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# **THE IMPACT OF CRIME NEWS COVERAGE ON FEAR OF CRIME AMONG THE AUDIENCE**

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PORTRAYAL  
OF INFORMATION IN LOCAL NEWSPAPERS

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Martinez Olsson, E. The impact of crime news coverage on fear of crime among the audience. A content analysis of the portrayal of information in local newspapers. *Degree project in Criminology 30 credits*. Malmö University: Faculty of health and society, Department of Criminology, 2014

The influence of crime news coverage on fear of crime in the audience has for decades been evaluated as a social problem. Indicating a relationship of exposure to crime news and the emergence of fear of crime. However, the research on crime news coverage is limited, and questions remain about how the lack of information in the portrayal of crime in newspaper influences fear of crime among the audience. This study examines the presentation of crime news in newspapers regarding the amount of information provided to the reader, and the influence of this coverage on fear of crime among the readers. The sample consist of 900 crime news articles published in two local newspapers in Skåne, Sweden, and were content analyzed based on previous research, and on theoretical perspectives of Locus of control, Assignment of responsibility, and Downward comparison. The results show that both information regarding the context of the crime incident, and information regarding the characteristics of the victim and offender are rarely portrayed in the crime news. The results also imply that the absence of information, provide in the newspapers, may influence fear of crime among the readers. This is suggested to be due to the lack of ability to control crime events, and to evaluate one's own risk for victimization. Finally, this study suggests educating newspaper journalist in public health method, which might lead to a decreased risk for fear of crime among the audience.

*Keywords:* content analysis, crime news coverage, crime perception, fear of crime, media, theoretical perspectives.

# **BETYDELSEN AV RAPPORTERING AV BROTTSNYHETER I UTVECKLANDET AV RÄDSLÅ FÖR BROTT BLAND TIDNINGSLÄSARE**

EN INNEHÅLLSANALYS AV PORTRÄTERING  
AV INFORMATION I LOKALA  
NYHETSTIDNINGAR

ELINA MARTINEZ OLSSON

Martinez Olsson, E. Betydelsen av rapportering av brottsnyheter i utvecklandet av rädsla för brott bland tidningsläsare. En innehållsanalys av porträttering av information i lokala nyhetstidningar. *Examensarbete i kriminologi, 30 högskolepoäng*. Malmö högskola: Fakulteten för hälsa och samhälle, institutionen för kriminologi, 2014

Nyhetsrapporteringen av brott och dess inverkan på läsarnas rädsla för brott har i årtionden studerats som ett socialt problem. Dessa studier indikerar på en relation mellan exponeringen av brottsnyheter och uppkomsten av rädsla för brott. Däremot är forskningen gällande brottsrapportering begränsad och lämnar utrymme för frågor gällande hur bristen på information i porträttering av brottsnyheter påverkar rädslan för brott bland läsarna. Denna studie undersöker hur presentationen av brottsnyheter gällande mängden information som tilldelas läsaren ser ut och hur denna rapportering påverkar rädslan för brott bland läsarna. Urvalet för studien består av 900 brottsartiklar, publicerade i två lokaltidningar i Skåne, Sverige. Genom innehållsanalys studeras artiklarna utifrån de teoretiska perspektiven kontrollokus, tillskrivning av ansvar och nedåtriktad jämförelse. Resultaten visar att både information gällande kontexten av en brottshandling samt information gällande egenskaper hos offer och gärningsperson sällan porträtteras i brottsartiklar. Resultatet visar också på att frånvaron av denna information kan påverka läsarnas rädsla för brott. Det antyds att detta beror på upplevelsen av bristen att själv kontrollera brottshändelser samt en bristande förmåga att kunna avgöra sin egen risk för utsatthet för brott. Avslutningsvis föreslås utbildning av journalister i författande metoder som kan minska risken för rädsla för brott bland läsarna.

*Nyckelord:* innehållsanalys, nyhetsrapportering av brott, media, rädsla för brott, teoretiskt perspektiv.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This study examines how crime news is covered in printed newspapers, and how this may affect the audience fear of crime. More specifically, the study examines the potential effects of the absence of characteristic information such as victim-offender gender, age, and ethnicity, and contextual information such as crime location, victim randomness, victim blaming, and crime type in the crime news, on the audience fear of crime. Based on a theoretical discussion derived from the perspectives of Locus of control, Assignment of responsibility, and Downward comparison, this study evaluates the risk of the emergence of fear of crime among the readers.

The coverage of crime in the media, especially violent crimes, has for decades been of interest for researchers (Duwe, 2000, Heath, 1984, Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). Newspaper journalists often portray crime in a way that contributes a misleading perception of crime rate among the audience (Thorson et al. 2003). This portrayal has during the past decades been criticized, mainly because it is not consistent with reported crime (Duwe, 2000; Chermak & Chapman, 2007, Krajicek, 1998). Heath et al. (2001) state that even though the crime rate drops, fear of crime stays high. This indicates that fear most likely is based on other factors than the reported crime rate. Liska and Baccaglini (1990) state that fear of crime to a large extent are derived from the overrepresentation of violent crimes such as murder, assault, and robbery, in the coverage of crime news. They found that the more violent crime news the readers were exposed to, the more fear of crime they experienced (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). Consequently, as crime news mainly consists of violent and sensational crimes, fear of crime and perceived risk for victimization increases (Chermak & Chapman, 2007).

The coverage of crime in newspapers often lacks important information that could contribute to a contextual understanding of the crime, indicating what may have caused the crime incident. Dorfman et al. (1997) found that 84 % of the crime news lack information about the contextual components of the crime. Heath et al. (1981) indicated that the absence of this type of information in crime news leaves room for individual speculations, and stereotypical associations about the crime incident. In turn, these associations provide an inaccurate perception of the risk for victimization, and an increased risk of fear of crime (Heath et al. 1981). In order to reduce the risk of fear of crime, victim-offender characteristic information, and contextual information of the crime news, as previously mentioned, is of essential importance when covering crime news.

Previous research on media crime coverage has mainly focused on one specific crime type when discussing the influence of the portrayal of crime news in media (Burns & Orrick, 2002; Dorfman et al. 1997; Duwe, 2000). These studies often involve an examination of the effects of violent crimes in crime news, on the audience. This is since these crimes to a greater extent negatively affect readers than non-violent crimes (Dorfman et al. 1997; Duwe, 2000; Liska and Baccaglini, 1990). Instead, the interest of this study is to content analyze all crime articles, regardless of crime type, that appears in local newspapers; and based on theoretical assumptions, evaluate the impact of the absence of contextual and characteristic information on fear of crime among the audience.

The theoretical perspectives of Locus of control (LOC), Assignment of responsibility and Downward comparison will offer an explanation of why fear of

crime may emerge from the coverage of crime news. The most essential of these theoretical approaches is that lack of information regarding what might cause victimization increase the risk for fear of crime. The perspective of LOC suggests that the perception of the cause of crime incidents influences the readers' perception of having control over one's own life events. This control is more likely to be achieved when the cause of victimization is clearly portrayed in the crime news (Houts & Kassab, 1997). This in comparison to when the victim of the crime event is portrayed as random, indicating that the risk for victimization is beyond one's own control (ibid.). The perspective of Assignment of responsibility more specifically describes the importance of attribute blame towards the victim. In order to assess their own risk of victimization, the readers must be able to distance themselves from the characteristics, or the behavior of the victim (Walster, 1966). This however requires information regarding the victim and its actions prior to the victimization, which is rarely portrayed in the crime news (Heath, 1984, Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). The last theoretical perspective also describes the importance of the ability to distance oneself from the victim. Downward comparison suggests that in order to reduce the risk of fear of crime, the reader must be able to compare oneself to the victim. If characteristic information such as gender, age, and ethnicity of the victim is portrayed in the crime news, and what behavior that might have cause the crime event is illustrated, the reader will be able to compare its own characteristics and behaviors with the one of the victim. By that, the reader will be able to draw conclusions regarding its own risk of victimization based on the information in the crime news. To conclude, the theoretical perspectives suggest that the less the characteristic and contextual information is portrayed in the crime news, the greater the risk for fear of crime.

The lack of information in newspapers coverage of crime has been studied and discussed previously, particularly from a public health perspective. This perspective suggests that the contextual information of crime events is essential knowledge when to reduce the risk of fear of crime (Stevens, 1998; Thorson et al. 2003). Despite this, the impact of the absence of contextual and characteristic information in crime news is somewhat unstudied. Researchers have called for studies focusing on how the lack of information might influence the readers (see Chermak & Chapman, 2007). As mentioned above, the impact of contextual and characteristic information in media has been studied before; however, this is true mainly in United States and United Kingdom. In a Swedish context this is an even more limited area, with just a few exceptions (Heber, 2007; Burns & Orrick, 2002). Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by examining the prevalence, or rather the absence, of contextual and characteristic information in the crime news coverage in two Swedish local newspapers.

Research has shown that television crime news, to a wider extent, affect public crime perception and the emergence of fear of crime, compared with newspaper crime news. This is due to that newspaper readers are more likely to select which news articles to read based on interest. This selective ability, Heath & Gilbert (1996) state, is much less established in television news. However, Heber (2007) states that crime news is the most striking subject in newspaper, attracting all type of readers. Only a few newspaper readers skip the crime news, regardless of where in the newspaper the article is presented (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). This indicates that the coverage of crime in newspaper do affect the readers. This media is therefore still of great interest when studying the emergence of fear of crime.

## **Aim and research questions**

Based on a quantitative content analysis of two Swedish local newspapers, the primary aim of this study is to examine how crime is portrayed in the printed newspapers with a special focus on the presence of characteristic and contextual information. A second aim is to, based on a theoretical discussion, evaluate how the presence, or rather absence, of characteristic and contextual information influence the emergence of fear of crime among the readers.

Given the purpose of the study, two research questions have emerged:

- How does the printed local newspapers portray crime with regard to the amount of characteristic and contextual information provided to the reader?
- Based on theoretical perspectives, do the portrayal of crime in newspaper affect the audience perceived fear of crime?

In addition to the research questions of this study, an ambition is also to illustrate optional journalism technique that generates a more accurate perception of crime rate, and the risk for victimization. Hopefully, this study will promote interest of the journalistic technique of the public health perspective, and by that reduce the risk of fear of crime among readers.

## **BACKGROUND**

This section will outline previous studies on the area of fear of crime, and in what way media covering crime news. This will include a description of how media may impact crime perception among readers, and provide a picture of how fear of crime emerges from the coverage of crime news. The section will also present a picture of the theoretical framework of this study, and demonstrate how these perspectives offer an explanation towards the linkage of crime news coverage and fear of crime. Finally this section will declare definitions of key concepts of the present study.

### **Crime perception and media**

Media plays a significant role in public knowledge of worldwide events, especially crime events. Previous research has shown that the preliminary source of knowledge of crime is gathered through media, and its coverage of crime news (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004). In Sweden, among 70 % of the population read the newspaper every day, indicating that this media plays a central role in public acquisition of news (TU, 2012). However, media often portrays violent and sensational crime news, resulting in a misleading picture of crime (Payne & Gainey, 2003; Duwe, 2000). Due to this distorted pattern of crime report strategy, there is an imminent risk for a stereotypical and incorrect perception of crime rate generated in public knowledge. Studies of perceived safety conducted by the Swedish national council of crime prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet, Brå), state that the public concern of crime is independent of the actual crime rate (Brå, 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2013, 2014a). Regardless of the number of reported crime (see appendix, Figure 1), the amount of fear of crime among Swedes appears to be unchanged (Brå, 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2013, 2014a). This implies that information

of crime is mainly obtained from sources where crime rate has been exaggerated, and were it is described as an increasing problem.

In order to understand public reaction to crime rate it is important to understand the process by which news are spread. The concept of moral panic indicates that crime news is spread by the description of a behavior that is strongly undesired among the general public. Moreover, the threat of this problem is largely exaggerated, where the offender often is presented as a monster, and the victim as completely innocent (Goode & Ben Yehuda, 2009). The focus of innocent victims, in crime news, emphasizes the stereotypical perception of who are responsible for threat in society, and who are the victims (Young, 2009). An example of the importance of public perception of a problem is the vandalism of liquor stores that followed the verdict of the beating of Rodney King<sup>1</sup>. The residents of South Central Los Angeles argued that the liquor stores were associated with a large number of crimes. As a respond to the public arguing to the amount of liquor stores in their neighborhood, media changed focus from the conflicts of Black and Koreans, towards a focus of the increasing risk of crime due to the prevalence of liquor stores (Wallack et al. 1993). Consequently, the residents took action and vandalized and destroyed over 25% of the liquor stores in their neighborhood (ibid.). The public reaction was directed to those who were described as responsible for the threat by the media. On the bases of the initial public concern, media enlarged the threat resulting in a moral panic. Cohen (1980) argues that this reaction is neither correlated with an actual threat, nor with the actual cause of the problem. Instead, the incomplete picture of the crime event might be enough for public reaction, and for the emergence of fear of crime (ibid.).

Besides providing the public with information regarding news, the news organizations' primary purpose is to make profit. Violent and sensational crimes as murder or manslaughter are attracting a large audience resulting in profit making (Duwe, 2000). Consequently, these types of crime are therefore of great interest for news organizations. The desire to make a profit might therefore outweigh the desire to convey an accurate picture of crime and crime rate.

What may also affect both crime perception, and news value is how the victim, offender, and context are presented in the newspapers. Researchers claim that it is not the absolute number of crime news that influences the audience. Readers of the newspapers are rather affected by articles focusing on sensational crimes, and in the way crime news is presented (Heath, 1984, Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). Heath (1984) also showed that contextual information is relevant to the amount of fear the audience experience reading crime news. The more random and sensational, and the more crime committed in the local area, the more fear and anxiety the audience may experience reading the article (ibid.). This indicates a relationship between crime news and fear of crime.

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<sup>1</sup> Rodney King, an African American man, was, during a furlough, brutally beaten to death by a group of police officers.

## **Fear of crime and media**

When discussing media, and its influence on audience, it is of great value to draw attention to the link between media and the risk of fear of crime. As mentioned, media contributes to a misleading perception of crime. As the publication of crime news focuses on violent and sensational crime, the public perception is that the overall crime is violent, and often with a fatal outcome (Duwe, 2000; Liska & Baccaglini 1990). In the light of this pattern of crime news reporting, researchers have studied how this distorted crime perception influence the audience. For instance, Weitzer et al. (2004), state that those who have media as their primary source of crime are more afraid of being victimized; this in comparison with those who obtain knowledge about crime through other relevant sources. This indicates a relationship between fear of crime and media. Obviously, different types of crime sources, for example victimization- and crime rates do influence people's fear of crime. However, research has showed that regardless of these predictors, media consumption is a significant source related to fear of crime (Chiricos, Padgett & Gertz, 2000).

### *Perception of control*

In their study of how fear of crime is affected by crime news coverage, Liska and Baccaglini (1990) found that readers generated more fear of crime while reading crime news covering murder or extremely violent events, than crime news covering non-violent crimes. However, what determines the degree of fear of crime among the audience is not only depend on the violent nature of the crime news, but also to what extent the readers can relate the crime event to their own lives (Chiricos et al. 2000).

Fear of crime is largely dependent on to what extent people perceive having control over life events, and how they perceive their own vulnerability of victimization (Heath et al. 2001). In order to contain control over life events, and to reduce perception of risk for victimization, people tend to compare their own personal relationships and life-style to the ones described in crime news (ibid.). In other words, Heath et al. (2001), state that people tend to perceive having more control over situations in a personal context (with friends, family) compared with an unknown context (with strangers). Therefore, while being exposed to crime news where the offender has a close relationship to the victim, the audience usually does not experience fear of crime because they have not previously felt risk for victimized by their friends and family. However, crime news describing victim randomness generates fear of crime because it implies that this crime could happen to anyone, anywhere (ibid.). This is also true describing difference in fear of crime in local crime news compared to non-local crime news. Local crime news generates fear of crime to a greater extent due to a close relationship to the area (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). The more local crime reported in the newspapers; the more fear did people experience (Chiricos et al. 2000; Heath, 1984; Liska et al. 1990). The fear of crime increases when having difficult to distance oneself from the victim or the crime event, be so in characteristics or in place of resident (Heath & Gilbert, 1996).

### *Group differences in fear of crime*

The prevalence of fear of crime varies between groups. Previous research has argued that those of least risk of victimization are those who are most afraid of crime (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). Fear of crime tends to be greater among women, non-Caucasian, previous victimized, and elderly (Weitzer et al. 2004).

Tulloch (2000) investigated how media influence differently among different groups, in four Australian cities. Through focus groups and interviews, Tulloch (2000) found that, almost twice as many women did fear crime compared with men. He also found that regardless of age, women tend to experience fear of crime (ibid.). This might be due to that women, to a greater extent compared with men, tend to perceive themselves as vulnerable for crime, throughout life (Tulloch, 2000). Despite this, men do too fear crime. Chiricos et al. (2000) found that when respondents read about local crime in the newspaper, the gender differences decreased regarding fear of crime. This indicates that the local setting, of the crime reported in media, might explain fear of crime more than gender differences. This pattern was also recognized by Liska and Baccaglini (1990), they stated that regardless of gender, fear of crime was influenced by local crime news, and also by the degree of violence portrayed in the crime news.

When it comes to age differences, researchers claim differently. Weitzer et al. (2004) state that fear of crime decline with age, and increase again in late middle age, and continue to increase the older you get. This might be due to, as described in gender differences, the perception of vulnerability of victimization. Tulloch (2000) argues differently, instead she states that perception of personal risk does play a significant roll in fear of crime. Further, Tulloch (2000) found that elderly see themselves in a less personal risk compare with younger people. Therefore, elderly does not fear crime more than young people. This might be due to, Tulloch argues, that elderly to a lesser extent find themselves in risky situations compared with younger people (ibid.). Consequently, age differences might primarily depend on the degree of avoidance of risky situations.

Although researchers claim that the primary predictor for fear of crime is previous victimization, and not media consumption (Weitzer et al. 2004), other researchers state that the indirect factors such as exposure to crime news coverage do play a significant roll in developing fear of crime (Bandura, 2002; Chiricos et al. 2000).

Finally, studies have shown that fear of crime is influenced by different kinds of structural information of the newspapers. First, the page number of where the crime news is reported plays a significant roll in the development of fear of crime. Liska and Baccaglini (1990) found that people tend to generate more fear from the crime news that appeared in the first section of the newspaper. However, this is not true for local crime news. Regardless of page number, local crime news affect the readers (ibid.). This might be due to the fact that readers do select the article to read by interest (Heath & Gilbert, 1996; Pollack & Kubrin, 2007). However, people do often read crime news regardless of where in the newspaper it is presented (Heber, 2007). Page number might therefore not be the primarily predictor for fear of crime, but is still of importance to evaluate. Moreover, fear of crime is also significantly affected by initially reported crime news. Crime news influence fear of crime differently depending on if it is initially published in the newspapers, or if the article is a follow-up of a previous reported crime event. The first time reading crime news of a specific event, generates more fear of crime than the following times reading of the same event (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). This might not illustrate a group difference, as the title refers to. However, this is of importance when examining crime coverage, and to predict differences in fear of crime.

### *Consequences of fear of crime*

Fear of crime is often studied by measuring belief of risk for victimization, level of perceived safety, and by studying changes in behavior due to fear of crime (Chiricos et al. 2000; Weitzer et al. 2004). Tulloch (2000) found that the respondents often refer to media while discussing the crime. Most people did feel that crime rate was increasing and that crime was getting more and more violent. Further, Tulloch stated (2000) that people change their behaviors in order to feel safe. For example, some of the respondents change their routine when to use public transport, feeling more vulnerable to victimization at certain times. In a Swedish context, this is true to some extent. Normally, fear of crime does not lead to routine, or behavior changes (Brå, 2014a). However, a recent study from Malmö University indicates that in some areas of Malmö over 30 % of the residents refrain from some activities due to fear of crime (Ivert et al. 2013). This implies how fear of crime might restrict people's quality of life by affect perception of latitude, and limit the ability to feel safe in ones own neighborhood.

Brown and Walsh-Childers (2002) discuss the third-person effect. This perspective claims that people tend to underestimate the degree to which they are influenced by crime news in media. This might give light to the change of behavior mentioned above. People change their behavior, or refrain from certain activities; however, they just might not think of it like refraining or changing. Therefore, it is likely that the avoidance behavior is becoming their new routines and life-styles (Litzén, 2006; Lorenc, 2012). By acting with an avoiding behavior towards situations that are perceived to be fearful, people tend to feel they are in control over their life-events, and by that experience less fear of crime (Lupton & Tolloch, 1999).

### **News content and the Public health perspective**

“ [...] media have done an increasingly poor job of developing balance between what is interesting and what is important. This is the difference between a crime story and crime coverage [...] (Krajicek, 1998:12).”

### *Crime news content*

The impact of exposure to crime news has been studied for decades. Krajicek (1998) states, in his critic of crime news coverage, reasons for the emergence of a distorted crime perception among the audience. One of the reasons, Krajicek (1998) argues, for this pattern is the journalistic interest of portraying sensational crime news, over crime news indicating a bigger social problem. Krajicek's critique, *Media miss real story on crime, while chasing sex, sleaze, and celebrities*, clearly describes the research field that during the past decades has criticized crime news journalism. These studies focus on the news content, and how crime news is covered in media (Bjorstorm et al. 2010; Dorfman et al. 1997; Duwe, 2000; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Heath, 1984; Liska & Baccaglioni, 1990; Pollack & Kubrin, 2007; Thorson et al. 2003; Williams & Dickinson, 1993). Most of this research claim that the amount of crime news exposed to the audience is not the problem; rather, it is the way of describing crime as sensational and random that has been criticized (Heath et al. 1981; Heath, 1984; Liska & Baccaglioni, 1990). Chermak and Chapman (2007), found, through content analysis of four daily newspapers that violent and sensational crime was significantly overrepresented in newspapers, compared to what is found in crime

statistics. This misleading picture of crime is also true for the portraying of offenders. Again, in contrast to crime statistics, Black people are overrepresented in crime news (Bjorstorm et al. 2010). Bjorstrom et al. (2010) found that Black people are more likely to be portrayed as offenders than White people, and less likely to be portrayed as victims. This is also an indication of how journalists cover crime news, and how stereotypical views of crime are maintained.

Moreover, other studies have found the same pattern as mentioned above. Media provide a misleading picture of crime, focusing on sensational crimes rather than social problems. For example, Liska and Baccaglini (1990) found, in their content analysis of newspapers, murder to be the most reported crime news in newspapers. They stated that, murder represented 0,02 % of the crime in the crime statistics; however, almost 30 % of the crime news was covered by stories of murders. Burns and Orrick (2002) evaluated the content of news regarding the tragic dance hall fire in Gothenburg, in 1998. In their study, they stated that the media did not provided any attention towards how the authorities handled the situation. Burns and Orrick (2002) argue that the authorities did several mistakes that might have contributed to the devastating consequences of the dance hall fire. Despite this, media focused on identifying and blame the offenders, and completely exclude other complex problems that contributed to this tragic event.

As mentioned in previous section, the misleading portrayal of criminals and crime events leave the public with a distorted crime perception. In turn, this creates an impression of a threat that is not justified.

### *Public health perspective*

Journalists often describe crime as inevitable, and ignore the possibility to put the crime events into context in order to cover the cause of the incident. The perspective of public health on the other hand portrays crime as preventable, and focuses on risk factors for victimization (Thorson et al. 2003). This perspective presents crime news including information of contextual and causal factors. This in order to present crime in a more accurate and justified way compared with the news coverage of most journalists. The public health perspective is a method to convey crime news in a way that emphasis prevention, scientific development, and the development of programs to enhance the understanding of delinquent behavior (Thorson et al. 2003). It also focuses on accurate risk factors for crime and vulnerability for victimization.

There is plenty of accessible information of risk factors and crime statistics, for journalist to use. By implement this type of information, the public would gain a wider understanding of crime rates and individual risks. Chiricos et al. (2000) found, when information regarding risk factors where included in the crime news it generated less fear of crime among the readers. Despite this, only a few journalists portray crime news accordingly. Dorfman et al. (1997) found that in about 85 % of the studied crime articles, contextual factors were absent.

Moreover, the perspective of public health also argues that crimes such as fraud and domestic violence are very common, and thereby a major problem in society. However, journalists rarely cover these types of crimes, consequently the general public underestimates the prevalence of these problems (Dorfman et al. 1997).

The public health perspective mainly focuses on conveying knowledge of the possibility of crime prevention (Coleman & Thorson, 2002). However, journalists

have to design their work to emphasize the portrayal of information of the relationship between victim and offender, define risk factors properly, and contextualize crime event for a better understanding of crime rate and risk for victimization.

So far, the impact of crime news coverage on crime perception and the emergence of fear of crime have been discussed. Indicating that there is a relationship between the coverage of crime news and crime perception among the readers. It also suggests relationship between the absence of information in crime news and fear of crime among the audience. Further discussion will offer a theoretical explanation to the relationship of the crime news coverage and the risk of fear of crime.

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical approach of the present study is based on three perspectives indicating how the coverage of contextual and characteristic information influences fear of crime. These perspectives will contribute to a wider understanding of how media coverage is affecting the audience (for an overview, see Table 1).

#### *Social learning theory and Locus of Control*

The first perspective, Locus of Control (LOC), emerges from Rotter's Social learning theory that explains why people react differently to the same event (Rotter, 1966). The differences, Rotter (1966) argues, are depending on how the cause of an event is perceived. The perception that one's own action has prompted the incident generates a greater feeling of having control over one's life events. In comparison, if the perception of the cause is that forces beyond one's own control caused the event, this would generate a feeling of having lesser control over life-events (ibid.). Rotter (1966) refers to these differences as internal and external control. Internal control refers to the belief of one's own ability to control life events. External control, on the other hand, refers to the belief that someone else is in control of your life events, and that it is not preventable (Houts & Kassab, 1997). Control, reinforcement and social context, integrate in this theory in order to give answer to a reaction to a specific attribute, for example fear of crime. Rotter (1966) states that the situation is of great importance in reinforcing a specific behavior. The reinforcement of a behavior in a certain situation creates expectations of the same outcome following the same behavior in similar situations in future.

Previous victimization is of relevance for a negative reinforcement to a certain context (Houts & Kassab, 1997). When victimized, or when being exposed to victimization through newspaper, negative reinforcement is imposed with the behavior that preceded the victimization. The fact that the victim was walking alone at night could influence the fear of crime in both the victims and the indirect victims, such as a newspaper audience (Houts & Kassab, 1997). In newspapers crime is often portrayed to be random, a random offender attacks a random victim (Tulloch, 2000). This does not leave any room for the ability to control behavior or life events. Instead it leaves the reader with the impression that it is nothing you can do to avoid being victimized. Therefore, as LOC indicates, when reading crime news where victims were randomly selected, the reader will perceive less control over life events. A perception of the impossible in preventing victimization generates fear of crime, and a sense of vulnerability among public (Heath, 1984).

### *The importance of victim blaming and Assignment of responsibility*

The second perspective, Assignment of responsibility for accidents, recognizes the importance of victim blaming on public fear of crime. Walster (1966) states that the more responsibility a person can attribute towards the victim of an accident (or crime), the safer he/she will feel. This is due to our propensity of engaging in a self-protective manner in order to ensure that we are not in the same risk for victimization as the victim portrayed in the media was. Walster (1966) also claimed that the more serious an incident is the more responsibility is people prone to attribute to the victim. In order to feel assured from victimization, people tend to attribute responsibility towards the victim, and note their inequalities with the victim (ibid.). To be able to engage in self-protective attribution, and to feel safe, it is essential that crime news articles provide information regarding victim and offender characteristic, and whether the victim can be assigned responsible for the victimization. However, newspapers seldom blame the victims for their own vulnerability. Instead, the victims are often portrayed as being innocent and randomly selected by the offender (Duwe, 2000).

This also indicates that people tend to compare their own characteristics with the victim traits portrayed in the crime news, including both behavior and characteristics such as gender and age. We want to distance our self from the victim in order to feel safe. If categorizing our self as similar to the victim, the more we feel that crime could happen to anyone, anywhere, which indicating higher risk for victimization and less ability to control life events, and more fear of crime (Walster, 1966). We compare ourselves with the victim in order to distance from the risks for that kind of victimization.

Previous research have found that readers experience less fear of crime while reading crime news portraying victim with victim blame, compared with when the victim is not blamed for the victimization (Heath, 1984). This is because when action were taken by the victim, it seems more clear what behavior to avoid in order to remain safe, and not being victimized. Therefore, information of victim blaming in crime news is important in order to avoid increased fear of crime among readers. The same applies to information of relationship between victim and offender. Portrayal of randomness in crime news increases fear of crime among the audience. It is important to contextualize crime, and communicate a more accurate picture of crime; this in order to generate a more accurate picture of risk for victimization, and to reduce the risk of fear of crime (Coleman & Thorson, 2002)

### *Downward comparison*

The third perspective of importance in this study is the theory of Downward comparison (Wills, 1981). The essence of this theory is that people gain subjective well-being by compare themselves to the less fortunate ones (Wills, 1981). Heath (1984) found that in negative situations such as crime events, people were prone to be as distant from the characteristics of the victim as possible. This implies that in order to maintain well-being, when reading crime news, the victim has to be portrayed as distant from your own characteristics as possible, including gender, age, and place of resident (Heath, 1984; Wills, 1981). Many researchers have found this perspective to be of great importance when evaluating the risk of fear of crime when being exposed to local and non-local crimes (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990; Heath & Gilber, 1996; Chiricos et al., 2000). Local crime news affect people to a greater extent due to the difficulties to distance from incidents that

occur in one's own neighborhood or city (Chiricos et al, 2000; Heath, 1984). Gill (2007) remarked that "one death at home is equal to 100 else where in the West, and 10,000 in the rest of the world (2007:113)". Liska and Baccaglini (1990) found that when reading non-local crime news, people felt safe in comparison. This suggests that, while the non-local crime news in newspaper decrease public fear of crime, local crime news generate more fear of crime, due to the difficulties to distance from the crime event.

These theoretical perspectives portray the ability, and the importance to maintain control over life events. As illustrated in Table 1, the theories complete each other by focusing on different aspects of information, presented in the news coverage of crime, needed to reduce fear of crime. Locus of control suggests that information indicating victim control is most important to reduce fear of crime. Assignment of responsibility offers a more specific explanation of why information regarding victim blaming is important, this in order to distance one self from the behavior of the victim. And finally downward comparison explains in more detail the importance of characteristic information such as gender, age, ethnicity, and crime location in order to distance from the victim.

**Table 1.** The Theoretical Perspective of the Influence of Crime News Information on the Emergence of Fear of Crime in the Audience.

Theoretical perspective	Information of importance	The emergence of fear of crime
<i>Locus of control</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim blame,</li> <li>• Randomness</li> <li>• Victim-offender relationship</li> </ul>	The risk for fear of crime will increase when information regarding victim blaming are absent, and when the victim is portrayed as randomly selected. The less control over crime events, the more fear of crime.
<i>Assignment of responsibility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim blaming</li> </ul>	When victim blaming is absent, the audience cannot attribute responsibility of the victimization to a certain act by the victim, and are therefore enable to note their inequalities with the victim. The risk for fear of crime is increased when the victim cannot be blamed for its victimization
<i>Downward comparison</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Ethnicity</li> <li>• Crime location</li> </ul>	The more victim characteristic information is absent, the less are the audience able to compare oneself to the victim, and the more fear of crime will emerge. Also, the more local crimes are portrayed the more fear of crime among the readers.

So far based on previous research and theoretical framework, factors such as victim randomness, victim blaming, victim-offender relationship, gender, age, ethnicity, and crime location have been found to be of great importance when discussing the risk of fear of crime. Information of victim randomness and victim-offender relationship is of importance for the reader in order to evaluate the risk for victimization. On the other hand, victim blaming, crime location and the characteristics of the victim and the offender is of importance for the ability to distance oneself from the victim, and by that evaluate one's own risk for victimization. The absence of information regarding these factors in the crime

news, increase the risk for fear of crime. In order to understand medias influence on fear of crime, it is of great interest to studying the prevalence of the aforementioned factors in the coverage of crime news articles.

## **METHOD**

This section will present the method of the data collection, and the coding procedure of this study. First, a description of the targeted newspapers will be presented, including and a clarification of the audience in terms of the range of the newspapers. Second, there will be a description of the data collection, including a presentation of the analysis method used for this process. Finally, there will be a presentation of the measures, and the coding procedure.

### **Choice of newspapers: Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne**

Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne are the most widely read local newspapers in Skåne (TU, 2012). Local newspapers have in previous research shown to be of great interest when covering crime news content in media (Heath, 1984; Liska & Baccaglioni, 1990; Dorfman et al., 1997; Bjornstrom, Kaufman, Peterson & Slater, 2010). The interest of local newspapers is mainly due to the fact that the crime coverage of local crimes seems to affect the audience more than non-local crime news (Chiricos et al., 2000). Moreover, by selecting local newspapers, the targeted population is getting clearer; this obviously since the audience of local newspapers usually is living in the local area. However, it is a possibility that people do read Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne electronically, not being residents of Skåne. Still, the majority of the audience of the targeted newspapers is living in Malmö and vicinity (TNS Sifo, 2013).

Some researchers argue that newspaper readers tend to be a specific group, including gender and economic similarities (Heath & Gilbert, 1996). However, the two newspapers, analyzed in this study, do not show these similarities among the readers. Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne appear to reach out to a wide audience, with significant differences in income, gender, and age (TU, 2012, see Table 2).

Sydsvenskan is the largest daily newspaper in Skåne, with 110 200 editions per release (Mon-Sun). It is a subscribed, morning newspaper that reaches out to a wide audience (TU, 2012). Metro Skåne, on the other hand, is the largest non-subscribed newspaper in Skåne, with 124 600 editions per release (Mon-Fri) (ibid.). The two newspapers reach out to roughly the same audience; Metro Skåne reaches out to a somewhat younger audience compared with Sydsvenskan's slightly older audience. This indicates that the two newspapers cover a wide audience in Malmö and vicinity, resulting in a generalizability of the readers.

The differences in the newspapers are very small (TU, 2012). Table 2 below illustrates the range of Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne among the readers. As shown in Table 2, the newspapers seem to reach out to both men and women, of all ages, and with different socio-economic conditions. The newspapers differ in terms of numbers of published issues a week. Sydsvenskan publishes issues on a weekly basis from Monday to Sunday. Sydsvenskan also publishes on days of public holidays, such as Easter holidays. Metro Skåne on the other hand, publishes from Monday to Friday, and do not publishes on public holidays. This

results in that the majority of data in this study contain articles published in *Sydsvenskan*, compared with articles published in *Metro Skåne*. This might influence the result in terms of differences in journalistic technics between *Sydsvenskan* and *Metro Skåne*.

**Table 2.** In Percent, the Range of the Newspaper (Swedish Population)

	Sydsvenskan	Metro Skåne
<b>Gender</b>	Percent	Percent
Men	4	4
Woman	4	4
<b>Age</b>		
15-29	3	5
30-44	4	4
45-59	5	4
60-79	5	3
<b>Household income (SEK)</b>		
-168	3	4
168-300	3	4
+300	5	4

### Data Collection

In order to examine the absence of contextual and characteristic information in printed newspapers, crime news articles were collected by content analysis from *Sydsvenskan* and *Metro Skåne*. The newspapers were gathered from the electronic media archive *Retriver*. *Retriver*, provides a simple solution to store data electronically. For this study, all articles included in the data collection are saved by print screen, allowing further investigations, and further controls of the articles. *Retriver* also benefits from the availability of articles, and to provide information of the total number of articles covered in the edition.

Using *Retriver*, every copy of *Sydsvenskan* and *Metro Skåne*, published from January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012 (neither *Metro Skåne* or *Sydsvenskan* are published on New Year's Day, January 1<sup>st</sup>) until Mars 31<sup>st</sup> 2012, were content analyzed through a detailed code schedule. The code schedule was strictly constructed based on the theoretical approaches of this study (see appendix, Table 3). The selection criteria included all crime articles published during the aforementioned period. However, as Table 4 illustrates, only crime incident articles were examined, including only those articles discussing crime incidents in the initial phase (discovery, arrest, investigation, indictment) (see Chermak, 1994). This included follow-up crime news such as crime committed in 2011, but where the investigation started in 2012. However, discussions about cold cases were excluded. This also included crime stories where politicians, or other authority figures, discussed development of crime incidents based on specific crime events<sup>2</sup>. However, these articles were excluded as they were more related to political position, than to the actual incident. Moreover, crime discussed in the section of editorials and citizen letters, incidents classified as accident (such as car accidents), stories about crime rate

<sup>2</sup> For example, based on the series of gun killings in Malmö in early 2012, politicians and police officers often discussed the gun law, including discussions of particular incidents

that did not include a direct incident, and other lists of crime rate were all excluded.

**Table 4.** Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria of Data Collection

Inclusion criteria <sup>a</sup>	Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovery</li> <li>• Arrest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold-case discussion</li> <li>• Crime development discussions (crime rate)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigation</li> <li>• Indictment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political crime discussions</li> <li>• Crime discussed in editorials or citizen's letters</li> <li>• Accidents</li> </ul>

<sup>a</sup> Crime news inclusion criteria includes incidents in initial phase (see above) including follow-up cases. This accordingly to Chermak, 1994

### *Time period*

As mentioned, the articles collected for this study were published in the beginning of 2012. This was a period in Malmö when gun killings were presented in media as an increasing problem. A publication from Brå indicates that in 2012, crime including guns was more common in Skåne, compared with the regions of Stockholm and Gothenburg (Brå, 2012b). Moreover the publication also states that the citizens of Malmö perceived more fear of crime in 2012, compared with citizens of Stockholm and Gothenburg. The demographic density of the population was offered as an explanation. The problem level of Malmö during 2012 makes it an interesting place and period for content analysis of local newspapers. This period may also be perceived as biased, and would benefit from further studies that compare differences in the crime reporting over different time periods. Despite this, Chyi & McCombs (2004) state in their content analysis of the news reports of the Columbine school shootings that “[...] the specific details of news stories obviously change from day to day and from event to event. But the narrative strategies employed in journalistic storytelling are enduring. (2004 p.31) “ This indicates that regardless of a period including a specific problem, the storytelling technics of journalists remains. Bjornstrom and colleagues (2010) reached the same conclusion in their study of the coverage of ethnicity of victims and offenders in media. They stated that there is no empirical support for the change of coverage patterns over a few years period. To conclude, this is making the period of 2012 interesting to evaluate, based on the report of Brå (Brå, 2012b); however, not completely biased given the contextual information conveyed by journalists. Given the purpose of this study, the selected period is also a valid choice of time to describe the content of crime news in media in Malmö and vicinity.

### **Content analysis**

The content analysis used in this study, is appropriate based on its opportunities to studying data in detail, but still enable to keep high level of objectivity in the analysis. The content analysis enables a systematic coding procedure, increasing the ability for replication, and decreasing the risk for subjective interpretations of the data (Bryman, 2011). Bryman (2011) states that the emphasis in content analysis may lie in both the information covered in media, but might also direct the interest towards the non-covered information. For the aim of this study, content analysis enables analysis of how details in crime news are covered.

Further, the theoretical frameworks of this study are the guidelines of how to approach the data material, and also create the basis for the interpretations of the results. The theoretical approaches also enable a response to the details presented in the content analysis, and allow an answer to the question of how crime news coverage might affect the audience.

## **Measures**

The following section will present the variables and the coding procedure of the study. It will also provide a more detailed description of the structural, contextual and characteristic information referred to in the study.

Through content analysis, the newspapers were analyzed based on the variables identified to be of importance for the evaluation of crime news coverage in previous research, and emphasized by the theoretical perspectives. The *structural information* refers to the presentation of the crime news including the framework of the articles, follow-up crime news, and the placement of the articles in the newspapers. The *characteristic information* covers the age, gender and ethnicity of the victims and the offenders presented in the crime news. The *contextual information* presents the factors of crime location, victim randomness, victim blaming, and crime type.

### ***Structural information***

The structural information will provide an explanation of the framework of the articles, the follow-up crime news, and the placement in the newspapers.

**Framework of articles.** This includes variables of, name of newspaper, date, weekday, number of articles in issue, headline, and mention in other newspaper. As might be clear, the variable of newspaper, weekday, and date describe in what newspaper (Metro Skåne or Sydsvenskan), and on what date and weekday (Mon-Sun= 1-7) the analyzed article appears. Headline refers to the signature of the article, presented in a full quotation of the headline. Number of articles in newspaper refers to all articles in the newspaper, making it possible to evaluate the proportion of crime news. Finally, the variable of mention in other newspaper (no=0, yes=1), describes if the same article appears in the other newspaper analyzed in the study.

**Follow-up crime news.** Based on research of the impact of initially published crime articles on the increased risk of fear of crime (Liska and Baccaglioni, 1990), the information of follow-up crime news is evaluated. The variable of follow-up crime news (no=0, yes=1) refers to information regarding if the crime event has been mentioned in the newspaper before, or if the event is initially published in the paper. If a crime event appears more than once (not including same newspaper issue), it will be coded as a follow-up crime.

**Placement in newspaper.** Information of placement in the newspaper refers to where in the newspaper the crime news was published. If the article was in the front page (1= front page), centerfold (=2), presented as a notice (=3) anywhere in the paper (except front page), or else where in newspaper (=7). The following coding represent the multiple placement in the same issue: first page and centerfold (=4), first page and else in paper (=5), and notice on first page and else in paper (=6).

According to Liska and Baccaglini (1990), crime news presented in the first 15 pages indicates an increased risk for fear of crime among the audience, compared to the articles portrayed in the rest of the newspaper. For this study, since the newspaper editions often are between 25-30 pages, the 10 first pages are referred to as increase fear of crime among readers. By that, the newspapers articles will be separated the first 10 pages (=0) from the rest of the newspaper (=1), enabling analysis of the placement of the crime news as an indicator of increased fear of crime.

### *Characteristic information*

The characteristic information of this study refers to the factors of gender, age, and ethnicity of the victims and the offenders in the crime news. This information also refers to the number of victims and offender presented in the crime news article.

**Characteristics of victims and offenders.** In this study, gender, age, and ethnicity refer to the general characteristics of the victim and the offender, indicating that these factors enable comparison among the audience. This generates an ability to distance oneself from the victim, which might decrease the risk for fear of crime (Willis, 1981).

Gender (man=0, woman=1) refers to if information regarding the gender of the victim or the offender is presented in the crime news. Gender also includes values of no information (=2), indicating that no gender is mentioned. For victims a value of *victimless* (=77) is also possible, indicating that the offence is victimless, or when the victim is not present in the coverage of the crime news (for example, child pornography). Age refers to information regarding the age of the victim and the offender (adult=0, under 17=1). Victims and offenders age 18 or older are referred to as adult, and if they are 17 years or younger they are referred to as under 17. The age information also includes a value of no information (99), indicating that no information regarding age is presented in the crime news article. Ethnicity refers to the information regarding if the victim is Swedish (=0), or have other ethnicity (1). This information also has the value of no information (=2), indicating no ethnicity is mentioned.

The number of victims or offenders refers to how many victims (one=1, two=2, three=3, four or more=4, store, authority =5, material damage=6, animals=7) or offenders (one=1, two=2, three=3, four or more, gang=4, store, authority=5) that are mentioned in the crime news, both including values if no information (=99).

### *Contextual information*

The contextual information covers the description of the factors of location of crime event, victim randomness, victim blaming, and crime type.

**Location of crime event.** Based on the finding of previous research that local crime news is generating more fear of crime among the audience, compare with non-local crime (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990; Heath, 1984), crime location is evaluated.

Location of the crime refers to the geographical location of the crime. This indicates whether the crime was committed in Malmö, in surrounding suburbs of Malmö, or small towns in vicinity of Malmö: Lund, Lomma, Bjärred, Vellinge

and Dalby (=1), or if the crime was committed in the rest of Sweden (or internationally) (=0). This information also includes the value of no information (=2), indicating no mention of where the crime was committed. Further, location also refers to if the crime was committed in Sweden (=1) or in international area (=0).

**Victim randomness and victim blaming.** Research has shown that fear of crime increase when crime news portrays the victim to be randomly selected, and when victim blaming is absence (Heath, 1984). Therefore this information is of value to evaluate in this study.

The information of randomness and assignment of victim blaming refers to the importance of information that indicates whether the victim of a crime took some actions that increased the vulnerability of victimization, and whether the offender selected the victim by chance or not. The victim randomness refers to the information whether the victim was randomly selected (=0), or non-random (=1). Only if the article describes any relationship between the victim and the offender (No=1, Yes=2), was the victim coded as non-random. When there was no information about relationship, or if it expressed that relationship did not exist, the victim selection will be coded as random.

Victim blaming refers to the information regarding if the victim could be blamed for the crime event (=1), or not (=0). Included in the interpretation of victim blaming is whether the victim is previously known to the police (No=0, Yes=1, No information=2), is a member of a gang (No=0, Yes=1, No information=2), or if the article suggests any action committed by the victim that could increased the risk for victimization (for example, victim was in a hazardous place, walking home alone, being drunk). The coding also includes whether the offender was previously known to the police, or if the offender was a gang member (same coding as for victims).

**Crime.** When violent and sensational crime is portrayed in the crime news, the risk of fear of crime increase (Liska & Baccaglioni, 1990; Heath, 1984). The information of crime type refers to what kind of crime that is covered in the crime news. The categorization of the crime types is based on the classification of Chermak (1994). This classification of crime facilitates analysis on crime type. Murder (=1) represents those crime news where the victim is found murdered, other violent crimes (=2) represent assault, sexual assault, robbery, arson, kidnapping, terrorism, threat, attempted murder, all crimes including some sort of violence against the victim. The victimless crimes (=3) represent those crimes where no victim is present, including drug related crimes, drunk-driving, and weapons offenses. White-collar crimes (=4) are those crime news that cover fraud, embezzlement, forgery, and corporate crimes. The property offenses (=5) represent crime news of burglary, and vandalism.

Finally the unspecified crimes (=6), this crime type represent those crimes that do have a victim, but which in the crime news do not portray any victims. This includes child-pornography, trafficking, preparation of offense, and other unspecified crimes. It is clear that these crimes have victims, however, in the crime news the victim is neither portrayed, nor specified. For example, an article describes the case of a man who got caught for possession of over 200 child pornography films. It is clearly a victim here, however, in this case the victim is

not described, the focus is rather on actions that did not directly include a victim. This creates a problem as this missing data affect the analyses; therefore, due to the non-portrayal of a victim, these crime types will be analyzed together with the victimless crimes in the analysis.

For all contextual and characteristic information, the code *no information* was included, indicating that the article made no mention to that factor. For example, if the offender is unknown it is not possible to assign offender-characteristics to that specific crime event. In this case all offender variables were coded as *no information*. Moreover, for the victimless, unspecified, and property crimes with no victim, the contextual and characteristic information were coded as *victimless*. Below an example of a crime news article is presented, illustrating an example with only one victim. However, obviously there are crime news including more than one victim, and more than one offender. In those cases, all individuals of a crime event were coded separately, as victim2 or offender2 etc. However, if there were more than five characters of either victims or offenders, and no information of victim or offender characteristics were mentioned, *no information* was only coded for one victim or offender. In articles that presented more than four victims or offenders, only the first four victims or offenders mentioned were coded.

### **Procedure of coding**

As mentioned, all crime news that appeared in Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne, during a three-month period in 2012 was content analyzed on the basis of a coding schedule. In this section there will be a presentation of an example of one of the selected and coded crime news articles of this study. The example will illustrate the coding procedure (see coding-schedule in appendix, Table 3).

### *Example of a crime news article*

Below is an example of one of the articles selected for the study, followed by a description of how it is coded (the article has been translated).

#### *Metro Skåne, 2012-01-02*

“ **It was blood everywhere.** The year of 2012 began with yet another bloody gunfire in Malmö. Only 30 minutes of the new year had past when a 15-year-old boy was shot with several shots outside his home in Rosengård. The boy was taken to the hospital with life-threatening injuries. At 6.30 pm yesterday the boy died at the hospital. According to Hans Nilsson, officer of charge at the Skåne police, at least one shot have hit the boy in the head. ‘He got hit both in the head, and in the stomach’, Hans says. A witness, Metro Skåne talked to, says that he came to the house about an hour and a half after the 15-year-old was shot. ‘It was blood everywhere’. A lot of bad things are happening now, you start to get afraid to walk outside, the witness says. Late last night, there was still no suspect for the murder, and on their website, the police appealed to the public for help. The information officer at the Skåne police, Marie Persons says ‘ We hope people will provide some leadings on what they know’. The 15-year-old are previously know to the police, for minor offenses, but no serious crimes. According to Hans Nilsson, the crime will be classified as murder.”

This article was published in Metro Skåne on January 2<sup>nd</sup> (date=12/01/02), and it appeared on both front page and on page six in the newspaper (placement= first page and else in paper (=5), and first ten=0). This was the first time this crime event was portrayed in Metro Skåne (No follow-up =0). The crime occurred in

Rosengård, Malmö (location=1, and in Sweden =1). The victim of the crime is a boy (man=1, number of victims=1), under the age of 17 (under 17=1); the ethnicity of the boy is not mentioned (no information=1). The victim is previously known to the police (known to police=1), and even though with no serious offenses, victim blaming is by that claimed (victim blaming= 1). Since the police did not have any suspect of the murder (crime type=1), the crime news does not portray any information regarding the offender (no information on all offender variables). This also reduces the information regarding victim-offender relationship (no relationship=1), which in turn indicates that the victim was randomly selected (yes random=0).

### **Ethical considerations**

Previous research has shown how the media coverage of crime news might affect the audience negatively (Heath, 1984; Liska and Baccaglioni, 1990; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004; Coleman & Thorson, 2002). The distorted crime perception that is likely to emerge from media consumption, have been considered to be a public health issue. It is therefore ethically justifiable to evaluate to what extent the two most read local newspapers in Skåne provide coverage of crime news that promote fear of crime among the audience. It is important to highlight how the journalist technique might influence the audience, and, if necessary, recommend a change in the coverage in order to reduce the distorted crime perception of the readers, and by that reduce the risk for fear of crime.

## **RESULTS**

### **Analytical plan**

The first step of the analysis includes a descriptive presentation of the crime story content. This illustrates the coverage of information, and lack of information of the contextual and characteristic variables of the study. Initially there will be a presentation of the structural information, followed by a description of the contextual variables.

The second step of the analysis will, based on logistic regression, present the relationship between the characteristic and contextual information in the crime news. Further, there will also be a more detailed presentation of the information present in the crime news article. This exclusively includes information that is present in the crime news articles of the newspapers. This illustrates the newspapers coverage of the characteristic and contextual information in crime news.

The third step of the analyze will be presented as a theoretical discussion of the crime news coverage (see next section). This discussion will offer an explanation of the effect of crime news coverage on the fear of crime among the audience.

### **Descriptive analysis –absence of information in crime news**

A total of 1020 crime articles were coded. However, in order to examine the data material in relation to the aim if the study some crime types had to be excluded to enable analyze of the variables. Crime news that covered politics and war incidents were therefore excluded, a total of 120 articles. These types of crime did neither illustrate a specific offender nor a specific victim. Instead, these crime

news generally cover an ongoing political problem, making the contextual and characteristic information secondary in its importance. Moreover, crime news covering politics and war generally describes incidents of violence directed towards individuals with political influence, or directed towards an area in war. The specific aim of the violence of these crime incidents makes it complex to analyze based on the theoretical framework of this study. Due to the complexity of these crime types, the variables become irrelevant in a crime coverage context, and are therefore excluded from the analysis of this study. However, terrorism and mass murder are not excluded from the analysis. This is due to the randomness in the aim of the violence of these crime types. For example, Duwe (2000) found that mass murders often were portrayed, in newspapers, as random, leading to a perception of that it could happen to anyone, anywhere. The level of randomness makes the crime type relevant to the variables of this study. To conclude, the following analysis will be preceded without the politics and war news articles.

After exclusion of the crime articles that covered political and war incidents, 900 crime news articles remained for analyze. Table 5 shows the distribution of the crime type covered in the remaining news articles. The findings show that violent crimes and murders cover 54,2 % (14,2 % and 40,0 %) of all crimes reported January-Mars in 2012. The most common covered crime in the newspapers was violent crimes where assault, robbery and other physical violence are the most prevalent crimes (results not shown). The least covered crime type was white-collar crimes, represent 5,3 % of all crime news. This results are consistent to previous research, indicating that violent crimes are overrepresented, and nonviolent crimes are underrepresented in crime news when compare to official crime data (Chermak & Chapman, 2007; Duwe, 2000). The official data of crime statistics in Skåne 2012, indicates that more than twice as many nonviolent crime such as white-collar crimes (29 976) were reported, compare with violent crimes (14 774) (Bra.se).

**Table 5.** Distribution of Crime Type (N=900)

Crime type	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Murder	128	14,2	14,2
Other Violent Crimes <sup>a</sup>	360	40,0	54,2
Victimless Crimes <sup>b</sup>	69	7,7	61,9
White-Collar Crimes <sup>c</sup>	48	5,3	67,2
Property Crimes <sup>d</sup>	138	15,3	82,6
Unspecified <sup>e</sup>	157	17,4	100
Total	900	100	

<sup>a</sup> Assault, sexual assault, robbery, arson, kidnapping, terrorism, threat, attempted murder.

<sup>b</sup> Drugs, drunk-driving, weapons offenses.

<sup>c</sup> Fraud, embezzlement, forgery, corporate crimes.

<sup>d</sup> Burglary, vandalism.

<sup>e</sup> Child pornography, trafficking, preparation of offense, other unspecified crimes.

### *Structural information*

Table 6 illustrates the descriptive analyze of the structural information in the study. The descriptive results of the crime news articles show that more of the analyzed articles were published in Sydsvenskan, compared to the number of articles published in Metro Skåne. This is mostly due to the weekly publishing of Sydsvenskan (Monday to Sunday), while Metro Skåne is publishing only on weekdays (Monday to Friday). This might seem to make the analysis of the crime

coverage biased. However, Figure 2 (see appendix) illustrates the average amount of crime news published in Metro Skåne and Sydsvenskan in three randomly selected weeks (Metro Skåne *Mon-Fri*, Sydsvenskan *Mon-Sun*). The findings show only small difference in the proportions of crime articles in the two selected newspapers. By that means, readers of Metro Skåne and Sydsvenskan are approximately exposed to the same amount of crime news.

Further, Table 6 shows that most crime articles are published in the first 10 pages of the newspapers, this in both Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne. Regardless of crime type, 72,1 % (Sydsvenskan) and 84,0 % (Metro Skåne) of all crime news are published in the first 10 pages. The distribution of crime types is the same on the remaining pages of the newspapers. This indicates that all crime types are present in the remaining pages, but to a very low extent. Moreover, most of the crime articles are initially reported. This pattern are applied in both Sydsvenskan and in Metro Skåne, meaning that most of the articles have not been mentioned before, and are for the first time published in the newspaper. Slightly more than 90 % of all crime news articles in the newspapers are initially published. Liska and Baccaglini (1990) stated the same pattern in their study. This pattern is found to increase the fear of crime among the audience.

**Table 6.** Descriptive Analysis of the Structural Information in Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne (N=900).

Variable	Sydsvenskan		Metro Skåne	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<b>Articles in newspaper</b>	562	62,4	338	37,6
Total of both newspapers	900	100	900	100
<b>Placement</b>				
<i>First 10 pages</i>	405	72,1	284	84,0
<i>Rest of the paper</i>	157	27,9	54	16,0
Total	562	100	338	100
<b>Follow-up</b>				
<i>Follow-up</i>	55	9,8	31	9,2
<i>Not follow-up</i>	507	90,2	307	90,8
Total	562	100	562	100

The structural information described, illustrates the construction and the composition of the articles in this study. The findings show that this information is in line with previous research (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990), indicating a similar journalistic technique in the coverage of crime news. The majority of the crime news portrays serious offenses such as murders and other violent crimes. The crime news is published in the first part of the newspapers, and is mostly initially published stories. To proceed, the contextual information will be presented in a descriptive analysis.

#### *Contextual and characteristic information*

The contextual and characteristic information includes values of “no information”, this indicates that the crime articles did not provide information regarding a specific factor. This result section will be reported by separately present victim information, and offender information. The victimless offenses in this analysis consist of 27,1 % of all crime news. These crimes includes drug-, drunk driving-, and weapon offenses, but it also includes offenses where the crime is not directed

to a particular individual such as property crimes and white-collar crimes against stores or municipal property. These crimes naturally do not include victim-information.

Table 7 illustrates the descriptive analyze of the contextual and characteristic variables of the study. In the majority of the crime news, the contextual and characteristic information is absent when analyzing both victim and offender information. Even though most information is missing in the article covering crime news, age and gender is the most frequent information among both victims and offenders.

**Age, gender, and ethnicity.** Despite that almost 25-33% of all crime articles did not present information about gender and age of the victim; this is the most common victim-information portrayed in the crime news of Metro Skåne and Sydsvenskan. Gender is the most standard information when a victim is presented in the crime news. The victims presented in the crime news are most often portrayed as adult woman. Even though most victims are described to be women, the gender differences in the crime news are very small (men 22,1 % and women 24,1%). Moreover, most victims in crime news are over 18 years (25,6%), and about 13 % of the victims are under 17-years old. Despite this, it is still very common that no gender- or age information is presented.

The majority of the crime news articles of this study lack information regarding the gender and age of the offender. The gender of the offender is more often portrayed in the crime news, compared with age information. However, information regarding offender gender is absent in nearly one third of the crime news articles of this study. When gender-information is present, the most frequent offender portrayed in the crime news are men (58,8 %), only 6,8 % of the offenders in the crime coverage are women. Moreover, nearly 50 % of all articles lack information about the age of the offender. When information is presented regarding age, 45,8 % of the offenders are over 18 years, while only 4,7 % is 17 years or younger.

For both victims and offenders, ethnicity is seldom mentioned in the crime news. Only about 4 % of all crime news did mentioned ethnicity of either the victim of the offender. The few times when ethnicity is mentioned in the crime news it is more often a non-Swedish origin of the victim or the offender that is portrayed.

**Previous criminality.** Information regarding if the victim or offender are previously known to the police, or are members of a gang is seldom mentioned in the crime news, as illustrated in Table 7. In about 80 % of all crime articles, information regarding victim or offender previous criminality is absent. It is more common to mention previous criminality among offenders compared with victims. Moreover, in most cases when information is present it often confirms previous criminality rather than denies no previous criminality.

**Table 7.** Descriptive Analysis of Contextual and Characteristic Information (N=900).

Variable	Victim		Offender	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>				
<i>Man</i>	199	22,1	529	58,8
<i>Woman</i>	217	24,1	61	6,8
<i>Both man and woman</i>	17	1,9	28	3,1
<i>No information</i>	223	24,8	282	31,3
<i>Victimless<sup>a</sup></i>	244	27,1	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>				
<i>Under 17 (0-17)</i>	114	12,7	42	4,7
<i>Adult</i>	230	25,6	412	45,8
<i>Both adult and child</i>	12	1,3	7	0,8
<i>No information</i>	300	33,3	439	48,8
<i>Victimless</i>	244	27,1	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
<i>Swedish</i>	4	0,4	6	0,7
<i>Not Swedish</i>	37	4,1	36	4
<i>No information</i>	615	68,3	858	95,3
<i>Victimless</i>	244	27,1	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Number of victims</b>				
<i>Alone</i>	110	12,2	480	53,3
<i>One</i>	409	45,4	123	13,7
<i>Two</i>	65	7,2	42	4,7
<i>Three</i>	25	2,8	74	8,2
<i>Four or more</i>	52	5,8	11	1,2
<i>Store</i>	98	10,9	480	53,3
<i>Material damage</i>	10	1,1	-	-
<i>Animals</i>	14	1,6	-	-
<i>No information</i>	117	13	170	18,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Known to the Police</b>				
<i>Yes</i>	26	2,9	126	14
<i>No</i>	9	1	5	0,6
<i>Both Yes and No</i>	0	0	2	0,2
<i>No information</i>	621	69	767	85,2
<i>Victimless</i>	244	27,1	-	-
<b>Gang member</b>				
<i>Yes</i>	1	0,1	51	5,7
<i>No</i>	20	2,2	4	0,4
<i>Both Yes and No</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>No information</i>	635	70,6	845	93,9
<i>Victimless</i>	244	27,1	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Victim blaming</b>				
<i>Yes</i>	179	19,9	-	-
<i>No</i>	474	52,7	-	-
<i>Both Yes and No</i>	3	0,3	-	-

<i>Victimless</i>	244	27,1	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Randomness</b>				
<i>Yes</i>	416	46,2	-	-
<i>No</i>	235	26,1	-	-
<i>Both Yes and No</i>	5	0,6	-	-
<i>Victimless</i>	244	27,1	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Victim-Offender relationship</b>				
<i>Yes</i>	156	17,3	-	-
<i>No</i>	10	1,1	-	-
<i>Both Yes and No</i>	1	0,1	-	-
<i>No information</i>	489	54,3	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100</b>
<sup>a</sup> Victimless crimes includes drug-, drunk driving-, and weapon offenses. It also includes property crimes and white-collar crimes against stores or municipal property, crime not directed to a specific individual. Unspecified offences mention in Table 3 are also measured as victimless.				

**Victim blaming.** Previously criminality of the victim partly indicates information of victim blaming. However, victim blaming also includes indications that the victim somehow is responsible for the victimization, such as walking home alone at night. In almost 20 % of the crime news, victim blaming is mentioned in the article. In over 50 % of the articles, the victims have not to act in a way that might increase the risk for victimization.

**Victim randomness.** The result of the crime news suggests that, in most of the articles the offender has randomly selected their victims. Indicating no relationship between victim and offender. Victim-offender relationship is seldom mentioned in crime articles. Only in 17% of the crime news did the article describe any offender-victim relationship, and just 1 % of the articles confirm no victim-offender relationship. This indicates that victims are most often portrayed in the crime news to be randomly selected by the offender.

To summarize, the results of the descriptive analyze of the contextual and characteristics information show that this information to a great extent is absent in the crime news of Metro Skåne and Sydsvenskan. The most frequent information portrayed in crime news is gender information of both the victim and the offender. The age of the victim and offender is also often mentioned, however less frequently mentioned compared with gender information. Pollack and Kubrin (2007) also found this pattern of the portrayal of victims and offenders in crime news. They found that gender and age of both victim and offender are reported in the majority of the crime news. Also, in consistent with previous research, this study shows ethnicity to be rarely mentioned in crime news (Pollack & Kubrin, 2007). Moreover, victim or offender previous criminality is rarely mentioned. And as in previous research, the victims in the crime news of this study are often portrayed as randomly selected, with no previous relation to the offender (see Duwe, 2007). Finally, as illustrated in Table 8, the newspapers more often cover crime committed in the local area compare with crime events from the rest of Sweden, or internationally.

**Table 8.** The Mention of Crime Location in Crime News (N=900)

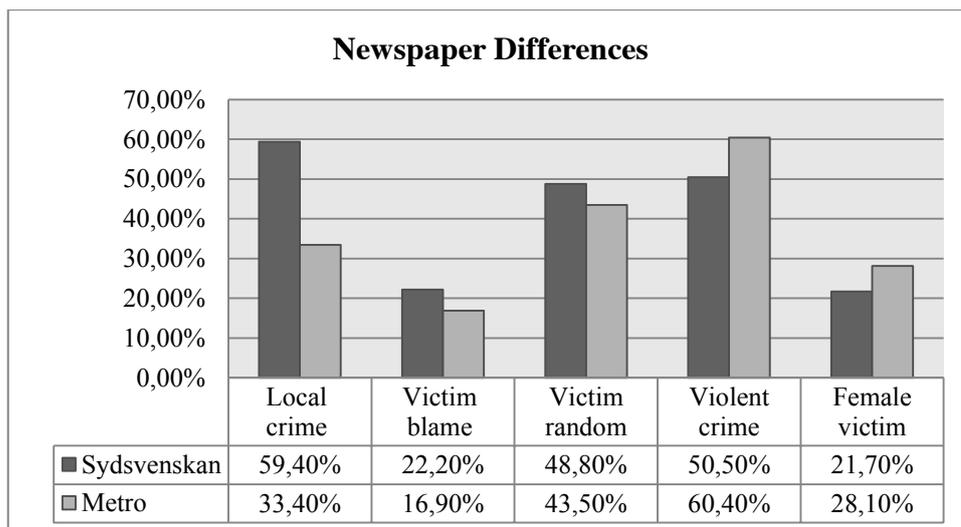
Crime location	Frequency	Percent
Local	447	49,7
Non-local	408	45,3
No information	45	5,0
Total	900	100
Sweden	773	85,9
Not Sweden <sup>a</sup>	110	12,2
No information	17	1,9
Total	900	100

<sup>a</sup>This number do not include war and politics N=120

### *Differences in targeted newspapers*

Based on the statistical information regarding the targeted newspapers, the differences were expected to be small (see Table 2). Indeed, the results show mostly small differences between Metro Skåne and Sydsvenskan regarding absence of information in the crime news (see appendix, Table 9). Overall Sydsvenskan show higher proportion of articles where information regarding gender and age for both victim and offender is absent. Metro Skåne on the other hand, report higher proportions of absent information in crime articles regarding ethnicity and previous criminality of both the victim and offender.

Despite small differences in most characteristic information between the newspapers, the results show larger differences in the presentation of contextual information, and also in the victim-gender portrayal (see Figure 3). Sydsvenskan publishes a significant greater amount of local crime news, and are more frequently report victim blaming and victim randomness in their crime news compared with Metro Skåne. Metro Skåne, on the other hand are more frequently report violent crimes, and do more often portray the victim to be woman, compared with Sydsvenskan.



**Figure 3.** Differences in the Portrayal of Information in Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne.

## **Regression analysis- variation in the portrayal of victim and offender characteristics in crime news**

In order to further investigate how local newspaper portray crime news, binary logistic regression was run to illustrate the relative chance that gender, age, or ethnicity information is mentioned in the articles. The initial regression analyze represents the odds for victim or offender characteristic information to be reported in crime news, based on the portrayal of victim randomness, victim blaming, crime severity, victim-offender relationship, and crime location. These analyses represent whether characteristic information is presence or absence (see Table 10).

Second, further analyses (Table 11 and Table 12) represent the predicted variation of gender-, age-, and ethnicity differences. These analyses refer to the relative chance that victim or offender of a given gender, age, or ethnicity is more or less likely to be portrayed in crime news depending on the same contextual information as mentioned afore.

As mentioned, the regression analyses in Table 11 and Table 12 represent the crime news where information regarding gender, age, or ethnicity *is* present. This analyze do not include the “no information” cases, nor cases with multiple age, gender, or ethnicity of the offender or the victim (both adult and 17 years or younger, both man and woman, both Swedish and Non-Swedish). In order to examine gender, age, and ethnicity differences, this exclusion is needed to refine the cases to only measure “man” or “woman”, “adult” or “under 17”, or “Swedish” or “Non-Swedish”, of the victim and offender. Since cases including multiple values are seldom mentioned in the crime news (see Table 7), this exclusion will not have any significant impact on the regression outcome.

### *Variation in the absence of information in victim characteristics*

Table 10 illustrates the variation in the portraying of characteristic information in crime news where victim randomness, victim blaming, severity of crime<sup>3</sup>, victim-offender relationship, or crime location is mentioned. For the victim characteristics, the odds for the victim to be portrayed as random is .05 times higher when victim gender is not mentioned in the crime news, compared to when information regarding victim gender is present. The results also suggest that the gender of the victim is significantly more than three times as likely to be mentioned in violent offenses, compared with non-violent offenses. The remaining contextual information shows no significant gender differences in the odds for being portrayed in the crime news.

Further, severity of crime is the only significant variable predicting odds for age portrayal in crime news. It suggests that the odds for victim age to be mentioned in crime news are 3.1 times higher ( $B=1.12$ ,  $SE=.24$ ) when portraying violent crime than non-violent crime news. However, in the remaining contextual information it is not significantly more or less likely that victim age is portrayed.

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<sup>3</sup> The information include in *severity of crime* differs between victim and offender. In the analysis of victim characteristics, the crime variable include only cases where victim is portrayed, which not include victimless, nor unspecified crimes. In the offender analysis, crime variable include all crime types, including victimless, and unspecified crimes.

Victim ethnicity is significant less likely to be portrayed when the victim is randomly selected, or when the crime is violent, or is committed in a local area. Victim ethnicity is more likely to be mentioned in crime news where victim blaming is present. However, it is important here to note that information regarding victim ethnicity is only mentioned 4,5 % of the all crime news articles, which one should have in mind when analyzing this result (see Table 7).

#### *Variation in the absence of information in offender characteristics*

Turning to the portraying of offender characteristics, Table 10 indicates that the odds ratio for offender gender to be mentioned is .41 times lower (B=-.89, SE=.19) when the victim is portrayed as random than non-random. That is, the odds for the offender gender to be mentioned in crime news portraying randomly selected victim, is less than half as likely than when the victim is not randomly selected. The results of the remaining contextual information show no significant difference in the likelihood of the mention of offender gender in crime news.

The age of the offender is two-thirds less likely to be mentioned in crime news where the victim is randomly selected, than in crime news with non-randomly selected victim. Further, the odds for age information to be mentioned in the crime news are 10 times higher when victim-offender relationship is portrayed. Indicating that it is less likely that offender age is mentioned when no victim-relationship is covered in the crime news. It is not significantly more or less likely to mention the age of the offender in the coverage of victim blaming, severity of crime, or crime location. Finally, the only contextual information that shows significant differences in the odds for mention offender ethnicity is the location of the crime. The results indicate that it is less likely that the ethnicity of the offender is mentioned in local crimes than in non-local crimes. However, as mentioned for above, ethnicity is rarely mentioned in crime news at all, which is important to evaluate when interpreting the results.

**Table 10.** Odds-ratios. Variation in the Absence of Characteristic Information of Victims and Offenders in Crime News Coverage (N=900).

Variable	Gender (0=No information)		Age (0=No information)		Ethnicity (0=No information)	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Victim (0=No information)						
Randomness (Random=1)	-.55 (.18)	.58**	-.31 (.17)	.74	-.68 (.32)	.51*
Victim-blame (Victim-blame=1)	.34 (.20)	1.41	.32 (.18)	1.37	.88 (.33)	2.40**
Severity of crime <sup>a</sup> (Violent=1)	1.23	3.41***	1.12 (.24)	3.10***	-3.5 (.45)	.03***
Victim-offender relationship (Relationship=1)	.67 (.72)	1.98	.75 (.66)	2.12	<sup>x1</sup>	1
Crime location (Local=1)	.18 (.17)	1.12	-.03 (.16)	.97	-1.90 (.45)	.15***
Offender (0=No information)						
Randomness (Random=1)	-.89 (.19)	.41***	-1.20 (.17)	.30***	-.23 (.39)	.79
Victim-blame (Victim-blame=1)	-.01 (.19)	.99	.19 (.18)	1.21	.39 (.40)	1.48
Severity of crime <sup>b</sup> (Violent=1)	.08 (.14)	1.10	.23 (.13)	1.26	.12 (.32)	1.13
Victim-offender relationship (Relationship=1)	.60 (.111)	1.18	2.32 (.72)	10.22***	<sup>x2</sup>	1
Crime location (Local=1)	.20 (.15)	1.22	.05 (.14)	1.05	-2.40 (.53)	.09***

\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Victimless offenses excluded

<sup>b</sup> Victimless offenses included

<sup>x1</sup> Significant level 1, 50% have expected value less than 5, no observed values of “no ethnicity-information” with no victim-offender relationship.

<sup>x2</sup> Significant level 1, 50% have expected value less than 5, no observed values of “no ethnicity-information” with no victim-offender relationship.

*The gender, age, and ethnicity differences in the portrayal of victims*

Table 11 illustrates the predicted variance in the portrayal of victim gender, age, and ethnicity in the contextual information. The results show that the odds ratio for being portrayed with victim blaming is half as high for female victims than male victims. Further, crime news portraying male victims predicts presentation of violent crimes. This indicates that male victims are in greater risk than female victims to be portrayed in violent crime news (B=-.89, SE=.36, Exp (B)=.41). For the contextual information of victim randomness, victim-offender relationship, and crime location the analyze show no gender differences in the crime news coverage.

The results show significant age differences in victim blaming and in the severity of the crime. The results show that victims under 17 years are less likely to be portrayed with victim blaming than adult victims. The odds-ratio to be portrayed with victim blaming is more than two-thirds as high for adult victims, compared with young victims. Moreover, it is 15.0 times more likely that adult victims are portrayed in violent crimes than victims 17 years or younger. For the remaining contextual information, no age differences are shown in the portraying of the victim.

And for the variance in victim ethnicity, the results suggest that being Non-Swedish victim predicts the portrayal in violent crime news. This implies that the risk for being portrayed in violent crime news is more than 9 times as high for Non-Swedish victim, compared with Swedish victims (B=2.23, SE=.53, Exp(B)=9.25).

**Table 11.** Odds-ratio. Victim Gender (N=416), Victim Age (N=344), and Victim Ethnicity (N=41) Differences in Crime News Coverage.

Variable	Gender (Woman=1)		Age (Under 17=1)		Ethnicity (Non-Swedish=1)	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Randomness (Random=1)	-.21 (.20)	.81	-.20 (.23)	.82	-1.26 (1.20)	.28
Victim-blame (Victim-blame=1)	-.58 (.22)	.56*	-1.23 (.29)	.29***	-.16 (1.05)	.85
Severity of crime <sup>a</sup> (Violent=1)	-.89 (.36)	.41*	2.71 (1.03)	15.04**	2.23 (.53)	9.25***
Victim-offender relationship (Relationship=1)	1.66 (.89)	5.24	<sup>x1</sup>	-	<sup>x2</sup>	-
Crime location (Local=1)	.01 (.20)	1.01	-.01 (.24)	.99	-.73 (1.25)	.48

\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Do not include victimless offenses

<sup>x1</sup> 50% have expected value less than 5, no observed values of victim age 17 or younger without victim-offender relationship.

<sup>x2</sup> No observed values of Swedish victim with mention of victim-offender relationship.

*The portrayal of gender and age differences of offenders*

The odds-ratios illustrated in Table 12 represent predicted variance of gender, age, and ethnicity differences in the portrayal of offender characteristics. The results show that male offenders predict the portrayal of randomly selected victims. It is significantly more than twice as likely that the offender is presented as male, when the victim is portrayed as random (B=-.88, SE=.31, Exp(B)=.42). The remaining contextual information shows no significant differences in portrayal of offender gender.

Further, the results of Table 12 show a significant age difference in the coverage of victim randomness. The odds ration for portraying the victim as randomly

selected is increased by 2.27 times when the offender of the crime is 17 years or younger. It is also significantly more likely for young offenders (under 17 years) to be portrayed in violent offenses than adult offenders ( $B=1.87$ ,  $SE=.49$ ,  $Exp(B)=6.46$ ). The risk for being portrayed in local crime news is twice as great when the offender is under 17 years, compared with adult offenders ( $B=.71$ ,  $SE=.35$ ,  $Exp(B)=2.04$ ).

**Table 12.** Odds-ratio. Offender Gender (N=590), Offender Age (N=454), and Offender Ethnicity (N=42) Differences in Crime News Coverage.

Variable	Gender (Woman=1)		Age (Under 17=1)		Ethnicity (Non-Swedish=1)	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Randomness (Random=1)	-.88 (.31)	.42**	.82 (.36)	2.27*	<sup>x1</sup>	-
Victim-blame (Victim-blame=1)	-.46 (.37)	.63	.26 (.36)	1.30	<sup>x2</sup>	-
Severity of crime <sup>a</sup> (Violent=1)	-.35 (.27)	.70	1.87 (.49)	6.46***	.34 (.88)	1.40
Victim-offender relationship (Relationship=1)	<sup>x3</sup>	-	<sup>x4</sup>	-	<sup>x5</sup>	-
Crime location (Local=1)	.20 (.49)	1.22	.71 (.35)	2.04*	<sup>x6</sup>	-

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Include victimless offenses

<sup>x1</sup> 50% have expected value less than 5, no observed values of Swedish offender with random victim.

<sup>x2</sup> 50% have expected value less than 5, no observed values of Swedish offender portrayed when victim blaming.

<sup>x3</sup> 25% have expected count less than 5, no observed values of female offender without victim-offender relationship.

<sup>x4</sup> 50% have expected value less than 5, no observed values of offender age 17 or younger without victim-offender relationship.

<sup>x5</sup> No observed values of Swedish offender with mention of victim-offender relationship.

<sup>x6</sup> 50% have expected value less than 5, no observed value of Swedish offender in crime committed in local area.

There are no significant differences in the portrayal offender ethnicity in the presentation of contextual information. Finally, worth mentioning is that for the victim-offender relationship, there are no observed values where female offender did not have a relationship with the victim. Resulting in an expected value to low for odds-ratio analysis. The same issue is applied when analyzing offender-age differences and victim-offender relationship. No value for offender age 17 or younger without relationship with the victim was observed. Moreover, no values were a Swedish offender was portrayed in crime news of randomly selected victims were observed. Swedish offenders were not observed when mentioned victim blaming, victim-offender relationship, nor in local committed crime news. It is important to interpret this result with the knowledge that the value of “no information” is excluded in the analysis.

In sum, in the analysis of present information, the main results show that information regarding victim characteristics (gender, age, and ethnicity) is more likely to be mentioned in violent offenses than non-violent. When information is present, the victims of a violent crime are more likely to be portrayed as adult, more likely male, and with a Non-Swedish ethnicity. The absence of offender characteristic information shows no difference in likelihood of being portrayed in the contextual information. However, again when analyzing presented offender information the results show that offenders of violent offenses is more likely to be described as 17 years or younger, but with no significant gender or ethnicity difference.

When the victim of crime news is portrayed as random it is less likely that victim gender or ethnicity is described. It is however no differences in the mention of victim-age when the victim is portrayed as randomly selected, than when the victim is not randomly selected. When information is present, there are no victim

gender, age, or ethnicity differences in the likelihood of be mentioned when the victim is portrayed as randomly selected in the crime news. It is more likely that offender gender and age is not portrayed when the victim of the crime news is described as randomly selected. However, when information is analyzed, the offender of the crime news describe a randomly selected victim is more likely to be portrayed as male than female. The offenders of such crime news are also more likely to be described as being a young (17 years or younger).

The victim characteristics information of gender or age is not significantly more or less likely to be present when portraying victim blaming. However, it is more likely to mention victim ethnicity when victim blaming is portrayed in the crime news. These results however include only 19 cases (2 Swedish victims with blame, and 17 non-Swedish with blame), and should therefore be analyzed with causation (results not shown). When information of the victim is present, it is more likely for male victims to be blamed for the victimization. It is also more likely for adult victims to be blamed for their victimization. When the victim is being blamed for the offense, there are no offender characteristic differences in the likelihood of being portrayed.

Finally, there are no victim characteristic differences in the likelihood of being portrayed in local crimes than in non-local crime. The same pattern is applied for the information of victim-offender relationship. The exception for this pattern is that the ethnicity, of both the victim and the offender, are less likely to be mentioned in local crime news. The victim is more likely to be portrayed as 17 years old or younger in local crime news, compared with non-local crime news. It is also less likely that the age of the offender is mentioned when victim-offender relation is not mentioned.

## **CRIME NEWS COVERAGE AND FEAR OF CRIME- A THEORETICAL DISCUSSION**

The aim of this study was to evaluate the coverage of crime news in local newspapers, and examine the impact of this portrayal on the fear of crime among the audience. The following section will summarize the main findings of the study, and discuss these in relation to how crime news coverage may influence the audience fear of crime based in theoretical assumptions.

First, there will be a presentation of the findings regarding the coverage of crime location, crime type, and placement in newspapers. Further, a discussion of the portrayal of contextual and characteristic information in the crime news coverage will be presented. Second, based on a theoretical discussion the victim and offender characteristic differences in the crime news will be presented. The theoretical discussion will offer an explanation of how the coverage of crime news, and the absence of information, might influence fear of crime among the audience. The discussion will also reflects on the differences of crime news coverage in the two newspapers, and how it might affect the audience differently. And finally a presentation of the limitation of this study, and further recommendations and policy implications will be proposed.

### **Presentation of crime news**

The majority of the crime covered in *Sydsvenskan* and *Metro Skåne* are violent. More than every second crime in these newspapers is portrayed as violent such as murder, assault, and robbery. The prevalence of violent crime is not in line with the number of violent crimes reported to the police (Brå, 2014b). Brå (2014b) suggest that one third of the crimes reported in Skåne during 2012 are categorized as violent. The picture presented in the crime news is therefore to be considered as distorted, when compared to the reported crime rate. This increases the risk for a distorted crime perception among the readers of *Sydsvenskan* and *Metro Skåne*.

Another distorted picture of the crime rate is portrayed through the amount of local crime news. Every second crime, covered in the crime news of this study, is committed in Malmö, or in the vicinity of Malmö. This portrayal of local crime news might increase the risk for a distorted perception of the crime rate in the local area. It might not been surprising that the local newspapers portray local events; however, the lack of an accurate picture of crime rate in comparison to the rest of country, mistakenly creates a picture of Malmö (and vicinity) to be an area with a very high crime rate. Payne and Gainey (2003), state that the more inaccurate picture of the crime rate the media portrays, the more inaccurate crime perception the audience develops; and a distorted crime perception increases the risk for fear of crime among the audience (Chiricos et al. 1997; Liska & Baccaglioni, 1990). The result of this study might therefore imply that the distorted portrayal of crime rate in the crime news coverage increases the risk of fear of crime among the readers of *Sydsvenskan* and *Metro Skåne*. The majority of all crime news cover crime committed in Sweden, this patten remains even when including the politic and war cases. This might also increase the fear of crime, reading mostly of crimes committed in the own country.

As for the placement of article in the newspaper, the majority of all crime news is placed in the first 10 pages of the newspaper, and is often initially presented in the newspapers. According to Liska and Baccaglioni (1990), this increases the fear of crime among the audience. They state that this is due to the fact that the articles of the first pages of the newspapers are constructed in a sensational way, keeping the readers interest for he rest of the articles in the newspapers (Liska & Baccaglioni, 1990). According to this, the results of this study imply, that the structural placement of the crime news increases the risk of fear of crime among the readers.

### **The absence of information**

The results of this study show that both characteristic and contextual information to a great extent is absent in the crime news coverage. The most frequently information covered in the crime news are the gender and age of both victim and offender. However, in more than one fourth of all articles, information of victim-gender is missing; and in one third of all crime news, the age of the victim is missing. When turning to the portrayal of the characteristics of the offender, around one third of all articles mentioned gender, and only about half of the articles described the age of the offender. Only in about 4 % of the studied crime news articles, ethnicity of offender and victim was mentioned. However, when analyzing these cases it reveals that ethnicity is in majority mentioned when a crime is committed internationally. This indicates that as the crime is committed abroad it is more common to mentioned the ethnicity, compare with when crime is committed in Sweden.

These findings are, with some exceptions, consistent with previously research. Pollack and Kubrin (2007) found that in the majority of the crime news, gender and age information is present, which is in line with the findings of this study. Moreover, in the current study, ethnicity is almost never covered in the crime news. This pattern disagrees with findings of previous research. For example, Bjornstrom and colleagues found that ethnicity is overrepresented when the offender is black. Indicating a significant ethnicity differences in portrayal of the offenders (Bjornstrom et al. 2010). Pollack and Kubrin (2007) on the other hand, find no such pattern, they found, in line with this study, that ethnicity information rarely was mentioned in the crime news. However, Chermak and Chapman (2007) found that the mention of victim or offender ethnicity did not play a significant role in the audience perception of fear of crime. This might therefore, to some extent, indicate that the pattern found in this study would not influence the emergence of fear of crime among the audience of Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne.

To a much lesser degree, the media tend to portray the contextual information of the crime event. The least portrayed contextual information of the victims is whether or not the victim has a background of previous criminality (known to police, or member of a gang). This information would offer an understanding in the increased risk for victimization prior to the crime event. In general the victim is seldom portrayed with any victim blaming for the crime event, indicating that it could happen to anyone, regardless of previous behavior. Neither do crime news articles mention victim-offender relationship to a large extent. Every fifth article includes information indicating on a relationship between victim and offender. Further, close to every second victim in the crime news are portrayed as being randomly selected by the offender. Again, this implies that the majority of the victims do not have any relationships to the offender that might have increased the risk for being victimized, indicating that anyone can become a victim of a crime committed by whomever.

The results are in line with previous research. Duwe (2000) states that the majority of all crime news published, portray the victim to be random and without any relationship to the offender. The more the victim and offender are portrayed as strangers to each other, the more newsworthy the news is claimed to be, and the greater risk for fear of crime among the audience (Duwe, 2000).

The great amount of absence in both contextual and characteristic information in crime news articles decreases the audience ability to distance from the victim. Heath et al. (1981) suggests that the lack of information also increases the audience ability to react to crime news accordingly to their perception of crime, result in maintenance of the distorted picture of crime rate and risk for victimization. This pattern also creates an increased risk for fear of crime, which will be discussed in the following section.

### **Crime news coverage and fear of crime**

As mentioned, most of the contextual information, and also information of victim-ethnicity is absent when crime news is covered in Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne. Accordingly to previous research (Heath, 1984; Liska & Baccagilni, 1990; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004), and also suggest by the theoretical perspectives (LOC, Assignment of responsibility, and Downward comparison), the coverage of crime news in this study might affect the audience negatively. With an absence of information regarding the contextual information of victim blaming, the victim-

offender relationship, and with a large extent of crime news portraying victims as randomly selected, crime committed in the local area, and mostly describing violent crimes, the crime news affect the audience and increase the risk for fear of crime. Accordingly to theoretical framework, the audience will experience less control over their life-events, they will not be able to assign the victims with responsibility for the victimization, and by that not be able to distance themselves from the victim as much as appreciated for not experience fear of crime. The fear of crime might also increase due to the large number of local crime covered in the newspapers.

In compare to this, gender and age of victim and offender are more frequently portrayed. This might decrease fear of crime among audience due to the possibility of distance from the victim. However, the presentation of gender and age might also pinpoint a certain group of characteristics that might increase the fear among those who can associate with the characteristics portrayed.

### *The effect of crime news coverage on fear of crime – a theoretical explanation*

As suggested by the perceived control perspective of Locus of control (LOC), the audience of newspapers is negatively affected reading that the victim is randomly selected (see Table 1). As the results of this study show, information regarding victim characteristics is often absent in crime news when portraying victims as randomly selected. This implies that everyone possesses the same risk of being victimized, and that the ability to decrease this risk is beyond one's own control. This also implies that it is the forces outside of yourself that control the live-events of your life. Moreover, most of the victims of this study did nothing that might have increased their risk for victimization. This indicates that the audience can do nothing to avoid being victimized. This lack of control will, according to the Locos of control, increase the fear of crime among the audience.

The lack of victim blaming will also affect the audience ability to assign responsibility towards the victim. This is important in order to confirm inequalities with the behavior of the victim. The results suggest that men more often than women are portrayed with victim blaming. This implies that women are in an even greater risk for fear of crime since most female victim portrayed in crime news are not to blame for their victimization.

The theoretical perspective of Downward comparison suggests that the more the audience are able to distance themselves from the victim, the less fear of crime they will experience. Heath (1984) expressed the comparison process as “[...] readers like the grass to be browner on the other side of the fence, and the browner the better (1984:274)”. This implies that the more distant from the victim, for example in gender, age, ethnicity, or place of residence, the less risk for the emergence of fear of crime. The results of this study show that almost as many men as women are portrayed as victims in the crime news. However, male victims are more often portrayed in violent crimes than female victims. This might increase the fear of crime among men. Women on the other hand might decrease their fear of crime since they are, on a gender basis, distant from the victims portrayed in the majority of the violent crimes. The results also suggest that young victims (under 17) are less likely to be victims of a violent crime, and are less likely to be blamed for their victimization. This implies that readers that

might recognize themselves with these characteristics are experience less fear of crime since they are rarely victims of violent crimes.

The prevalence of ethnicity information in this study is limited, it is therefore of importance to analyze these result with those condition in mind. Victim ethnicity is seldom mentioned in local crimes, this might be explained by the pattern of presenting ethnicity information in crimes committed outside of Sweden, making it more natural to describe ethnicity of the victim. The results also suggest that victim-ethnicity is more likely to be mentioned when victim blaming is described. Victims with other ethnicity than Swedish are more often blamed for their victimization. Again, these results have to be analyzed in relation to the low number of articles describing ethnicity. The readers of the newspapers might be influenced by the portrayal of ethnicity and victim blaming. This indicates that the Swedish readers might fear crime more, than Non-Swedish readers, since more victims of Swedish origin is portrayed as have not act in a way that increased risk for victimization, compared to victims of a Non-Swedish origin. Again, the likelihood of this pattern is based on very few cases, making it difficult to state this pattern as influencing the audience fear of crime.

As mentioned above, the audiences like the grass to be browner in their neighbor's garden, implying that the more non-local crime the less risk of fear of crime among the audience, they will feel safe in comparison. The results show that more than half of all crime news, published in Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne, is committed in Malmö, and vicinity. It also suggests that most of these crime news cover violent crimes. On the basis of Downward comparison, this indicates that the readers will experience fear of crime when reading the local newspapers due to the frequently present of local crime news. The newspapers portraying Malmö and vicinity to have as many victims of crime as the remaining Sweden have. The distorted amount of local crime creates fear among the audience, and influences a distorted perception of crime in the area.

Moreover, on the basis of previous research, the large number of violent crime has shown to have impact on the crime perception of the readers (Payne & Gainey, 2003; Chermak & Chapman, 2007). The overrepresented amount of violent crime news in this study, might also indicate an increasingly risk for fear of crime (Chiricos et al. 1997). Another factor that might influence the emergence of fear of crime among the audience of Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne is the overrepresented articles published in the first ten pages. Accordingly to Liska and Baccaglioni (1990), this pattern also increases the fear of crime among readers.

In conclusion, the portrayals of crime news in this study suggest that the readers of Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne might fear crime due to the lack of information portrayed in the newspapers. The absence of information, and the distorted amount of violent, and local crime influence the readers negatively, and increase the risk of fear of crime among the audience.

### *Differences in the newspapers*

The results show differences in the coverage of crime news in the two newspapers. Sydsvenskan publish many more local crime news than Metro Skåne. This might indicate that readers of Sydsvenskan perceive the local crime rate to be higher than readers of Metro Skåne do. Making the risk of fear of crime greater among the readers of Sydsvenskan, compared with readers of Metro Skåne.

However, Metro Skåne publishes more violent crime news than Sydsvenskan, indicating differences in crime perception among the readers. Metro Skåne also, more often than Sydsvenskan, portray their victim as female, implying gender-based differences in the risk of fear of crime among the audience. The publications of Metro Skåne might cause a more distorted crime perception among their readers compare to Sydsvenskan. Women reading Metro Skåne might perceive a grater risk for fear of crime than women reading Sydsvenskan. On the other hand, men who read Metro Skåne might have a decreased risk for fear of crime compared with men who read Sydsvenskan. This is based on the differences in the portrayal of the gender of the victim in the two newspapers.

Moreover, Sydsvenskan do more often than Metro Skåne portray their crime news with victim blaming and victim randomness. Based on theoretical perspective discussed above, this might partly decrease the risk for fear of crime among the audience of Sydsvenskan. The more victim blaming presented in the crime news, the less risk for fear of crime. However, the more randomly selected victims the more risk for fear of crime.

The newspapers seem to influence their audience differently. However, based on the theoretical framework of this study, it is not possible to answer which factor that influences fear the most. However, previous research states that violent crime and local crime are the factors that have the greatest impact on fear of crime among the readers (Heath, 1984; Liska & Baccaglini, 1990; Chiricos et al., 2000). This implies that the newspapers equally affect their readers in terms of emergence of fear of crime. These differences might be due to the differences in frequency of publishing of Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne, and also due to differences in the journalistic technique of the two newspapers.

### **Limitations**

The results of this study have some limitation. First and foremost, the discussion of the crime news coverage impact on fear of crime is based on theoretical assumptions regarding risks of the emergence of fear of crime. The results cannot express the actual fear of crime among the audience, even with support of previous research. Further, the results do not imply that the audience necessary develops fear of crime while reading the crime news. Instead the results of this study should be considered as illustrate the increase or decrease of risk for fear of crime while exposed to crime news in Sydsvenskan or in Metro Skåne.

Moreover, the results might be seen as limited based on that the sample of crime news only covered the 3 first months of 2012. It might be likely that crime news is covered differently over the year. An overview of the articles appearing in Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne in the media archive *Retriver*, show that crime news are more frequently covered in October to December (see appendix, Table 13), and less frequently covered in June-July. This indicates that January to Mars might cover a more aggregated picture of the crime news coverage over the year. This limitation could have been avoided by randomly select sample period over the year. However, in this study, the prevalence of initially published, and follow-up crime news has been of interest to evaluate, therefore this result in a non-random sample period.

The results are also limited to examine the coverage of crime news in Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne, two local newspapers that mainly covers crime

committed in Malmö and vicinity. It is likely that the audience of these newspapers also is exposed to other media reporting less local crime news that might influence their crime perception. It is also likely that other newspapers, published in Skåne, covers crime news differently from the targeted newspaper chosen here, for example tabloid newspapers. Again, the results are therefore limited to describe the coverage of the chosen newspapers.

For statistical limitations, the problem of missing data is necessary to address. The crime news covering political and war related events were excluded from the analysis. This was due to that such crime news seldom portrayed the victim or the offender of the crime event. This does not indicate that the information was absent, it rather indicates that the crime news cover an ongoing political problem, making the characteristic and contextual information irrelevant. Including these crime news would have made the statistical analyses misleading since these articles often excluded characteristic and contextual information. However, the exclusion of these crime news might create a misleading picture of the numbers of crime committed outside of Sweden. This limitation has to be considered while studying the results of crime location.

Despite these limitations, the result of this study is mostly in line with previous research on the field, making it more clear that the results should not be seen as anomalous.

### **Further recommendations and policy implications**

The results from the present study indicate how crime news are portrayed in media, and that the journalistic technique applied in *Sydsvenskan* and *Metro Skåne* might increase the risk for fear of crime among the audience. The results also indicate that the coverage of crime news might lead to a distorted crime perception among the readers. The further recommendations of this study emphasize the importance of a change in the journalistic technique in order to decrease the risk of fear of crime among the audience.

If crime perception and fear of crime partly are formed by the coverage of crime news in media, the way journalists cover crime in media should be altered. The public health perspective is a model of portraying crime news in a way that minimize misinterpretations of risks of victimization, and clarifies the articles by providing important information to reduce risk for fear of crime. Dorfman et al. (1997) suggest that journalists should use contextual data available when describe a criminal event in order to portray the crime news in its context. For example, data that contextualize crime by declare that most crime is committed by someone the victim knows, that violent crimes often happens under the influence of alcohol, and that a small number of all offenders are responsible for a large proportion of all crimes. This data, Dorfman et al. (1997) suggest, make the crime appear less random and by that might decrease the risk of fear of crime among the audience. However, if journalist is to contextualize crime news it is essential that law enforcement and other authorities, holding important information regarding a crime event, help reporters to gain this information.

Further, Dorfman et al. (1997) suggest that it is essential that journalists ask the right questions regarding the contextual and characteristic information of a crime event -did the victim and offender know each other? -Is the victim previously known to the police? -Was alcohol involved? These questions could provide a

more detailed and balanced picture of what led to the crime incident. This limits the audience ability to draw inferences based on a stereotypical belief about victimization, and instead creates a more accurate understanding in the risk of being victimized.

By educate journalist in the public health method, and provide them with an access to data needed to portray crime news containing a contextual understanding, the audience's understanding of the actual risk for victimization would be improved, which hopefully might led to a more accurate crime perception which in turn might decrease the risk for fear of crime among the audience of the newspapers.

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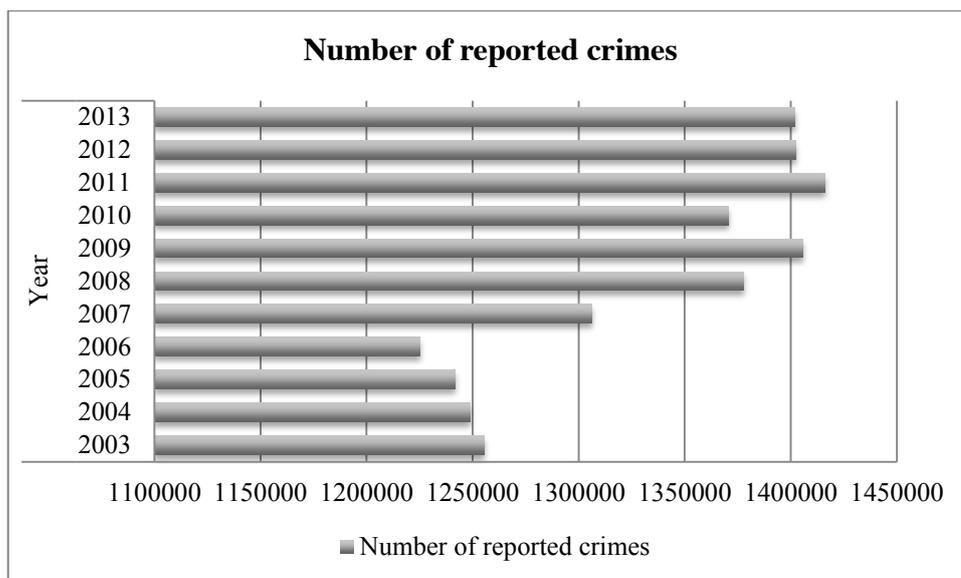
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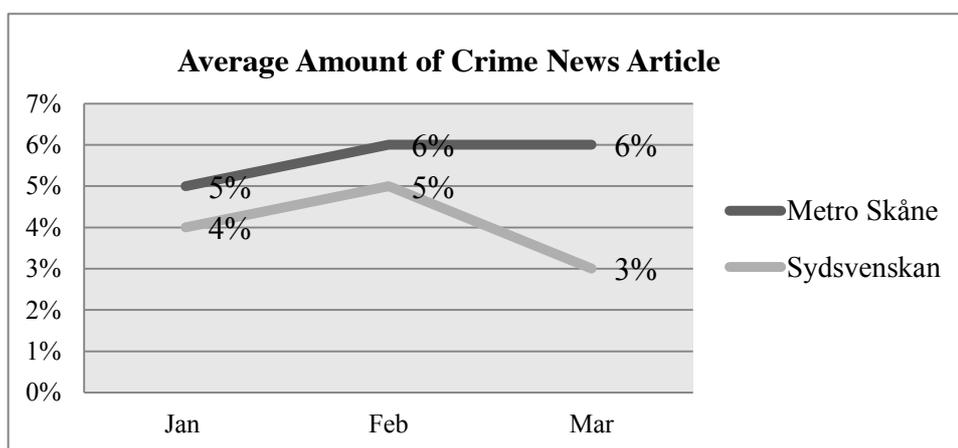
## APPENDIX



**Figure 1.** Number of Reported Crimes in Sweden, 2003-2013.

**Tabel 3.** Coding Procedure. Content Analyze of Crime News Article

<b>Structural variables</b>								
<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Number of articles</i>	<i>Weekday</i>	<i>Page number</i>	<i>Placement in newspaper</i>	<i>Headline</i>	<i>Follow-up</i>	<i>Mention in other newspaper</i>
Metro	2012-01-02	57	Monday	6	First page and else in paper	"It was blood everywhere"	No	Yes
<b>Contextual variables</b>								
<i>Number of victims</i>	<i>Number of offenders</i>	<i>Crime</i>						
1	No information	Murder						
<b>Location of crime event</b>								
<i>Malmö and vicinity</i>	<i>Sweden</i>							
Yes, in Malmö and vicinity	Yes, in Sweden							
<b>Victim variables</b>								
<i>Victim known to Police</i>	<i>Victim, gang member</i>	<i>Victim blaming/responsibility</i>	<i>Randomness</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Yes	No information	Yes	No information (indicating randomness)	Man	15	No information		
<b>Offender variables</b>								
<i>Offender known to Police</i>	<i>Offender, gang member</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Offender-Victim relation</i>	<i>Type of relation</i>	<i>Motive to crime</i>	
No information	No information	No information	No information	No information	No information	No information	No information	



**Figure 2.** The Average of Crime News Articles Published in Sydsvenskan<sup>a</sup> and Metro Skåne<sup>b</sup>, in Three Random Publishing Weeks.

**Table 9.** In Percent, the Information Differences in the Targeted Newspapers Metro Skåne and Sydsvenskan.

Variable	Metro Skåne		Sydsvenskan	
	No information	Information	No information	Information
<b>Gender</b>				
Victim	22,5	53,8	26,2	44,7
Offender	23,9	70,7	32,6	67,4
<b>Age</b>				
Victim	33,4	43,2	33,5	37,4
Offender	46,4	53,6	50,2	49,8
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Victim	71,6	4,4	66,0	4,6
Offender	95,3	4,7	95,4	4,6
<b>Previous criminality</b>				
Victim	71,9	28,1	67,3	32,7
Offender	86,4	13,6	82,4	17,6
<b>Victim-Offender relationship</b>	65,7	26,6	76,9	15,5
<b>Victim blaming</b>				
Blaming	-	16,9	-	22,2
No Blaming	-	60,1	-	48,6
<b>Victim random</b>				
Random	-	43,5	-	48,8
Not random	-	33,7	-	22,1
<b>Crime location</b>				
Local	-	33,4	-	59,4
Non-local	-	55,0	-	39,5

**Table 13.** The Result of the Number of Specific Crime Types Articles in Sydsvenskan and Metro Skåne, During 2012.

Crime	Sydsvenskan			Metro Skåne		
	Jan-Mar	Jun-Jul	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Jun-Jul	Oct-Dec
Rape	38	71	57	20	12	51
Assault	151	166	167	54	43	84
Robbery	79	57	71	37	28	37
Burglary	88	94	115	13	11	20
Drugs	58	64	45	16	3	26
Fraud	38	54	40	13	10	21

