. Moreover, it employed interpretive repertoires that reproduced possibly received notions of who are “Swedish” and who are not.

There are three ways of conceptualizing the significance of this apparent anomaly. First, there is the possibility that the substantial rejections illustrate the point made by Schröder (2000) that comprehension is a property of empirical
readings. Basically, then, by attributing the racism proposition to partial third party actors in the texts, the substantial rejections display a basic comprehension that is dissimilar to the other ten respondents. In addition, it is dissimilar to the one made by the author of this dissertation in the analysis provided in Chapter Four. But – and this is the crucial point – it is of similar status, since it illustrates how audiences can make creative use of media texts according to their own background experiences, political ideology and cultural knowledge. Basically, then, the six substantially critical respondents, as it were, in fact did not read the same text as the other ten respondents. This position cannot be endorsed here because, if not for empirical reasons, of its theoretical absurdity and ultimately self-refuting character (cf. Fetveit [2001] and the discussion in Chapter Two).

The second possibility is essentially diametrical to the first. Here, the substantial rejections of racism constitute empirical misinterpretations or miscomprehensions of the preferred meanings inscribed into the texts. Possibly for the same reasons (background experiences, political ideology and cultural knowledge) the respondents are incapable of seeing the real meaning of the Kat texts. This is indeed a plausible theoretical possibility. However, a plain dismissal of certain readings as miscomprehensions is to oversimplify things. Above all, such conceptualization would gloss over the possibly systematic nature of the readings that seemingly deviate from the preferred meanings. Accordingly, it would fail specifically in this context to regard the substantial rejections as structured by a certain logic that in fact may be conceptualized as partly deriving from news journalism as a form of discourse.

The third possible alternative, then, is to regard the range of preferred meanings as embracing both the substantial rejections and the readings that incorporate the assertion of police inaction as a form of discrimination and racism. This would further entail a notion of preferred meanings as a variety of mechanisms that reside on different levels. As such, these mechanisms are effects of partly different structures that can find expression in concrete news texts, and, because of this, they may in fact counteract one another. This is in essence the conceptualization that was proposed in Chapter Four. Now it can be empirically substantiated.

Accordingly, the proposition about police inaction as discrimination is asserted on the textual level through the recruitment of certain actors (Stefan Kalmán and Sarah Bargadle) and the authors’ supportive treatment of what they have to say about the matter. On the same level, it is however counteracted by the way in which the Kat texts tend to depict people of Somali origin as transgressors of the moral order, and consequently as unworthy victims. The implicit textual definition of Somali people as morally culpable and as unworthy victims can be conceptualized as a function of the structure of identities and relations in news journalism in which criminals are barred from participating on equal terms by virtue of their being transgressors of the moral order (cf. Hall et al. 1978). As such, it
also connects to prevailing definitions in news representations of certain actor categories, for instance ethnic minorities, as problem bearers (cf. Löwander 1997, ter Wal et al. 2005, van Dijk 1991).

Finally, the preferred textual meaning about police inaction as racism is frustrated by an established interpretive repertoire that originates at least partly from the implicit textual definition of the problematic issue as an essentially ethnic problem that can be ascribed to a specific narcotic substance (rather than as a problem of social marginalization in a more general sense). Insofar as this textual definition is brought to life in empirical readings, it can be reinforced by the news institution’s default addressing of the reader as a member of the Swedish national community – which we assert is ultimately an effect of news journalism being an established part of nationscape (Jørgensen 1994). The implication then is that people of Somali origin do not belong to the same community as the reader.

In these ways, then, the substantial rejections cannot be taken as evidence of freedom of interpretation of news discourse, or polysemy. Rather, they illustrate the multi-level character of preferred meanings. The same line of reasoning can also be applied to the preventionist evaluations, in which the news texts were assessed by the respondents based upon their hypothetical ability to achieve beneficial social effects. Although these readings display a critical attitude on an immediate textual level, they must plausibly be regarded as essentially compliant in relation to the prevailing moral position on this specific topic in elite news. Empirical readings may treat the preventionist repertoire differently; in this study, some respondents were critical of it, others called for its more intense expression in the texts. Most respondents, however, seemed not to bother about it at all. However, this variation cannot be taken as evidence that they in fact read altogether “different texts”. Again, it illustrates the multi-level character of preferred meanings.

The multi-level nature of the range of preferred meanings entails the recognition that it constitutes a compound effect of different mechanisms that, on different levels, can both counteract and reinforce one another. How actual readings may selectively draw upon the elements in this structure is an empirical question. But the structure of preferred meanings will exist independently of empirical readings.

The implication for the theory and methodology of reception studies is that the challenge of investigating preferred meanings as a compound structure should be taken seriously. Such a program would entail sensitivity to micro-level textual devices as well as the various conditions and constraints originating in more abstract levels of genres, media formats and thematic associations provided on the aggregate level of dominant depictions of certain topics and issues. In a recent defence of textual analysis as a methodological site of research in its own right, Fürsich argues that
textual analysis can help understand the spectrum of readings a media content allows. This is to ask, in what way does the specific content under investigation initiate (make real) various subject positions. This goes beyond the question of how a specific audience member may read/misread or analyze/appropriate media messages (Fürsich 2009:247).

Supporting this position is not to say that the study of actual decodings is superfluous. In fact, the first word of the quote above (“textual”) could be replaced with “reception” to signify the position that is outlined here. Contrary to Fürsich’s overall argument for stand-alone text analysis, I hold it to be self-evident that the identification of the “spectrum of readings” and “subject positions” that a “specific content” can “make real” becomes more valid and reliable with systematic studies of actual decodings. Empirical reception research is an indispensable tool for a research programme that aims at identifying the functioning of structures of preferred meanings – but only if it is not misguided by voluntarist (and possibly also idealist) theories of audience autonomy and interpretive pluralism.

Obviously, the above argument is not merely an esoteric point made in relation to previous theorizing about news and media reception. It must not be forgotten that the main interest behind these theoretical debates is related to questions about media influence and the general nature of the power relations between media institutions and audiences (cf. Philo 2008). In the present study, the news institution emerges as a powerful and potentially influential definer, not only of social reality, but of “society” in a more specific sense – which, as has been shown, above all includes notions of the limits and borders of society and of who gets included in it and who does not. And ultimately, the study at hand provides empirically grounded arguments that a number of structures inherent in news journalism as a textual system, and a number of basic properties of news decoding, tend to make the nation-state the preferred version of society in the world of news discourse.

Suggestions for Further Research

Finally, I will briefly address three weak points in the study. The first is related to some peculiarities that may have resulted from the specific news topic (illicit drugs) chosen as subject matter for the study. The second concerns the sociological validity, or rather the lack thereof, of the study, whereas the third weakness is its statistical non-representativity. I will briefly comment on how these drawbacks could be rectified in future research on news and nationality.
First, the selection of illicit drugs as subject matter was made on the basis that it, among other things, could provide topical attention to national political differences, for instance on a European level. The texts eventually selected consequently brought these issues into play in different ways. The rationale behind holding the topic constant in the two texts was that the analysis would in this way be able to reveal how a wide range and variety of formal properties and devices of news discourse could function in reception – independently of topic.

Ironically, then, the utilization of this very topical interest can in fact be seen as playing a card that proved to be a bit too safe. There is broad agreement among contemporary experts on social and criminal policy (e.g. Gould 1989, 2001, Tham 1995, Boekhout van Solinge 2004, 2001, Tops 2001) not only that the criminalization streak in Swedish drug policy tends to be unique in an international perspective (with the possible exceptions of the US and some other Nordic countries), but also that the political designation of drugs as a serious societal problem has served specific political and cultural purposes during the past few decades in Sweden. Swedish criminologist Henrik Tham (1995) has studied the public debate that both preceded and coincided with some significant policy changes in the area of illicit drugs (among others the criminalization of consumption and the compulsory care of alcoholics and drug addicts). In conclusion, Tham asserts that the issue is heavily symbolically invested in Sweden. The designation of illicit drugs as a serious societal threat tends to serve a nationalist function. “In a period of national uncertainty”, Tham suggests, “the struggle against drugs has been broadened into a more general national project for the defence of ‘Sweden’” (Tham 1995:120). The British connoisseur of Swedish social policy, Arthur Gould, provides very similar explanations of the status of the issue in Sweden (Gould 2001).

Dutch criminologist Tim Boekhout van Solinge (2004:174–176) argues that the restrictive Swedish model of drug control can be partly explained by the historical success of popular movements such as the Association for a Drug-Free Society (RNS), Parents Against Drugs (FMN) and Hassela Solidarity in articulating their essentially right-wing demands for criminalizing policy changes with a social-democratic rhetoric emphasizing traditional working-class values such as decency, discipline and solidarity. Following Boekhout van Solinge, these have been successful because they have appealed both to political parties across the left–right spectrum and to the general public. Dissenting voices from this political consensus – or political hegemony as its critics would label it – tend to be violently marginalized as “drug-libertarian”. Gould has characterized this as the “dark side” of the Swedish welfare state:
To be a drogleral in Sweden is to declare yourself irrational, immoral and, almost, traitorous. The moral panic induced by this ideology has all the intolerance associated with fundametnlist religion and political witch hunts (Gould 1999:556).

In an earlier article, Gould (1989:740) concludes his policy study of the criminalization process during the 1980s with a rhetorical question that is obviously intended to pinpoint what he perceives to be key values in the political culture of Sweden:

Now Sweden also proudly refers to its welfare state as the peoples' home and, as anybody who has visited the country will know, Swedish homes, offices, institutions and public places are meticulously clean and tidy. Could it be, as Gustav Johnson was once quoted as saying about the numbers of children taken into care, that social policies are characterized by a desire to 'keep the streets clean'? Is the desire to incarcerate alcoholics and drug addicts, in part, not simply a desire to care for or control them but a method by which they can be tidied away?

Obviously, analyses of Swedish political culture such as the ones referred to above are, and must perhaps necessarily be, caricatures in many respects. Taken together, they do however provide enough grounds to cast some doubts as to the success of the selection of illicit drugs as a news topic for the empirical studies. The possibility must be seriously considered that the political history of the drugs issue and its possibly unusual status as a national political symbol may have exerted influence on the respondents' interpretations and evaluations in the decoding process. Furthermore, its possibly strengthened public invocation at times when supranational political systems such as the EU consolidate and remind citizens of their presence on a daily basis, may render its suitability as news topic questionable in this context. With the research design employed in the study at hand, it is impossible to determine the extent to which the issue itself has actually played a role in the constitution of nationalist closure.

The topical importance should however not be exaggerated. It is still reasonable to assume that the possibly unusual character of the topic may have amplified certain traits of news discourse rather than introduced an entirely different set of conditions for the reception of these texts. Having said this, topical choice is nevertheless something that future research into the field of study will have to take into account more stringently than the present study has done – for instance by selecting two or more news topics rather than one.

As acknowledged previously, the sociological validity of the study is debatable. Although the social characteristics of the respondents were reasonably varied regarding gender, age, education and occupation, important groups remain unrepresented (ethnic minorities living in Sweden, unemployed people and retired people to name a few). To be sure, the study at hand is hardly exceptional in this
respect compared to other empirical reception studies (see e.g. Radway 1991, Jensen 1986, Eriksson 2002). And as I have argued a number of times previously, the reception studies methodology constitutes an essentially poor way of exposing how social structure may act as mechanisms in the facilitation and restraining of meaning-making. However, as social scientists, this is obviously something that we want to know more about. One prospect of rectifying this shortcoming in future research is a strategic selection of respondents that would represent diverse groupings in society – so diverse that it would be at least reasonably safe to draw tentative conclusions about the functioning of social-structural conditions in the construction of meaning (cf. Olausson 2005).

Finally, the study says little about the frequency and spread of nationalist closure in news reception among audiences. Its methodology and research design was aimed at identifying the prerequisites of closure, not its dispersion in comparison to other possible frames of reference. Insofar as the study in fact has identified and conceptualized transfactual structures and mechanisms of nationalist closure in the interaction between news texts and audiences and in news as a form of discourse, a serious challenge lays ahead. This would entail converting these findings into measurable indicators that in some way or another could be incorporated into a survey design. This could provide answers to the perhaps more straightforward question of what frames of reference comprise the most common among news audiences.

The study at hand conceptualizes the conditions of nationalist closure in news decoding as comprised of an ideational and an interpersonal dimension: the invocation of established interpretive repertoires in the interaction between audiences and news texts, the structure of identities and relations of news as a form of discourse, and the structural location of the news institution as a part of nationscape. It would be a stumbling block indeed to operationalize these findings. But it is my firm conviction that it would be doable.
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Kat, item 1
Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England

[Lead] Kat. The Illegal import of the Eastern African drug kat into Sweden has multiplied since the middle of the 90s. Kat is classified as a narcotic substance in Sweden, while it is considered a vegetable in England among other countries.

A Swedish early pensioner gets caught in the customs control in Helsingborg. He has two heavy bags with him, and it turns out they contain 30 kilos of kat: bunches of reddish twigs with delicate sprouts and fine, green leaves, cautiously wrapped up in moisture-preserving banana leaves.

The early pensioner is interrogated, suspected for narcotics smuggling. He first says he “agreed to bring over some kat to some friends”. Then he explains that he was contacted by a black man in Helsingör who promised him 500 crowns if he carried with him the two bags on the ferry and then passed them on to the man’s accomplice on the Swedish side.

– We catch kat smugglers several times a week, says Per Corsing, border control officer within the customs authority in Skåne. Just during the first four months this year we seized over two tons of kat – twice as much as last year!

The kat bush is grown in Kenya. The drug is flown daily to England and Holland. There the kat leaves are considered exotic vegetables that are allowed to be imported and sold, bought and chewed. But as soon as they pass over the border to Sweden they are turned into illicit narcotics. The prices are set accordingly; a bunch of kat costs at least five times as much in Stockholm as in London.

There are established smuggling routes from London and Amsterdam into Sweden. The simplest way is to send flying couriers with swelling suitcases directly into Sweden. The Swedish customs have however closed off this route fairly effectively during the last year.

Instead the kat traders use Denmark as a transit station. The merchandise is shipped by plane or long distance truck to Copenhagen, and there are two options here. Either it is loaded onto smaller trucks or motorcars that are driven on board the ferry to Helsingborg or rolled into Sweden over the Öresund Bridge. Or it is packed in bags which temporarily hired couriers carry with them over the sound.

The kat smuggling into Sweden has become better organized in recent years. This is according to Stefan Kalmán, drug investigator at the western police district in Stockholm.

– Before it was unusual that the customs made seizures as big as 50 kilos of kat, he says. Now it happens again and again that couriers get caught with 130 kilos in the
car. The customer base has grown. I am convinced that the abuse mainly among the Somalis in Sweden has increased.

At the same time the enterprise has become more controlled from the top, according to Stefan Kalmán. The principals sit in London and Copenhagen, and they make big money.

– But the petty dealers also make good profits. I have myself found 50000 crowns in the pockets of one of the importers in Rinkeby in Stockholm. The same person had according to the tax authorities wired 850000 crowns abroad during the last year – although he was unemployed.

An airplane from Nairobi lands at the Heathrow airport in London. The cargo bays are filled with cardboard boxes. Every box contains approximately 40 bunches of kat.

The coveted twigs with the delicate, green leaves were harvested in Kenya this night. Now, ten hours later, they find new owners at a wharf in a messy industrial estate in Southall in western London, a poor suburb where very few Englishmen live – but all the more Somalis, Indians and Jamaicans.

The buyers crowd with their vans at the wharf, fast talking and deft with banknotes and cardboard boxes, eager to get going with today’s kat trade. The larger share of the consignment will be consumed by Somalis here in London, but a part of it will be smuggled into Scandinavia.

One of the buyers is named Saed Hershi. He thinks the Swedes are ridiculous for making kat an illicit drug.

– Kat grows under God’s free heaven and harms no one – on the contrary! In my home country we have been chewing kat for thousands of years. Everybody is doing it. Kat makes you focused and crystal clear in your head. You feel good and you manage more. I’d rather my children chew kat than drink alcohol – you don’t get dead drunk or aggressive!

Saed Hershi is married with two children. By day he drives a forklift at a factory, but by the evenings he is occupied with his very profitable moonlighting: he owns and runs one of the many kat clubs that are concealed behind the broken brick facades of Southall. It is located in a back lot full of car wrecks and engine parts, construction scrap and rotten garbage. A plank made out of a discarded radiator leads up to two rooms and a toilet. There is no furniture in the rooms. On the floor there are carpets and thick pillows.

– I buy kat for one pound a bunch and sell for three, tells Saed Hershi. In that way I get some extra income and there’s nothing wrong with that! Kat is healthy. Kat keeps the kids off the streets. I would never sell drugs, and I do not allow drugs in here!

It is seven o’clock. Leaning against the walls are ten men from Somalia, each one of them with a bunch of kat on banana leaves in front of them. They pick at their sprigs, chew the bitter-tasting sprouts and leaves, swallow the drug-containing vegetable sap and gather the cellulose to a ball inside the cheek. When their cheek pouches get too stretched they spit out the ball in a plastic bag.
That is what they do, hour after hour, night after night. Their eyes are wide open, but their gaze more and more indolent and introverted. Hunger and fatigue disappear, but the grand plans invented are forgotten the next morning.

Some chew kat in moderate amounts. Others are dedicated to a constant intoxication. The big consumers chew four or five bunches a day, and they barely sleep. They lose both their job and their family, become skinny and manic, poor and aggressive: in recent years it has become more and more commonplace that emaciated Somalis with dead eyes wander about in London’s poor districts.

It has not gone this far for Ilyas Ali. He works as an airplane cleaner at Heathrow and he often goes to Saed Hershi’s club. For him, as for most Somali men, kat is first and foremost a social drug. Here he meets his friends, cultivates contacts and hears news from his ravaged home country.

– Kat has many good effects, he says. You get stimulated to think and analyse. And you can have much fun with a woman if you have chewed a couple of bunches – you can manage as long as you like! But I have heard that some get impotent instead. I guess it is different, this thing.

Ilyas Ali is not worried about the long terms effects of his kat use.

– My father and grandfather chewed every day – nothing to worry about. But it is true that you lose your sense of hunger. It is important to eat first and chew later. And you should not chew too much. Then you lose your job.

You become mad in the long term if you chew four or five bunches a day. This is according to Ali Jama, employed by Saed Hershi to clean up the club and sell kat to the guests.

– You stay up all night, and after a couple of months you cannot manage anything anymore. It becomes impossible to do your job, the family goes to hell. It is misery. I have seen many who have burned out and gone mad...

He says he does not chew more than one-and-a-half bunches of kat a night. But after having seen him a couple of days I understand that he is doing it a lot longer and takes a lot more.

– I do know that kat is no good for me, he sighs. Kat is dangerous for your health. I hope I will quit chewing one day. My girlfriend is nagging on me every day, and I will try...

We leave the club and walk out on the street. There the rumour about the inquisitive and photographing Swedes has made men in the kat enterprise gather. A heated discussion breaks out; drug critical forces in Great Britain want England to follow Sweden’s example and prohibit the kat trade, and the kat dealers in London want no publicity at all. Not even in remote Sweden.

A tall limping gentleman in a black woollen coat appears at our side. He tells us to follow him, and we do it. He leads us into a house, through a long corridor and up a dark staircase.

– My boss wants to talk to you, he says.

We meet an even taller person who offers us seats and invites us tea. He is well dressed, introduces himself as Ali Farah and tells us that he owns several kat clubs in Southall. We explain who we are and what we want.
— Hmm, me and my colleagues can get into trouble by your writing, he says. Every story comes back to us in some way. The authorities can begin to hassle us. They can begin to think we are involved in the illegal drug trade, for example that we smuggle kat to Scandinavia.

Ali Farah confirms that for several years kat dealers have been organizing kat shipments to Sweden. But as a Somali you cannot fly to Arlanda, Skurup or Skavsta with a fat bag and think you can slip through the customs without problems, he says; now the couriers have to have light complexion to stand a chance.

Often young and unsuspecting tourists are recruited at pubs and are offered a free airline ticket and a smaller amount of money for carrying a bag and leave it at a certain hotel in Stockholm.

— But the Swedish market is not that big, Ali Farah says, and most of it is shipped by truck.

One of his partners, a muscular man in tight and expensive clothes, breaks into the conversation.

— I have sold kat to Sweden, he frankly admits. I earned quite a lot of money. But several of my couriers got caught at Arlanda. The customs confiscated their bags, and I took great losses.

I ask him for his name.

— Call me Mr. X, he replies and laughs.

Then he gets an idea:

— Can you bring a bag to Stockholm? You will get well paid!

I consider the proposal a joke but ask how much money I would have received.

— I know that couriers have received several hundred pounds to carry a bag into Sweden. But I do not pay that much... And I have actually stopped doing this kind of business.

Tomorrow in “Insider”: “Kat strikes hard against the Somalis in Sweden – but the police do almost nothing”.

Kat, item 2
Unequally Harmful in Different Countries

In the Europe of the bureaucrats one step over a national border can turn a law-abiding citizen into a criminal.

The one who is standing in Belgium chewing kat is occupied with a fully legal activity. Should he take one step into France he must spit out what is in his mouth first, since he otherwise might be the object of police action.

Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and France are the European countries that in different ways prohibit the free use of kat.

In Sweden kat was classified as a narcotic substance at the beginning of the 1980s. The classification prohibits both use and import.

— The rationale was that kat contains substances that had already been classified as narcotics, says Conny Eklund at the Swedish Medical Products Agency.
But the majority of the countries of Europe allow kat use. Does this not challenge the ambition of EU’s common drug policy?

The truth is that there is no such policy. The countries of Europe differ from each other not only in legislation. Different ways of measuring consumption and risks render the countries’ methods for fighting abuse hardly comparable.

The confusion surrounding kat effectively illustrates Europe’s lack of a comprehensive drug policy.

1985 the former EG decided to take joint measures against drug abuse. A so-called drug observatory was set up in Lisbon. The task of the observatory was to gather the experiences of the member countries and achieve more effective drug control.

But the member countries were not that keen on sharing their experiences. The information they still provided was often embellished and incomplete.

Although the civil servants of the observatory today speak of a “slight improvement”, the problems persist.

The European narcotics debate is to a great extent about the harmfulness of so-called “soft” drugs like hash.

Drug-liberal countries, like Holland, can with the support of their own statistics prove that the acceptance of hash use prevents more severe abuse.

Countries with a stricter legislation, like Sweden, can with the help of their statistics prove the opposite.

How great is the risk of dying when abusing a certain drug?

Different countries provide different answers, since the methods of measuring so-called drug-related mortality are so different. In Sweden a heart attack suspected to have been preceded by narcotics abuse can be classified as drug related. In other countries it can simply be registered as “heart attack”.

Therefore according to official statistics Sweden paradoxically has more drug-related deaths than Holland, with its decidedly higher narcotics consumption.

The differences may relate to genuine differences in attitude about how statistics should be produced and interpreted. But at the drug observatory in Lisbon the civil servants speak of a “war of attitudes with religious overtones”.

Many countries have invested political prestige in precisely their way of attacking the drug problems. They are not interested in finding other solutions.

But how harmful is kat?

It depends on in which country the question is asked.

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Facts/the drug kat
The drug kat is comprised of sprouts and delicate leaves from a bush with the Latin name Catha edulis that grows wildly in eastern Africa and is cultivated in Kenya, Yemen and Ethiopia.

By chewing kat and swallowing the vegetable sap you ingest the intoxicating substances katin and katinon. The sprouts and the leaves must be fresh to have the intended effect; as soon as they are harvested the levels of the active substances decrease.
In 1989 kat was classified as a narcotic substance in Sweden. The drug is a central stimulant and is addictive.
During intoxication you get dilated pupils, higher heart rate and faster respiration. You feel exhilarated, strong and smart.
High doses give side effects as headache, nausea, palpitation, trembling, confusion, anxiety, hallucinations, irritability, restlessness.
The intoxication is always followed by sleeping disorders. Kat also impedes the appetite; those who chew the drug regularly become undernourished.
Long term abuse can result in tooth injuries, liver injuries, constipation, gastritis, bronchial problems, lung disease, sexual disorders, muscular spasms, depression and psychosis.

Facts/the kat trade
Kat has been used as a social drug for hundreds of years in the countries of the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.
More and more coffee and tea farmers in Kenya have in recent years switched to kat. Half a million small farmers in Kenya grow kat.
The drug is very common in Somalia. When thousands of Somalis at the end of the 1980s sought shelter in Europe from the civil war they introduced the drug into their new countries.
Kat is distributed daily by plane from Kenya to England and Holland, where the drug is legal. From there it has hitherto mainly been smuggled into Sweden in regular suitcases by flying couriers. In recent years more and more kat has been shipped into Sweden over the Öresund Bridge in motorcars and in trucks.
The price on the street in London for a bunch of kat is 2–3 pounds, which corresponds to 30–45 Swedish crowns. In Rinkeby in Stockholm one bunch is about 200 crowns. A big consumer chews four or five bunches a day.
In Sweden it is almost exclusively Somalis who chew kat, but no one knows how many abusers there are. According to the approximations of the drug enforcement police 20–40 percent of the Somali men in the Stockholm suburbs Tensta and Rinkeby chew kat more or less regularly.

Caption, main photograph:
Chewing kat. Saed Hershí owns a kat club in London where Somalis gather every night. “You become smart and concentrated by chewing kat. You write fantastic poetry!” he says. He himself does not consume more than one or two bunches a night. Yet he is often so psyched up when he comes home that he has to smoke some marijuana to be able to go to sleep.

Caption, photograph 2
Drug seizure. More and more kat is being smuggled into Sweden. The customs in Helsingborg catch kat smugglers several times a week. Bert Hillgren, squad leader at
the customs authority, examines the bags filled with kat which a Swedish early pensioner tried to smuggle into Sweden.

Caption, photograph 3
Wholesaler in kat. Kat is grown in Kenya and is flown to London each day. The drug is delivered in cardboard boxes with ventilation holes. At a wharf in Southall the buyers are gathering. They sell most of it to Somalis in London, but a part of it is smuggled into Sweden.

Caption, photograph 4
A bunch of kat. The Eastern African drug kat consists of twigs or branches with delicate sprouts and fine, green leaves from a bush with the Latin name Catha edulis. Each bunch is wrapped in banana leaves to preserve the moisture. A bunch costs 30–45 crowns in London but approximately 200 crowns in Rinkeby in Stockholm. A big consumer chews five bunches a day.

Kat, item 3
“Men Who Chew Kat Stop Striving”

[Lead] In Rinkeby the illicit drug kat is sold quite openly. It destroys the health of more and more Somalis, breaks up their families and sabotaging their integration into Swedish society. But the police do almost nothing.

The man in the red jacket who strolls over the town square in Rinkeby radiates authority. He is the central figure in the illegal kat trade in Stockholm. His subordinate vendors act quite openly; now they walk around and take orders, in an hour or two they will deliver the goods at the agreed time in a doorway or a park.

Kat is a central stimulant that is classified as a narcotic substance in Sweden. It consists of reddish twigs with delicate sprouts and fine, green leaves from a bush that grows in the Eastern African highlands.

Half a million small farmers in Kenya grow kat. The fine twigs are bundled together in bunches, are wrapped up in moisture-preserving banana leaves and are packed in sacks or cardboard boxes that are shipped by plane to England and Holland. From there, the drug is sold further to other countries in Europe.

Dagens Nyheter published in the Sunday’s paper a major feature about the kat trade in London and the increasing kat smuggling into Scandinavia. By smuggling 100 kilos of kat into Sweden you can earn more than 100000 crowns.

Here in Rinkeby the drug is delivered in consignments of tens or hundreds of kilos at least four times a week. A couple of years ago the kat trade on the town square flourished a few times a month. Now it goes on every day.

Every bunch costs as much as 200 crowns, but the demand is great. A moderate kat-chewer consumes one or two bunches a day, a big consumer four or five. You work at the bitterly tasting sprouts and leaves in your mouth, swallow the drug-
containing vegetable sap and gather the washed out vegetable parts to a ball inside one of your cheeks. When the ball grows too big, you spit it out.

It is almost exclusively Somali men who chew kat. Here in Rinkeby they meet in the afternoon at the town square or at a cafe. They have arranged money, and they buy a few bunches. Then they gather in an apartment where no women or children bother them.

They chew and discuss, chew and analyse. The hours pass, the intoxication in their brains rises. They feel alert and smart, rich and happy. The world outside becomes more and more diffuse.

The drug kat is somewhat weaker than amphetamine, but it works in approximately the same way. It impedes the appetite and sweeps away the need to sleep; those who consume more than one or two bunches during one evening stay up all night. Big plans are hatched, but they are forgotten the next morning. Now the kat abuser is exhausted and aggressive, because all that matters is somehow getting money for more kat.

A Somali man who calls himself Ibrahim and who lives in Rinkeby contacted DN after the articles about Somalis in Sweden in “Insider” this spring. He does not dare to come forward with his real name in the paper and criticize his compatriots. He fears harassment, but still wishes to warn against kat. He thinks the drug destroys the Somalis’ reputation.

– Kat is a serious threat to the lives of the Somalis in Sweden, he says. A man who chews kat every day shuts himself off from the labour market. He isolates himself with his Somali friends and does not get into Swedish society. Kat is an anti-integration drug!

Ibrahim never chews kat, but he knows of Somalis in Rinkeby who do.

– They have changed, he says. They have become weak. They lack direction in life. They do not even care about applying for jobs. The only thing on their minds is kat.

Many Somali families break up in Sweden and according to Ibrahim kat is almost always in the picture.

– Kat destroys lots of Somali families, he says. The man buys kat with the social welfare money instead of buying food and clothes for the children... There is a big risk that even the children will become criminal drug addicts. They join gangs and do criminal stuff. They belong to the lowest class in society, and their dads are drug addicts.

Ibrahim does not think the Swedish authorities take the drug seriously.

– They do not seem to care at all about the Somalis that are affected. The police do almost nothing to fight the kat trade. It is discrimination!

Kat numbs the pain. The intoxication helps the men repress both the terrible memories of the civil war in Somalia and the shame they feel about their miserable lives in Sweden.

Many were before the war respectable citizens in their home country – here in Sweden they live off of social welfare. They cannot provide for their families. They feel humiliated, discriminated and marginalized. Their confidence shrinks, as does their faith in Swedish society. Eventually nothing is important any more – except for the friends and kat.
This according to Sahra Bargadle is the foremost explanation of the increase of kat abuse among Somali men in suburbs such as Rinkeby in Stockholm, Gårdsten in Gothenburg and Rosengård in Malmö.

Sahra Bargadle herself grew up in Somalia’s capital Mogadishu, and like most Somalis in Sweden she fled from the civil war in her home country at the beginning of the 90s. Since 1996 she has worked as a cultural interpreter in Tensta. Now she works with women’s issues, and has good insight into the lives of the Somali families.

– Kat causes many divorces, she says. If the man chews every day he becomes passive and irresponsible. He is gone all day and comes home late at night. The woman takes care of the children and tries to get money, and the man eventually merely becomes a burden. There is fighting about the economy, about everything. And since a single woman with children can manage on her own in Sweden she leaves him.

Sahra Bargadle was in the middle of the 90s one of the initiators of the Somalian women’s association Hawo Tako, named after a Somali woman who became a heroine in Somalia because she fought so successfully against the Italian colonisers.

– We took her name to underscore that you have to fight to get a good life in Sweden. And we are strong opponents to the men chewing kat, because when they do they stop struggling. And then the lives of the women and children also get destroyed.

Children need good role models, Sahra Bargadle points out, and a father who chews kat is a bad father.

– The children get lost and disappointed in Swedish society, she says. They can imitate their dad and become criminals themselves. During the last year I have noticed that even lots of young guys in Tensta and Rinkeby chews kat. They feel discriminated on the labour market and they cannot get a foothold in Sweden.

Kat is by Somali tradition considered a harmless drug; many who chew the bitter leaves do not know – or do not want to know – how dangerous they are. Hawo Tako has arranged study groups for women about the effects of the drug, and now the association will invite the men to particular information evenings.

The municipal administration in Rinkeby tries to stop the abuse by arranging discussion evenings and by distributing an informative brochure about kat. And the Rinkeby health clinic has developed a special treatment programme for kat abusers. But the authorities do not do much more than that.

Sahra Bargadle is indignant at the Swedish judicial system for largely ignoring to fight the kat trade.

– I sometimes think that the police, the prosecutors and the judges are racist because they do not care about all the Somalis who get into trouble because of kat. And we are used to being considered worthless. What happens to us and our children – it does not matter... But it is getting worse and worse. More and more kat is being smuggled into Sweden, people in areas like Tensta and Rinkeby are struck harder and harder and sooner or later this becomes a serious problem for the entire Swedish society!
Kat, item 4
“The Police Do Almost Nothing”

The Swedish authorities do not care about the serious problems that kat use causes among Somalis in Sweden, and this passivity comprises a form of discrimination that borders on racism – it’s only Somalis who are affected.

This is the opinion of Stefan Kalmán, police officer and for the past six years drug investigator in Rinkeby, Tensta and Hjulsta in north-western Stockholm.

– If Swedish families had been affected by kat in the same way as Somali people are affected – then the judicial system would have clamped down on the kat trade a long time ago, he says.

Kat is the most common kind of narcotics in Tensta and Rinkeby. Between 20 and 40 percent of the Somali men in the area abuse kat, according to Stefan Kalmán, and this is an approximation he has made with the aid of Somali associations in the area.

The drug was classified as a narcotic substance in Sweden thirteen years ago. Thus it is illegal; it must not be possessed or sold. The trade goes on every day on the Rinkeby town square. But the drug enforcement police conduct almost no active investigations on kat, according to Stefan Kalmán.

– We do not have the resources for it, he explains. We sometimes bump into guys with plastic bags containing a few bunches of kat, and then we seize it of course. Sometimes we dedicate a day for investigation. Recently we discovered 54 kilos of kat in an apartment in Rinkeby. This is the only larger seizure we have made here in the western district in recent years, despite the fact that the kat smuggling into Sweden has increased and has become more organized.

Two years ago, Stefan Kalmán wrote an official letter to the Prosecutor-General about kat. The goal was to get the judicial system to take kat more seriously and to start fighting the drug through active police work.

But a letter like that must, according to the rules of the Stockholm police force, be approved by the judicial unit in the police station at Kungsholmen before it is allowed to be sent – and there Stefan Kalmán’s letter remains.

– Many police officers and prosecutors think that this is a Somali problem that isn’t that important – it does not hit Swedes. And it is true that it is only Somalis who chew kat; the risk that other groups of people will start abusing kat is small. But I think this attitude is degrading and inexcusable. I know of many Somalis who suffer severely and who feel powerless and angry about the passivity of the authorities, says Stefan Kalmán.

He proposes in his letter to the Prosecutor-General that the limit between negligible narcotics offence and narcotics offence when it comes to possession be lowered from two kilos to one kilo. In that way it will become meaningful for the police to hunt kat vendors; if they are arrested they can be sentenced to imprisonment instead of fines.

He also proposes that the limit between narcotics offence and grand narcotics offence be lowered from today’s 400 kilos to 50 kilos. A change of this kind would make it possible for the police to arrest a courier who is caught with more than 50 ki-
los in his car, and the district court would be able to sentence him to two years imprisonment.

– True, the guy who had 54 kilos in his apartment was indicted, and he will probably be in prison for some months. But we could not arrest him – he goes on with the kat dealing the very same day!

Stefan Kalmán thinks it is possible to make Sweden more or less free from kat. It would be enough if the authorities made up their minds; the necessary resources would not be particularly great.

– We know how to fight the kat trade, he says. It is not that hard. It is only Somalis who chew kat, and compared to other drugs it is bulky. It is hard to handle it without anyone noticing it.

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Caption, main photograph
Warns against kat. “Men who chew kat stop struggling”, says Sahra Bargadle. “Kat destroys people and families. The problem is growing. The drug must be fought.”

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Eastern Europe, front page preamble
Wave of Cheap Drugs

[Lead] Threat from Eastern Europe. The Supply Leads to Extremely Low Prices for “the Standard Drug” Amphetamine

Cheap amphetamine from Eastern Europe and the Baltic States is overflowing the Swedish narcotics market. The extremely good supply means that the prices have dropped to a fraction of the levels of the 1970s. The police report that one gram of amphetamine, which is enough for several doses, today costs no more than 70 crowns on the street.

– Talk about a bargain sale, says Sven-Erik Eriksson at Maria Ungdom, who is very concerned about the drop in prices. He labels amphetamine “a standard drug”, and considers its abuse as something typically Swedish.

– We have caviar, herring and snaps, crisp bread, and we have amphetamine, he says.

Among young people narcotics abuse today is as widespread as it was during the record years of the 1970s. The police and the customs have instituted a Nordic cooperation to manage the smuggling. The new threat comes from the Baltic States. In Finland 90 percent of all amphetamine already comes from Estonia.
The Drugs Pour in from the East

[Lead] The smuggling of amphetamine into Sweden is increasing substantially. Prices have dropped to 70 crowns a gram compared to 400–500 crowns 20 years ago. Narcotics abuse is at a similar level as during the 1970s. The police and customs in the Nordic countries are now taking common measures to cut back the new, large influx from the Baltic States.

The police and the customs in the Nordic countries intend to take forceful measures against the smuggling of amphetamine, ecstasy and similar drugs. The background is a substantially increased use of these substances during the entire 1990s. Hitherto the efforts of the police have not produced any results.

The police also see a new serious threat: extensive smuggling from the Baltic States.

– In a longer perspective things look dark. I think that there are more and more narcotics that come in that way. In Finland the smuggling of amphetamine from Estonia is already a very big problem, says Walter Kegö, head of the narcotics division of the National Criminal Police.

Already now the police and the social authorities can say that the supply of amphetamine or amphetamine-like substances is very good. The prices are also at record low levels – there is information that amphetamine is sold for 70 crowns per gram. In the 1970s the corresponding amount cost between 400 and 500 crowns.

The low prices and the good supply are of concern to the authorities in the Nordic countries. At a meeting in the beginning of May representatives from the police and customs decided to form a group that will make suggestions how the fight against the so called synthetic drugs is to be intensified.

– The most important reason is that these drugs create new groups of abusers, in particular among young people. We see that ecstasy is the entrance gateway and that many then move on to heavier substances, says Walter Kegö.

The growing popularity of amphetamine can be seen in the reports from the Swedish police and customs. During the 1990s the number of seizures has almost doubled; last year, the police and the customs found amphetamine on 4752 occasions.

The abuse of amphetamine has a long history in Sweden. Up until the 1980s it was most common to inject the drug. But since the spread of HIV via the abusers’ needles the number of new injecting drug abusers decreased.

In the beginning of the 1990s the use of amphetamine gained momentum again. The new abusers chose to drink, sniff or eat the amphetamine.

At about the same time the old Eastern Bloc fell apart, which created new routes for the narcotics into Sweden. Today Poland stands for more than half of the amphetamine smuggled into Sweden. The second largest suppliers are Belgium and Holland. Even from the Czech Republic extensive smuggling takes place.

But it is towards the Baltic States that the National Criminal Police now direct their attention. In Finland nearly 90 percent of all amphetamine is judged to come from Estonia.
At the same time Swedish customs and police have seized amphetamine made in Baltic laboratories.

Also part of the threat is the risk that amphetamine manufacturers in other countries increase their efforts not to be competed out of the important Swedish market.

Once a year the police seizes amphetamine in Stockholm in January. The police is not satisfied with the results. This is the most important drug for the police.

Eastern Europe, item 2
Amphetamine New Party Drug

[Lead] Narcotics abuse soon back at the high levels of the 1970s

The use of narcotics has increased substantially among youth during the entire 1990s. This is shown by a study of 18-year-old men drafted for military service. The survey is conducted annually by CAN, an umbrella organization that collects and spreads information about different drugs, and shows that the narcotics abuse now can be as widespread as during the record years of the 1970s.

– There are several explanations of the increased abuse. One important one is the influence of youth culture, says Ulf Guttursson at CAN. For example Sweden has followed the tracks of the USA since the 1970s, though at a lower level. It is about international trends and the situation is the same in most Western countries.

Between 1992 and 1999 the proportion of draftees who report to having tried narcotics at least once has almost tripled, from six to seventeen percent. Last year four percent of them answered that they had used amphetamine on some occasion.

The study points in the same direction as the experiences of the police, the customs and the social authorities. The drug abuse among young people increases and especially evident is the use of amphetamine and similar substances.

At the youth rehabilitation centre Maria Ungdom in Stockholm the personnel keep statistics on which drugs the people taken into custody have taken. These show that amphetamine steadily increased up until 1997 and thereafter levelled off. About one fifth of all of the young people taken into custody at Maria have amphetamine in their bodies.

– We consider amphetamine as the standard drug. This is typically Swedish. We have caviar, herring and snaps, crisp bread and we have amphetamine. There is a long tradition and lots of knowledge about how to use amphetamine, says Sven-Erik Eriksson at Maria Ungdom.

Still alcohol and cannabis comprise the most usual substances of intoxication. But the impression is that the supply of amphetamine right now is very good and it is as easy to get hold of as cannabis.

– We are concerned about the low prices. Amphetamine costs 70 crowns a gram according to the police. Talk about a bargain sale. If this is true there is very much amphetamine, says Sven-Erik Eriksson.

In contrast to older amphetamine abusers the young people choose to take the drug in other ways than by needles. According to Maria Ungdom’s statistics there are very few young people who inject amphetamine.
The young people who Maria Ungdom takes into custody come from all social classes. Heroin by contrast seems to be more common among youth who come from a worse social environment.

In CAN’s extensive survey of draftees young people who do not study or are unemployed are overrepresented among those who have used narcotics on some occasion. The same goes for those who have quit school after ninth grade or have foreign backgrounds.

– It still is a fact that young people who come from a shaky environment more easily get stuck in heavy abuse. The abuse that takes place among the middle-class groups has more the character of partying, says Ulf Guttursson at CAN.

There are no statistics about how many Swedish young people that use narcotics regularly. The latest comprehensive survey is from 1992. At that time the number of heavy narcotics abusers was estimated to 17000.

Eastern Europe, item 3
“They’ll Take Anything”

At the Karolinska Hospital (KS) in Solna 60000 samples suspected to contain traces of narcotics are analysed every year. But the difficulties of keeping up with the chemists in the drug factories in Holland, Poland and Estonia among others are significant.

Olof Beck, head of the laboratory at KS that analyzes pharmaceuticals and narcotics, confirms the image that amphetamine and other synthetic drugs have been on the march during the 90s.

– People seem to take anything. Young people can call here complaining about their ears ringing, headache and nausea. And then they tell that they have bought a drug over the internet, he says.

Facts/Amphetamine

Amphetamine and related substances like ecstasy, cocaine and fenmetralin are central stimulants that affect the central nervous system.

Amphetamine is produced chemically and is often sold in bags of 0.1 or 0.2 gram. Smaller doses (0.05–0.1 g) give feelings of increased energy and an increasing sensory awareness. The intoxication lasts several hours.

Larger doses of amphetamine can cause dry mouth, fever, sweating, headache, deteriorated vision and dizziness.

Other physical symptoms are higher heart activity, faster respiration, higher body temperature, sweating and paleness.

Source: CAN
Interview Guide, the Kat Texts

1 Introduction

[If first interview: fill in the background form. Ask and take notes.]

Assure anonymity.
Ensure that it’s ok to record the interview.

Procedure:
I will give you a couple of newspaper articles to read. When you are done reading the interview will take place.

I have this form in front of me. I may take notes sometimes. This is because I want to keep track of the questions that I have asked.

It is important that you know that this is not a comprehension test. I am not going to test how “well” you have understood what is in the texts.

Nor is it a memory test. You do not have to memorize what is in the texts. In fact – we will have the articles on the table as we talk about them in order to be sure that we know what we are talking about.

What I am interested in is how you as an individual read and interpret these texts. As individuals we experience things rather differently and it is your thoughts and experiences I want to know more about here.

Most questions will be of an open character and I do not want you to feel like you have to perform or “do well” in any way.

Even though this may be a special situation I now ask you to read these texts as you would were it not for this situation. If you think some parts are boring, it is ok to skip them, if you would do so otherwise.

--------- The interviewee reads the text ----------

2 First readings/general impression

Now that you have read these articles, do you have any spontaneous thoughts about them?

<Be careful to take up and explore all the threads laid out here. Take notes! Prompt the interviewee to develop his/her thoughts by repeating what is said and/or explicitly asking for elaborations>

<If the interviewee responds negatively, ask alternative questions, like: “Did you find the texts interesting?” “Why (not)?”>

3 “Walk through”

Remember to follow up and explore threads even here!

Item 1
> “Narcotics in Sweden, Vegetable in England”. What did you think about when you read this headline?

> The lead: “The illegal import of the Eastern African drug kat to Sweden has multiplied since the mid-90’s. ...” What did you think when you read that?

> What did you think about this quote? “– Kat grows under the free heaven of God and harms no one – far from it!”.

> What did you think about these descriptions of the kat club? “The time is seven pm. Leaning against the walls seven men from Somali sit and chew..."
> “Then he gets an idea…” (When he asks the reporter to smuggle some bunches into Sweden)

Item 2
> What did you think when you read this headline? “Unequally Harmful in Different Countries”

> “In the Europe of the bureaucrats one step over a national border may turn a law-abiding citizen into a criminal”

> What did you think when you read this? “Different countries provide different answers as the methods of measuring so-called drug related mortality are so different”

Item 3
> What did you think about the lead-in? “In Rinkeby the illegal drug kat is sold openly. More and more it destroys the health of Somalis’, tears their families apart…”

> “– Kat causes many divorces…”

> “– I sometimes think that the police, the prosecutors and the judges are racists because they don’t care about all the Somalis who get into trouble as a consequence of kat”

Item 4
> What did you think when you read this? “The Swedish authorities don’t bother about the serious problems caused by kat among Somalis in Sweden.”

> “– Stefan Kalman believes there is a good possibility of making Sweden more or less free of kat.”

4 Provocation

> What do you as a Swede think about what you just have read?

5 Wrapping up

[If second interview occasion: If you compare these articles with the ones you read last time we met, what do you think of the differences and similarities between them?]

Now I would like to know more about how it felt for you to read the articles.
Did you read as usual?
Did you read extra carefully?
Did you think about what I was going to ask you while reading?
Would you have read them were it not for this situation?

Have you read articles like these prior to this occasion? What were they about?

Is there anything that you would like to add before we stop? Something that you have thought about that we have not talked about?

> Shut down the recording.

Now I would like to know how you experienced the interview. Was it like you expected it to be? Did you feel awkward or uncomfortable in any way? Do you feel that what you have said accurately reflects your thoughts about the texts?
Coding Categories and Descriptions for the Analysis of News Material

I Background information

1 [ID]
   1–9999

2 [LENGTH]
   (Small, Medium, Large)
   0 Small
   1 Medium
   2 Large

3 [MONTH]
   1–12

4 [YEAR]
   2000–2006

5 [DAY]
   1–31

II Discourse type [note: concept subsequently changed to “sub-genre”]
One, and only one, required

6 Discourse type [DISCOURSE]
   0 Event Report
   1 Private Story
   2 Sneak Peek
   3 Work in Progress
   4 Assessment
   5 Investigative Endeavour

III Actors
   Actor if:
   a. Direct quotes
   b. Indirect quotes
   c. Otherwise referred to – or inferred – as sources of information or origins of actions/events
   d. At least one required

7 Customs actors present [POLICE]
   0 No
   1 Yes

8 Police actors present [POLICE]
   0 No
   1 Yes

9 Political actors present [POLITICAL]
   0 No
   1 Yes

10 Social service/authority actors present [SOCIAL]
   0 No
   1 Yes

11 School/educational actors present [SCHOOL]
   0 No
   1 Yes

12 Medical actors present [MEDICAL]
   0 No
   1 Yes
13 Social science actors present [SSCIENCE]
   0 No
   1 Yes
14 Correctional system actors present [CORRECT]
   0 No
   1 Yes
15 Lay actors present [LAY]
   0 No
   1 Yes
16 Legal actors present [LEGALACT]
   0 No
   1 Yes

IV Political inclination
Ends of Swedish National Policy: (1) Overall “A Drug Free Society”; (2) All dealing with illicit substances criminal; and (3) Restricted employment of harm reduction (needle exchange for IV heroin users, medical use of methadone/subutex restricted, zero-tolerance as a qualification for receiving care/rehabilitation etc.)

17 Critique of execution of policy expressed [mCRITIQUE]
   0 No
   1 Yes
18 Critique of the ends of policy expressed [eCRITIQUE]
   0 No
   1 Yes

V Main content themes
One, and only one, main theme required. (Several peripheral themes possible, see below). Inclination in headline, lead and beginning of body text decide upon main theme. Guiding question for main theme: Is it reasonable to suppose that the piece would have remained intact without this theme?

19 [mTHEME]
   0 Insider’s (user’s) story/perspective/biography [INSIDER]
   1 Measurements/statistics [MEASURE]
   2 Getting worse [GWORSE]
   3 Getting better [GBETTER]
   4 Youth culture/youth issues [YOUTH]
   5 Smuggling [SMUGGLING]
   6 Criminal general [CRIMGEN]
   7 Legal matters [LEGAL]
   8 Prevention [PREVENT]
   9 Rehabilitation [REHAB]
  10 EU [EU]
  11 Celebrities [CELEB]
  12 Research/science [SCIENCE]
  13 Verdicts [VERDICTS]
  14 Fun [FUN]
  15 Other [OTHER]

VI Peripheral content themes
Two peripheral themes possible, same categories as above.

20 [pTHEME1]
   0–15
21 [pTHEME2]
   0–15
Coding Categories and Descriptions for the Analysis of Reception Interview Material

Descriptive categories

“How I read this text”
When prompted by the interviewer.

Last leading question
Answers to the last question of the interview (the "as Swede"-positioning).

Clarifications
Conversations regarding the interview situation, the intention behind the interviewer’s questions etc.

Metalinguistic readings
Must be unprompted by the interviewer.

Ideology
Statements that explicitly refer to (or presuppose) the text as an expression of an overarching “ideology”, or particular ways of representing reality. A stronger version of Text statements.

Journalism
Statements that explicitly refer to (or presuppose) the text as an expression of how journalism works. A more elaborate version of Text statements.

Veracity
Statements providing reflections on the accuracy of the text’s description of reality. Does not necessarily have to refer explicitly to the text as text”, since such references often remain presupposed. (Veracity statements are sometimes supported by Personal experience, i.e. referential accounts.)

Text
Statements about the text as a textual construction (e.g. about wording, about valence or about the choice of headlines compared to the content of the body text).

First person effect
Descriptions of how the interviewee reacted when reading the text, how his/her understanding evolved etc.

Third person effects
Statements about how other people might react to the text.

Referential readings
Must be unprompted by the interviewer.

Generalization
Strong confirmation/incorporation of the plausibility and validity of the reality as it is offered by the text/element in text (preferred reading). Statements that not only confirm/incorporate, but also apply the text’s categories and propositions to other areas and issues. Can be supported by Personal experience.

Confirmation/incorporation
Statements signalling acceptance of propositions made in the text. Can be both quite brief and elaborated.

Further questions
The interviewee expressing interest to know more about the reality as offered by the text. Stronger versions of Further questions may criticize the text for not covering a certain area, or judging it to be imbalanced. Such statements are coded as Metalinguistic--> Veracity.

Personal experience
The interviewee relating the text to his/her own experience, or lack thereof.

Preferred meanings–empirical readings relations
Statements that can plausibly be derived from specific propositions (preferred readings) made by the texts.
East 1: The normalization thesis
Metalinguistic
Referential
East 2: Supply from the East
Metalinguistic
Referential
East 3: Generational change
Metalinguistic
Referential
Kat 1: Kat causes misery
Metalinguistic
Referential
Kat 2: Sweden is better
Metalinguistic
Referential
Kat 3: Police inaction, racism
Metalinguistic
Referential

**Interpretive repertoires**

Statements whose meaning must be understood in the context of specific interpretive frameworks (discursive competencies/resources) “external” to the concrete text–reader interaction. Must be unprompted by the interviewer.

Somalis are not Swedes
Implicit and explicit definitions of people of Somali background living in Sweden as essentially non-Swedes.

The Open Europe
Statements that can be understood against a backdrop of a discourse of Europeanization, or more generally globalization.

European Trouble-Spots
Statements that can be understood against a backdrop of received knowledge about Eastern Europe and the Netherlands as dirty locations.

It’s Getting Worse
Statements that can be understood against the backdrop of older generations generalizing negatively about the behaviours and practices of “the youth of today”.

Preventionism
Statements that presuppose, or explicitly refer to, the texts as if they had (or should have) a prevention purpose/intention.

Racism as an individual characteristic
Implicit and explicit definitions of racism as individual attitudes (in opposition to the definition presented by the Kat texts).
Publications in the series
Örebro Studies in Media and Communication

Publications in the series
Örebro Studies in Conditions of Democracy


