



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
DEPT OF JOURNALISM, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Do we really need to know everything?

Crisis Communication Ethics among Swedish Journalists and Citizens

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Aim of study:

To compare assessments of ethical issues regarding news reporting from the Stockholm terror attack among Swedish journalists and citizens.

To address tensions between reporting as much as possible, and ethical considerations



Time line

FRIDAY
7
APRIL
2017

14:53

Call to SOS Alarm about truck on Drottninggatan in Stockholm

14:57

Police arrives at the scene

14:57

Twitter: *What the f... is happening???*

14:58

Breaking news in **aftonbladet.se**

15:02

Breaking news in **expressen.se**

15:11

Breaking news in national news agency TT

15:16

Breaking news in public service radio

Attentat på Drottninggatan i Stockholm: "Flera döda" och stort antal skadade



NYHETER fre 07 apr 2017



15:28 **Twitter:** *“Shootings at Fridhemsplan now ...”*

15:37 Breaking news about shootings at Fridhemsplan

15:40 Police urging to avoid city centre

16:53 **stockholmdirekt.se:** Police denies shootings at Fridhemsplan





17:38 **Police press conference** publishing photo of wanted person

20:26 Police arrests Rakhmat Akilov in Stockholm suburb

FRIDAY
28
APRIL
2017

Publication of name, age, nationality and photo of victims that died





Research questions:

1. How did Swedish journalists and citizens assess media ethics regarding news about the Stockholm terrorist attack 2017?
2. How did journalists that reported on the Stockholm terrorist attack, 2017, assess media ethics compared to journalists that did not report.
3. What impact did professional and demographic factors have on the assessment of media ethics regarding the news about the Stockholm terrorist attack, 2017.



Method:

Web surveys to journalists and
citizens with identical questions

Material:

Journalist panel – 2,555 respondents, 1,092 answers (43 %), June 2017

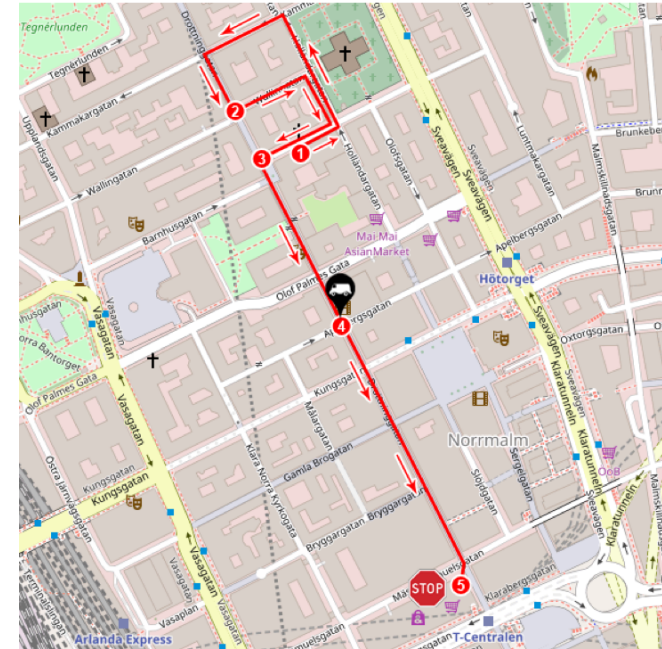
Citizen panel – 4,300 respondents, 3,881 answers (90%), October 2017



Previous Swedish studies

Börjesson 2007:

Very small differences in ethical assessments concerning news content between journalists and citizens in general.



No differences at all between journalists and citizens with higher education.

Edström 2011:

80 percent of Swedish journalist have university education.

Börjesson, Britt. 2006. Namnpublicering – en fråga om offentligt och privat. I Kent Asp (Ed.): *Den svenska journalistkåren*, s 87-95. Göteborg: JMG, Göteborgs universitet.

Edström, Maria. 2011. Arbete och utbildning. I Kent Asp (Ed.) *Svenska journalister 1989-2011*, 21-26. Göteborg: JMG, Göteborgs universitet.



Ethical assessments issues:

- Delayed publishing of the victims' names
- Live reporting with eye witnesses directly after the attack
- Publishing of name and nationality of suspected perpetrator same day as attack
- Publishing of suspected shootings at Friedhemsplan in Stockholm



RQ1: Assessments of ethical issues among journalists and citizens.

Both journalists and citizens:

- Most support for delayed publishing of victims' names
- Least support for publishing of suspected shootings

Citizens more in favour of publishing names of both victims and perpetrator than journalists



RQ2: Assessments of ethical issues among journalists who reported themselves, who's media organization reported, or did not report at all.

- No striking differences between three groups
- However, greater acceptance if the own media reported, and especially if journalist directly involved in reporting
- Most difference regarding publication of suspected shootings



RQ3: Implications of professional and demographic factors on assessment of ethical issues

- Journalists in three cases out of four make different assessments than citizens
- Proximity effect confirmed – journalists reporting themselves are less critical than those who did not
- Elderly people, women and highly educated are more sceptical of publishing than others



Conclusions

- Professional identity influenced journalists' ethical considerations.
- Journalists less critical of ethical considerations when involved in reporting.
- Citizens generally more in favour of name publishing than journalists.
- The results reveal a turnaround compared to the similar studies from the early 2000s.
- Possible effect of social media content on journalistic news?
More research is needed.



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Thank you for your attention