



## Ideation, social construction and drug policy: A scoping review

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**Title page**

**Ideation, social construction and drug policy: a scoping review**

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## **Ideation, social construction and drug policy: a scoping review**

### **Abstract**

Within drug policy scholarship there is a growing body of literature applying ideational and social constructionist approaches to address the complexity of drug policy making and the apparent failure of the evidence-based policy paradigm to free the process from controversy and contestation. Ideational approaches are concerned with the roles played by ideas and beliefs in policy making, while social construction explores the way policy problems are constructed, and agendas are set and delineated by dominant frames and narratives. Interest in these approaches has developed over the last two decades, but has rapidly gained momentum over the last five years. There has been limited reflection on the state of the field, therefore it is timely to conduct a review of the literature to assess the value of these approaches, capture emerging themes and issues, and identify gaps in the literature to support future research directions. Using the Arksey and O'Malley framework, a scoping review was conducted to survey the breadth of the field. Following database and hand searching, 48 studies from 1996 to 2016 were selected for inclusion in the review. A narrative synthesis was undertaken and the literature was grouped into five broad theoretical approaches: ideational policy theory, problem construction, narratives and frames (including media analysis), construction of target populations, and policy transfer and mobilities. The majority of the studies are focused on single countries and drug policy issues, with few studies undertaking comparative work or reflecting on general theoretical developments in the literature. This study found that the Arksey and O'Malley framework was effective in capturing a potentially diverse field of literature and demonstrates the importance of ideational and social constructionist approaches to drug policy scholarship. Further research is required to achieve expanded geographic coverage, test policy making models and undertake comparative work.

### **Key words**

Ideation, social construction, drug policy, policy theory, scoping review

## Introduction

Drug policy scholarship is an emergent field at the cross roads of public policy and public health. Inspired and informed by public health research findings, but drawing from the social sciences, drug policy research focuses on exploring the processes and outcomes of policy making in relation to illicit drugs. Those focused on reforming drug policy have highlighted the detrimental public health consequences of existing policy to argued for re-orienting drug policy away from a regime that penalises drug users to one that seeks to reduce the harms associated with drug use (Rhodes & Hedrich, 2010). The close alignment of the harm reduction movement and public health extends to embracing the evidence-based paradigm that has dominated policy making in recent years. Both the Vienna Declaration (Wood et al., 2010) and more recently, the statements issued by the Commission on Drug Policy and Health (The Lancet, 2016) appeal to governments and international bodies to bring public health evidence to bear in policy debates and considerations. However, as Ritter and Bammer capture, researchers have been “vexed” by the way evidence has been both utilised and underutilised in policy making and from this frustration has emerged a rich field of research that explores the complexity and messiness of the policy making process by introducing and testing concepts and models from political science (Ritter & Bammer, 2010). While a considerable body of scholarship continues to pursue the goal of achieving evidence-based policy (EBP), an alternative stream is drawing on ideational and social constructionist accounts of policy making to explore the roles in public discourse and policy formulation of evidence, politics, stakeholders, ideas and beliefs.

The research question posed by this review is how have ideation and social constructionism been used to analyse drug policy? These two broad theoretical approaches have been chosen as they have been identified as two of three dominant narratives of policy that are being used to explore and challenge drug policy (Stevens & Ritter, 2013). Under the other stream, characterised as ‘authoritative choice’ by Stevens and Ritter (2013), policy constitutes a technical process of solving problems where government is the key actor. The evidence-based policy (EBP) paradigm exemplifies this approach and has been subject to robust critique both generally (Nutley, Davies & Walter, 2007; Smith, 2013), and specifically in relation to drug policy (Nutt, King, Saulsbury, & Blakemore, 2007; Monaghan, 2010; Bennett & Holloway, 2010). This review, therefore, is concerned with the emerging literature that constitutes a post-EBP approach to policy analysis and a challenge to this dominant narrative.

Ideational theorists contend that ideas are a primary source of political behaviour, as they shape not only how we understand political problems but how we subsequently develop and embrace (or reject) approaches to those problems (Béland & Cox, 2011; Braun, 1999). Ideational approaches provide a way of accounting for a myriad of influences in politics by including actors whose roles had previously been marginalised in political analysis, such as non-political organisations and networks. Ideas are also at the heart of social constructionist approaches to exploring policy making with a particular focus on problem construction, the impact of the construction of target populations, and frames and narratives. Rather than see policy making as a rational, linear process where solutions are produced in response to recognised and understood problems, social constructionists see the problems themselves as being constructed through the policy making process. Bacchi's (2009) work has been particularly influential in this regard, inspiring extensive use of her framework which asks what the problem is represented to be, in order to challenge underlying assumptions as to the policy problem that is being addressed.

This growing literature applying ideational and social constructionist approaches to drug policy has developed over the last two decades, but has particularly picked up pace in the last five years with more works appearing in peer review journals and on conference programmes. It is therefore timely to scan the field to establish the emerging themes, issues and theoretical approaches. While some impressive studies exist that address particular drug issues or interventions, there is surprisingly little work that has yet to reflect on the state of the field of scholarship and its future directions.

This literature review applies the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework for scoping reviews in order to capture and summarise the breadth of scholarship in this field. A rigorous search strategy was employed, data charted and the results collated and summarised in a narrative synthesis organised by guiding themes. This framework was chosen as it provides a means of methodically scoping and describing the body of literature concerned with ideational and social constructionist approaches to drug policy, and identifying gaps in the literature. This review focuses on the body of work that is emerging as a critical response to the rise of evidence-based policy approaches to drug policy and therefore a scoping exercise to understand the extent and nature of the work is appropriate. This paper is organised to reflect the five stages of the review framework, as described in the method below, and concludes with a discussion of the results and consideration of the limitations of the review.

## Method

The Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework for scoping reviews provides a means of summarising and capturing the breadth of literature in a particular field. It has similarities with the systematic review method, but where systematic reviews generally focus on narrow areas of inquiry with an emphasis on the quality of studies, scoping reviews are more concerned with the "extent, range and nature of research activity in a particular field" (Brien, Lorenzetti, Lewis, Kennedy, & Ghali, 2010). The framework provides an effective means of collating and categorising strands of scholarship with the findings presented through a narrative synthesis that draws 'conclusions from existing literature regarding the overall state of research activity' (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p.21).

The Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework has five distinct stages:

1. Identifying the research question
2. Identifying the relevant studies
3. Study selection
4. Charting the data
5. Collating, summarising and reporting the results.

The first stage, identification of the research question, sets the parameters of the study and shapes the development of the search strategy. The second stage is focused on a comprehensive search of primary studies from a variety of sources including electronic databases, key journals, networks, organisations and conferences. Stage 3 employs inclusion and exclusion criteria appropriate to the research question to determine the relevance of studies which are reviewed and if necessary eliminated first by title, then abstract and finally review of the full article. The fourth stage of 'charting the data' involves the extraction of key information through the application of a common analytical framework to all the studies. The fifth and final stage is two-fold: basic quantitative analysis is undertaken of the charted data to describe the scope of the body of literature, and, a narrative account is given of the existing literature based on a framework or thematic construction reflective of the purpose of the research question that first guided the review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

## Application of the framework

### *Stage 1: The research question*

A broad research question was established, asking how have ideational approaches and social constructionism been used to analyse drug policy? Drug policy is narrowly defined, focusing on government policy that addresses the issues arising from the use of illicit drugs, with a particular but not exclusive focus on health outcomes. Excluded from the area of inquiry (unless there is an explicit link to drug policy) is literature primarily concerned with drug addiction, drug treatment, drug supply and markets, and drug-related criminal justice and law and order concerns. As with any area of social policy, boundaries in academic literature are not neat, so where there was cross-over and connection between issues I have opted for an inclusive approach.

### *Stage 2: Identification of relevant studies*

My initial search conducted in April 2016 accessed three databases, employing a combination of relevant search terms. No time or language restrictions were placed on the searches. Table 1 shows the search terms employed, resulting in 1114 hits.

**Table 1 Search terms and hits**

Database	Search terms	Hits
Scopus	drug* AND policy AND ideation	72
	drug* AND policy AND frames	254
	drug* AND policy AND narrative*	242
	drug* AND policy AND construction*	188
	drug* AND "advocacy coalition framework"	4
ProQuest	drug* AND policy AND ideation NOT suicid*	7
	drug* AND policy AND "advocacy coalition framework"	10
	drug* AND policy AND "social construction**"	226
	drug* AND policy AND narrative AND illicit	37
	drug* AND policy AND frames AND illicit	27
Medline	drug* AND policy AND ideation NOT suicid*	3
	drug* AND policy AND "social construction**"	24
	drug* AND policy AND narrative AND illicit	18
	drug* AND policy AND "advocacy coalition framework"	2
		<b>1114</b>

The initial search in Scopus using the term 'ideation' revealed a strong link to articles on suicide, so subsequent searches were modified by including the term 'NOT suicid\*' to eliminate literature related to suicide and drug use from the search. The use of the term 'illicit' was also included after the initial

Scopus searches to eliminate articles related to pharmaceutical drugs. This is a problematic distinction as harm from drugs does not *a priori* relate to whether drugs are licit or illicit, but government policies relating to problematic drug use do tend to be inclusive of illicit drug use, thus being a useful term to narrow the inquiry.

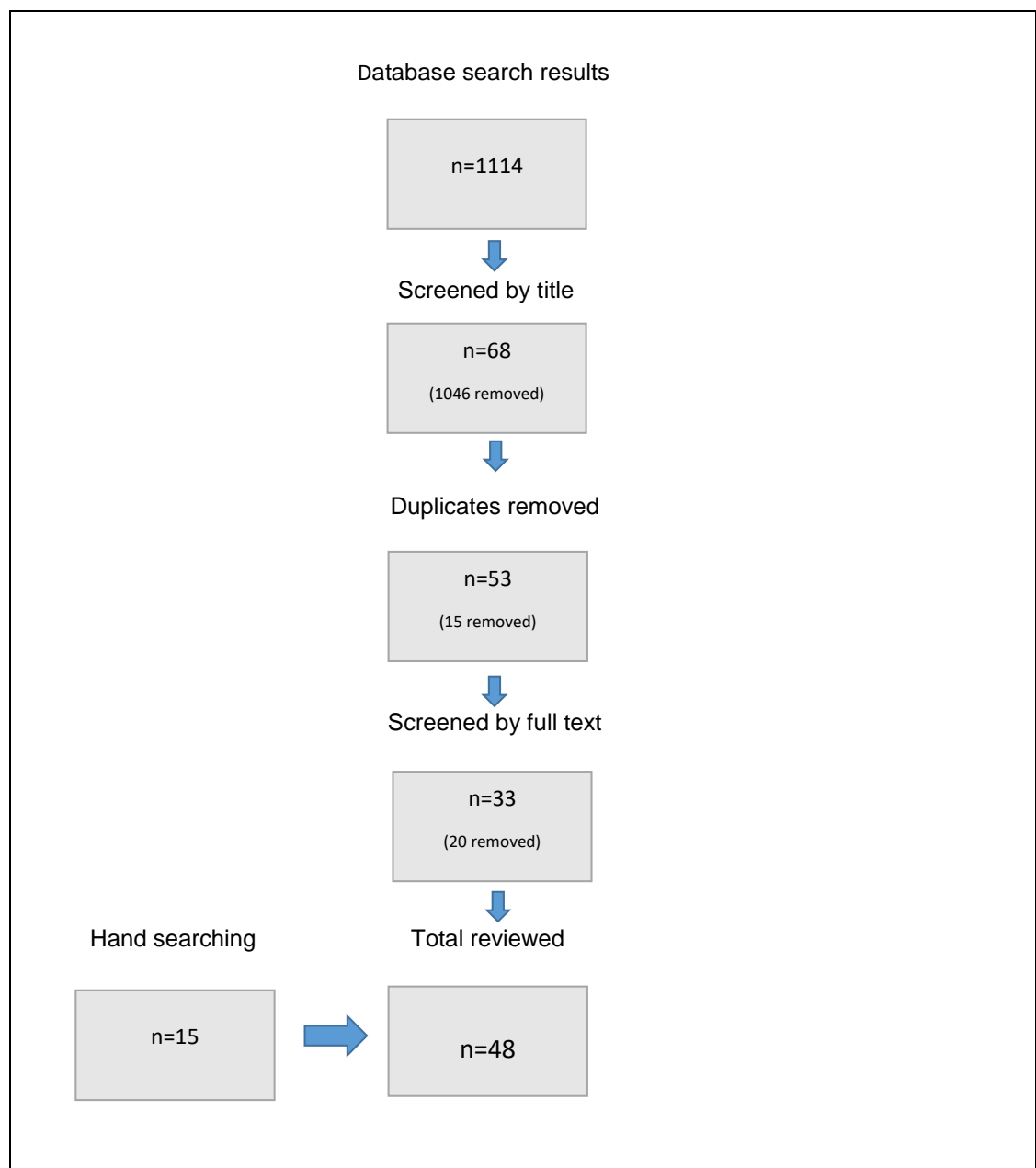
### *Stage 3: Study selection*

The 1114 hits were screened by title and of those only 68 were selected for inclusion. Despite modifications to the search terms to try to refine the results, many studies were focused on pharmaceutical drugs and policy, vaccinations, paediatrics and psychiatry and were therefore excluded. Of the 68 studies selected, 15 were duplicates, reducing the number of articles to be screened by abstract to 53. At this stage a further 20 were removed. Works were excluded if they were journalistic, historical narratives, or opinion pieces. Studies were also excluded if they did not primarily address the development of drug policies, as were studies related only to alcohol and tobacco. 33 articles from the initial list of 1114 then remained to be screened by full text.

Ongoing hand searching was undertaken during the review period as the included studies revealed relevant literature through citations and bibliographies. A methodical search was also undertaken of the following journals: *International Journal for Drug Policy*; *Drugs Education, Prevention and Policy*; *Harm Reduction Journal*; *Addiction*; *Substance Use and Misuse*; *Addiction Research and Theory*; and, *Drug and Alcohol Review*. This process yielded an additional 19 works, four of which were subsequently excluded as their approach did not meet the criterion of a focus on ideation or social construction. With 15 hand searched studies and the original 33, the total number of studies included in the review came to 48 (see Figure 1). Consistent with Arksey and O'Malley's emphasis on accessing a variety of literature sources, 69 per cent of studies were retrieved through the initial database search with the remaining 31 per cent being added through hand searching.



**Figure 1: Flow chart of study selection**



**Stage 4: Charting the data**

Information on each study including geographic coverage, theoretical approach, drug policy or issue, method and data source was extracted and recorded on an excel spreadsheet, which forms the basis of Appendix 1. In setting the terms to be used to categorise the literature, there is a risk that the studies' approaches are oversimplified in order to have them conform to set headings or categories. Despite this risk or limitation, the process provided structure for the findings and allowed the literature to be

critically analysed according to a thematic framework that built upon the type of theoretical approach applied in each study. This analysis is summarised in a narrative review below which is reported under Stage 5.

## **Results**

### *Stage 5 Collating, summarising and reporting the results*

In keeping with Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework, this final stage of the review presents the results in two parts. The first section reports the outcomes of applying quantitative analysis to the charted data to present a picture of the scope and distribution of the literature. The second part presents a narrative synthesis of the literature which is organised thematically according to the dominant theoretical approaches that were first analysed through the initial charting of the data.

#### *5.1: Scope and distribution of the literature*

The charting of the data revealed that the geographic coverage of the literature is limited, with studies relating to only 14 countries, 8 of which are in Europe (excluding the UK). The most represented country is Australia, with 40 per cent of the studies ( $n=19$ ) focused on its drug policies and issues, followed by the UK ( $n=8$ ) and the US ( $n=7$ ), both on 17 and 15 per cent. The majority of the studies ( $n=40$ ) focus on one country only, with only one study coming from Asia (Afghanistan) and no studies from Central and South America, Africa and the Middle East. Of the remaining eight studies, four are comparative, examining the approaches of two or more countries. A further two take an international perspective, while the remaining two relate more generally to the issues of social construction and drug policy, without being country specific.

Time restrictions were not placed on the search but no articles that met the criteria were discovered prior to 1996. Up until 2011 there was a fairly steady flow of studies appearing, after which point there was a significant increase. Of the 48 studies, 22 appeared in the first 16 years (from 1996 to 2011), whilst the remaining 26 (54 per cent) appeared between 2013 and 2016.

43 of the 48 or 90 per cent of the studies were found in peer reviewed journals. Of these articles, a third appeared in the *International Journal of Drug Policy* ( $n=14$ ). The remaining studies comprised a PhD thesis ( $n=1$ ), books ( $n=2$ ), a book chapter ( $n=1$ ) and a report ( $n=1$ ).

At the end of the charting process five broad theoretical approaches or underpinnings of the studies could be identified: ideational policy theory (predominantly influenced by Kingdon (2010) and Sabatier (1998)) ( $n=14$ ); problem construction (predominantly based on the work of Bacchi (2009)) ( $n=15$ ); narratives and frames ( $n=15$ ); construction of target populations (drawing on Schneider and Ingram's (1993) work) ( $n=4$ ); and, policy transfer and mobilities ( $n=5$ ). Five of the studies are identified as fitting into two categories therefore the count of studies exceeds the total of 48. As outlined above, the process of categorising work requires judgements to be made that may restrict how work is described. In general, however, these categories usefully capture the spread of studies across the broad theoretical approaches. The work is described in more detail below (see 5.2 Narrative synthesis).

As would reflect the concern with ideation and social construction, all studies are qualitative and utilise an array of data sources, including policy documents, parliamentary records, media, interviews, surveys, ethnographic material, participant observations, grey literature and research texts. Table 2 captures the range of topics that emerge in the literature. Again the count exceeds the number of studies as more than one topic is evident in many works. That the works addressed drug policy was a criterion for inclusion in the review; the use of a 'drug policy' category reflects that some studies specifically sought to address the subject in a more direct way than others.

**Table 2 Topics covered by studies**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Count</b>
Drug policy	19
Evidence/research	13
Specific drug programs	9
Specific drugs	8
Media	9
Discourse	5
Drug users	3
Moral panic	3
Law	2
Networks	1
	<b>72</b>

### 5.2: Narrative synthesis

One of the key purposes of undertaking a scoping review is to summarise and disseminate research findings from a particular field of scholarship (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). This second part of the Results

section is organised according to the key theoretical approaches that were initially identified during Stage 4 and seeks to directly address the question as to how ideational and social constructionism are used to analyse drug policy. Under those two broad headings, studies are organised according to the main theoretical underpinnings or concerns that influenced their work. This section is followed by a discussion of the gaps in the literature and potential future directions for research.

#### *Ideational approaches to policy analysis*

Ideational approaches to drug policy have been applied to critique evidence-based policy, test 'multiple streams' approaches to policy making, and explore the transfer, translation and sharing of ideas.

#### *Evidence and drug policy*

A concern with evidence has imbued drug policy research in response to the embrace of the evidence-based policy paradigm by advocates of drug policy reform operating under the banner of harm reduction. Ideational theories have been used to provide a framework for critiquing evidence and its relationship with the political process of developing policy in a contested area. Critiques of EBP are concerned with what constitutes evidence and how effectively it is utilised, as well as challenging the "naïve" assumption that policy making can be de-politicised by the judicious application of science to societal problems (Stevens & Ritter, 2013).

One of the most influential scholars in this area is Stevens (2007) who explores bias in the use of evidence, claiming that there is an underlying misunderstanding about the link between evidence and policy. He proposes a new theoretical approach to understanding that relationship based on an evolutionary analogy. While he illustrates that evidence is used selectively to entrench the legitimacy of powerful groups, he does not suggest that evidence is irrelevant or that the idea of using evidence in policy should be abandoned. Rather, Stevens argues that evidence is only one of a number of determinants of policy, and that it is the narratives used to frame social problems that provide the key to whether evidence enters policy (Stevens, 2007).

Monaghan (2011) contributes to this debate with a challenge to Stevens' conceptualisation by focusing his inquiry on the nature of evidence itself. Monaghan questions the dichotomy that is presented of policy being either 'evidence-based' or 'evidence-free'; the latter being read as ideologically driven. Through his work on the UK drug classification system and the reclassification of cannabis, Monaghan

identifies three 'perspectives' representing different views of evidence and concludes that a plurality of evidence exists, casting into doubt the notion that a consensus on evidence-based policy is achievable. Monaghan's stance is reflected in Roumeliotis' (2014) study of Swedish drug policy (discussed below) which is premised on the argument that knowledge itself cannot be free from ideology.

It is MacGregor (2013) who asks the question are politicians the problem in relation to the barriers that impact the use of evidence? While her work is discussed below in relation to frames and narratives, it is important to note that this vexed question of the relative influence and the nature of evidence itself continues to be a very active line of inquiry in drug policy scholarship (see also Ritter, 2009; Tieberghien, 2014; Lancaster, 2014; Lancaster & Ritter, 2014; Van Toorn & Dowse, 2016; Fraser & Moore, 2011; Dwyer & Moore, 2013; Bright, Bishop, Kane, Marsh, & Barratt, 2013; and Everett, 1998).

### *Policy change theories*

Policy making theories from political science provide useful frameworks for exploring contested policies, and in turn, drug policy scholarship provides valuable case studies to contribute to theory testing and development. For example, Lancaster, Ritter and Colebatch's (2014) examination of the development of methamphetamine policy in Australia tests the extent to which Kingdon's multiple stream heuristic is a useful tool for the analysis of drug policy issues. This comprehensive study draws on a range of source documents that are classified against each of the three streams (problem, policy and political). While finding strengths in Kingdon's approach, the authors also provide an insightful critique, questioning the extent to which the streams operate independently and whether policy windows are necessary for action. In addition, they identify a potential underestimation in Kingdon's approach of the role the media plays in agenda setting (Lancaster, Ritter, & Colebatch, 2014).

Kingdon's framework is also employed in two papers exploring the introduction of drug consumption rooms in Australia and Denmark respectively (Gunaratnam, 2005; Houborg & Frank, 2014). These papers are concerned with the debates that are conducted in relation to introducing facilities and the roles played by stakeholders and politicians. Despite the very different circumstances and locations, both studies draw similar conclusions, noting the critical role played by political actors in exercising their powers over legislation and resources allocation. Houborg and Frank in seeking to understand whether policy change in Denmark can be understood in terms of shift from 'government' to 'governance' conclude that there is limited space for governance in drug policy on account of the legal and prohibitive

foundations of the policies (Houborg & Frank, 2014). This is an important reminder of the constrictions placed on the engagement of civil society and other actors in the development of new approaches to drug policy, particularly when attempting to understand the factors that may ultimately lead to policy change. Gunaratnam's conditional endorsement of Kingdon's approach as a means of explaining why a trial proceeded in New South Wales but not in the other two jurisdictions also pursuing safe injecting facilities is more problematic (Gunaratnam, 2005). While I would agree that Kingdon's multiple streams can be used to *describe* the outcomes, Gunaratnam does not provide sufficient explanation for why politicians ultimately supported different outcomes in three jurisdictions.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) (Sabatier, 1988; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999) offers promise of shedding light on drug policy issues with its argument that policy outcomes are the result of competition between coalitions which hold different beliefs about policy problems. Studies that have utilised the framework focus on understanding how one set of ideas becomes ascendant over another within a policy sub-system (Hallam, 2006; Kübler, 2001; Monaghan, 2011; Sobek, 2003). Scholars such as Kübler (2001) and Hallam (2006) demonstrate the utility of the ACF when applied to drug policy issues, albeit with modifications to the framework in each case. Monaghan (2011) treats the ACF more as a spring board, replacing the notion of 'coalitions' with 'appreciative perspectives' in his study of the UK drug classification system. The strengths of the ACF lie in its recognition of the role coalitions play in carrying ideas to policy outcomes, while acknowledging the crucial role played by the decision making power that resides in government structures. An ongoing challenge for the application of the ACF lies in testing out whether the influence of coalitions is overstated: coalitions can be identified, but can it be demonstrated that the policy goals that were achieved were the outcome of collective action (see Schlager, 1995).

In providing case studies for policy theories, drug policy scholarship has served to further challenge the underlying presumption of coherence in policy making. For example, Hughes, Ritter and Cowdery's (2014) study of the drug trafficking legal threshold highlights the complexity of introducing policy in areas that affect multiple policy stakeholders. Drawing from both Kingdon and Sabatier's approaches, this study focuses on four key aspects of the policy process: the roles of formal policy actors, public opinion, the 'problem', and the available research that could inform the policy solutions. This framework is deftly applied and the authors draw the conclusion that the policy development process has been

“arbitrary and messy” and raises the concern about the extent to which policy development should proceed in the absence of evidence (Hughes, Ritter, & Cowdery, 2014, p 992).

Where the study on legal thresholds takes a relatively narrow aspect of policy, Hudebine’s (2005) paper looks at broader changes to drug policy over a longer period of time focusing on the advent of harm reduction policies in the United Kingdom. He, too, concludes that consensus and coherence are the exception rather than the rule in drug policy. Like the work of Houborg and Frank (2014), Hudebine identifies that the prohibitive elements of policy have a powerful effect, in this case, achieving the deviantization of the drug using population. Attempts to ensure the social inclusion of this marginalised population (through harm reduction approaches) result in a duality, creating tension and ambiguity. The picture he paints is one of dynamic but not deep change, where drug policies are better understood as an exercise in ‘containment’: a political balancing act severely challenged by the emergence of HIV (Hudebine, 2005).

#### *Policy transfer and mobility*

The final area of literature with a focus on an ideational approach is that of policy transfer and mobility. A limited number of studies were identified that directly address the process by which policy makers from one jurisdiction borrow ideas or use knowledge about institutions or practices from another jurisdiction (McCann, 2008; McCann & Temenos, 2015; Temenos, 2016; Bewley-Taylor, 2014; Butler, 2013). These works are illuminating as they seek to trace the circulation of ideas and consider the factors that affect the successful transplanting of policies from one place to another. Consideration of policy transfer sits comfortably with the study of the impact of evidence on drug policy as scholars explore a notion of ‘best practice’ and demonstrate the limitations of policy as ‘technical solutions’ when applied in new settings.

Both Butler (2013) and Bewley-Taylor (2014) present case studies that explore the explicit borrowing of policies by national bodies, Butler examining the Dublin pilot drug court in Ireland which sought to transplant the US model, and Bewley-Taylor reconstructing the events that led to the development of the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy. While Butler’s study engages a limited number of interviews with key informants, he is able to highlight some of the potential pitfalls of policy transfer, illustrating the scepticism with which this ‘outside’ idea was met, and the failure of the policy sponsors to embrace the underlying philosophy of therapeutic jurisprudence, which he argues is central to the American drug

court practice. Butler succeeds in presenting a convincing picture of the complexity of policy transfer, stressing the tensions in this particular field between political aspirations, separation of powers functions and inter-governmental cooperation (Butler, 2013). Bewley-Taylor's study of Afghanistan considers the impact of local setting on this instance of policy transfer. He argues the inclusion of (progressive) harm reduction approaches in the strategies demonstrates evidence of the impact and influence of international policy networks in Afghanistan (Bewley-Taylor, 2014). Both Bewley-Taylor and Butler stress the power of the symbolism embodied in the adoption of the particular policies in their respective case studies; an outcome far removed from concerns of effectiveness or best-practice that might more readily be associated with the motivation for adopting others' policies.

Finally, mobility is a theme that is central to the work of McCann (2008), McCann and Temenos (2015) and Temenos (2016). Mobility is explored not just in relation to policy but in relation to people who carry ideas and have interactions in 'real' places. These articles promote broadening the focus of policy transfer from state actors to others engaged in sharing knowledge and experience, through case studies of the development of Vancouver's four pillars drug policy (McCann, 2008), the global model of drug consumption rooms (McCann & Temenos, 2015) and the role of harm reduction conferences as sites where policy mobilisation occurs (Temenos, 2016).

### *Social construction*

The utilisation of social constructionist approaches to analyse drug policy has focused in four areas: problem construction, narratives and frames, drug users as a target population and the construction of drugs themselves.

### *Problem construction*

The literature in this field has been significantly influenced by Bacchi's (2009) approach to problem construction and her 'what's the problem represented to be' framework. A central tenet of Bacchi's work is the contention that problems are not solved by policies but rather made by them. This is not to argue that the issues are not real, but that they are defined and 'made' by the policy that seeks to address them. Problem construction has proved to be a useful underpinning for work on drug policy in two ways. First, it provides a means of unpacking the underlying assumptions of drug policy, helping to shed light on limitations of current approaches and opening up the possibility of reform. Secondly, it



provides a robust critique of the evidence-based policy paradigm by challenging the validity and authority of evidence in the policy making process.

Lancaster and Ritter's (2014) examination of Australian national drug strategy documents and Lancaster, Duke and Ritter's (2015) comparative study of the 'recovery' agenda in Australia and the UK, apply Bacchi's concept of 'problematization' to demonstrate how ideas of problems shape what is possible in terms of policy 'solutions'. While Lancaster and Ritter (2014) find a connection between the construction of the problem of drugs in the Australian context and what is then proffered as an appropriate set of responses, the latter paper, through its comparative approach is able to show that meanings (in this case in relation to the 'recovery' agenda) are not fixed and are subject to negotiation (Lancaster, Duke & Ritter, 2014).

Fraser and Moore (2011) in a similar vein, apply Bacchi's approach to explore meaning and the role of causation and evidence in the development of policy responses to Amphetamine Type Substances in Australia. By focusing on representations of the substances themselves in policy documents, Fraser and Moore seek to understand the extent to which drugs can be seen to be deterministic (ie. to what degree can they be said to cause a particular effect). They conclude that despite an acknowledged paucity of evidence, causation (for harm) is still attributed, thus justifying the policy responses in the documents. In another paper, Moore and Fraser (2013) use problem construction to examine addiction treatment and practices, arguing that by conceiving of addiction as a bounded problem that can be treated in isolation, the system works to produce 'addicts' who are defined by the treatment regime (ie. the policy solution). Moore and Fraser demonstrate the unintended consequences that flow from this approach, including the outcome that "(a)s addiction comes to be produced by the very system designed to treat it, the scale of the problem appears to be growing rather than shrinking" (Moore & Fraser, 2013, p. 916).

The second stream of work to emerge under the banner of problem construction, is a consideration of the role evidence plays in the formation of policy and the way in which it is increasingly relied upon as a means of 'knowing the problem' in the context of national drug strategies (Roumeliotis, 2014; Lancaster & Ritter, 2014). Roumeliotis examines knowledge utilisation in the development of national drug policy in Sweden and concludes that there has been a shift from seeing drugs as an issue of social exclusion to a problem of individual behaviour, the solution to which lies in the domain of experts, not politics. Van

Toorn and Dowse (2016) in comparing the use of evidence in two policy areas (drug policy and child protection) using Bacchi's framework, conclude the role of evidence is to construct a common frame through which meaning is applied and resolutions to problems sought, as opposed to being used to 'solve' policy problems.

Lancaster (2014) argues against evidence being treated as inherently valid and therefore privileged in the policy making process. Her commentary offers the possibility of pushing for reform by developing policy through a more inclusive process that breaks the monopoly of 'valid' knowledge (that is, if we understand policy as constructed the possibility must exist to 'reconstruct' it in a new form with new influences). However, questions remain as to how key interest groups participate and are heard in policy processes. Dingelstad, Gosden, Martin and Vakas' (1996) study concludes debates about drugs are socially constructed and linked to the key interest groups that participate in those debates. The authors, however, offer no insights into what allowed those particular interest groups to dominate the debates, or other questions about the operation of power or influence. Of all the works, Fraser and Moore's is the most reflective on this issue, arguing that neither a material view or an entirely socially constructionist view is sufficient to understand the interactions that produce the 'problem' of drugs. They contribute the following useful insight: "We need, instead, to understand the problem as both factual and political, and policy as a site in which the politics and materiality of drugs are made" (Fraser & Moore, 2011, p. 500).

### *Narratives and frames*

Stone's (1989) work on causal stories resonates with drug policy scholars, providing a framework for accounting for the often repeated but relatively unfounded narratives that dominant representations of drugs. These narratives, in which drugs are framed in terms of criminality or as an issue of individual morality, curb the policy solutions that are offered. MacGregor delves into the question of the overarching but rarely challenged narrative that 'drugs are dangerous', which she sees as dominating public debate (MacGregor, 2013). Her comprehensive study of drug policy in Britain since 1979 comprises document and media analysis as well as participant observation and interviews. To MacGregor the frames signal a set of interests and values that relate to politicians 'playing the game' of electoral survival, constrained by a collective decision making model. MacGregor's work demonstrates how particular narratives prevail and remain remarkably unchanged despite the emergence of new evidence

and knowledge. Moreover, MacGregor succeeds in situating her work squarely in the sphere of politics and political actions, while still demonstrating the value of a social constructionist perspective on the influence of ideas.

Where MacGregor identifies continuity in the underlying narrative shaping British drug policy, it is change that is identified in a comparative study of the framing of drug consumption and gambling in Germany and the Netherlands (Euchner, Heichel, Nebel, & Raschzok, 2013). Encompassing a sixty year period, this study draws on parliamentary and government documents to identify dominant frames, concluding that morality framing, while present in the mid-twentieth century, lost its importance over time, and that close connections can be identified between 'frame shifts' and policy outputs.

A further interesting application of the analysis of policy narratives comes from Fitzgerald's work on two divergent attempts to introduce safe injecting facilities in Australia. To better understand the cause for the failure of the Victorian initiative, Fitzgerald identifies a distinctly different narrative dominating the policy debates in relation to law enforcement in the two locations, concluding that the lack of confidence in the police in New South Wales opened the way for more acceptance of alternative framing and solutions to the street based drug scene (Fitzgerald, 2013).

### *Media*

A series of studies has sought to understand the role the media plays in framing debates on drug issues and drug policy, raising amongst other issues, the question of how influential the media is in policy debates and political outcomes. Useful starting points to this literature are Lancaster, Hughes, Spicer, Matthew-Simmons and Dillon (2011) and Bright, Marsh, Smith and Bishop (2008). The former article identifies four key functions played by the media: agenda setting; framing; shaping attitudes towards risk; and feeding into political debates and decision making. The latter employs a social constructionist approach, identifying the dominant discourses that recur in Australian media and exploring how those discourses impact on how we conceive substance use, providing a rationalisation for the policy outcomes that are offered. Interestingly, the study identifies six dominant discourses, challenging more binary conceptualisations of debates around drugs hinging on proponents and opponents of particular policy positions (Bright, Marsh, Smith & Bishop, 2008, and for contrast, see Hallam, 2006).

A readily identified role of the media in relation to drugs is that of a vehicle for creating 'moral panic' as we see in the work of Everett (1998), Bright, Bishop, Kane, Marsh and Barratt (2013) and Alexandrescu

(2014). Each study deals with the media reaction to the appearance and impact of a single drug (crack cocaine, Kronic and mephedrone respectively), and all make the case that the media played a significant role in drawing the public's attention to these drugs and in doing so, agenda setting in relation to demanding a response from government. Each study raises the concern that the narratives that recur through media reports are divorced from a scientific evidence base and can carry the unintended consequence of increasing risk to the public as a result of media focus.

Two studies stand out for presenting more nuanced and ambiguous findings about the role of the media (Tieberghien, 2014; Hughes, Lancaster & Spicer, 2011). Tieberghien explores the representation of scientific knowledge in the Belgian media, in relation to drugs, concluding that while the media was found to support an 'enlightenment' role in relation to incorporating scientific information in reporting on drugs, the presentation was often inaccurate or distorted, demonstrating a selective use of research (Tieberghien, 2014). Hughes, Lancaster and Spicer's (2011) study of Australian print media with its aim to understand how generalizable findings of media bias and sensationalism are, offers important insights into the debate on the role of media and moral panic. Their research found that overall there was a bias of reporting towards frames that depicted crime or deviance, however, most articles were reported in a neutral manner and in the absence of crisis framing, leading the authors to conclude that media reporting (in Australia) "may be less overtly sensationalised, biased and narrowly framed than previously suggested" (Hughes, Lancaster & Spicer, 2011, p. 285).

While the above studies demonstrate that framing of drug issues occurs, being able to link that framing to political or policy outcomes is more problematic. Two studies that seek to achieve this are Elliott and Chapman (2000) and Lawrence, Bammer and Chapman (2000), both of which examine media coverage during the attempt to introduce a heroin trial in the Australia Capital Territory during the 1990s. Where Elliott and Chapman focuses on the representation of drug users, Lawrence, Bammer and Chapman are concerned with the orientation of reporting on any aspect of heroin. Both studies conclude that the extensive negative coverage contributed to the failure of the trial. While the arguments are compelling, these two works (like other media analyses) are limited by only being able to suggest or imply a link between the outcomes and the reporting as neither work demonstrates a direct impact that the reporting had on the political and policy decision making process, being limited methodologically to analysis of media.

This limitation suggests that there is a need for further work exploring the impact of the agenda setting function played by the media. An approach to this is demonstrated in Everett's (1998) study of the US federal sentencing guidelines for crack cocaine utilising a public arena framework. Everett depicts the media as challenging political elites' ability to frame and define social problems. Complementing his media analysis, Everett explores the interactions between the Congress and the US Sentencing Commission when the laws were subject to review following exposure of the racial bias that accompanied the enactment of the sentencing guidelines. Given how divorced the sentencing laws were from evidence about the relative harms of crack cocaine versus powder cocaine, Everett makes a compelling case for the ability of the media to set an agenda that enabled legislators to pursue ideological positions in the face of contrary evidence (Everett, 1998).

### *Target populations*

The social construction of drug users as a target population arises in a number of studies from the US, UK and Australia (Amundson, Zajicek, & Kerr, 2015; Lybecker, McBeth, Husmann, & Pelikan, 2015; Neill, 2014; MacGregor, 2013; Stevens, 2011; Hudebine, 2005; Elliott & Chapman, 2000). Influenced by the works of Schneider and Ingram (1997) and notions of 'deservedness', these studies focus on the impact on policy of the negative construction of drug users as a deviant population. MacGregor (2013) and Stevens (2011) see British policy as having been strongly influenced by underlying assumptions and characterisations of drug users that have served to inextricably link drug users and criminality, oversimplifying the complexity of circumstances surrounding drug use. Evidence is also of concern here, as studies such as Amundson, Zajicek and Kerr's (2015) conclude. In examining the public discourse of state legislators in the US during debates on welfare drug testing, this study finds proponents did "little to distinguish welfare recipients from drug abusers...(a)lthough empirical evidence does not support a connection between welfare receipt and drug use" (Amundson et al., 2015, p.458). Neill (2014) specifically applies Schneider and Ingram's (1997) notion of social construction to two drug policy models (law and order, and public health). Neill finds that which of the two models dominates depends on how the drug population is perceived and concludes by advocating for a public health approach based on a "drug addiction as disease" model. In doing so, Neill fails to take the social constructionist analysis through to its logical conclusion that the disease model is also a social construct, and itself subject to criticism for its underlying assumptions. Neill, in privileging "medical

treatment” above “politically based solutions”, fails to explore the complexity of the issue, placing herself at odds with other scholars such as Roumeliotis (2014) who argues that in treating drug use as an issue of the individual, rather than society, opportunities are lost to see the wider social circumstances that make drug use problematic.

### *Construction or enactment of drugs*

The final area of literature to emerge from social constructionist approaches concerns the impact on policy of the construction of drugs themselves, or the way in which they are produced and reproduced in public discourse (Moore & Fraser, 2013; Dwyer & Moore, 2013; Kolind, Holm, Duff, & Frank, 2016). Moore and Fraser’s (2013) article using Bacchi’s approach is discussed above but two additional relevant works were found that work from a Science and Technology Studies approach. Dwyer and Moore (2013) critically examine the way that methamphetamine is ‘produced and reproduced’ in public discourse. This study looks beyond public policy documents, searching webpages, health promotion, education and campaign materials, media accounts, grey literature and research texts. More innovatively, the authors compare their findings from this public discourse with consumers’ experiences of methamphetamine use, taken from an ethnographic study. They find that public discourse “enacts methamphetamine as an anterior, stable, singular and definite object routinely linked to the severe psychological ‘harm’ of psychosis” (Dwyer & Moore, 2013, p. 203). This is at odds with the findings of the ethnographic accounts (which indicate a range of experiences) and for the authors, gives insufficient consideration to the social and cultural contexts in which the drug can be taken – a factor which is “well established as essential to any understanding of drug experiences and effects” (Dwyer & Moore, 2013, p. 206).

Kolind, Holm, Duff and Frank’s (2015) work complements Dwyer and Moore’s study in its examination of the way both legal and illegal drugs are enacted in Danish prisons. Following identification of three enactments of drugs in prison settings, the authors conclude that drugs do not have a static meaning, but that meaning will depend on the particular situation. This work demonstrates social construction at play beyond the construction of the problem of drug use, to the very substances themselves, the meaning of which cannot be taken for granted in policy development.

## Discussion

The application of the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework to a scoping review of this nature has proved both appropriate and efficient. While there are some limitations (discussed below), the method works to capture the breadth of literature in this field by initiating the search through rigorous database querying, augmented by hand searching. As the results demonstrate, drug policy scholarship's adoption of ideation and social constructionist approaches goes back only twenty years and as a relatively young field of social policy there is considerable scope for continuing to pursue these theoretical frameworks in more depth and with greater geographic coverage. The literature is dominated by a critical stream that challenges and interrogates existing policies and the means by which they are negotiated and deliberated by the various actors engaged in the policy making enterprise. The major themes that have emerged concern the roles of evidence, stakeholders and politicians, and the influence of public opinion and the media.

The issue of evidence remains unresolved in the literature, although there is consistency in the position that a 'pure' version of evidence-based policy is unachievable. The focus of inquiry shifts to consider if evidence is not the prevailing influence on policy, what is, and through what theoretical lens can we satisfactorily account for this process? As this scoping review illustrates, drug policy has proved rich grounds for exploring the process of policy change and various studies grapple with the question as to whether continuity or change best describes our approach to drugs (see MacGregor, 2013; and for contrast Euchner et al., 2013). There is an ongoing need to explore the roles played by stakeholders and public opinion in the development of drug policy. The role of public opinion remains problematic and is closely tied to questions about the role of politicians and political leadership, with studies producing mixed findings that paint politicians as both decisive to policy outcomes (Gutnaranam, 2005) and constrained by collective action (MacGregor, 2013).

Another theme that emerges is that of the coherence of drug policy with studies describing policy as "arbitrary and mess" (Hughes et al., 2014, p.992) and characterised by "ambiguity and ambivalence" (Hudebine, 2005, p. 240). These characteristics of drug policy potentially challenge more conventional applications of policy theory models, providing opportunities to test out the boundaries and applicability of familiar frameworks and approaches such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework and Kingdon's multiple stream approach. What is apparent from the scoping review is that there are some influential

theoretical approaches that remain less explored such as Haas' (1992) epistemic communities or Baumgartner and Jones' (1993) punctuated equilibrium theory. While there are studies that embark upon theory building (see Stevens, 2007 and Monaghan, 2010 as examples), of the 48 studies, only three articles are primarily concerned with the state of theory in the body of drug policy research, presenting an opportunity for further consideration and debate of the field itself amongst drug policy scholars (Lancaster, 2014; Ritter & Bammer, 2010; and Stevens & Ritter, 2013).

The review has revealed a narrow geographic focus. Work being undertaken in Australia dominates, ahead of the UK, and the US, with the majority of the remaining studies focused on European countries. Given the significance of drug issues in South America, Asia and Africa there is a remarkable gap in the literature in this regard. Bewley-Taylor's (2014) study of Afghanistan's national policy stands out and while it could be a model for exploring policy transfer approaches in other countries, there is a more fundamental need to explore policy making in different political systems from domestic perspectives. Also revealing, is the lack of comparative literature in this field, with only four studies examining the approaches taken in two or more countries. There is a significant opportunity to contribute to our understanding of policy development by undertaking comparative research.

Finally, an underlying but insufficiently explored area is the relationship between different levels of policy and in particular the impact of national policy on local jurisdictions. The importance of this issue will vary from country to country and be dependent on the local context, but its exploration brings with it opportunities to interrogate the gap between policy and implementation and issues of local interpretation and policy transfer issues sub-nationally. Of the works reviewed, Hudebine (2005) provides the best example of an attempt to grapple with the consequences of ambiguity in national policy leading to alternative interpretations of policy implementation at the local level. Further work in this area is warranted and would frame the exploration of questions such as the impact of national level discussion and narratives on the reality of implementing drug policy and services at the community level.

### **Limitations**

This scoping review has a number of limitations which should be noted. I have presented a narrative synthesis of the results by grouping my findings by themes based on theoretical approach. There is a risk that the studies presented are 'pigeon-holed' to fit the thematic schema and the breadth of their enquiries may not be conveyed. However, the thematic groupings presented themselves quite readily



through the process of extracting data during Stage 4, suggesting that the included literature is representative of the work being undertaken in this field.

A further limitation lies with the issue of the completeness of the review. While a reasonable attempt has been made to rigorously apply Arksey and O'Malley's framework, there are still questions as to how many databases should be searched initially and how much hand searching should be undertaken. The use of Scopus, in particular, should give excellent coverage but defining and refining search terms is crucial to the process. The number of articles that were subsequently picked up through hand searching key journals was surprising but may reflect the key words used by authors. Despite no language restrictions being placed on the searches, no non-English language studies were returned. This is unexpected given relevant work being undertaken, particularly by European scholars. While English search terms were utilised, databases such as Scopus contain translations of materials (at least at the abstract level). This, and the issue of search term returns, are issues that warrant further investigation.

Further, the process of establishing and applying inclusion and exclusion criteria will greatly affect the range and volume of literature that is subsequently reviewed and selected for inclusion. The decision as to which studies are selected can only be resolved by constant reference to the central research question. Studies focused on governance comprise one area of literature that was largely excluded as falling outside the immediate area of inquiry, but contribute fruitfully to drug policy research and would be of interest to drug policy scholars. Finally, Arksey and O'Malley (2005) recommend an optional step of undertaking stakeholder consultation to augment a review's findings. This step was not undertaken due to time and resource constraints, but could well have served to improve the completeness of the review.

## **Conclusions**

This scoping review has served to capture the body of literature that has emerged in response to the challenge of understanding contemporary drug policy making as a post-evidence-based policy construct. It has demonstrated the potential of both ideation and social construction to explore critical questions that relate to the role of evidence, the influence of stakeholders and the power of problem construction and framing. Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework proved to be an effective means of capturing diverse strands of the literature and organising them through a narrative synthesis to

show the range of work being undertaken in this field. While interest in this area is clearly growing as evidenced by the number and rate of published works, there remain many areas that warrant further research, including expanding the geographic range of studies, undertaking further comparative work and contributing to reflections on the state of the field. Importantly, drug issues continue to challenge policy makers and communities, and generate controversy, whether through the emergence of new substances or longstanding unresolved issues such as decriminalisation, managing overdose and the preventing the spread of blood borne viruses. Further drug policy scholarship is required to help us to better understand the complexity of policy making and to continue to explore and shed light on the power of ideas and knowledge to effect change.

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The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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## Appendix 1 Overview of selected research

Author, Year	Journal/Book/Thesis	Country	Theoretical approach	Drug policy/issue	Method	Data source
Alexandrescu (2014)	<i>Crime, Media, Culture</i>	UK	Narratives and frames	Mephedrone, media and moral panic	Discourse and media analysis	Online published news items
Amundson et al. (2015)	<i>Sociological Spectrum</i>	US	Social construction of target populations	Construction of welfare recipients as drug users	Documentary discourse analysis	Media, press releases and speeches
Bewley-Taylor (2014)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Afghanistan	Policy transfer	Development of the Afghan national drug strategy	Narrative policy analysis and historical reconstruction	Documents and interviews
Bright et al. (2008)	<i>Addiction Research and Theory</i>	Australia	Discourse analysis	Identification of dominant discourses on drugs	Media analysis	Newspaper articles and media
Bright et al. (2013)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Australia	Narratives and frames	Kronic, dominant discourses, moral panic	Media and discursive analysis	Online published stories, google trends analysis and survey data
Butler (2013)	<i>Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy</i>	Ireland	Policy transfer	Drug courts in Ireland	Case study	Documents and interviews
Clarke (2016)	<i>Critical Social Policy</i>	US	Narratives (Narrative Policy Framework)	Needle exchange programs in California	Narrative analysis	Documents, media, committee recordings and interviews
Dingelstad et al. (1996)	<i>Social Science and Medicine</i>	Australia	Social construction (problem construction)	Drug debates and interest groups	Case studies	Interviews and research texts
Dwyer and Moore (2013)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Australia	Social construction, Science and Technology Studies	Methamphetamine and public discourse	Discourse analysis and ethnography	Web content, media, policy documents, grey literature, research texts and ethnographic material
Elliot and Chapman (2000)	<i>Drug and Alcohol Review</i>	Australia	Social construction of target populations	Construction of drug users and the ACT heroin trial	Qualitative content analysis	Newspaper articles
Euchner et al. (2013)	<i>Journal of European Public Policy</i>	Germany and Netherlands	Frames and frame shifting	Morality framing of gambling and drug use in the Netherlands and Germany	Case studies and documentary analysis	Parliamentary and government documents
Everett (1998)	Book chapter	US	Social construction (problem construction and public arenas model)	Sentencing of crack cocaine offences in the US	Narrative reconstruction and media analysis	Documents and media
Fitzgerald (2013)	<i>Critical Public Health</i>	Australia	Narratives (Narrative Policy Framework) and framing	Safe injecting facilities in Australia	Narrative analysis	Interviews, policy documents, parliamentary records, research texts and ethnographic material
Fraser and Moore (2011)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Australia	Social construction (problem construction)	Amphetamine-type substances policy, representation, knowledge and evidence	Policy analysis	Policy documents
Gunaratnum (2005)	Report	Australia	Kingdon's multiple streams	Safe injecting facilities in Australia	Case studies	Media, press releases, parliamentary records, reports and research texts



Hallam (2006)	PhD Thesis	Australia	Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework	Drug policy and harm reduction in Australia	Case studies	Media, press releases, parliamentary records, reports and research texts
Houborg and Frank (2014)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Denmark	Kingdon's multiple streams and Callon's 'framing' and 'overflowing'	Drug consumption rooms in Denmark	Critical discourse analysis	Media, legislation, government and NGO documentation
Hudebine (2005)	<i>Addiction Research and Theory</i>	UK	Policy paradigms and problem construction	Harm reduction and drug policy in the UK and perceptions of drug users	Cognitive policy analysis	Policy documents, reports, research texts and interviews
Hughes et al. (2011)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Australia	Frames	Australian news media reporting of illicit drug issues	Media content analysis	Newspaper articles
Hughes et al. (2014)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Australia	Policy theory (Kingdon and Sabatier)	Legal thresholds for drug trafficking	Critical legal and historical analysis	Policy documents, legislation, parliamentary records, government inquiries, policy reports and research texts
Kolind et al. (2016)	<i>Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy</i>	Denmark	Science and Technology Studies, 'enactments' and actor network theory	Drugs in prisons	Critical analysis	Interviews and participant observations
Kübler (2001)	<i>Journal of European Public Policy</i>	Switzerland	Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework	Harm reduction policies in Switzerland	Tests ACF's policy change hypotheses; case study	Documents
Lancaster et al. (2011)	<i>Drug and Alcohol Review</i>	Australia	Media/ communication theories	Impact of media and effect on drug policy	Models of media effects	Research texts
Lancaster (2014)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	General	Social construction (problem construction)	The evidence-based drug policy endeavour	Discursive analysis and commentary	Research texts
Lancaster and Ritter (2014)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Australia	Social construction (problem construction and representation)	Australia's national drug strategy documents	Critical discourse analysis	Documents
Lancaster et al. (2014)	<i>Policy Studies</i>	Australia	Kingdon's multiple streams	Methamphetamine and public discourse	Case study	Research texts, summit papers, grey literature, government reports, policy announcements and media Reports
Lancaster et al. (2015)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	UK and Australia	Social construction (problem construction)	Recovery agenda in the UK and Australia	Comparative policy analysis	Reports
Lawrence et al. (2000)	<i>Aust &amp; NZ Journal of Public Health</i>	Australia	Frames	Media coverage and the ACT Heroin Trail	Media content analysis	Newspaper articles
Lybeker et al. (2015)	<i>Policy and Internet</i>	US and Mexico	Social construction of target populations and narratives (Narrative Policy Framework)	New media and the portrayal of issues on the US-Mexico border	Media analysis	YouTube videos
MacGregor (2013)	<i>Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy</i>	UK	Social construction (problem construction) and narratives and frames	Political perspectives of drug issues in the UK	Thematic analysis using grounded theory approach	Government and policy documents, media, interviews and participant observation
McCann (2008)	<i>Environment and Planning A</i>	Canada	Policy transfer and urban policy mobilities	Drug policy in Vancouver	Case study	Documents, media and interviews

McCann and Temenos (2015)	<i>Health and Place</i>	International	Policy mobilities	Drug consumption rooms	Case study	Government and policy documents, research texts, reports and interviews
Monaghan (2011)	Book	UK	Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework; models of evidence use and the 'processual' model	UK cannabis classification system and evidence	Case study	Government and policy documents, research texts, reports and interviews
Monaghan (2010)	<i>Social Policy and Society</i>	UK	Models of evidence use and the 'processual' model	UK cannabis classification system and evidence	Theory building	Government and policy documents, research texts, reports and interviews
Moore and Fraser (2013)	<i>Qualitative Health Research</i>	Australia	Social construction (problem construction)	Addiction treatment policy	Case study	Interviews
Neill (2014)	<i>World Medical and Health Policy</i>	US	Social construction of target populations	Social construction of drug users and impact on drug policy in the US	Historical narrative	Research texts
Ritter (2009)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Australia	Evidence-based policy	Use of evidence in drug policy making	Empirical research	Interviews
Ritter and Bammer (2010)	<i>Drug and Alcohol Review</i>	Australia	Policy making theories (multiple)	Impact of research on drug policy making	Descriptive and analytical	Policy documents
Roumeliotis (2014)	<i>Addiction Research and Theory</i>	Sweden	Social construction (problem construction)	Knowledge utilisation and ideology in Swedish drug policy	Discourse analysis	Public reports
Small et al. (2006)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Canada	Social construction (problem construction), narratives and cultural change	Safe injecting facility in Canada	Narrative account	Research texts
Sobeck (2003)	<i>Administration and Society</i>	US	Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework, bureaucratic politics framework and the institutional analysis and development framework	Group membership and participation in the drug policy making process in California	Case study comparing different policy frameworks	Meeting minutes, observations, reports, interviews and surveys
Stevens (2007)	<i>Critical Social Policy</i>	UK	Narratives and frames and 'evolutionary' theory of evidence selection	Bias in the use of evidence in policy development	Theory building	Policy documents
Stevens (2011)	Book	UK, US, Sweden and the Netherlands	Narratives and frames, evidence and policy making	Bias in the use of evidence in policy development; harmful consequences of drug policy	Empirical research	Government and policy documents, observations, and ethnography
Stevens and Ritter (2013)	<i>Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy</i>	General	Narratives	Drug policy development and evidence utilisation	Editorial to IJPD special edition	Research texts
Tammi (2005)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Finland	Social construction and elite networks	Drug policy development in Finland	Discourse and network analysis, case study	Policy documents, reports, proceedings, committee member notes, media and interviews
Temenos (2016)	<i>Space and Polity</i>	International	Policy mobilities	Conferences, networks and drug policy reform	Empirical research	Documents, interviews and observations
Tieberghien (2014)	<i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>	Belgium	Research utilisation and the media	Drug policy debates in Belgium	Discourse analysis	Newspaper articles and policy documents

van Tooren (2016)

*Evidence and Policy*

Australia

Social construction (problem construction) and frames

Compares role of evidence in drug policy and child protection

Case studies and discourse analysis

Policy documents