

Kriminologiska institutionen



Popular Descriptions of the Rape Victim in the Press

A quantitative content analysis comparing Swedish and
Michigan articles

Examensarbete 15 hp

Kriminologi

Kriminologi III (30 hp)

Vårterminen 2010

Nishadi Beck och Sara Virtanen Janbakhsh

ABSTRACT

Not all victims can relate to the concept of the ideal victim. Especially rape victims can have a hard time gaining status as a victim. Rape victims may have to deal with being questioned about the circumstances but that has taken a turn towards the right direction in the redefinition of the rape law. In past decades the focus shifted more towards the victim and instead of looking at the victim's behaviour as much, there is now a sharper focus on the acts of the offender.

We compare Sweden and Michigan, two places with similar legal structures, to examine whether there are different media portrayals of the ideal victim.

The theory of "the ideal victim" by Nils Christie refers to crime victims who easily achieve legitimate status as a victim in the eyes of the public. The different attributes of being an ideal victim are used to understand the description of a victim. Constructions of gender are used as a complement to the concept of the ideal victim.

The previous studies show that there is a clear relationship between media and crime victims regarding recognition and visibility. This paper examines characteristics of the rape victim, presenting the most commonly portrayed descriptions in newspaper articles.

A quantitative content analysis has been carried out to interpret themes in the material, which consisted of morning and evening newspapers from Sweden and Michigan from 2008 and 2009. The coding is a thematic analysis with nine themes and the results are illustrated in figures.

The findings show that Sweden and Michigan have similar popular descriptions emphasizing the ideal victim. Their similar restrictive and redefined rape laws seem to be related to the amount of reported rapes in both jurisdictions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 4

 1.1 AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS 5

 1.2 DISPOSITION 5

2. PROBLEM FORMULATION 6

 2.1 THE RAPE LAWS IN SWEDEN AND MICHIGAN 8

3. PREVIOUS STUDIES 9

 3.1 REFLECTIONS 13

4. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES 13

 4.1 “THE IDEAL VICTIM” BY NILS CHRISTIE 13

 4.2 APPLYING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE 15

5. METHOD AND MATERIAL 16

 5.1 APPLYING THEMES 18

 5.2 LIMITATIONS 19

6. RESULTS 20

 6.1 PRESENTING THE FIGURES 21

 6.2 SUMMARY 26

7. DISCUSSION 26

8. CONCLUSIONS 31

9. REFERENCES 35

APPENDIX 38

1. INTRODUCTION

Individuals have been victimized by criminal acts throughout history. From the earliest times being a victim received very little attention and interest was concentrated on the offender and the sentence the offender received. The media, for example, concentrated reporting on the crime committed and describing the perpetrator. In today's society the situation is rather different because there is an interest in crime victims following the emergence of victimology (Toblowsky 2000). In the USA, the interest in crime victims emerged between 1960 and 1975. This was due to discrimination, the development of equal rights campaigns and the expanding role of therapists (Nilsson 2003:86). In Sweden the term crime victim dates back to the 1970s. It attracted much attention and became a public concept in Sweden during this time. Legal adjustments were made; victim organizations and women shelters were set up, all these to benefit the crime victims (Åkerström & Sahlin 2001, Nilsson 2003).

We believe how crime victims are reported in the media is selective. Sexual and violent crimes have high value in news reporting and they sell newspapers (Chermak 2005:53). Therefore rape qualifies as a high value crime in news reporting. It is an act of violence and humiliation against a human being, the victim has to deal with the consequences of the crime and it can also be regarded as a social crime when it adversely affects the victim's family and friends in a negative way (Karmen 2000). Rape is a crime usually committed against a woman by a man, whether an acquaintance or stranger, and it is a crime violating an individual's integrity (BRÅ 2005:12). The actual legal definition of rape has changed over time in both Sweden and Michigan; it now includes both men and women, and people of all ages (von Hofer 2006:182, Horney & Spohn 1991:123).

We suspect that the media in the USA sensationalizes rape stories to make them more newsworthy. This leads to certain rape victims gaining status as an "ideal" victim with the help of the media. It could mean that US victims of non-sensationalism rapes have more difficulty obtaining victim services and support, and maybe less likely to report their victimization. We argue that the media filters information and is very biased in showing the real side of crime and at the same time affecting our perceptions of crime and crime victims. It is therefore important

to understand the consequences of certain victim portrayals in the press since we think it does not reflect the reality of being a crime victim.

We compare Sweden and Michigan, two places with a similar legal structure, to examine whether there are different media portrayals of the ideal victim.

1.1 AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study will be to compare descriptions of the rape victim in Swedish articles with articles from the state of Michigan. We can ask ourselves how the newspapers present popular descriptions of rape victims in two places with different backgrounds relating this to the theory of the “ideal victim” (Christie 2001). Christie’s attributes of the ideal victim will be applied to portrayals of the rape victim in the newspaper articles. By popular description we mean the most common and frequent portrayals of the crime victim and by portrayals we mean characteristics of how the crime victim is presented in the press.

In this paper following questions will be answered:

- *How are popular descriptions of the rape victim presented in the press in Sweden and the state of Michigan?*
- *Do the descriptions of rape victims differ between locations, and, if so, how?*

1.2 DISPOSITION

In the upcoming section we will discuss and motivate the aim of the paper. We highlight the Swedish and Michigan rape laws, their respective victim support services and reflect on how the media is related to our thesis. In section 3 follows previous research carried out within the field of crime victims and in relation to the media. After that the theoretical perspective is presented in section 4, followed by the method used in the paper in section 5. Then the results and discussion will follow ending with the conclusions of the paper, which are presented in sections 6, 7 and 8.

2. PROBLEM FORMULATION

Sweden and Michigan are similar in population, size and distribution with one major metropolitan area but more specifically to this paper, they are similar in their respective rape laws and reported rapes per year. In both jurisdictions rape laws are restrictive and gender neutral; the law in Michigan is considered the model rape law in the USA (Horney & Spohn 1991).

Sweden is the third largest country in Western Europe with a population of about 9.4 million (Statistics Sweden 2009). Sweden is considered a safe country with a low crime rate, but a recent study funded by the European Commission found that Sweden has the highest level of reported rapes in Europe: 46 incidents of rape per 100,000 inhabitants in year 2006 (The Local 2009 [1]). The high level of reporting violent and sexual crimes could indicate that society puts trust in government policies to prevent and solve this category of crime (Tham 2001:40). Furthermore Sweden emphasizes women's rights, currently ranking third in the UN global gender-related development index. Women and girls are encouraged to speak up about their rights and this is also something taught at school.

A contrary to Sweden's image as a model society that emphasizes gender equality, a recent Amnesty report, Case Closed 2008, criticises Sweden's disparity between the numbers of reported rapes and the conviction rates (The Local 2009 [2]). A trend in the report show that victims, young women in particular, who do not identify themselves as an "ideal victim", tend not to report the crime, if the rape was committed in an intimate relationship or in a date rape. The report concluded that regardless of Sweden being gender equal, "this achievement seems to have halted at the doorstep of private homes" (ibid.). Fear of public shame according to the report can also be related to the low conviction rates, since there is a group of well-educated women who are scared of being seen as a "tragic failure" (ibid.).

According to the EU based study, rape in Sweden has a strong connection to nightlife and partying, especially after-club parties in private homes (The Local 2009 [1]). Most of the rapes in Sweden are committed by people who know each other, in domestic settings. Other contributory factors are early sexual debuts and high alcohol consumption by individuals. Most

attacks (*överfallsvåldtäkt*) in Sweden are taken place outdoors (BRÅ 2005). The rape law in Sweden was amended in 2005 to strengthen the individual's rights to sexual integrity and security by broadening the definition of rape. Sexual abuse, which earlier consisted of helpless conditions such victim being asleep, unconscious, intoxicated and suffering from a mental illness or sickness, is now defined as rape according to Swedish law.

Michigan lies in the Midwest of the United States of America and its population is about 10 million for the year 2008, making it the eighth most populated state and the tenth largest state in the USA. The 1974 Michigan criminal sexual conduct statute was regarded by many as the model rape law reform in the country (Horney & Spohn 1991: 121). The purpose of the reform was to treat rape like other crimes by not focusing on the behaviour or reputation of the victim, but on the acts of the offender. The Michigan law redefines rape and sexual assault by establishing four degrees of gender neutral, criminal sexual conduct based on the seriousness of the offence, the amount of force used, the degree of injury, the age and incapacitation of the victim. In specific, it was thought that making the law gender neutral would lead to an increase in convictions for rape (*ibid.*) For the year 2006, the Michigan state police released statistics indicating the total offences for the state of Michigan. Statistics show that there were 5344 reported rape cases (attempt to rape included) in 2006 and there were as many as 130,790 cases of non-aggravated rape cases reported where 99,009 of those cases were reports to Michigan police departments (Michigan State Police 2006).

Treatment and help towards rape victims has been a developing process, which can be seen, in the growing medical, legal and victim service sectors that are being established in the country. Some of the main goals for victim service centers were to educate society about rape, rape-prevention and to improve the treatment of victims, all of which could increase the number of reported rapes in the country. In the USA males are the least likely group to report a sexual assault (National Crime Victimization Survey 2006). Female crime victims are overrepresented in the American media, which is explained as a reason because women's vulnerability increases newsworthiness (Chermak 1995). According to the US Department of Justice, in 2008 Michigan had an average of 45 reported cases of rape for every 100,000 inhabitants, similar to Sweden.

Also like Sweden, the Michigan rape law was redefined to be gender neutral and it reflects efforts being made towards gender equality. Victims are encouraged to get support from different victim organizations and report their cases, which consequently could result in higher conviction rates. Sweden and Michigan offer a range of victim support organizations and they are well developed in that area. We argue that since victim support is voluntary not everyone will turn to these. There is a complexity in identifying oneself as a victim. Nilsson (2003) states that a victim does not always want to be seen as a victim in the eye of the public meaning the victim can decline the ability of to be in control, consequently distancing from the concept of being a victim. Societal norms presumably affect whether individuals see themselves as crime victims or not and this could affect reporting the crime to the police (Viström 2009).

The press is selective, influencing and biased in terms of information. There tends to be high value in violent and sexual crime reporting. This sort of high value news is often published in relation to the story's sensationalism and newsworthiness and it is therefore important to be aware of media portrayals, because they do not reflect reality (Jukovic 2006). We believe certain crime victims gain more recognition and media coverage than others. Crime victims that are ideal will presumably belong to this category.

2.1 THE RAPE LAWS IN SWEDEN AND MICHIGAN

The Swedish Penal Code, Chapter six (6), 'On Sex Offences', deals with sex crimes perpetrated against both children and adults. A person committing rape (sexual intercourse or other comparable sexual act forced by violence or serious threat) can be sentenced to imprisonment for at least two and at most six years. If the rape is considered as aggravated rape the offender can be sentenced to imprisonment for at least four and at most ten years. Rape perpetrated against a child is normally considered as aggravated rape (Interpol 2009).

Section 1 of the Swedish Penal Code:

§A person who, by violence or threat involving or appearing to the threatened person as imminent danger, forces the latter to have sexual intercourse or to engage in a comparable sexual act, shall be sentenced for rape to imprisonment for at least two and at most six years.

Rendering the person unconscious or otherwise placing the person in a similarly helpless state shall be regarded as equivalent to violence. (Interpol 2009)

The Michigan rape law has four degrees of Criminal Sexual Conduct statute that deals with sex crimes perpetrated against children and adults. The statute redefines rape and other forms of sexual assault by establishing four degrees of gender-neutral criminal sexual conduct based on the seriousness of the offence, the amount of force or coercion used, the degree of injury inflicted, and the age and incapacitation of the victim. The law states that the victim need not resist the accused and that the victim's testimony need not be corroborated (Horney & Spohn 1991:123). The general provision of the rape law (four degrees excluded) is as followed:

§Four degrees of criminal sexual conduct defined by penetration vs. contact and by presence or absence of aggravating circumstances (e.g., personal injury, force, coercion, armed with weapon, victim incapacitated). (Horney & Spohn 1991:124)

3. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Jukovic (2006) uses Christie's theory of "the ideal victim" and Lindgren's description of three different victim roles, which are "the accomplice victim", "the passive victim" and "the reluctant victim", to examine how rape victims are depicted in the press in Sweden. The method is a combined discourse analysis and the data consisted of 22 articles from one morning and one evening newspaper in Sweden. The findings show that rapes that are attacks are reported more often than other types of rape in the press in Sweden between the years 2005 and 2006. Attack here refers to when the victim is attacked suddenly by an unknown perpetrator (BRÅ 2005) where for example the rape victim was attacked by a stranger while going home which can be identified as Christie's attribute where the victim is going about their everyday business (when translated in Swedish *överfallsvåldtäkt*). Jukovic states that the press presents portrayals that fit in with Christie's ideal victim and Lindgren's victim roles and even when it is not reality it keeps stereotype conceptions about rape alive.

Another study by af Sandberg (2004) researches the descriptions of crime victims in two Swedish newspapers during a period of one week in 2002. The theoretical perspective of the

study is a gender approach, which explains gender as a social construction. She uses a mixed method combining quantitative and qualitative content analysis to examine her research question. She finds that there are clear distinctions between male and female victims and how they are portrayed in newspapers. The study shows that the descriptions of male and female victims agree with traditional norms of gender existing in today's society. She states that women victims were often described as weak, giving feelings a lot of space while the male victims were never described as weak. The women victims were also described in more personal detail than the males.

Nilsson (2003) examined transcriptions of in-depth interviews and also Swedish newspaper articles and magazines on crime victims and how victimhood is represented in the media between 1999 and 2002. The research has partly been done in relation to the theory of the ideal victim by Nils Christie and ideologies of victimology. In his discussion on the importance of recognition for crime victims he finds that crime victims tend not to always want to be seen as a victim, which consequently weakens their ability to be in control (Nilsson 2003:90). Victim positions become more apparent when the media divides people into distinctive categories of good versus bad and loser versus hero. Victims portrayed as heroes in the media become sensational because the common image of the victim being weak is what is usually presented. This Nilsson means has an impact on how the media depict rape victims.

Chermak (1995) examine the overlap between crime victims and the news media. His study is based on 2,664 crime stories where a content analysis, in-depth ethnographies and interviews were done on the material. In his findings he discusses sensationalized stories often involve an innocent victim being attacked. It presents a simplified side of the crime, for example that the evil and strong offender goes after a defenceless victim (Chermak 1995:9). He states that young and elderly victims are examples of defenceless victims because they are the group least able to protect themselves (Chermak 1995:82). On the other hand, when the same group of defenceless victims, become defendants they have less of an impact on newsworthiness. Chermak discusses frequencies and to what extent victims and crime are presented and where in the press this appears. He focuses on how crime victims and the news media overlap in crime reporting (Chermak 1995:3).

Walklate (2007) gives an introduction to key theoretical, methodological and current issues in victimology and criminal victimization. She discusses these aspects with criminal victimization within the broader social and cultural changes that has taken place in the last twenty-five years. The book is written in the context of post-September 11th and alongside the events in Madrid 2004 and London July 2005, questions who can be considered a victim of crime and what response to such victimization might look like. The book is divided into six chapters and mainly concentrates on the UK and Wales but some aspects will be placed within a global context including for example the US. The early chapters discuss the emergence of the victim of crime and what has influenced the shape and form of this matter. It discusses the crime victims as the forgotten party in the criminal justice system to now being the centre of the criminal policy-making. The author discusses receiving the label as a “victim”. She relates this to Nils Christie (2001) and means that victim status is something that has to be achieved through individual recognizing but also through social and in policy terms being recognized as a victim (Walklate 2007: 28). It can be identified as a sense of belonging for individuals who have been victimized illustrating different concepts of being a victim and the different understandings about them.

The various theoretical perspectives are assessed that are present within the discipline of victimology and their ability to make sense of the issues relating to criminal victimization. The author examines positivist, radical and critical victimology as the theoretical perspectives. Further on, Walklate takes upon the instrument of criminal victimization survey as a method to address the ways in which it has facilitated an understanding of how crime impact peoples’ lives. The surveys were carried out to mainly overcome some of the limitations inherent in recorded crime statistics. The US Bureau of Justice for example states that in the year 2004 males were as vulnerable to violence by strangers as non-strangers while females were victimised by non-strangers with the experience of violence most likely to be rape or sexual assault (Walklate 2007:69). The final chapters discuss the question of policy and re-politicization of the crime victim through different angles. Responding to sexual violence for example has redefined rape laws in as many as 11 different countries, making the law gender-neutral and expanding the definition to include other forms of penetration (Walklate 2007:142). Walklate concludes with an examination of future possibilities for victimology and victim policies in the light of current political preoccupations.

BRÅ (2005) aim to provide a more detailed description of rape than that which emerges from existing criminal statistics and aims to increase the basic understanding of reported rapes in Sweden. The study is based on information on reported rapes collected from the police around Sweden from the years 1995 and 2000. The information is almost always based from a victim's perspective where the majority of the rape victims were female. It presents a female victim's reality and experience of being a victim. The material for this study consists of 2370 documents of reported rapes. The reported rapes can be said to reflect the real case of reported rapes for the two chosen years and they can be generalised to the trend of reported rapes during the 1990s and the early 2000. The findings in more detail show that the majority of the reported rapes are committed between a victim and perpetrator who are familiar with each other, 60 percent of the victims are young(er) under the age of 30, types of rape which receive more attention are if the rape is committed by more than one perpetrator, it is a rape related to party-life and rapes that are attacks (*överfallsvåldtäkt*) meaning that an unknown perpetrator suddenly attacks the victim mostly outdoors. This study is relevant for future research as a basis for discussions on prevention strategies and measures to increase the rate of reporting rapes. The results can also increase awareness of the prosecution of offenders and provide rape victims care and support. The study also questions the development of rapes, how many rapes go unreported (hidden statistics) what are the causes of this? How has the change in the rape law affected these aspects? These are some of the perspectives that raise importance of the report and indicate the need for further studies and analysis (BRÅ 2005:11).

von Hofer (2006) researches on Swedish rape statistics through an international perspective. He aims to describe how different aspects influence crime statistics. He uses European crime statistics funded by the European Commission to show that Sweden has one the highest number of reported rapes in Europe (von Hofer 2006:175). He problematizes this by the different ways countries keep statistics and interpret the figures. The outcome of the statistics is controlled firstly by different regulations on how data is collected and presented, secondly by the legal conditions and finally by factual aspects such as the public's tendency to report crime and the actual crime that is committed (von Hofer 2006:176). Difficulties when interpreting data depend on these factors. When considering Sweden's high rates of reported rapes, the actual crime is still high when compared with countries that have a different social control of women e.g. in

some places women are not supposed to go alone outdoors (von Hofer 2006:186). The best way to examine this is through victim surveys instead. He concludes by saying that comparing crime statistics through an international perspective is questionable but when combining the statistics in a time series context it can help explain how crime reports have developed in different countries over a period of time (von Hofer 2006:187).

3.1 REFLECTIONS

The previous studies contribute and guide us with different concepts relating to various problems with crime victims and the media. They show how to approach the matter with different methods, theories and data which all come up with valuable results. Having these in mind we chose to take this one step further and make a comparison between two places with different backgrounds hoping that it adds even more to the study of rape victims. Instead we examine different constructions of victim portrayals in the media relating it to the concept of the ideal victim. The enhanced interest in crime victims is reflected in the media coverage as shown in the previous studies. An important and obvious factor in the process of increasing the visibility of victims relates to the role of the media, which is an aspect worth recognizing in this paper.

4. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

A victim can be defined in different ways. The concept of the victim has expanded into other areas, one example being a crime victim. This concept can simply be defined as an individual harmed as a result of illegal acts (Karmen 2001). Mendelsohn and von Hentig, two pioneer criminologists, developed various techniques for describing the victim that most importantly differentiated the victim from the non-victim (Walklate 2007: 31). To understand this, each of them developed victim typologies, one focusing on the relationship between the victim and the offender and the other on if the victim is at fault or not in crime (ibid.)

4.1 “THE IDEAL VICTIM” BY NILS CHRISTIE

The theory of the ideal victim by Nils Christie (2001) refers to crime victims who easily achieve status as a legitimate victim in the eyes of the public (Christie 2001:47). The concept defines itself through descriptions of how a victim is portrayed. According to the theory there are certain

criteria that need to be fulfilled to gain status as an ideal victim. An example of an ideal victim would be Christie's description of an old lady on her way home after visiting her sick sister, being attacked and robbed by a stranger in mid-day, who then uses the money to buy alcohol and drugs. Christie states that the ideal victim does not necessarily have anything to do with a "real" victim meaning that the ideal victims are not the same as legal victims; a real crime victim is often far from the concept of the ideal victim (Christie 2001: 48, 57). Ideal victims often fear being exposed to crime. It can be explained by their lack of knowledge of the outside world, and the elderly, for example, gain information through media and cannot always get the information confirmed to be true or not, which results in a misleading image of their surroundings (ibid.).

In order to identify the concept of the ideal victim there are six attributes. According to Christie (2001) and paraphrased by Dignan (2004) ideal victims are:

1. Weak in relation to the perpetrator; meaning physically weak, vulnerable and/or most likely a female.
2. Going about their normal, everyday business; provided it is legitimate.
3. Blameless because they were in a decent place, at a decent hour.
4. Unrelated to and unknown by the perpetrator.
5. Victimized by a comparatively big and "evil" perpetrator.
6. Strong and powerful enough to make a case for herself and claim status as the ideal victim.

(Christie 2001:48, Dignan 2004:17)

The example of the old lady used to illustrate the ideal victim can be put in an opposite way where if you fight away the perpetrator trying to rob you, by being strong, one might not easily be able to make a case for oneself. The vulnerability of the victim must not be questioned by the victim's surroundings in order to gain legitimate status. The ideal victim must be weak enough to be non-threatening and gain sympathy of the public (Christie 2001: 51). The need for a victim category is necessary since it improves the situation for victims in suffering. When increasing gender equality, it would consequently undermine their positions as ideal victims. So if women

were to receive “status” as ideal victims they would be forced to accept continued subordination (Christie 2001: 57-58).

4.2 APPLYING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

A gender perspective can be tied into the theory of the ideal victim. Gender is an analytical category that helps describe constructions such as femininity and masculinity (Lander 2003: 27-28). Femininity and masculinity are not characteristics that are inherent to the sexes, woman or man. Instead they are social constructions applied in a specific context. Lander compares gender to class, ethnicity and sexuality and they are reflected through the way we live, speak, dress etcetera (ibid.). Constructions of gender could be identified in the articles and presumably in terms of normative femininity.

Normative femininity is the norms of what is “female” and is recognized as a form of control of women in everyday life and it is visible and works through self-control in relation to other women (Lander 2003: 41-42). According to Lander women have a part in the construction by trying to live up to the norms and be seen as respectable women. They are controlled by what is the conception of the “deviant woman” in a specific context and that which does not deviate becomes the normative femininity. It is an exercise of power reproducing the dualistic conceptions of what are female and male values, for example female stands for the natural mother instinct (Lander 2003: 33-34,42). A female rape victim who is not described or presented according to Christies attributes might be seen as a disrespectable woman and therefore not gain legitimate status as a victim. Through the control of women’s sexuality, conceptions of “the normal woman” are defined, which is not being anything like “the deviant woman”. For example women should not reveal skin and body shape because these imply sexuality and might label them as a “whore” (Lander 2003: 40-41). If a victim is blamed for the crime he or she will not gain legitimate status from the public nor get any sympathy. Another aspect to this problem is rape victims’ self-image and how it is affected by these preconceptions. It can be assumed that the rape victim’s self-image may be lowered.

Women may be unrecognized as perpetrators because they may not fulfill the attribute of being big and “evil”. If the victim is often seen being weak, passive and subordinate in relation to the perpetrator who is strong, active and superior (Pettersson 2003), it will presumably be shown

that the most popular descriptions of the victim will be female and the perpetrator will be male. The links between being a victim and being female imply the passivity and powerlessness of a woman (Walklate 2007).

The discussion of gender is far more complex than presented here and it will in this paper only be used as a tool to identify constructions and portrayals of rape victims as a complement to the concept of the ideal victim.

5. METHOD AND MATERIAL

The method used in this paper is a quantitative content analysis. This is a research technique used for analyzing documents and texts, either printed or visual. The method seeks to quantify content in pre-determined categories chosen by a coder in a systematic and preferably replicable manner (Bryman 2008: 274). The aim of the approach is to produce quantitative matter out of collected raw data and code it in accordance with categories chosen by a coder. It allows themes emerging out of chosen data to be placed in pre-determined categories producing the results. One needs to clarify the subjects or themes into classification by type, for example age, gender, etc. (Bryman 2008: 278).

Coding is an empirical stage in the process of performing a content analysis and there are two main elements to a content analysis, a coding schedule and a coding manual (Bryman 2008: 283). A coding schedule is a form into which all the data relating to an item being counted will be entered. It is also a statement of instructions to easily code the information found in the material being studied. It is important to use a coding schedule because it provides a complete list of all the coded categories and guidance how to understand the information. A limitation when doing a coding schedule is that it only tends to draw the attention to what is been examined which possibly narrows the view of the material (Bergström & Boréus 2005:78). The coding in our paper is a thematic analysis. On the basis of our research question we counted themes and then coded them into subtypes.

One of the main criteria of increasing reliability in a content analysis is generating a neutral instrument so that the analysis and the results are replicable. It is important to keep a detailed record of the process of the research, so that decisions made along the way can be easily

tracked. The method of analysis and quantification should also be clearly defined so that different researchers can arrive at the same conclusion.

The material for this paper consists of newspaper articles from Sweden and the state of Michigan. We use articles collected from one morning paper and one evening paper, from each jurisdiction. Initially we had four newspapers but it was necessary to add one more newspaper from Michigan and also include the year 2009 for the Michigan press. For Sweden we chose Dagens Nyheter (DN), which is a morning newspaper and Aftonbladet (AB) which is an evening one. DN is the highest circulation daily morning newspaper in Sweden and AB is a mass circulation evening newspaper. DN is distributed and also available on newsstands while AB is only available on newsstands. The two newspapers are widely read throughout Sweden and we believe the choice of these two papers gives us meaningful insight into the different ways the press portrays crime and the victims of crime. Three major newspapers were chosen from the state of Michigan: Detroit News, which is the highest circulation newspaper in the Detroit metropolitan area, Ann Arbor News and Flint Journal, which are two other high circulation newspapers in Michigan. All these newspapers are daily. We gathered Swedish articles directly from the newspaper websites. Michigan articles were accessed through the Westlaw database. We chose to access the Swedish and Michigan newspapers online because of the easier accessibility, especially regarding the Michigan newspapers which otherwise would not have been available to us. In Sweden, the online articles are similar to the paper editions and we assume it would be the same for Michigan so there should not be any indications of less validity in the material chosen because the information is almost guaranteed to be the same.

Different keywords were used in the search for articles and applied on both DN and AB. Two keywords were used when locating Swedish articles, "våldtäkt" and "våldtagen" which mean rape and raped, respectively. The keywords, "rape" and "sexual assault" were used in the search for the Michigan articles since these terms are commonly used in the US when describing the crime. To increase validity in the material two different keywords were used on each of the five newspapers to make sure nothing was excluded. We searched keywords in the entire article and included both male and female victims.

We screened the initial results for relevance before including them in the material for analysis. When selecting both morning and evening newspapers, it increased the validity since the sample might otherwise be too limited with not enough information. We believe that news reporting varies between morning and evening papers and it should be distinguished. Morning papers tend to be more factual and concise while evening papers have more sensational placards and resemble tabloids more than morning papers do.

5.1 APPLYING THEMES

In this paper nine themes were chosen to be counted. These themes were related to the crime and victim, and concentrated on capturing all the relevant information in the articles. The themes chosen to be counted were sex of the victim, age of the victim, sex of the perpetrator, relationship between victim and perpetrator, location of the crime, time of the crime, whether the crime was an attack, whether victim was in a helpless condition and the content of the article. These themes motivate constructions of victim portrayals, particularly portrayals of the ideal victim. Sex and age of the victim and sex of the perpetrator we thought refer to Christie's (2001) attribute of the ideal victim being weak, vulnerable etc and perpetrator being strong in relation to the victim. Being weak would imply it is most likely a female, according to Christie and being big and strong would imply being a male. Relationship between the victim and perpetrator refers to the attribute if the perpetrator is unrelated or unknown to the victim. Location and time of the crime refers to if the victim was blameless for the crime because being in a decent place at a decent hour, for example going for lunch during work. Attack was chosen because we wanted to see if it supports the fact that attacks are the most reported in the media (Jukovic 2006). Attack refers to if the perpetrator jumped out at the victim (when translated in Swedish *överfallvåldtäkt*). Helpless condition refers to characteristics that point out the concept of being an ideal victim. We want to see whether there are indications showing that the victim is blameless for what has happened. Blameless means for example when the victim was asleep when the rape was committed and therefore being in a helpless condition. Content of the article relates to all the characteristics and how much of these details were presented in the articles. It is a summary of the number of characteristics per article. Reliability in picking out themes, words and subjects in a document at a specific period of time is problematic because the same word carries different meanings in different contexts to different researchers. It means that if the same

method is carried out by someone else, the themes could look different and result differently therefore weakening the reliability.

In the process of counting the material, first the newspapers were thoroughly read through to find relevant information. A coding schedule was used to find suitable information in the newspaper articles and in this case nine different themes were used to code the material. All newspapers were studied, marked with colors and coded under the themes. We started the coding procedure with the Swedish newspapers. All the newspapers were read and a colored pen was used to highlight the words and themes relevant to the themes chosen in the coding schedule and these were then placed under pertinent categories of themes. The same procedure was carried out on the Michigan newspapers. After choosing the articles and coding them, we checked each others articles to see if there were similar cases published more than once in the Swedish articles between DN and AB and all of the other newspapers from Michigan. The same case did not seem to appear twice in either of the locations.

A coding schedule, coding table (see appendix 2) and concept map (see appendix 3) were used to keep a detailed record of what had been done in the process of research therefore increasing reliability. When there were miscalculations it was possible to verify the themes and the raw data by rechecking the schedule, map and table. The handwritten coding schedule became the coding manual (see appendix 1).

5.2 LIMITATIONS

Regarding limitations, when locating articles for the US press, the timeline was different from the Swedish press. There was not enough relevant material from year 2008 so it was necessary to broaden the range to include year 2009 in the Michigan press to increase the chance of finding enough material. There were no evening newspapers available so we had to access them through their own websites. There were also fewer articles in Michigan newspapers and we had trouble finding relevant ones. This meant that we could not access Michigan's biggest newspapers since there was a charge and we did not have the budget for it. Therefore we were not able to consider a potentially major source of data.

We are aware that our preconceptions in the procedure of the method shape the outcome of the results when choosing and coding themes. If other themes had been chosen, other information would have been apparent. The themes were chosen to match Christie's attributes as much as possible. We need to be aware when choosing the themes and coding them manually that the process has to be thought through, because once the coding has begun it is difficult to go back and change the procedure (Bergström & Boréus 2005:83).

A more thorough procedure regarding the selection of the articles could have been done in order to validate the material and make sure the same case was not chosen twice from the articles. We could have also kept a detailed record of the cases.

6. RESULTS

Overall the Swedish newspapers gave us a total of 69 hits and the Michigan newspapers gave a total of 33 hits. Dagens Nyheter gave a total of 34 articles, Aftonbladet 35 articles and Michigan; Detroit News gave a total of 15 articles, Ann Arbour 14 and Flint Journal 4 hits. The articles were not sorted out as headlines or press items but all relevant articles with the keyword were examined. The number of victims did not match the total of articles since in some cases there was more than one victim in the article so we decided to count the victims. Rape (*våldtäkt*) seemed the most commonly used word in the Swedish press when describing the crime, while in the Michigan press both rape and sexual assault were frequently used.

The themes were broken into subtypes (see appendix 1). Furthermore we decided to place the themes from the Swedish and Michigan newspapers into a concept map (see appendix 2). This was necessary because of all information needed to be visible and represented in order to capture the full content of the article. The concept map was used to place the results from all of the newspapers. The center of the map is the victim with all of the nine themes being the branches connected to it. The results from the coding schedule were all counted and then placed accordingly in the concept map in numbers. To clarify the numbers placed in the concept map, results were then added to an excel sheet which became the coding table with all the nine themes and results included (see appendix 3). We use pie charts to clarify the results in total and to see similarities and differences between the two places.

6.1 PRESENTING THE FIGURES

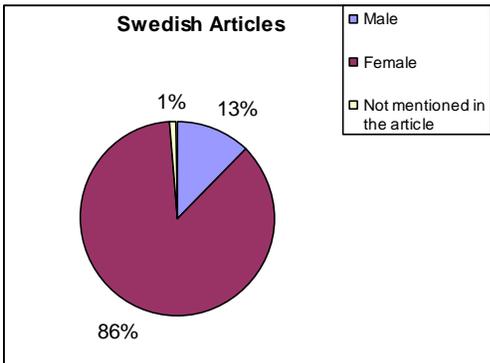


Figure 1.1 Sex of the victim in Swedish articles.

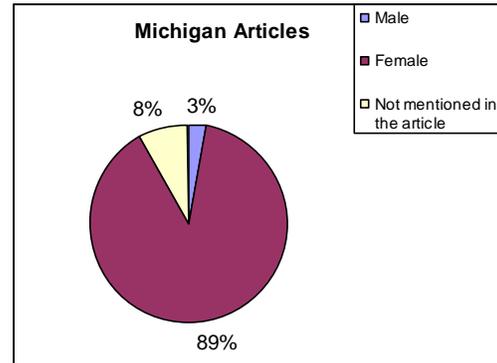


Figure 2.2 Sex of the victim in Michigan articles.

The Sex of the victim was coded in to male, female and not mentioned in the article.

In both Sweden and Michigan, the victims were mostly females. The Swedish articles contained about four times as many male victims as in Michigan. It is more common for the sex of the victim to be referred to in Swedish articles.

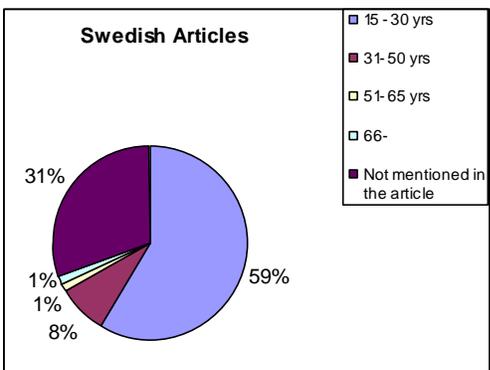


Figure 2.1 Age of the victim in Swedish articles.

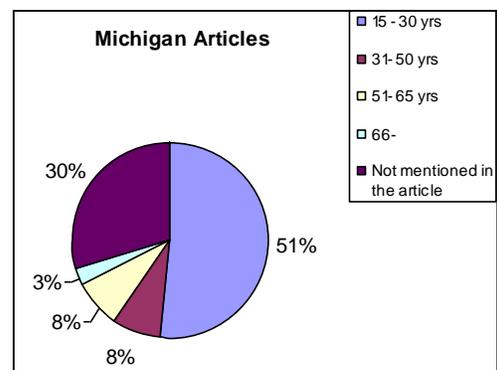


Figure 2.2 Age of the victim in Michigan articles.

The figures above show the age of the victim. The info was coded into five groups, from 15 years to 30, 31 to 50, 51 to 65, 66 years and above and not mentioned in the article. In the first group we chose age 15 instead of 18 because the law in Sweden states that rape under 15 is child rape, which makes it a different crime with a different description of the law. Age 66 and above was included because it meets with the concept of the ideal victim. The two other age groups were included because a middle range would tell apart the young and the older victims.

A group between 31 and 65 seemed too large so it was divided in to two. When deciding the range in the age groups the intervals were not of the same size, some categories are then more represented than the others. Since the younger and older age group was more relevant in relation to the ideal victim we thought that those two would matter the most in emphasizing the young and the elderly who can be considered physically weak in relation to the perpetrator refer to the first attribute of Christie (2001). More than half of the rape victims were aged 15 to 30 years in both places with Swedish articles having a slightly larger percentage. They both have the same percentage in the age group between 31 and 50. In the Michigan articles more victims were in the age range 51 and 65. Only one per cent was above the age 66 in the Swedish articles and three per cent in the Michigan articles. The second largest section describing the amount of not mentioned in the articles was almost of the same size in both places.

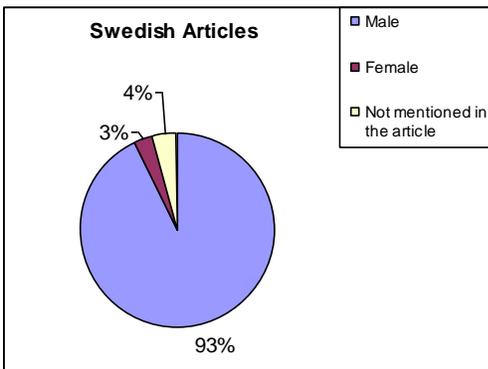


Figure 3.1 Sex of the perpetrator in Swedish articles.

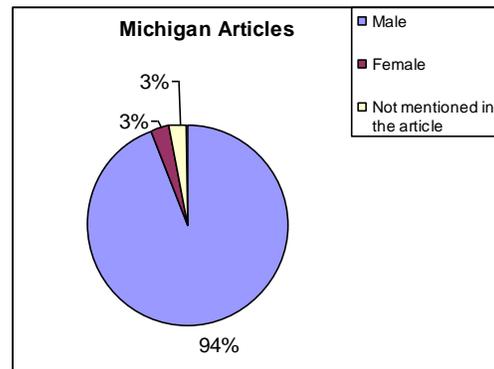


Figure 3.2 Sex of the perpetrator in Michigan articles.

We coded sex of the perpetrator as male, female and not mentioned in the article. Almost all of the perpetrators are male and only three per cent were female in both places.

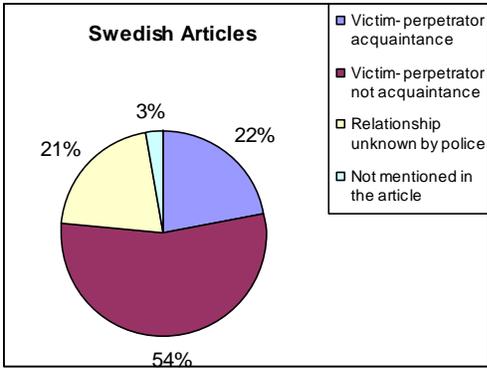


Figure 4.1 Relationship between victim and perpetrator in Swedish articles.

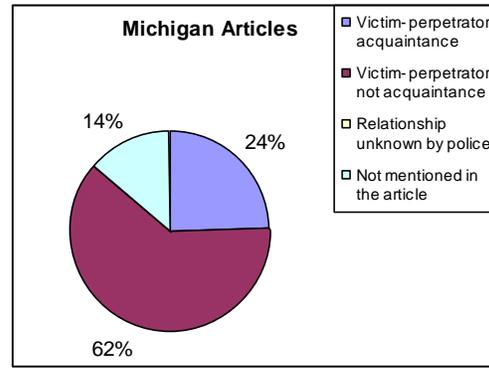


Figure 4.2 Relationship between victim and perpetrator in Michigan articles.

The figures above show the relationship between the victim and perpetrator. It was coded as acquaintance, not acquaintance, relationship unknown by the police and not mentioned. In approximately one fourth of the articles the victim and perpetrator were acquainted in both Sweden and Michigan. The largest section of the figure show that the victim and the perpetrator were not acquainted to each other in both places. The section “not mentioned in the article” is nearly five times bigger in Michigan than in Sweden. There are no cases in the Michigan articles where the relationship between the victim and perpetrator is unknown by the police whereas in Sweden it is twenty- one per cent.

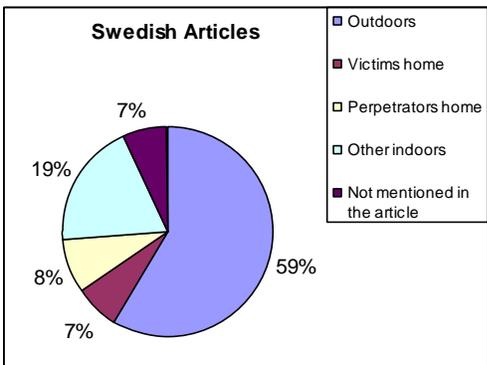


Figure 5.1 Location of crime in Swedish articles.

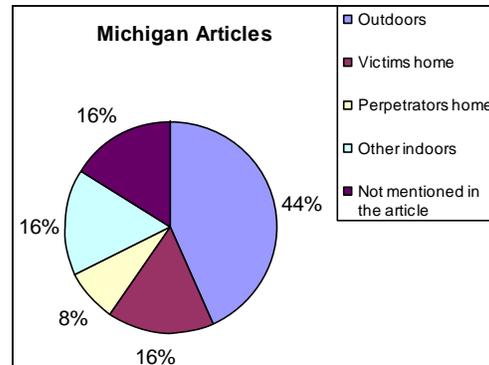


Figure 5.2 Location of crime in Michigan articles.

The figures above display the location of the crime as outdoors, victims home, perpetrators home, other indoors (a bar toilet, a staircase etcetera) and as not mentioned in the article. In both Sweden and Michigan the majority of the rapes were committed outdoors even though there is a

fifteen percentage point difference between the two. Twice as many rapes were committed in the victim's home in Michigan articles compared to the Swedish ones. Rape committed in the perpetrators home showed no difference between the two places. Other indoor locations are almost equally presented in the Swedish and Michigan articles. Twice as many Michigan articles did not mention location compared to Swedish articles.

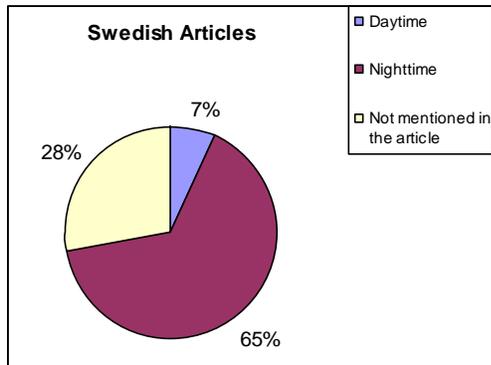


Figure 6.1 Time of crime in Swedish articles.

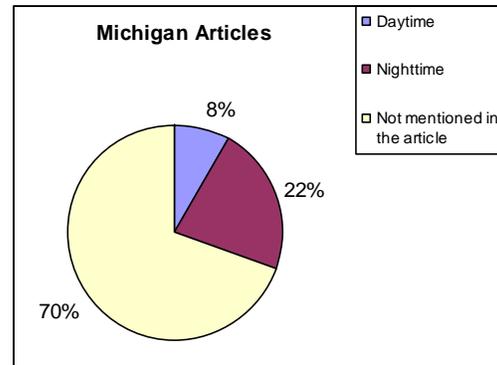


Figure 6.2 Time of crime in Michigan articles.

We coded time of the crime into daytime, nighttime, and not mentioned in the article. The smallest sections in both figures were rapes committed during daytime. In the Swedish articles the majority of the rapes were committed at nighttime. Over twice as many Michigan articles do not mention the time of the crime.

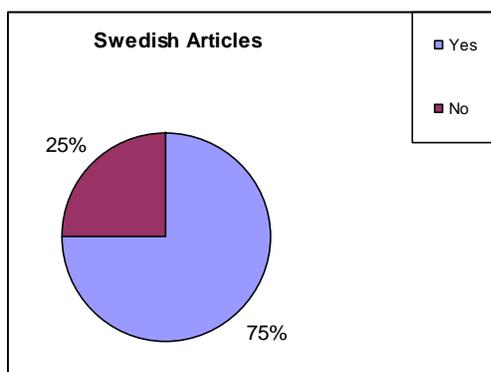


Figure 7.1 Attack in Swedish articles.

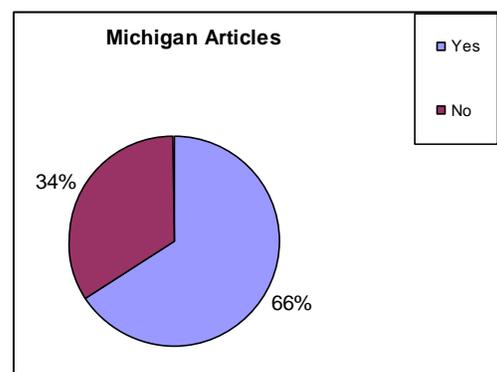


Figure 7.2 Attack in Michigan articles.

Attack was coded as yes and no. Yes refers to if the perpetrator jumped out at the victim (when translated in Swedish, *överfallsvåldtäkt*) and no refers to when the articles did not mention if it

was an attack. In both the Swedish and Michigan articles, a clear majority of the rapes were attacks.

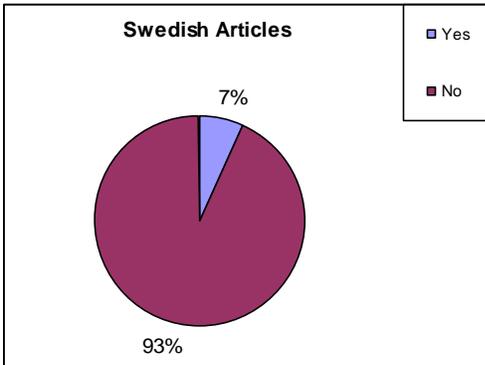


Figure 8.1 Victim in helpless condition in Swedish articles.

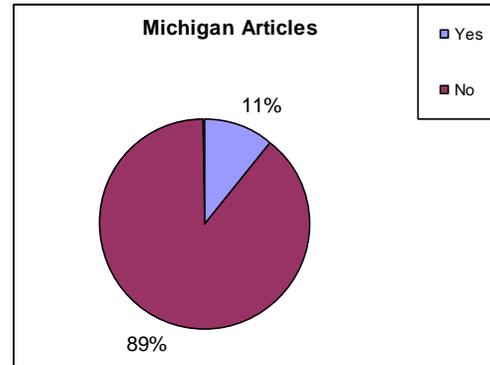


Figure 8.2 Victim in helpless condition in Michigan articles.

We coded victim in helpless condition as yes and no. “Yes” consisted of conditions such as victim being blind, victim asleep, handicapped and mentally handicapped. All the other cases that did not include any characteristics of a victim in a helpless condition were a “No”. The vast majority in both countries shows that the victims were not in a helpless condition of these types and only seven per cent of the victims in the Swedish articles and eleven per cent in the Michigan articles were in a helpless condition.

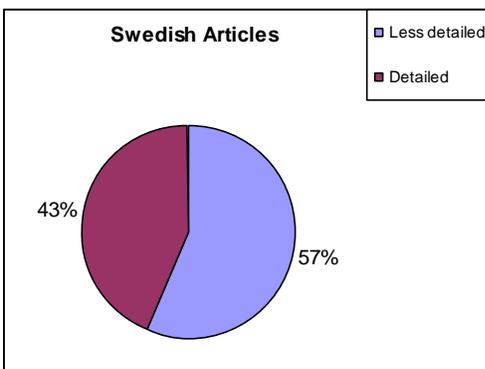


Figure 9.1 Content of the article in Swedish articles.

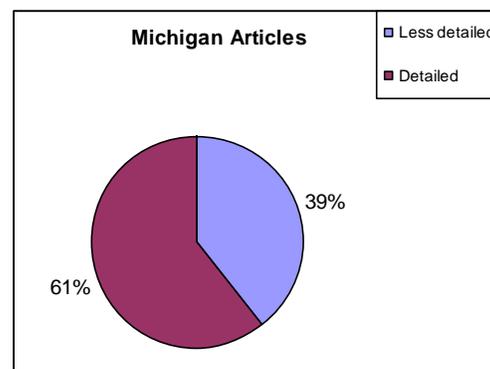


Figure 9.2 Content of the article in Michigan articles.

Content of the article was coded as less detailed and detailed. Less detailed referred to articles with less data. Detailed articles and less detailed articles could still be the same size but providing different data meaning more number of characteristics. Detailed articles contained more number of characteristics than less detailed. In Sweden the majority of the articles were less detailed and on the contrary majority of the Michigan articles were detailed.

6.2 SUMMARY

The most common descriptions in the Swedish articles show that the rape victim is female; the victim is aged between 15 and 30. The rape is committed by a male perpetrator; the perpetrator is unknown or unrelated to the rape victim. The rape has taken place outdoors at nighttime and it was an attack. The rape victim was not in a helpless condition. The Swedish articles tend to be less detailed in the content of the article.

The most common descriptions in the Michigan articles show that the rape victim is a female; the victim is aged between 15 and 30. The rape is committed by a male perpetrator; the perpetrator is unknown or unrelated to the rape victim. The rape has taken place outdoors but in most articles the time is not mentioned. The rape was an attack where the victim was not in a helpless condition. The Michigan articles tend to be detailed in the content of the article.

7. DISCUSSION

Male rape victims (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2) seem to be more recognized in Swedish articles and presumably they report more due to strong emphasis on gender equality. It can mean that male rape victims are more open and willing to report their cases to the police in Sweden. It can be contradicted by the fact that if the press is assumed to present more sensational news (Chermak 1995) they should present all cases of male rape victims, sensational referring to more unusual cases. More male victims in the Swedish articles give reason to believe that there has to be differences in the media when selecting the stories put in newspapers. Michigan articles tend to emphasize female rape victims simply because they appear more than the male victims. Generally one can state that in Sweden rape victims gain more legitimate status through the article portrayals when being both male and female, indicating no distinction between the two sexes. Male rape victims in Sweden might therefore turn to victim support more than males in Michigan since they are more recognized in the Swedish press. As Walklate (2007) discusses

male victims are vulnerable to violence by strangers and non-strangers but it is the female victims who are victimized most by non-strangers and the violence is most likely to be rape or sexual assault which agrees with the results showing that the majority of the rape victims are female.

The sex was not always mentioned in the articles similar in both Swedish and Michigan articles. This could be seen as a problem because when reading an article the reader might presumably think of the victim being a woman, which is not always the real case. As af Sandberg (2004) discusses the norm in society is a man being strong and a woman weak and vulnerable, naturally relating concept of a victim to a woman. She states that there are distinctions between how male and female victims are portrayed in newspapers which can be distinguished as the public's preconceptions of the sex of the victim. Nilsson (2003) discusses norms regarding victim roles; they are emphasized through newspaper portrayals of victims as femininity being especially compatible with concept of being a victim. The dominating femininity of a rape victim then is female and therefore also more ideal. The problem of this concept is that a woman rape victim should not deviate from the norms of female. Female rape victims who deviate from the norm in the eyes of the public might also not turn to victim support.

Rape victims between ages 15 and 30 (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2) can presumably be connected to nightlife in Sweden since the younger audience tends to have a more active social life, which is discussed in the EU based study (The Local [1]). According to this study alcohol consumption and after-club parties are other contributory factors, which show that this specific age group is more exposed to rape. These were reasons behind why the Swedish rape law was amended making it more pro-victim. According to the study done by BRÅ (2005), it shows that 60 percent of the rape victims were young, under the age of 30 which agrees with the above age range showing that it reflects reality. The age group 66 and above does not appear to be a popular description in either of the places and therefore probably reflecting reality because it is still unusual for victims of rape to be in this age group. Relating this to media, it seems that they publish information when a victim from that age group has been raped because it is unusual and newsworthy assuming that the press hungers for sensationalism. Unlike in Sweden, Michigan tends to portray older victims to a higher extent, showing that they also receive recognition as

victims in the press. The section implying that age is not mentioned in the articles can mean that if there are no young or old victims then it seems as not newsworthy. When not mentioning age would seem more important in the articles especially when the law emphasis on this in its description.

In both cases the majority of the perpetrators were male (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2) reflecting reality since rape is usually committed by a man against a woman. The fact that it is a rape by a male perpetrator and suppress of power on women, makes it all easier to clarify a victim's innocence and vulnerability (Nilsson 2003:93). Female perpetrators do not seem to be excluded from the articles since if they would have committed a rape it would most certainly be sensational and presented because it is an unusual perpetrator. It is a fact that women all together do not commit as much crimes as men, which is then a realistic portrayal of the perpetrator.

It seems quite frequent in both places that the victim and perpetrator (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2) were acquainted with each other and as it is in reality the most common relationship is when the victim and perpetrator are known to each other contradicting an attribute in Christie's theory. The findings from BRÅ (2005) clearly show that the majority of the reported rapes are committed between a victim and perpetrator who are familiar with each other. According to Christie (2001) the perpetrator needs to be unrelated and unknown to the victim to make it ideal which does not reflect reality. This description is a clear example of how to make a legitimate case. Even though the most common case of being raped is by someone familiar to you (BRÅ 2005), the articles show otherwise and make this in turn legitimate. When the relationship is unknown by the police it seem to be a trend in Swedish articles to point that fact out which does not seem to be the case in Michigan. The trend in Sweden indicates that the press has a need to inform the public if and when the relationship is unknown by the police. As Chermak (1995) states there is more value to the description of the article if it for example contains a comment from authorities or family members increasing newsworthiness. Another explanation could be that the narrative technique between the newspapers differs.

The majority of the rapes were outdoors in both places, as seen in figures 5.1 and 5.2 presenting a more sensational view since they are considered attacks (BRÅ 2005). This does not reflect

reality because most rapes are not attacks (Jukovic 2006). More than twice as many rapes were committed at victims' home in Michigan articles than in the Swedish ones, which indicate that there could be differences in lifestyles. Since the age group of 15 to 30 was the most represented, it could be connected to where and how the younger audiences socialize. When the rape is committed in a victims home it does not seem to be ideal if the perpetrator is invited in. On the contrary a home should be considered a decent place in order to gain legitimate status.

It is clear from figure 6.1 that most rapes take place during nighttime in Sweden. This can be related to the ideas behind Sweden having a strong nightlife, high alcohol consumption and private home parties at nighttime. One is for example more exposed to a possible attack on the way home after a night out in town. The fact that time is not mentioned in the majority of the Michigan articles may be due to the fact that time is not as important to write about in the articles and it may also be that the audience does not require knowing about it. Moreover both Swedish and Michigan articles tend to mention time even if the rape is committed during daytime, which shows no differences between the two places. A female rape victim who does not receive legitimate status for example in a case where the rape was committed at nighttime (majority in both Sweden and Michigan) can be recognized as a construction of normative femininity. In specific women have a need to be seen as respectable by themselves and others, and this works through self-control and self-image. Similar to what is not ideal is deviating from the norm. If a rape victim deviates from the concept of the ideal victim she (he) is left without recognition. Moreover if a victim feels that the public and legal system blames her (him) for what has happened they might not proceed with legal actions and so could be the case in Sweden. If close relationship rapes are less reported then there seem to be social errors in the view on women's rights. The disparity between the high reported rates of rape and convicted rapes reflect this. The Amnesty study (2008) supports this fact saying that rape in intimate relationships tend not to result in legal actions.

In figures 7.1 and 7.2 the majority was an attack in both the places. The findings from BRÅ (2005) show that rapes that are attacks (*överfallsvåldtäkt*) receive greater attention when the victim is suddenly attacked by an unknown perpetrator. A reason behind this could directly indicate the high rate of reported cases in Sweden and Michigan. This goes to show the

importance and emphasis both places have on actually reporting a rape. In that sense it is not looked down upon to be a victim of rape and the values and attitudes of both these places could indicate encouragement in reporting rapes that are attacks. In relation to the concept of the ideal victim, attack being the most popular description is also assumed to be the most legitimate type of rape, although it might clash with the attribute of being at a decent place at a decent hour. Since most of the articles report more on attacks, which is not a reflection of reality, a large group of rape victims are ignored in the Swedish and Michigan press.

Most victims not in a helpless condition (see figures 8.1 and 8.2) contradict some of the attributes of Christie showing that a victim does not necessarily need to be in a helpless condition to gain recognition in the press. There just seem to be victims in both places who are “ordinary” but still makes it to the newspapers. If the victim was asleep at the time of the rape, it is now considered rape and not only sexual abuse in both Sweden and Michigan meaning that a rape victim trying to make a case is supported by the redefinition of the rape law.

The fact that the Swedish articles tend to be less detailed than Michigan (see figures 9.1 and 9.2) could indicate that in Sweden it seems to always be important to write if a rape has been committed even though there is little information on the rape. There are usually basic details about the sex, age of the victim and location of the crime. It will still be written as a press item with all the critical information of what happened being mentioned, which does not seem to be the trend in Michigan. On the contrary the articles are much more in detail and personal showing a cultural difference between the two places. As a reader one seems to be able to follow a process of a rape committed in Michigan, with sometimes pictures and personal details of the perpetrator being published, it seems to take on a more personal stand than in Sweden. This can be expected at times in Sweden too but still less than Michigan. A reason for this could be how integrity in Sweden is protected during legal processes. Personal information is left out unless the case is made public regarding charges and conviction or when a case is well recognized.

The themes “relationship” and “attack” are portrayed as ideal in both places not reflecting reality. An overlap between these two themes can be discussed since they can both be related to the fact whether the victim and perpetrator are acquainted or not. But since attack was only used as it was mentioned in the articles this would not be a limitation. The ideal portrayals of the two

themes can be seen as a consequence affecting victims' belongingness in Sweden and Michigan. This has a negative effect on those who have been raped by an acquaintance because they are not recognized as much in the portrayals. There does not seem to be any explanations for why one place or the other emphasizes these popular descriptions other than the reason being the media's selectiveness.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The most popular description of being a rape victim in Sweden and Michigan has a lot of commonalities with few things differentiating the two locations. These could be reasons behind different attitudes and norms that each of these societies are built upon. Having different backgrounds, lifestyles, politics etcetera teaches each society to live and think in certain ways.

We have compared Sweden and Michigan to examine whether their similar legal structures impact media portrayals of the ideal victim. A quantitative content analysis was done on newspaper articles from the two places for years 2008 and 2009 with Christie's theory (2001) being used as the theoretical approach. The purpose was to find out how the press portrays a rape victim in relation to the ideal victim in Sweden and Michigan. The dominating concept of the ideal victim was similar in Sweden and Michigan with some characteristics differentiating the concept.

In today's society crime and crime victims are frequently discussed. It is fair to state that the media have an impact on what is being selectively shown to society and the different ways in which people in society understand the outside world. In general the media are drawn towards acts that are visible and spectacular, especially if they have a sexual or political implication (Chermak 1995). This means that the media holds a certain power to choose what to report on to the public. Even though the most common type of rape is committed when the victim and the perpetrator is acquainted, the press similarly in Sweden and Michigan still chooses to write on attacks, mediating that as the most common portrayal. Rape is a crime with high value newsworthiness because it violates the victim's integrity. Being a rape victim and making it to the newspapers gives you legitimate status as a victim. Being a crime victim makes you a victim but does not always gain status as being legitimate. So why the need to be legitimate? It can be seen as a self-helping and healing process for a victim to have made a case for oneself and been

portrayed in public as an ideal victim. This leads to some victims being labeled as deserving to be an ideal victim while others become undeserving victims (Walklate 2007). The nearer an individual fits to the ideal concept, the more attention they are likely to receive.

The restrictive and redefined laws show low tolerance towards rape in Sweden and Michigan. An indication of the high rates of reported rapes can be explained by measures taken to change the law but also because of the development of numerous victim support organizations. Maybe the two places could be seen as model societies when it comes to high reporting even though conviction rates are extremely low in Sweden in relation to the high rates of reported rapes. The fact that rape victims report their cases shows a trust towards the legal system, policy making and having hope that the process will help them get through the trauma whether it is with help from victims support organization or other measures.

When looking at the big picture meaning all of the themes of what are ideal in the articles in Sweden and Michigan, they show ideal portrayals but when looking at the themes separately there are some that do not agree with Christie's attributes. Those are time of crime and whether the victim was in a helpless condition or not. Since most of the rapes in the Swedish articles were committed during nighttime, it really reflects the active nightlife in Sweden. The attitudes towards alcohol and partying seem more neutral in Sweden than it does in Michigan. It can be stated that both the press and the rape law in Sweden show no negative attitudes to partying and it is not held against a rape victim even though it contradicts the attribute of going about their everyday business because nighttime according to Christie is not a decent time. In Michigan the press reports less on the time of the rape indicating no particular connections to this.

When a victim does not fit into the six attributes by Christie, the victim is not considered ideal. This can be said to have a negative effect on a victim not being able to gain enough recognition as an ideal victim. It seems highly unlikely that a victim can fulfil all of the six attributes to be an ideal victim in real life, and that is where the rape law makes a difference. It has now a broadened definition making it pro-victim and including all victims to be able to get recognized.

We believe Sweden and Michigan emphasize the ideal victim in a similar manner. It is important to recognize this in order to understand reasons behind how different victim portrayals are presented. This paper brings to light the importance for a rape victim to get back their lives by support, effort and recognition from society.

The complexity of statistics regarding reported rapes through an international perspective is something one should have in mind when reading this paper. Sweden and Michigan can for example be said to have similar social control of women, regardless of von Hofer's (2006) discussion on the factors affecting rape statistics. It can be explained because of their similar high rates of reported rapes. There might still be differences in how statistics are kept and interpreted between the two places but there are still important similarities in their respective legal structures motivating the high rates.

Having less material for Michigan than Sweden is clearly problematic. This means that the results from Michigan are not as substantive and can not be generalized to a larger extent as we can do for the Swedish material even though we added an extra year for Michigan to increase validity.

For future research the newspapers that were missed out because of their inaccessibility, could be included. It would also be interesting to approach this thesis in other ways by using other material. It would be possible to use court transcripts to find out other portrayals of victims. Court transcripts would contrast with media descriptions of victims in the sense that the descriptions are presented from a legal perspective based on the laws. These can be thought to vary from descriptions based on newsworthiness, sensationalism and the need to sell their stories. Another study would be to compare media portrayals of a rape victim in big cities with those from smaller ones. Chermak (1995) states there may be differences across cities because crime is unequally distributed. This means that in some big cities the media have a larger amount of crimes to choose from compared to smaller cities (Chermak 1995:133). The existing studies within this field are not really up to date, which motivates this research even more. Considering the method, having more of a qualitative approach would presumably add more variety to the material, results and analysis because it would allow more interpretation. Since we noticed pictures in the Michigan articles, an analysis on this could have been made relating it to

sensationalism, integrity and ethics. Additional theories combined with Christie's ideal victim could have been used similar to Jukovic (2006) in order to have a more variegated analysis.

Finally we argue that the situation is still far more complex regarding rape and rape victims. The media portrayals' dominating ideal descriptions becomes an obstacle in the process of gaining recognition and support for rape victims. There are as many different portrayals of a rape victim as there are rape victims and newspapers will never be able to portray them all in order to enhance each victim's individual status.

9. REFERENCES

- af Sandberg, A. (2004) *Dagstidningars beskrivningar av kvinnor och män som brottsoffer*. Stockholm University: Criminology Department.
- Boréus, K & Bergström, G. (2005) ”Innehållsanalys” (p 43-87) In: Bergström, G. & Boréus, K. (ed.): *Textens mening och makt. Metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys*. Second Edition. Denmark: Narayana Press.
- Brottsförebygganderådet, BRÅ (2005): *Våldtäkt. En kartläggning av polisanmälda våldtäkter*. Stockholm: Brottsförebygganderådet.
- Bryman, A. (2008) *Social research methods*. Malmö: Liber AB.
- Chermak, S. M. (1995) *Victims in the news: Crime and the American News Media*. Boulder, CL, USA: Westview Press, Inc.
- Christie, N.(2001) ”Det idealiska offret” (p 46-62) In: Åkerström, M. & Sahlin, I.(ed.): *Det motspänstiga offret*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Dignan, J. (2004) *Understanding victims and restorative justice*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.
- Horney, J. & Spohn, C. (1991) “Rape law reform and instrumental change in sex urban jurisdictions”. *Law and Society Review*, Volume 25, Number 1.
- Jukovic, E. (2006) *Våldtäktsoffret i pressen*. Stockholm University: Criminology Department.
- Karmen, A. (2000) *Crime Victim: An introduction to victimology*. Belmont, CA, USA: Wadsworth Pub. Company.
- Lander, I. (2003) ”Genus, normalitet och avvikelse” (p 21-45) In: Lander, I., Pettersson, T. & Tiby, E. (ed.) *Femininiteter, maskuliniteter och kriminalitet. Genusperspektiv inom svensk kriminologi*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Nilsson, B. (2003) *Brottsoffer. Offerskapets innebörder och villkor i (o)säkerhetens kultur*. Umeå: Boréa Bokförlag.
- Pettersson, T. (2003) ”Våld som iscensättning av femininitet?” (p 139-150) In: Lander, I., Pettersson, T. & Tiby, E. (ed.) *Femininiteter, maskuliniteter och kriminalitet. Genusperspektiv inom svensk kriminologi*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Tham, H. (2001) ”Brottsoffrets uppkomst och framtid” (p 27-45) In: Åkerström, M. & Sahlin, I. (ed): *Det motspänstiga offret*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Tobolowsky, P.M. (2000) *Understanding victimology: Selected readings*. (ed.) Cincinnati, OH, USA: Anderson Pub. Co.

Viström, J. (2009) *Framing the Crime Victim. A Qualitative Content Analysis of Swedish Editorials in the years 1997 and 2007*. Stockholm University: Criminology Department.

von Hofer, H. (2006) "Svensk våldtäktsstatistik i internationell belysning" (p 175-190) In: Roxell, L. & Tiby, E. (ed): *Frågor, fält och filter. Kriminologisk Metodbok*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Walklate, S. (2007) *Imagining the victim of crime*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

Åkerström, M. & Sahlin, I. (2001) "Inledning" (p 7-24) In: Åkerström, M. & Sahlin, I. (ed.): *Det motspänstiga offret*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Newspapers

Aftonbladet (<http://www.aftonbladet.se>)

Ann Arbor News (accessed through Westlaw)

Dagens Nyheter (<http://www.dn.se>)

Detroit News (accessed through Westlaw)

Flint Journal (accessed through Westlaw)

Other Sources

Government Offices in Sweden

Accessed: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/04/15/38/80b12cc7.pdf> (10-01-31)

Interpol 2009

Accessed: <http://www.interpol.int/public/Children/SexualAbuse/NationalLaws/csaSweden.asp> (10-06-14)

Michigan State Police 2006

Accessed: http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1645_3501_4621-25744--,00.html (10-06-13)

National Crime Victimization Survey Results 2006

Accessed: <http://www.rainn.org/news-room/rainn-press/2006-National-Crime-Victimization-Survey-Results> (10-04-15)

Statistics Sweden

Accessed <http://www.ssd.scb.se/databaser/makro/SaveShow.asp> (09-11-15)

The Local – Sweden’s News in English

[1]. Accessed: <http://www.thelocal.se/19102/20090427/> (09-11-11)

[2]. Accessed: <http://www.thelocal.se/article.php?ID=19124&print=true> (09-11-12)

US Department of Justice

Accessed: http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/offenses/violent_crime/forcible_rape.html
(09-11-11)

APPENDIX

I. Coding Manual

Sex of the victim is coded as male, female and not mentioned.

Age of the victim is coded into four age groups, from 15 years to 30, 31 to 50, 51 to 65 and 66 years and above, and not mentioned.

Sex of the perpetrator is coded as male, female and not mentioned.

Relationship is coded as victim–perpetrator acquaintance, not acquaintance, relationship unknown by the police and not mentioned in the article.

Location of crime is coded as outdoors, victim’s home, perpetrator’s home, other indoors and not mentioned in the article.

Time of crime is coded into daytime, nighttime and not mentioned in the article.

Attack is coded as yes and no.

Victim in helpless condition is coded as the variables of being blind, victim asleep, mentally handicapped and handicapped.

Content of the article is coded as less detailed and detailed.

II. Coding Table

	Swedish Articles	Michigan Articles	Total
1. Sex of the Victim			
Male	9	1	10
Female	62	33	95
Not mentioned in the article	1	3	4
2. Age of the Victim			
15 -30 yrs	42	19	61
31-50 yrs	6	3	9
51-65 yrs	1	3	4
66-	1	1	2
Not mentioned in the article	22	11	33
3. Sex of the Perpetrator			
Male	65	33	98
Female	2	1	3
Not mentioned in the article	3	1	4
4. Relationship			
Victim-perpetrator acquaintance	16	9	25
Victim-perpetrator not acquaintance	39	23	62
Relationship unknown by police	15	0	15
Not mentioned in the article	2	5	7
5. Place of Crime			
Outdoors	42	16	58
Victims home	5	6	11
Perpetrators home	6	3	9
Other indoors	14	6	20
Not mentioned in the article	5	6	11
6. Time of Crime			
Daytime	5	3	8
Nighttime	46	8	54
Not mentioned in the article	20	25	45
7. Attack			
Yes	54	23	77
No	18	12	30
8. Helpless Condition			
Yes	5	4	9
No	67	33	100
9. Content of the Article			
Less detailed	39	13	52
Detailed	30	20	50

III. Concept Map

