

Bilden av psykiatriområdet

Nyhetsrapporteringen i Rapport 1980-2006

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The image of the psychiatric field

News items in Rapport 1980-2006

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Abstract

In Sweden, as in many other countries in the Western world, care and support to people with mental illness have undergone major organizational changes.

The aim of the thesis is to describe and analyse the image of the psychiatric field that Swedish newscast gives from a long-term period of view and in the perspective of the great changes that have occurred in the psychiatric field. The research questions are: What image has the Swedish news coverage of the psychiatric field shown in a broad and long-term perspective? And how does the news image correspond to societal context?

“The psychiatric field” encompasses both an individual as a societal perspective on mental illness. A model based on the idea of the psychiatric field as “reality” is used to study the news image. The model consists of psychiatric field actors and questions, their properties and relationships. The study of news content in the news program Rapport, “Sweden’s largest news media”, is used to answer the first research question. To answer the second research question, the news image is studied in relation to events in the psychiatric field and to government statistics.

The psychiatric field becomes more newsworthy during the 27 years examined. It occurs more often; gets more space in the broadcasting and more impact as headlines. Four out of ten news items of the psychiatric field is about health care and legislation, while barely one third is related to violence and criminal activities. News about health care and legislation occupies more space, news about violence is more likely to be headlines. The changed news image corresponds to the actual circumstances, where comparisons have been possible to do.

The thesis discusses possible explanations for why the news images looks like they do, partly on the basis of interviews with journalists. The results of the interviews show a professional dilemma where the journalists wants on the one hand to contribute to nuance depictions surrounding mental illness, on the other hand protect the fragile and inexperienced interviewers. Change in the news reporting about the psychiatric field over the period studied is probably caused by the interacting factors in society and journalism.

Keywords: Media, journalism, news, psychiatry, mental illness, content analysis, news values, mediatization