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An analysis on how the media describe intimate partner violence from a social constructionist perspective

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Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to get a better understanding on how Swedish media describes intimate partner violence from a social constructionist perspective. This was done by analysing the way this violence is projected in three Swedish newspapers namely Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter & Expressen. Our study focused on heterosexual relationships and investigated how some sample of Swedish newspapers described the image of “men and women as perpetrators; gender construction”, “the presentation of the violence” and “the way society treats intimate partner violence victims (male/female)”. The theoretical approach in this analysis was based on social constructionism with a special focus on gender. In order to address the research objectives, a content analysis was performed and some comment and analysis on themes were given. The research findings revealed that both men and women could be perpetrators and victims of intimate partner violence with a main focus on woman as victims from media.

Key words: *men as perpetrators, women as perpetrators, social constructionism, gender, media image on intimate partner violence.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the decade intimate partner violence has been recognised as a social health problem and not as an individual problem like the newspapers usually describe it (Holtzman, 2014). According to the Newspapers, intimate partner violence is most often referred to as violence against women. It is also very common for these media to describe men as perpetrators and women as victims. But can women also be perpetrators and men victims? In December 1999 the United Nations General Assembly declared 25 November as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The UN General Assembly also encouraged governments, international organizations and NGOs to engage in activities, which could create awareness on violence against women.

The media tries to inform its audience that violence against women produces gender inequality and makes women vulnerable because the violence they describe is often against women while violence against men is rarely mentioned, creating an imbalance in gender equality. The violence we read about in newspapers always picture women as victims. Wouldn't the recognition of intimate partner violence against men be very helpful in the society? Intimate partner violence occurs in the whole world and affects both men and women and it can be prevented. Holtzman, (2014), describes intimate partner violence as social cultural problem rather than an individual problem associated with gender differences as media describes it. The recognition of IPV as a cultural problem may be a way of preventing it. Since newspapers have a big impact on readers it is believed that it could be valuable to examine how media describes this particular type of violence. That is why we hope that this essay will contribute to more knowledge on intimate partner violence especially that this knowledge will be used in the field of practicing social work.

1.1 The focus of the thesis

This thesis focused on previous articles published by some Swedish newspapers (*Aftonbladet*, *Expressen* and *Dagens Nyheter*) related to the topic being studied. Reviewing and analysing articles from these newspapers made it possible to do this. Whilst reviewing previous research on intimate partner violence authors discovered frequently recurring themes on the subject matter. These themes therefore became the main focus of the research. Another reason for choosing these themes was that they included many aspects of intimate partner violence namely:

- Men and women as perpetrators and gender construction;
- The presentation of the violence;
- The society's treatment of victims of intimate partner violence (IPV - male or female).

1.2 Aim and research questions

According to Holtzman (2014) the media has a tendency of framing the image of intimate partner violence by selecting a certain type of information and focusing on a particular theme in order to get a great story. There might be a risk that some information is left out and by framing the image of intimate partner violence in a certain way the media can increase the misunderstanding of IPV (Holtzman, 2014, p. 93).

The aim of this thesis was to investigate how intimate partner violence is described in some Swedish articles. The study focused on the following research questions:

- (1) How do samples of Swedish newspaper articles describe the image of male/female perpetrators of intimate partner violence; gender construction?
- (2) How do samples of Swedish newspaper articles portray and describe the violence in a heterosexual relationship?
- (3) How do samples of Swedish newspaper articles describe the way the society treats the victims (male/female) of intimate partner violence (IPV)?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The essay begins with chapter 1 that contains introduction, description of our essay orientation, aim and research questions and also essay disposition. In chapter 2 we will describe the connection between our essay topic and social work, define key concepts; present an overall background on previous research and theories relevant to the essay. Chapter 3 is about method. Chapter 4 presents results and analysis on the chosen themes. Finally in chapter 5 discussions will be presented where the research questions will be answered and suggestions for further research made.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter we will connect our subject to social work and define some key words.

2.1 Connection to social work

The fact that intimate partner violence has existed but never been recognized as a social problem until recently has allowed the media to describe perpetrators of intimate partner violence without sufficient information on the problem (Hutchison, 2008. p.212).

According to a global definition, Social Work (SW) is:

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

From the global social work definition above, we can read that social work stands for human rights but as Holtzman (2014) stated the human rights are violated for those who are victims of intimate partner violence. As future social workers we think it is essential that we learn about intimate partner violence and also about how this type of violence is constructed and presented in the media. It can be of interest to investigate what kind of picture people in general might have of intimate partner violence due to the media, for example newspaper articles.

2.2 Definitions

In this section some definitions of intimate partner violence will be given. The reason is for readers to have a better understanding of the subject than what they are made to believe by the media.

2.2.1 Intimate partner violence (IPV)

Intimate partner violence is defined as a “physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse” that can take place “among heterosexual or same-

sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy” (Carlyle, 2014). According to Brå’s report (2014, p.18), the definition of intimate partner violence can vary from different sources. Some research on IPV (e.g. Brå, 2014) includes only intimate love relationships between two people whereas others include even family members or relation between parents and children. This study will focus on IPV in heterosexual couples (current or former partner).

2.2.2 Types of IPV

The violence within a relationship can take multiple forms; the different variants are referred to as psychological violence, physical violence and sexual violence (Lundgren, 2004, p.101)

According to Lundgren (2004, p.54), **Physical** violence is when the victim gets punched, his/her hair pulled, pushed, beaten, kicked, slapped, stabbed or pressed down for not leaving. Physical violence is behaviour that intentionally or accidentally causes bodily harm or destruction of property (Socialstyrelsen 2015).

Furthermore Lundgren (2004, p.47) states that there are two variants of **sexual violence**, physical violence to the genitals, and forced sexual acts without the other partner’s consent. Often there is a combination of the two variants.

Socialstyrelsen (2015) explains that psychological violence consists of direct and indirect actions such as threatening, yelling or screaming, calling names, embarrassing or mocking the victim in front of others and criticizing the victim’s actions or goals. Further, violence or threats of violence against pets can be counted as psychological violence. Lundgren (2004), also identified ridicule as part of psychological violence. It is about offensive comments regarding both appearances as character traits and actions. Psychological violence can also be that the victim’s freedom is limited as he or she is prevented from seeing family and friends or participating in social activities or any other external contact (Socialstyrelsen 2015).

2.2.3 The process of normalization of violence

According to Lundgren (2004), violence normalization process is the term used to describe how violence starts in a relationship. Usually in the violence normalization process it is the psychological abuse that starts first and then with time it gets worse. It

is difficult for both victims and outsiders to notice what is going on. The abuser gradually exerts more and more mental cruelty towards his partner who becomes the victim gradually and controlled by the perpetrator who is his partner. Usually, if the psychological violence goes on for some time the abuser gets more power and control in the relationship giving way to material, physical and sexual violence. Lundgren (2004) continue saying that when this occurs, the victim is usually so degraded, frightened, controlled and confused that he or she does not leave the perpetrator despite all the violence. The different expressions of violence gradually become a part of everyday life and are considered a "normal" feature of the relationship. In addition, the victim often becomes so isolated that the possibility that a third party could pay attention to the abuse and come to the victim's rescue is very small (Lundgren, 2004, p.56).

Eventually the loving phase enters to a tense situation that stems from the uncertainty of the perpetrator and the victim's nervousness over being beaten again. In the end the tense phase of violence is glossed over and excused and the relationship then moves into a new period of love. It becomes a vicious cycle of maltreatment where violence is included as a normal part of the relationship (Lundgren, 2004).

2.3 Description of Intimate Partner Violence

This section will look at the various research reports on Intimate Partner Violence with a special focus on previous research, Swedish research and international research.

2.3.1 Previous research

In the following chapter, a selection of previous research on *how intimate partner violence is described* will be presented. In the presentation some relevant passages to our study from the previous research will be highlighted in order to increase knowledge on IPV, how it occurs both in Sweden and internationally. Therefore this chapter does not provide a complete overview of the selected previous research. Few Swedish studies have been done in this kind of subject. However, there is more international research on this topic than in Sweden. Since the whole thesis is based on an analysis of the conception of the media towards intimate partner violence, knowledge of previous research becomes necessary to describe as the authors' pre-knowledge on the subject matter and what has been done so far in the field of research. This and other sections in this chapter will form the background of the thesis.

2.3.2 Swedish research

Brottsförebyggande rådet (BRÅ) wrote the first report on men as victims of DV in Sweden "Våld mot kvinnor och män i nära relation" (Violence against men and women in intimate relationship) which was published in 2009. Both men and women are active in IPV, but women are more exposed than men according to the report. The same report claims that men report less than women about IPV. It continued that women normally suffer the psychological violence in the form of harassment. Also, there is no shelter for male victims of IPV to move to when exposed to IPV. Moreover men are not taken serious when they report that their partner has abused them. With all these, Brå concluded in the report that the reason why men report less is because they are not believed and help/support for men victims of IPV is poor. This study was conducted through quantitative method where different experiences from victims were studied. The study gives a picture of how complex IPV actually can be, which is relevant in our thesis since we are interested in how this complex phenomenon is constructed in the media.

In the other Swedish research Lövestad (2012) stated that IPV against women and its consequences has become an established issue in public health all over the world. She continued saying that less studies on IPV against men have been done, however recently women perpetrators of IPV and men victims of IPV are getting huge consideration in the world. Furthermore she stated that researchers have had different perspective on IPV: family violence perspective and feminist perspective. Family violence perspective claims gender symmetry is the problem. This means that both men and women use violence in IPV. On the other hand, feminist perspective claims that men are perpetrators and women are responding on IPV as self-defence. Studies on IPV suggest that even though both men and women take part in IPV, men tend to be more aggressive than women and women are more physically injured. This study was conducted through a quantitative method where different experiences from victims were studied. The study gives a picture of how complex IPV actually can be, which is relevant in our thesis since we are interested in how this complex phenomenon is constructed in the media.

Lundgren (2004) wrote the book "*Våldets normaliseringsprocess*", which means violence normalisation process. The normalisation process is an explanation of the process of violence in intimate relationships. The concept explains the process that takes

place in an intimate relationship where violence is exercised and where the victim with time begins to regard violence as part of daily life. To handle an everyday filled with threats and violence, the victim develops strategies to explain the occurrence of violence to him/herself and to others. The perpetrator in turn justifies violence practice by blaming the victim and the victim's strategy is often through various forms of adaptation of their vulnerability. The normalization process provides an interpretative framework within which one can better understand why the party subjected to widespread violence in an intimate relationship does not break up as well as the motives behind both victim and perpetrator behaviour in the relationship. The model is based on the study of violence in the heterosexual couple relationships but can also be used to understand the violence processes in same-sex relationships. This becomes very relevant to our study because many people often wonder why people remain in very complicated and life threatening relationships, which is not very easy to explain. Therefore understanding this process of normalization becomes very important to authors when it comes to analysing the findings in the Newspapers.

2.3.3 International research

Carlyle et al. (2014) stated in a study that was published in 2014, "*News Coverage of Intimate Partner Violence: Impact on Prosocial Responses*" that IPV is a big health problem in the US which affects both men and women and cost approximately six billion US dollar every year to fix the damage that it causes. The report further stated that the prevention of IPV in an effective way needs willingness and public support. However, present public opinion on IPV tends to blame the individual victim by placing responsibility for solving problem on them and not on the society. It also stated that the media take the blame as well blame since they describe IPV in series of separate incidents neglecting critical context information by removing IPV from cultural and social context in which it occurs. This underpins the misunderstanding that IPV is not a public health problem but a personal issue only. It therefore reduces society's responsibility to engage in determination of preventing IPV and helping IPV victims. In this study, the influence of different types of contextual information about victims and perpetrators of IPV were investigated on readers understanding and responses on IPV. The authors measured exactly the roles of individual cognitive and emotional considerations of IPV news coverage in expecting support/interest of helping victims of IPV.

In order to gain a better understanding on how media describe IPV we agree with this research whereby the authors carried out the images of IPV as public health problem and not individual issue, and different suggestion of how to prevent it. This study is high valid towards our aim and research questions. As we mention in the beginning of this chapter only relevant passages of the previous research were presented and not all the research.

In the next study "*Framing deadly domestic violence: Why the media spin matters in Newspaper coverage of femicide*" examines how the media presents stories feminised which takes place in the context of domestic violence (Gillespie et al. 2013: 222). The study was conducted in the US by a quantitative data collection, where the researcher through the North Carolina association against domestic violence received access to a list of the murders that occurred in an intimate relationship at home in between 2002-2007. It was found that 462 murders were committed during this period that 312 of these cases are about femicide. With a focus on women's murders launched an electronic search of newspaper articles in which the author managed to find articles that touched 299 of these cases. These articles were searched including information about the relationship between victim and perpetrator, weapon used, age and ethnicity of victims and perpetrators, if there were children present, if more than 11 persons were injured or killed, and what legal consequences the cases received (Gillespie et al., 2013: 228). The result divided articles into two groups; one group identifies femicide as a part of domestic violence, while the other group does not (Gillespie et al., 2013: 230).

In the articles which femicide was not defined as domestic violence six different frameworks were found; the event was normalized as mundane, the case was described as an isolated event, encountered deficiencies in the criminal justice system, guilt of the victim, loss of control or the moral collapse of the offender and event minimized by focusing on the problem as a whole (Gillespie et al., 2013: 231). Among the items which femicide was defined as domestic violence relationships, five different frameworks were found. The first four were the same as those found in the opposite group, (which femicide is not defined as domestic violence); namely; domestic violence as commonplace, the case is described as an isolated incident, blaming the victim, as well as loss of control or moral collapse of the offender. It did, however, find different kinds of definitions depending on which group they belonged to. The fifth

framework identified domestic violence as a social problem (Gillespie et al. 2013: 235). Power of the media is referred to in the study as both the problem and the solution. This is because the media on many occasions miss the opportunity provided to highlight femicide as a problem that deserves society's agitation and thus can contribute to the development and improvement in the guidelines for handling domestic violence (Gillespie et al., 2013: 240). Study results described the different perceptions that are made visible in current articles of femicide, and how the problem through different frameworks either defined as part of domestic violence or not. This knowledge is therefore relevant to our study, which aims to examine how intimate partner violence is depicted as a social problem.

In one study Berns (2001) defined intimate partner violence as physical, psychological or sexual abuse that occur between two people in an intimate relationship, regardless of marital or sexual orientation in her study "*Degendering the problem and gendering the blame: Political Discourse on Women and Violence*". Berns examined how intimate partner violence is produced in various newspaper articles. The author assumes an independent political magazine and from a men's magazine, (Berns, 2001: 262) and mainly focused on how the allocation of liability are made based on causes and solutions of the problem. Based on a patriarchal resistance perspective this means that the author of the articles either gives a clear expression of the view of where the responsibility is situated by describing the causes and solutions or they suggest causes and solutions by including certain facts while others are excluded. This basis for purposes of applying feminist constructions of domestic violence added major focus on sex role, which means that the woman will be seen as a victim. By making use of the concept of human violence, sex is not the same meaning when the search for a solution to the problem, which is a recurrent reflection in study (Berns, 2001: 265). The study also described how the debt coating is described for the different sexes. While there is a unified opinion regarding how the issue shall be referred to here it is not the same for debt coating. Berns explains how there has been a normalization of the victim's responsibilities, while responsibility, which lies on the offender, and the community has been ignored. Four strategies on how debt coating might look like is described: Women who are violent lifted up, female victims have a responsibility for their role as victims, criticism regarding the social tolerance of violence in women but not of men's violence in beating women (Berns, 2001: 269).

The study also described the hazards of a gender neutralization of the problem and guilt on the queue. Based on a patriarchal resistance perspective, are three points up regarding which consequences this can bring. These three points are that there is a normalization process concerning domestic violence, attention regarding the responsibility of men diverted and also the structural and cultural factors which can promote violence and that it gives a misleading picture of women's violence (Bern, 2001: 277). A majority of the articles studied both in men's magazines and political magazines framing domestic violence in a way that contributes to the fact that the burden of responsibility ends at the women regardless of the abuse of power, as victims or as advocates (Berns, 2001: 278). Berns described the consequences created by the problem defined in the way it does, and also how this definition affects the handling of domestic violence partner relationships. Major focus of the study is also placed on the guilt of the victim and perpetrators. The study is therefore relevant for the aim of our study.

This section has tried to highlight some of the costs, which accompanies IPV and other effects which could affect society in the long run. It therefore gives more credence to our study because looking at the high level of cost that governments have to spend on these issues it becomes very important to try to raise awareness and expose any anomalies that the media otherwise try to cover up. The exposure of these effects which we intend to bring out in our study will help the society to see the real problem at hand and find appropriate solutions to them. In the long-term it could help minimise some of these effects especially the cost factor.

2.4 Conceptual Framework Theory

As previously mentioned in chapter 1, less research has been done on IPV which give less result on theory analysis that can match with our thesis. Moreover we realized that even research done on IPV, contained less theory analysis in their text therefore the author was never clear with which theory perspective was used in the analysis. We also mentioned that we will focus on how media describe perpetrators of IPV and therefore a theoretical analysis of the matter will be done.

Our analysis will be done in a sociology perspective. According to Stevens (1998, p.36) sociology can be described to understand relationships between society and people living in it, that is, the society's interaction with the human behaviour. It means that we can only understand ourselves as humans based on the social practices and social way of thinking and being constituted by the society they live in.

2.4.1 Social constructionism

The theory that will be used for our thesis analysis is social constructionism (Burr, 2003; Wetherell & Maybin, 1998), which represents more sociology with focus on sociopsychology. The description of the theory given does not claim to be the exact theory for IPV, but we focus on relevant aspects relevant for our paper. With the help of social constructionism theory, we hope to give a better view from media description of how Swedish newspapers construct the image of victims and perpetrators of IPV.

Because the essay questions affect individual's interaction with one another as well as their relationship to the surrounding community, we believe that social constructionism is a useful analytical tool for this essay. According to Burr (2003 p.1), social constructionism can be considered as theoretical orientation that underpins all newer approaches, which offers radically and critically alternatives in psychology and social psychology as well as in other social sciences and humanities. What is called "social constructionism" has no single description because it has many different orientations. However, Burr (2003 p.1-3) stated that there are four common basic features in social constructionism theory. The first one is *critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge*. You cannot take things for granted or to carry out completely impartial studies because we interpret everything based on whom we are. It is important to be critical of taking for granted that IPV is physical by measuring the violence. For example, saying just that "it was a push or a slap" is still physical violence. The second basic feature is *historical and cultural specificity*. This means the concepts we use to understand the world are historical and culturally based. It all depends on where and when in the world one lives. What we consider as important in one culture might not be important in another culture, what was important ten years ago might not be important today.

The third and fourth basic features are that *social processes sustain knowledge* and that *knowledge and social action goes together*. This means that our daily interactions with

one another, especially the language we use are a specific form of knowledge. Burr continues saying that, with the various forms that this knowledge may take, it is a social construction. The result may be reasonable for some and unreasonable for others depending on where one lives in the world (Burr, 2003, p. 3-5). These basic features may include a link to the concept of heteronormativity since heteronormativity is seen as a phenomenon that is historically and culturally specific and maintained through social processes and actions. According to Lundgren (2004) IPV can occur in all kind of intimate relationships.

The central idea of social constructionism is that human consciousness and sense of self occur in social interaction with others. This means that we are influenced by our surroundings and we also have an impact on it. It is a vice versa process with language as a central part. The way we talk and the way others talk about us, affect the understanding of one's self (Wetherell & Maybin, 1998, p. 298-302).

According to Burr (2003, p.64-80), the word discourse plays a big role in social constructionism. With discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements, and all together produce a particular version of events. If one accepts social constructionism assertion that language can give different version of same event, it means around an object are varying discourses that everyone has different stories about it. This also means that there are different ways to tell the outside world about the object. In our thesis the object told is Intimate partner violence and how the media describe the Perpetrator of IPV, but also the themes can be considered as object. We may probably not give a proper discourse analysis but we definitely are going to try to give our best understanding on IPV, we also believe that discourse analysis which can also be called content analysis make statement easier when using social constructionism theory.

The way we position ourselves in a social context and in the dialogues, is intimately associated with how we describe ourselves, and various factors in our social situation. Communication is considered to affect all the people involved in it and helps to build these people's nature (Wetherell & Maybin, 1998 s.298-302; Burr, 2003). To use this theory to interpret the texts about intimate partner violence can in our opinion, both result in a greater understanding of what kinds of social contexts perpetrators and

victims exist in, but also an understanding of the role those who wrote the text are playing for the view of intimate partner violence. The description that we give on social constructionism does not claim to cover the whole subject, but the different aspects that we focused on are relevant for our thesis.

The social constructivist perspective is a fundamental perspective for this study, since our purpose is to study how a sample of Swedish newspapers describes the IPV. This is because media represents a large part of the information that reaches out to community individuals and constructs representations of reality, such as construction of intimate partner violence as a social problem.

As Alvesson and Sköldberg wrote it is important to be aware that the researchers cannot be objective, but in a sense, creating what they claim to find (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p.101).

3. METHOD

In this chapter, we describe the method that we used, but we will first introduce the epistemological position of the method. To fulfil the purpose of this analysis and research questions, the method chosen was content analysis. A short description of this method will be given together with the chosen articles and the ones we removed. At the end we will have a discussion of validity and reliability.

3.1 Epistemological position

Our study's scientific position is Hermeneutic. Hermeneutics comes from a Greek word called "Hermeneia" and it means interpretation. According to Patton, (2004, p.136-138) hermeneutics is a type of research approach that use interpretation as research method. Within hermeneutic research there is not a true or correct interpretation, instead the researcher looks for new ways to understand the phenomena that can be difficult to deal with in everyday life. Patton (2004) continued saying that research questions can be reformulated in terms "what it means" that are suitable for hermeneutic research approach. Furthermore, he stated that humans use more or less conscious interpretations to orient themselves in everyday life. Therefore it is important for us as researchers to differentiate between scientific interpretive and everyday understanding.

The implementation of a hermeneutic interpretation requires that you constantly switch between parts and whole that they form together. The researcher or interpreter analyzes the parts separately and then relate the interpretation to the holistic picture. The interpretation of the individual parts can change the overall interpretation. In turn it may change the interpretation of the individual parts and so on in a circular process, the hermeneutic circle. This circular process is virtually endless but stops when the interpreters think they have reached a common understanding that is free from logical contradictions (Larsson, 2005). In this paper the use of hermeneutic interpretation was mainly in the summary analysis where the different parts of the analysis brought together a summary interpretation in which they both affect each other and the analysis in full. There is however, a hermeneutic interpretation even in the analysis where we were looking for prominent patterns in the different themes. We then analysed the basis of the chosen theories and concepts.

3.1.1 Deduction

Our study is based on a deductive approach. By the social constructionism perspective it is the starting point for the purpose of the study and categorization empirical data. We have thus secured our study theoretically. According to Patton (2004) a deductive study means to start from theories that already exist and to test them towards empirical studies. This is to draw conclusions on the basis of existing theories.

3.2 Content analysis

According to Frankfort (2008) content analysis is a technic that gives a broad understanding of a message in systematic and objective way. By being systematic, the researcher should be careful beforehand to decide the selection of articles or document that only support the aim. For the objective, the research should be independent when conducting the analysis. The time frame used should be efficient for other investigators to get same results in same message/document or articles. In this thesis content analysis will be performed in order to get a clear image of intimate partner violence towards the one given by the media.

However, Burr (2003, p.64-80) stated that discourse also called content refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and all together produce a particular version of events. If one accepts social constructionism assertion that language can give different version of same event, it means around an object there are varying discourses that everyone has different stories about the object. This also means that there are different ways to tell the outside world about the object. In our thesis the object told is Intimate partner violence and how the media describe the Perpetrator of IPV, but also the themes can be considered as objects. From a social constructionism point of view there is no “true” interpretation. Instead we construct an interpretation that is relevant to our thesis.

3.3 Mode of procedure

The sample collections for this study were obtained from three Swedish newspapers website, Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter and Expressen.

Our articles were found from the three mentioned Swedish newspaper website, and the previous research was collected from the database Socindex and Google scholar - Brottsförbyggande rådet (Brå).

The research key words that we used were the following: *våld i nära relationer, våld mot män, våld mot kvinnor, förövare i våld i nära relationer, violence in intimate relationship, media image on intimate partner violence, media image of female perpetrator, media image of male perpetrator.*

By using the key words/sentences described above we got many hits but it was very difficult to find sufficient and lengthwise information in the articles about our main topic. Our intention was to limit the study to articles published from 2010 to 2015. After the search, only few articles contained enough material to comment on and that is why we decided to add seven more years back and start from 2003 to 2015. The reason why we chose articles from Swedish newspaper website is because the purpose of this study like we mentioned before is to clarify and give a valid image of perpetrators of IPV towards the one given by media.

3.4 Table of documents

D1	Dagens nyheter (DN)	DN July 2014	Ingen solskenshistoria
D2	Irena Pozar	EXPRESSEN.SE April 2015	Kvinnor och djur blir slagna – får inge skydd
D3	Monica Karlstein	AFTONBLADET Jan 2015	Trångsynta killar är mer våldsbenägna
D4	Emma Rigmorsdotter	AFTONBLADET Sep 2003	Kvinnorna som slåss - oftare än sina män
D5	Monica Karlstein	AFTONBLADET Oct 2012	Misshandlad och hånad
D6	Åsa Passanisi	AFTONBLADET Nov 2009	”Män är också offer i situation”
D7	Robert Holender	DN Sep 2014	Relationsvåld mot kvinnor grövre
D8	TT	DN Aug 2012	Många antas tiger om relationsvåld

D9	Rebecca Haimi, Caroline Wetterborg	DN Oct 2013	Män ofta utsatt för fysiskt våld i relationer
D10	TT	EXPRESSEN.SE Feb 2014	Förslaget: kvinnor ska ha rätt till poliseskort
D11		EXPRESSEN.SE July 2013	Våld i hemmet - ingen ska behöva utsättas
D12	Malin Roos	EXPRESSEN.SE April 2015	De skulle dödas av sina män
D13	Ulf Fahlén	EXPRESSEN.SE Nov 2013	Få våldsbrott mot kvinnor klaras upp
D14	Jeanette Ekström	AFTONBLADET Nov 2014	Ingen hjälp till män som misshandlas av kvinnor
		2003 – 2015	

To know which article we refer to when we use quotes in the results section, we have named each document for a number that appears on the ‘table of document’ above.

3.4.1 The criteria for selection of the articles

The articles chosen, are relevant to our study moreover, each article text contain at least two of our themes. The idea behind the chosen article was to gain enough and specific material about our three themes so that we can use them in return as a basis for content analysis. Articles with at least 300 to 2 277 words were chosen not because they were long but because they were relevant and contained enough material.

3.4.2 The criteria for exclusion of articles

Excluded articles did not contain specific materials to cover our themes. They contained different types of violence towards the ones we were analysing, for example children and animals. They contained IPV between family members e.g. children. Another reason for exclusion was also because some of those articles were too short lengthwise. They contained less than 205 words and did not contribute much relevant information to our topic.

3.5 Reliability and validity

Kvale et al, (2009, p.244-248) stated that a researcher can give examples on materials used in a research, and clarify how the analysed process have occurred in order to achieve a higher reliability. We strived to achieve reliability by discussing all the decisions taken during our study. We have also conducted analysis of the empirical material together, to take part in each other's interpretations. This is called analytical triangulation, which aims to improve the reliability of the study (Patton, 2004).

In social science, validity usually means whether a method investigates what it is supposed to investigate. (Kvale et al., 2009, p. 327). When making a qualitative study with small sample, there must be primarily a high internal validity. It seeks to achieve by entering and intensely investigating a number of cases that accurately describes and can be assumed to be characteristic. In order to achieve a higher validity, we used relevant quotes in our analysis. By doing that we made sure the questions we created reflected the exact issue (Intimate partner violence). With intimate partner violence all kinds of intimate relationship were studied without limitations to transgender, lesbians and homosexual couple. For example, if we had focused only on heterosexual couple, much information could have been missed out and achieving high validity could have been impossible

3.6 Triangulation

Patton (2004) states that analyst triangulation involves using several different investigators in the analysis process. Typically this main evaluation is for a team consisting of two or more researchers in a field of study, where each investigator examines the program with the same qualitative method interview, observation, case study or focus groups. In this study we used analyst triangulation because we were two doing this research and because we have conducted analysis of the empirical material together, to take part in each other's interpretations.

3.7 Generalizability

According to Larsson (2005), generalizability is limited in qualitative studies depending on the number of interviews but Frankfort (2008, p.52) stated that generalizability is the extent to which the research findings could be generalized to large populations and applied to different settings. It is, however, possible to use analytic

generalization since analytical generalisation involves a reasoned judgement about the extent to which the findings of one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situations. It is based on an analysis of the similarities and differences of the two situations (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p.262). However, a statistical generalization of findings is difficult to make because of the small sample collected.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Our empirical data consists of text written by other people. We have not met any respondents of our own and therefore the usual ethical considerations such as, informed consent were not relevant in our study (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p.70-71). We do, however, consider it to be our obligation to consider how particular groups of people are being portrayed in our thesis and we have considered this issue carefully.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will give a brief overview of the Newspapers chosen, present comments and results of the themes and quotes selected from the chosen articles; and clarify them. Further, some theoretical arguments will be highlighted and analysed within the theoretical framework. In order to answer the study questions presented the results will be based on these three main themes: Men and women as perpetrators and gender construction, how violence is presented and how society treats the victims (male/female) of IPV.

4.1 BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF NEWSPAPERS USED FOR THE STUDY

Dagens Nyheter (DN)

DN is an independent newspaper, free from political, organizational and economic spheres of influence. DN's political stance is liberal. The magazine is also edited in a liberal way. Over a period of earth-shaking changes DN had to assert to the open society's basic values, including enlightened reason and tolerant climate. Being independent liberal is the most comprehensive designation for this position, which is rooted in DN's tradition since its inception in 1864. Dagens Nyheter as newspaper and DN.se is read daily by about 1.3 million people. DN is also the country's largest advertising medium on newspaper page. Its starting point is that people, regardless of social background also have the opportunity to participate in and understand common concerns. It operates in an enlightened tradition that wants to help the Swedes to become a reading and thinking people. Therefore, it is particularly important to use the forms of distribution, which is either individually or in collaboration, to reach its recipient. It strives to safeguard the objectivity and independence of its activities at all levels. *Today's news* is part of the Bonnier Group, one of Europe's leading media companies. Ref: <http://www.dn.se/diverse/diverse-hem/om-dagens-nyheter/>

Aftonbladet

Aftonbladet, is a Swedish evening and online magazine with the political term "independent social democratic". Aftonbladet is owned by the Norwegian media group Schibsted, which holds about 91 percent of the shares, while the Confederation of Sweden (LO) holds the remaining nine percent. Aftonbladet was founded in 1830 by Lars Johan Hierta, who published the newspaper to 1851 and made it one of the largest

and most influential newspapers in the country (Ref: <http://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/lang/aftonbladet> - 2016-08-24)

Expressen

Expressen has since 1944 delivered a classic tabloid journalism with broad coverage of news, entertainment and sports. Expressen today is a media company with operations in all media channels, newspaper, online and mobile. The mission is to tell and there are readers who are clients. The paper begins with a strong opinion- block where readers' opinions are central. Online Expressen was the first to allow readers to comment and debate. Express Review, engages and drives the debate. People who are affected by decisions and dramatic news events are more important than accounting obligations. Publisher and editor of Expressen is Thomas Mattsson, assisting chief editor and deputy publisher Karin Olsson. Ref: <http://www.expressen.se/om-expressen/om-expressen>

4.2 Theme 1 – Men and women as perpetrator and gender construction

A publication in the DN newspaper stated that: “During the summer men’s violence against women increases”, it makes IPV a social cultural problem rather than individual. Example on that a newspaper (D1) stated that:

”During the summer, men's violence against women increases. This year is no exception. Statistics show that in June women are at the highest risk to get in trouble at home. Holiday involves alcohol, time with family and isolation from the rest of society.”

This part of the article gives a description or impression that consumption of alcohol has a big part in IPV. It also shows that isolation from everyday life can be a high risk.

In another article (D7) published that:

“- 25 percent of women report that they have at one point in their life-time been exposed to violence in intimate relationships. The corresponding figure for men is just under 17 percent, says Anna Frenzel, a researcher at the National Council, (as reported by DN)”.

Like we mentioned earlier, newspapers have a tendency to associate IPV with gender asymmetry. In D7 media presented 25% of women who have been exposed to violence and fewer than 17% of men. However we do not know who the perpetrators are. It could

be women that expose women to violence or men that expose men to violence; the article present lack of information regarding the perpetrators' gender.

The following document (D8) state that:

17 percent of women surveyed in a Novus survey stated that they had been subjected to repeated psychological, physical or sexual violence in a current or a previous relationship. – “It sounds like a low figure”, says Katarina Weinehall who conducted a research on domestic violence. She says that few women dare to speak loudly about the violence, and even fewer dare to report. There's really no statistics to go on, only the number of police reports and they are few compared to the cases already discussed concerning shelters and so on.

Like the document stated women do not dare to talk about their exposure to violence or report to the police. Only few dare to talk loudly about the violence and in the same document, 17% of women state to be victims of IPV. The percentage of the victims is low according to the statistics, moreover, the statistic does not tell how the violence occurs or who the perpetrator was.

D4 states that:

"Women are physically aggressive more often than men. And men are more often victims of violence. The study of violence and abuse in couples has attracted considerable attention. Previous research from the US shows similar results, but the survey is the first of its kind in Scandinavia. - What we are talking about are sweethearts who quarrel and fight. Not ill treatment, domestic violence and not man's mistreatment either, says researcher Hilde Pape at Nova, Norwegian Institute for Research on upbringing, welfare and aging. - But when we talk about the practice of "milder" violence as slaps, kicks and punches - then women use physical power at least as much as men, she says."

According to Holtzman (2014), media have a tendency of describing men as perpetrators and women as victims of IPV but this occurs all over the world and affects both gender. According to Burr (2003) masculinity and femininity are still extremely different in many parts of the world. She continued to say that the culture/society's view

of masculine as superior and feminine as inferior cannot imagine the idea of a man being victim of IPV and a woman as perpetrator. The document below shows the opposite of what Burr stated. In D4 it was stated that women are physically aggressive more often than men and men are more often victims of violence. This research is done in Scandinavia and it states that women are capable of being perpetrators as well as men. Moreover the construction of gender is not founded only in the media; it has also existed in the scientific theories. But the practise of milder violence such as slaps, kicks, and punches are used by both women and men as stated in the document.

Another newspaper (D14): *“Recently published government public inquiry "An equal society free from violence." This paper makes it clear that heterosexual male victims of domestic violence cannot expect any help. The focus is on men's violence against women. Even gay, bisexual and transgender victims of violence are observed, as well as girls and women subjected to honor-related violence. But no boys are mentioned as victims of honour violence. Not heterosexual male victims of violence. This clearly shows that there is a form of inequality in the society.*

The interpretation of violence should not be tied to gender but rather presented individually. This way both men and women would be included since violence occurs to both gender. In Sweden the idea of a man being victim was not considered until early 20th century. According to D3 published on January 2015:

"Magnus Loftsson is a psychologist and a PhD on children's exposure to violence and abuse at Stockholm University although he emphasizes young people's views of what is feminine and masculine as a major cause of violence. According to him there are many factors that cause violence and growing up in a violent home is one of them. Gender and gender roles are another important risk factor, he says and continues: - "This is the first time we see the Swedish figures suggesting a relationship between gender and violence. But it is always difficult to see what causes what and what comes first", he says. Previously it was known, however, that prevention programs that discuss gender violence reduces susceptibility. Since schools started working actively to change students' attitudes to gender violence the situation has reduced, he says, adding that this gives non-profit associations, sports clubs and schools even more support for working on prevention. Not just when it is needed urgently. "

Document 3 agrees that gender roles are an important risk factor for violence and growing in a violent home is another risk factor. The idea of working with prevention in schools is better than reporting the violence without clear information on how it occurs or what the treatment for the victims are, especially when gender is a key role. But the following quote D10 seems to focus on gender asymmetry by suggesting police escort only for women. This point of view shows the difference in gender roles that man and woman can be socialized and modified by culture and social situations.

“Women victims of domestic violence today have no legal right to police escort if they want to retrieve personal belongings in the home. The Justice Committee want to change that and therefore calls strongly on government to take action. – “We completely agree that the situation must be resolved, for this is completely unreasonable. It is all about victims who fled from their homes”, says the committee's deputy chairman Johan Linander (C) to SvD”

In theme 1 we find that media present men more as perpetrators and women as victims of IPV, but we also notice that both gender can be perpetrators and victims.

4.3 Theme 2 – the presentation of the violence

In the document below, IPV problems seems to be fixable if men are more romantic and women are tolerant and sexy. The cultural context is full of promises; the problem that cannot be resolved by (psychiatric) treatment can be resolved either by entertainment, vacation, kitchen renovation and so on. Those types of illusions stimulate violence because they do not help people to accept the frustration and tragedies that life brings. Accepting the tragedies means to learn how to face out the frustrations and adversities faced and not blaming on outside factors. In the same document people choose intimate partner based on their unsolved problems, by using a psychoanalytical framework. Young people choose a partner expecting that he/she will give them what they have missed in their life, e.g.: appreciation, love, attention and power. Example on that was written in D1 published on July 2014:

“What started as a romantic history with flowers and big gestures resulted in hell - the man broke her arm, spat on her and called her a whore. DN's report about violence

against women interviewed "Mary", who lived with an abusive husband for two years. After she fled the man found her again and beat her up one last time - so rough that she lost consciousness. But a fellow woman reported the incident, which resulted in a year in prison for the man."

Although this quote shows the abusive side of the relationship, there are moments when things are good, which gives one hope to stay in the relationship. The author wrote that when a man has unsolved issues he blames it on the woman, instead of facing out the main problem.

"Intimate partner violence occurs in all countries. According to a study by Lancaster University the British complaints of domestic violence increased by 38 percent when the national team went out of the World Cup in Brazil. It shows that women have to take the hit when men need to vent the most primitive aggression. "

This is another way of describing IPV by the newspapers, the same way that describes men as superior and women as victims and inferior. If the media could focus on IPV causes, society will be better in preventing them because the newspapers in one way or the other influence us all.

In following document 9 both men and women can be perpetrators. The article presented violence as follows: women are perpetrators only when they are defending themselves, whereas men always respond with violence.

"- It is surprising that men report a large exposure to violence. Eight to eleven percent said that their partners abused them physically during the last year, and I think this is very serious, says Gunilla Krantz, a professor in the Department of Medicine at the Sahlgrenska Academy.

The number of women who said they experienced physical violence during the last year by a partner was eight percent, or about the same level as men. Meanwhile, 64 per cent of men victims of violence also use violence against their partners. The corresponding figure for women is 40 percent. More women report that they have been maltreated in self-defence, while men were more likely to claim that they have been injured or wronged, and therefore used violence.

The study, involving a total of 1,400 randomly selected people aged between 18 and 65, also states that the consequences of the violence gets worse for women than for men. Every one out of ten women states that she had thought of suicide after she was beaten and a larger proportion of women than men also reflect depression, anxiety and sleeping problems as a result of the violence.

- The study states an equal proportion of men who are exposed to psychological violence that they walk around with thoughts of suicide as women, and this should not be neglected says Gunilla Krantz.

When it comes to sexual violence, men are overrepresented as practitioners, while women are the victims. Nearly ten percent of the women in the study say they have been sexually assaulted earlier in life, while the corresponding figure for men is 3.5 percent.”

Violence against women has a major focus than violence against men. This might be the reason why media more often presents women as victims and men as perpetrators. But in all that we only found violence in newspapers and not how it occurs or how it started. The following documents 11 and 12 show what happens to women victims of violence but not how it occurs.

“On average, seventeen women are killed in close relationships every year. In more than half of the cases, at least one official has been involved before she was murdered. There are numbers that are repeated again and again, but never gets better. 6000 so-called contact orders have been issued by the prosecutor's office this year. The applications have been even more, many receive no. According to crime prevention council decisions are almost always based on past crimes, in violation of the criminal preventive nature of the law was meant to have.

Today begins the trial against the 62-year-old man in Bjärred suspected of stabbing his wife to death in front of their adult daughter. The man is convicted of assault. Man gets used to almost everything and a violent relationship is getting harder to get out with the years.”

In theme 2 we found out that intimate relationships have not always been bad, but unfortunately in some cases people die of IPV. We also found out that IPV is a serious

problem in the society where victims have difficulty in leaving a relationship that once was good which has now turned into a nightmare.

4.4 Theme 3- the society treatments of IPV victims (male/female)

The violence process starts often with controlling behaviour from the man's side. He criticizes the woman, stopping her from spending time with friends, and requires her to adapt to his needs. The man begins to threaten and use violence, and the woman is forced to adapt further in order not to be exposed to more violence. These women, who experience IPV and have pets, are often exposed to a manipulation or being threatened that their animals will be harmed if they do not obey the perpetrator. This kind of abuse, which was mentioned in chapter 2, is also counted as psychological vulnerability. Even though there are many shelters for women around Sweden there is almost none that accept pets in the shelter for women. In D2 it states that:

“Threats of violence and actual violence towards animals make it difficult for many women to leave violent relationships. When women shelters are not able to receive the women together with their pets they are forced to occasionally return home to the beating.”

It is an issue that shelters cannot receive pets when women come to seek for help. This issue makes women return to their homes where they are getting beaten as it stated in the quote. The shelters should take into consideration that the animals' lives also are in danger as well as the women's life. Women are often afraid to leave their pets at home while they are seeking for help and support and that is why they bring their pets with them. Shelters exist to help and protect the victim of intimate partner violence and should exist for pets too. The newspaper highlights that there is not enough shelter for men as it exists for women, and that the same support and help should be given to men as it is given to the women.

“In Strängnäs two former shelter workers recently opened a supported housing for men, women and children. There are men who have been exposed to family violence and are welcome.

- Men who are subjected to violence should also receive help, just as affected women. We have seen it with our own eyes - the violence is just as wrong no matter whom it is

against, says Annelie Tollehed Biller, one of the founders of Strangnas supported housing”.

Reading this quote, shows that men are not receiving the same help and support from the social service as the women do. The social services should provide help and give the same treatment to all the victims (man/women), and it should not be based on gender. If a person is a victim of IPV it does not matter the gender, the age, religion, race, financial level, education or background. A victim of IPV is a victim no matter what. But it is not always that social services support or believe in men that have experienced IPV, because many of the society still have difficulty to imagine that a man can be beaten by his female partner. This thought is based on the stereotypes on gender that society still have, and on masculinity and femininity. Men that have experienced IPV do not feel confident in the police, because the police do not believe or trust that men are victims of IPV and make fun of them, as reading the following quote from D5:

“He gets beaten up by a woman and wants to make a report. Then the police laugh. In one of five of all domestic violence in Sweden is the man who is vulnerable and for many of them this is the living, new research shows”

Often the police do not take men seriously and that is why they laugh at them. But when a report comes from a female victim it is the opposite. Newspapers and social service write a lot on how they protect and help the female victim of IPV, but when it comes to male victims of IPV the newspaper and social services do not write much about male victims. They do not write about male victims of IPV because they do not have any statistics as it is stated below in D14:

“When a woman today will be charged with systematically and repeatedly assaulting her husband shows that the crime of "assault", which in turn leads to these crimes is more difficult to trace in any statistics. Those which cannot be clear to some statistics are not drawn attention to in the media or in politics.”

The idea about men reporting less about IPV is not totally true. It all depends on how the system functions. If the system is more focused on violence against women so will the newspaper and the society, but if the system focuses on the violence and the

perpetrator that commit it instead of the gender it should be easier for newspapers and the society to put same focus on men and women as perpetrators.

“Violence against women is terrible in every way, but it's not the only violence that occurs in relationships. Government, Social Services Act, the Swedish courts - all regulate how violence against women must be combated. Instead a women's kind should be a sexless peace, 'says Linda Dackemo who in his essay interviewed twelve men about their vulnerability and what aid they have received”.

The quote above was published in D5; the quote stated that the social services work to combat the violence against women and not against men. The author of this quote/article has an interesting statement. She brings up the law that protects the women from all intimate partner violence and domestic violence. This law does not exist for men, she stated that this law should not have a gender based law. Men and women are both victims of IPV and for that reason it should exist a sexless law that protects all kinds of violence. This means that there should be a protection law that are not directed to any specific gender.

D6 also shows that media also highlight good treatment against female and male victims of IPV:

“A good attitude is extremely important. We do a threat and risk assessment, to investigate what the next step should be. Often, the victims quickly have to come to a shelter. He or she must also terminate contact with his entire family. It is extremely difficult, of course, and many are therefore choosing to hold back to relatives and put up with violence.”

When woman report about IPV, social services or police usually take rapid action and put the woman in a shelter to protect her. This kind of treatment does not usually occur to male victims. According to the media, men do not feel equally treated by their surroundings as they treat women who are victims of IPV; and that is why men experience more negative treatments than positive from different social services.

In theme 3 we found out that there is not enough help for men, there is a lack of shelter for men that have been victims of intimate abuse. Men are not taken seriously when they report that their partners have abused them, especially when their partners are women.

4.5 Summary

Our essay is based on texts analysed from Swedish newspapers *Aftonbaldet*, *Dagens nyheter* and *Expressen*. In this analysis we examined how media describe intimate partner violence and the construction of gender appearance when man/woman is a perpetrator of IPV. Our intention was to investigate how IPV is described in some Swedish articles. The data from the newspaper was analysed in qualitative content analysis method. The issues studied were on how the media described perpetrators in themes such as men and women as perpetrators & gender construction, the presentation of the violence and the society treatments of IPV victims (male/female).

The analysis was made based on Patton (2004) and Burr's (2003) definition of social constructionism theory. As mentioned before, the essay question formulated by the themes was identified in the table of document. These themes and issues affect among other things related parties compared to the social context and the surrounding community. Theorising and creating an understanding of individuals or groups to different social institutions because the essay questions affecting individual's interaction with one another as well as their relationship to the surrounding community, we believe that social constructionism was a useful analytical tool. According to Burr (2003 p.1), social constructionism can be considered as theoretical orientation that underpins all newer approaches, which offers radically and critically alternatives in psychology and social psychology as well as in other social sciences and humanities. What is called "social constructionism" has no single description because it has many different orientations. A thought on social constructionism is that human knowledge of "itself" is built on social interaction. It does not mean that we are totally choice less or allow ourselves to be affected by the environment in any direction.

In theme one media description of *men/women as perpetrators and gender construction* was analysed. The study showed that media present women as victims of IPV, which makes it difficult to imagine men as victims. But according to Webster and Rashotte

(2009) “When anyone-male or female- is in subordinate position, social and expressive behaviours predominate, and when anyone is in a status advantaged position, competition, dominance, and competence are more likely.” This means that both men and women can be perpetrators of IPV because they can all possess dominance, competition and the feeling of superiority. In D8 we found statistics from police report about violence but nowhere was it written how the violence occurs or who the perpetrator is. The media report less on when the violence started and report less on men victims. It is up to readers to figure out if the violence occurs within same-sex relationship or man and women relationship. All these missing information can mislead readers about IPV.

In association with theme number one *men and women as perpetrators & gender constructions*, the pattern found in articles form a story where most of the time masculinity/superiority/power is, if not the only one, at least one of the most appearing characteristic that partners in intimate violence possess. There may be a risk of focusing too much on the gender aspect, especially when it comes to trying to explain the cause of partner violence by referring to the judgment standards that apply to these areas. A thought of seeing men as strong and capable of defending themselves when needed can make the idea of a man being a victim of intimate partner violence unthinkable. Furthermore in the essay we came across articles that show that women can also be perpetrators.

In the second theme *the presentation of the violence*, the media is a bit unclear because of too many associations on external causes, such as drugs, gambling, jealousy, etc. But none of them is the direct cause of intimate partner violence; they only contribute to a higher risk of IPV. The treatment of drugs and alcohol to addicted partners will be for big help to stop intimate partner violence. We also found out that the intimate partner relationship has not always been bad, but unfortunately in some cases people die of IPV. We also found that IPV is a serious problem in the society where victims have difficulty of leaving relationships that once were good and suddenly turned into a nightmare.

In the last theme which is *the society treatments of IPV victims (male/female)* we can see that the treatment in the society towards male and female victims of IPV is not the

same. Women victims are more favoured to be placed into shelters whereas men victims have no shelter to be placed and victims who have pets. Those victims who have pets have no choice than to stay in the abusive relationship because of protecting their pets. Men are laughed at or are not believed when they talk/report about being abused by their partner, especially if their partners are women.

The media present violence with insufficient information on how the violence occur and how it started. In articles where a man/woman was a perpetrator or victim of IPV there were lack of information if the partner was of same-sex or opposite.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we discuss the results related to our research questions. We will also give some methodological comments related to the possible advantages and limitations of the selected methodological strategy.

5.1 Results of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate how intimate partner violence is described by the Swedish media by looking at how they describe the image of perpetrators, what IPV means to them and how society treats victims (both male and female) of IPV. The theoretical basis for the study was social constructionism. Different scientific articles were also reviewed to enhance the theoretical basis and to also develop the conceptual framework. In order to achieve the aim of the study three research questions were developed: (1) how do samples of Swedish newspapers describe the image of male/female perpetrators of intimate partner violence and gender construction? (2) How do samples of Swedish newspapers portray and describe the violence? (3) How do samples of Swedish newspapers describe the way the society treats the victims (male/female) of intimate partner violence (IPV)? The empirical evidence was based on sample cases gathered from selected Swedish Newspapers namely *DN*, *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*. The evidence gathered helped in answering the research questions.

5.1.1 How do samples of Swedish newspapers describe the image of male/female perpetrators of intimate partner violence and gender construction?

Empirical results: Summarizing the results from the empirical findings, it was realised that both men and women can be victims and perpetrators of IPV. The newspapers analysed showed a pattern that women were described as weak and victims of IPV and not as perpetrators. In D7, there were some statistics about male and female victims of IPV, but there was no mention of who the perpetrators were. It could therefore be women or men. This is just an assumption since the media was not clear on it. This trend was seen throughout the findings. It therefore makes it difficult to know who the real perpetrators of IPV are. The media also makes little or no mention of abuse in same-sex relationships.

Theoretical interpretation: The study brought together different descriptions of intimate partner violence by the media from a social constructionist perspective. The intention was to gain a better understanding on media description of IPV. The empirical result for research question 1 revealed that both men and women can be victims and perpetrators of IPV. We think that a more reasonable interpretation of violence should not be tied to gender but rather to individuals. The theoretical interpretation of the result for research question 1 is that women are considered as vulnerable and men as perpetrators because of gender asymmetry that construct men as strong and women as weak.

Connection to earlier research: The result for this research question can be related to earlier research in the following way: Lövestad (2012) stated that IPV against women and its consequences has become an established issue in public health all over the world. She continued saying that less studies on IPV against men are achieved, however recently women as perpetrators of IPV and men as victims of IPV are getting huge consideration worldwide. Furthermore, she stated that researchers have had different perspective on IPV: family violence perspective and feminist perspective. Family violence perspective claims gender symmetry is the problem this means that both men and women use violence in IPV. On the other hand, feminist perspective claims that men are perpetrators and women are responding on IPV as self-defence. Studies on IPV suggest that even though both men and women take part in IPV, men tend to be more aggressive than women and women are more physically injured. It is evident from the results that gender asymmetry is a health problem for both men and women. The media description of IPV from the results is a health problem common to both men and women of, which any of them could be victims or perpetrators. This confirms Lövestad (2012) assertions and in line with the family violence perspective. It however contradicts the feminist perspective that only women can be victims and where they become perpetrators then it is only for self-defence. From the empirical studies it is evident that both men and women can be victims and perpetrators of IPV. This study was relevant to the authors' because both men and women were questioned and the results were clear and relevant.

5.1.2. How do samples of Swedish newspapers portray and describe the violence?

Empirical results: Question two reveals that women are more exposed on psychological violence before physical violence was introduced. Their former or present male partner or other males close to them have in one way or the other abused all the women, described by the research sample. The document described how the violence was slowly introduced into the relationship before it escalated. When the violence goes on for a long period of time, it ends up normalising the process of violence. It normalises the psychological violence until the physical is introduced.

Theoretical interpretation: The theoretical interpretation of the result for research question two is that women have been victimized for their kindness. The document studied showed how women blamed themselves for their partners' mistakes or abuse. A basic feature of social constructionism is *critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge*. This means that you cannot take things for granted or to completely carry out impartial studies because we interpret everything based on whom we are. It is important to be critical of taking for granted that intimate partner violence is physical by measuring the violence. For example, simply saying that "I wish I did not shout, he would not have slapped me". Slap is still physical violence.

Connection to earlier research: The result for this research question can be related to earlier research in the following way: According to Brå (2009) report both men and women are active in IPV, but women are more exposed than men. The same report claimed that men report less than women about IPV. It continued to say that psychological violence in the form of harassment is common and women are victims of it. This study was relevant to the aim of our study because it presented some sort of violence that occur to women and some for both men and women. Lundgren (2004) is also relevant to our study since she wrote about the violence normalisation process. The normalisation process is an explanation of the process of violence in intimate relationships. The concept explains the process that takes place in an intimate relationship where violence is exercised and where the victim with time begins to regard violence as part of daily life. Lundgren (2004) states that psychological violence occur before physical violence, sometimes the victims do not realise that they are being psychologically abused until they experience both psychological and physical abuse. For the victim to handle an everyday filled with threats and violence, the victim develops strategies to explain the occurrence of violence to him/herself and to others.

The perpetrator in turn justifies the practice of violence by blaming the victim. The victim's strategy most often described is through various forms of adaptation of their vulnerability.

5.1.3. How do samples of Swedish newspapers describe how the society treats the victims (male/female) of intimate partner violence (IPV)?

Empirical results: Question three reveals that there is neither shelter for male victims nor for women with pets. The findings also reveal that the police do often not take male victims of IPV seriously and only few reports from the police are taken further to the social service. But when a report comes from a female victim it is the opposite. Media and social service write a lot on how they protect and help the female victim of IPV, but not for male victims. But since both males and females could be victims of IPV it is important for the social service to play a neutral role by providing help to all of them irrespective of their gender. If a person is a victim of IPV it does not matter the gender, the age, religion, race, financial level, education or background. This makes it difficult for victims who have nowhere to go to. Once a person is exposed to violence, there must be public support to prevent and help them.

Theoretical interpretation: The theoretical interpretation of the result for research question 3 is that the victims are blamed instead of being heard or helped by the society. The second basic feature of social constructionism "*historical and cultural specificity*" means that the concepts we use to understand the world are historical and culturally based. It all depends upon where and when in the world one lives. What we consider important in one culture might not be important in another culture, what was important ten years ago might not be important today. For example, nowadays in Sweden intimate partner violence is considered as a health problem, this was not the case some years back.

Connection to earlier research: The result for this research question can be related to earlier research in the following way: Berns (2001) described how the debt coating was used for different sexes. While there is a unified opinion regarding how the issue should be referred to here, it is not the same for debt coating. Berns explained how there has been a normalization of victim's responsibilities, while responsibility, which lies on the offender and in the community have been ignored. The study also describes the hazards of a gender neutralization of the problem and guilt on the queue. This study was

relevant to our study because major focus was placed on the guilt of the victims and perpetrators instead of placing the guilt on the treatment from the society. We can also relate our third theme to Carlyle (2014) study, because it states that the result of news media coverage underpins misunderstanding that IPV is not a public health problem but a personal issue only. This reduces society's responsibility to devise fervent ways to prevent IPV and support IPV victims. This shows that media has big influence on how society treats victims of IPV. It should be the other way around, the public support and society have to be more willing to find new effective ways of preventing IPV and give equal treatment to both male and female victims since it is a big health problem and affects both of them.

5.2 Methodological discussion: Theoretical and methodological issues

The sociological analysis made shows that gender asymmetry is important regarding how media describe perpetrators of intimate partner violence. However it is important for society to differentiate between gender asymmetry and the causes of IPV in order to get a better understanding of perpetrators and victims of IPV. A part of the context in the newspaper seems to believe that IPV have a specific expression where a man has to be the perpetrator and the women the victim. Especially the highlighting on opinions of gender seems to be important for the media when describing perpetrator. To sum up our results from answered questions shows that the perpetrators of intimate partner violence image in the media seems to arise from the gender asymmetry.

The interpretation we tried to give was based on the contents of the documents, which directly related to intimate partner violence. Example gender asymmetry seems to have a big impact on interpretation of IPV in the media. Authors do not have an opposing view on the role the definition of gender plays on intimate partner violence but rather believe that it can be dangerous to focus on it especially when trying to give a better understanding of perpetrators of IPV image. Gender asymmetry may be a way for the media to describe perpetrators' image of IPV but not the causes of IPV. What this means is that if society continues to believe that women are more vulnerable it might increase violence against women. Violence has to be realised for what it is without necessarily associating it to gender. It is not always based on gender asymmetry neither on drugs and alcohol. Beside these factors, other social circumstances can push perpetrators to be violent in intimate relationship. For example, when one tries to

compensate the lack of care from parents during childhood; different types of abuse or the incapability to handle difficult and negative emotions in general can influence the perpetrator to commit violence. Therefore when the media describe the perpetrators of intimate partner violence they need to be aware of the complications also. They also need to be aware of their own understanding of violence and the society's is characterized by all kinds of beliefs and biases. Authors' therefore suggest that media should consider all these situations before describing perpetrators of IPV otherwise misguided information on intimate partner violence can probably cause worse damages to the society.

The main goal of this essay was to gain a better understanding on IPV image than the media could offer by examining how the media describe them. In this essay authors' used one theory that was related to different concepts in the analysis. But this was used mainly during the analysis and not the comments section because doing so will only be repetition. The theory was used to analyse the information gathered from the newspapers. The information was support to the themes and related to each other. In the comments we wrote that media relate gender asymmetry as cause of intimate partner violence while describing perpetrators. Saying that both men and women can be perpetrators or victims of IPV like we are doing in this essay can be doubted by the society that have same belief like those sample of Swedish newspaper we used. The advantage with the selected method, content analysis, was that the document used with combination of the theory presented a detailed in-depth picture of subjects (see, further Patton, 2002). The limitations with the method however, was that the interpretations in analysis could have been different if we could have used another way of analysing. For example if we had psychological perspective we could accomplished a more discussion of problem based on the professional treatment of perpetrators rather than how media describe them. Another limitation is that the selected cases are rather limited. It is not possible to know the typicality of the cases (see, further Patton, 2002).

5.3 Suggestions for further research

The result of this paper has made us to come up with some suggestions to further research that can be described in the following list:

- (1) The first suggestion is that research made on intimate partner violence against women should be influenced by research done on intimate partner violence against men to try and see if there are underlying forces regarding gender that one have missed to notice so far.
- (2) The second suggestion, in order to increase a better understanding on intimate partner violence, is that it would be interesting to investigate the media portrayal of woman perpetrator of IPV with other method than our own. For example using quantitative methods only.
- (3) Most of the articles that we analysed had short texts to work with. It would be very interesting to compare and work with more extensive texts, and to get a clearer idea on examples of how usually intimate partner violence occur.
- (4) It would also be interesting to do a deeper analysis on how big impact the media have on intimate partner violence and how it influence the society. Another aspect of intimate partner violence could also include how masculinity and femininity violence is expressed in same-sex partnerships.
- (5) By comparing studies like we suggested might be possible to identify different types of behavior that seems to be mutual to human practice of power nevertheless different types of important situations.

Hopefully, these suggestions can contribute to a better understanding on intimate partner violence and the real image of perpetrators without attaching gender construction.

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APPENDIX

Original quotes - some examples of translation

“Under sommaren ökar mäns våld mot kvinnor. Det här året är inget undantag. Under juni löper kvinnor, statistiskt sett, störst risk att råka illa ut i hemmet. Semester innebär alkohol, tid med familjen och isolering från resten av samhället.”

“During the summer, men's violence against women increases. This year is no exception. Statistic result shows that in June women are at the highest risk to get in trouble at home. Holiday involves alcohol, time with family and isolation from the rest of society.”

”– 25 procent av kvinnorna uppger att de någon gång under sin livstid utsatts för brott i när relation. Motsvarande siffra för männen är knappt 17 procent, säger Anna Frenzel, utredare på Brå, till DN.”

“- 25 percent of women report that they sometime during their lifetime exposure to violence in intimate relationships. The corresponding figure for men is just under 17 percent, says Anna Frenzel, a researcher at the National Council, told DN.”

”Kvinnor som utsatts för våld i nära relationer har i dag ingen laglig rätt till poliseskort om de vill hämta personliga tillhörigheter i hemmet. Det vill justitieutskottet ändra på och uppmanar därför inom kort regeringen att vidta åtgärder.

- Vi är alldeles överens om att situationen måste lösas, för det här är helt orimligt. Det handlar ju om brottsoffer som flytt från sin bostad, säger utskottets vice ordförande Johan Linander (C) till SvD”

“Women victims of domestic violence today have no legal right to police escort if they want to retrieve personal belongings in the home.

The Justice Committee want to change that and therefore calls shortly government to take action.

- We are completely in agreement that the situation must be resolved, for this is completely unreasonable. It's all about victims who fled from their homes, says the committee's deputy chairman Johan Linander (C) to SvD”