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Drama in the dailies : violence and gender in Dutch newspapers, 1880 to 1930

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Drama in the Dailies

Violence and Gender in Dutch Newspapers, 1880 to 1930

Clare Wilkinson

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Drama in the Dailies. Violence and Gender in Dutch Newspapers, 1880 to 1930

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	7
Chapter 1: Introduction	9
1.1 Debate on gender and violence	11
1.2 Research aim	20
1.3 Theoretical framework.....	25
1.4 Methodology.....	33
1.5 Thesis overview	40
Chapter 2: The socioeconomic and legal context.....	42
2.1 Political and economic developments	43
2.2 Problematizing male behaviour: drink and sexuality.....	48
2.3 Women and children in the family.....	56
2.4 Private violence and social problems in Britain and the Netherlands.....	64
2.5 Criminal justice system.....	67
2.6 Prosecution of family and sexual violence.....	73
Conclusion	84
Chapter 3: Newspaper dynamics and crime reporting.....	85
3.1 Expanding market and rising importance of female readers	86
3.2 The role of family and sexual violence in newspaper content	94
3.3 Naming and shaming the perpetrator	100
3.5 News values as determinants of crime news content	103
3.6 The mediating effect of sources.....	108
3.7 Form, style and the question of sensationalism	114
Conclusion	121
Chapter 4: Intimate partner violence in the news.....	123
4.1 Changing coverage of intimate partner violence.....	124
4.2 Representation of intimate partner violence: Foreign stories	128
4.3 Representation of intimate partner violence: Dutch stories	132
4.4 Condemnation and sympathy	148
4.5 Avoiding moral judgements	153

Conclusion	156
Chapter 5: Parents who maltreated their children in the news	158
5.1 The Children's Acts	160
5.2 Coverage of maltreatment stories in the newspapers	167
5.3 Representation of abandonment, abuse and neglect, infanticide, and filicide.....	171
5.4 Sympathy and condemnation	186
Conclusion	193
Chapter 6: Sexual violence in the news	195
6.1 Debating the law on sexual violence in the 1880s.....	197
6.2 Coverage of sexual assaults	199
6.3 Construction of sexual violence against women and children	204
6.4 Sexual murders.....	217
6.5 Sexual violence as a problem	222
6.6 Homosexual acts with adolescent boys	226
Conclusion	230
Chapter 7: Conclusion	232
Appendix. Articles in Dutch law on family and sexual violence	241
List of tables and figures	246
Sources.....	247
Bibliography	251
Summaries	284
Summary in English	284
Samenvatting in het Nederlands.....	287
Curriculum vitae.....	292

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1880, the Amsterdam factory worker Johannes de Raad was sentenced to ten years in prison for battering to death the two-year-old son of his girlfriend Anna Fasting, a cleaner. She was sentenced to one year for hitting the boy on other occasions. The Dutch newspapers expressed horror at the crime; they were particularly critical of the mother, who they implied got off lightly. In the words of the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, she was the ‘moral co-perpetrator’ (*zedelijk mededader*) in allowing De Raad to do this. Her own argument that she was pregnant with De Raad’s child and afraid of being deserted by him held no weight.¹ This case was typical of newspaper stories of private violence in 1880 in both the poverty-stricken circumstances of the protagonists and the journalists’ lack of empathy for the woman involved. At a time when newspapers were aimed at a small group of middle-class male readers, the stories reflected their viewpoint; tales of family violence were situated in a world far removed from theirs.

The next fifty years saw big changes in the Dutch economy, politics and civil society. These changes gave both the working class and women a voice in the public sphere, while children became the focus of government policies. Industrialization took off, the cities expanded and the country’s population doubled. Living standards improved for the masses and the working class acquired political representation through the confessional (Catholic and Protestant) and socialist parties.² Family life changed too, as the male breadwinner model became the norm for all strata of society. This put greater emphasis on men’s duty to protect and provide for their family, while the home became idealized as a domestic haven in which children should grow up in a carefree existence. Moreover, the state was now prepared to intervene in family life to enforce this, and in 1905 child protection legislation was introduced that allowed children to be removed from the custody of incompetent parents.³ Women started to mobilize themselves in the late nineteenth century. A feminist movement emerged, and they set up their own philanthropic organizations. They played a key role in the campaign to abolish prostitution and in the temperance movement, which problematized male sexuality and male drinking behaviour respectively. Criticism of the male double standard also led to greater compassion for unmarried mothers, who were seen as victims of male seducers and given practical support.⁴ By 1930, the conditions for

¹ “Doodslag van een kind,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 15 January 1880, 6; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 21 January 1880, 6.

² Friso Wielenga, *Nederland in de Twintigste Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009), 15-124; Jan Luiten van Zanden and Arthur van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914. Staat, instituties en economische ontwikkeling* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2000), 343-414.

³ Nelleke Bakker, Jan Noordman, and Marjoke Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden in Nederland. Idee en praktijk 1500-2000* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2010), 264-282, 452-465.

⁴ Ulla Jansz, *Denken over sekse in de eerste feministische golf* (Amsterdam: Sara/Van Gennep, 1990), 75-99; Annemieke van Drenth and Francisca de Haan, *The Rise of Caring Power* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 133-16; Petra De Vries, “Duel met Hendrik Pierson. Mannelijke seksualiteit en de Nederlandse

couples like Johannes de Raad and Anna Fasting had changed dramatically. They had more money, better housing and access to benefits during periods of sickness or unemployment, while unmarried mothers could opt for mother-and-baby homes rather than being forced to stay with their partner for financial reasons. Moreover, if parents were suspected of mistreating their offspring the state had powers to intervene and remove the child.

The newspaper market too was transformed between 1880 and 1930, with women and the working class becoming target segments. In 1880, the market consisted of small-circulation papers focusing on politics and economics for a masculine middle-class readership. As the population grew and became more affluent, a mass media developed that encompassed the working class too.⁵ Moreover, in the 1890s newspapers started to target female readers, encouraged by advertisers who saw women as the managers of the household budget. The press increasingly paid serious attention to women's views and issues important to women. In the interwar period, newspapers became family papers with special sections for women and children.⁶ As a result, the private life of the family became a topic worthy of attention in the public media discourse.⁷

The changing position of women, the working class and children in society generally and the newspaper market specifically might be expected to influence media coverage of sexual violence and family violence (assaults on partners and parental maltreatment of their children) because representations of these forms of violence are bound up with ideas about class, gender and childhood. However, it is not clear *a priori* what effects should be expected. If government policy was focused on ensuring an innocent childhood for all and newspapers had become family papers with children's sections, would journalists pay *more* attention to the sexual abuse of children or would this become a taboo subject? The increasing idealization of domesticity might be expected to lead to greater condemnation of family violence, but how did that work when women were the perpetrators, for example committing infanticide or neglecting their children? If newspapers were targeting women readers, did that translate into compassion for these female perpetrators as victims of circumstance or were they seen as particularly abhorrent for violating idealized notions of motherhood? Similarly, did the rise of the working class as a political force and a significant market for newspapers cause journalists to downplay family violence among the poor, or did they choose to portray working-class offenders as aberrant cases?

natie rond 1900," in *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis no. 20, 'Strijd en Seksualiteit'*, ed. Barbara Henkes et al. (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 2000), 18-40; Gemma Blok, *Ziek of zwak. Geschiedenis van de versalvingszorg in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Nieuwezijds, 2011), 31-68.

⁵ Marcel Jeroen Broersma, *Beschaafde vooruitgang: de wereld van de Leeuwarder Courant 1752-2002* (Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2002), 221-251.

⁶ Carli Schuit and Joan Hemels, *Recepten en rolpatronen. Nederlandse kranten en hun vrouwelijke lezers 1888-1988* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1988), 11-129.

⁷ Alison Light sees a similar foregrounding of the domestic in the press in Britain in the interwar period, see: Alison Light, *Forever England. Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1991), 6-11.

The purpose of the present study is to disentangle these relationships and find out exactly how and why press coverage of family and sexual violence changed between 1880 and 1930, and what role gender played. This ties in with an international debate among historians on changes in attitudes to private violence in relation to gender; that debate is discussed in the next section. The third section presents the aims and main thrust of the present study. This is followed by a discussion in the fourth section of the theoretical framework. The fifth section presents the methodology and sources. Finally, the sixth section gives an overview of the substantive chapters.

1.1 Debate on gender and violence

This study aims to contribute to the debate on changing attitudes to gender and violence in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is part of a broader debate on the decline of interpersonal violence in Western society. There is now a consensus among most historians that lethal violence fell significantly between the Middle Ages and the twentieth century. The early modern period in particular was a turning point, with a fall in the number of deaths from men fighting other men. Much of the debate on the reasons for the decline of violence has consequently focused on this early period and on public violence.⁸

Many scholars have seen Norbert Elias's theory of a civilizing process as a fruitful starting point when seeking to explain this decline. Elias argued that the move from a knightly warrior society to a courtly society was accompanied by a change in people's personality and behaviour. With the formation of nation states and the resultant increasing interdependency, people learned to control their emotions and impulses, including the aggressive urge. Initially, this was as a result of external constraints, but over time the constraints were internalized: people felt repugnance at these urges and found it 'natural' to exercise self-control. According to Elias, this process started among the elite and then filtered down to other ranks in society.⁹

Various historians have elaborated on this theory. Muchembled gives pride of place to the disciplining of unmarried young men. They were the main perpetrators of the public violence that was so prevalent in the late medieval and early modern periods. In Muchembled's reading, the towns took the lead in controlling these young men and

⁸ Manuel Eisner, "Modernization, Self-control and Lethal Violence. The Long-term Dynamics of European Homicide Rates in Theoretical Perspective," *British Journal of Criminology* 41, no. 4 (2001): 618-638; Gerd Schwerhoff, "Criminalized Violence and the Process of Civilisation: a Reappraisal," *Crime, History & Societies* 6, no. 2 (2002): 103-126; Pieter Spierenburg, *A History of Murder. Personal Violence in Europe from the Middle Ages to the present* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 3-7; Robert Muchembled, *A History of Violence from the end of the Middle Ages to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 1-6. For a criticism of the view that interpersonal violence declined, see: Richard McMahon, Joachim Eibach, Randolph Roth, "Making Sense of Violence? Reflections on the History of Interpersonal Violence in Europe," *Crime, History & Societies* 17, no. 2 (2013): 5-26.

⁹ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Eisner, "Modernization, Self-control and Violence," 619-620, 630-633.

removing them from public spaces in order to create the peaceable social relations necessary for urban life where people lived at close quarters with one another.¹⁰ Other historians have criticized aspects of Elias's theory. Schwerhoff contends that Elias misinterpreted his sources, misrepresents medieval society and is wrong to treat violence as a natural urge that people learned to restrain; Schwerhoff argues that violence in the medieval and early modern periods was often ritualized and far from impulsive.¹¹ Eisner sees Durkheim as offering valuable insights. Durkheim explains the decline in violence through the rise of individualism, which liberated the individual from the bond of collective obligations. This explanation fits with the important role of insults and honour in sparking off violence in medieval society, and with the fact that the decline was concentrated in public violence between men. He also points to Oestreich's concept of 'social disciplining', for example by religious and educational institutions, as a way of explaining why violence declined not just in absolutist states as Elias argued but also in countries such as England and the Dutch Republic with a much weaker courtly society.¹²

These historians have concentrated on male public violence – violence between men in streets, cafes and other public spaces. But the civilizing theory has also been invoked in the debate on changes in private violence, that is to say family and sexual violence, usually involving women or children. Here it is the nineteenth century rather than the early modern period that has been the focus of attention.

Private violence and the reconstruction of gender in the nineteenth century

The nineteenth century has been viewed by historians as a pivotal period in the long-term decline of violence, both public and private. Most historians are agreed that there was an intensification of the civilizing process in response to industrialization, urbanization and the perceived threat from the disorderly urban masses. As a result, the pacification of male public violence was largely accomplished by the end of the century.¹³ The developments in private violence in this period have however been the subject of considerable debate. That debate has centred on Britain, which dominates the historiography of crime in the modern period, and the discussion that follows inevitably reflects this dominance.¹⁴ It has been

¹⁰ Muchembled, *History of Violence*, 1-30, 211-225.

¹¹ Schwerhoff, "Criminalized Violence," 109-127; Gerd Schwerhoff, "Zivilisationsprozeß und Geschichtswissenschaft. Norbert Elias' Forschungsparadigma in historischer Sicht," *Historische Zeitschrift* 266, no. 1 (1998): 561-605. For criticism of the civilizing thesis, see also McMahon, Eibach, Roth, "Making Sense," 15-22; Joachim Eibach, "Violence and Masculinity," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Crime and Criminal Justice*, ed. Paul Knepper and Anja Johansen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 230-231.

¹² Eisner, "Modernization, Self-control and Violence," 631-634.

¹³ J. Carter Wood, "A Useful Savagery: The Invention of Violence in Nineteenth-century England," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 9, no. 1 (2004): 24-27; Muchembled, *History of Violence*, 197-224; Spierenburg, *History of Murder*, 164-181; Martin J. Wiener, *Men of Blood: Violence, Manliness, and Criminal Justice in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 289-292.

¹⁴ Paul Lawrence, "The Historiography of Crime and Criminal Justice," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Crime and Criminal Justice*, ed. Paul Knepper and Anja Johansen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 18.

argued by historians of Britain such as Martin Wiener that once male public violence came to be seen as less of a problem in the late nineteenth century, the attention of the authorities and moral entrepreneurs turned to private violence. More specifically, they were concerned about male private violence among the working classes. Decreasing tolerance for private violence against women and children was expressed in campaigns against wife-beating, cruelty to children and the sexual abuse of children, in new legislation and in harsher prosecution.¹⁵ This was tied to new concepts of gender (the 'reconstruction' of gender) that originated with the middle classes but were increasingly applied to all classes. Women came to be seen as naturally more moral and lacking sexual passion, as well as weak, passive and irrational. Their identity was closely tied to their maternal role. Men, on the other hand, were seen as rational beings whose identity was forged through their role as head of the household and provider. They were no longer judged on their physical prowess; instead they were expected to exercise self-control and be 'men of dignity' rather than 'men of honour'. Wiener argues that male violence was increasingly condemned as a result while female violence was treated more leniently.¹⁶

Even in Britain, let alone in other countries, not all the evidence points to a greater condemnation of private violence against women and children. Legislation was certainly enacted from the late nineteenth century across the Western world to combat private violence, but this legislation was largely aimed at protecting children rather than women. Moreover, historians have shown a gap between the rhetoric and the treatment of private violence by law enforcement bodies and social services. Nor were developments always linear; gains made in the nineteenth century might be reversed in the twentieth century.

In Britain, campaigns by feminists against wife-beating helped bring about reforms in 1878 and 1895 that made it easier for wives to leave brutal husbands.¹⁷ These advances were, however, counteracted in the early twentieth century by a growing preference for reconciliation and marriage-mending among magistrates and social workers.¹⁸ Similar campaigns against domestic violence have not been seen in other countries. In fin-de-siècle France, violence between partners was reconstructed as crimes of passion that often

¹⁵ Wiener, *Men of Blood*, 1-8; J. Carter Wood, "Criminal Violence in Modern Britain," *History Compass* 4, no. 1 (2006): 82-83; A. James Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship. Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Married Life* (London: Routledge, 1992), 34-67; George K. Behlmer, *Child abuse and moral reform in England, 1870-1908* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), 44-110; Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 2000), 13-16.

¹⁶ John Tosh, *A Man's Place. Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 1-10, 27-52; Wiener, *Men of Blood*, 9-39; Eibach, "Violence and Masculinity," 242.

¹⁷ Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship*, 52-67.

¹⁸ George Behlmer, "Summary Justice and Working-Class Marriage in England, 1870-1940," *Law and History Review* 12, no. 2 (1994): 254-260; Annmarie Hughes, "The 'Non-criminal' Class: Wife-beating in Scotland (c. 1800-1949)," *Crime, History & Societies* 14, no. 2 (2010): 48-52.

resulted in acquittal by juries for both male and female perpetrators.¹⁹ Australian feminists largely ignored domestic violence as an issue. Jo Aitken argues that while feminist campaigners in Britain focused on wife-beating as a working-class phenomenon that bolstered their argument for female suffrage, such an analysis was not appropriate for the Australian women's movement because of the very different class politics in a country where universal male suffrage was already in place by the time feminism took off.²⁰

Child protection organizations, campaigns and legislation were a widespread phenomenon in Western countries from the 1870s onwards: societies for the prevention of cruelty to children were established in the 1870s in the US and in the 1880s in Britain. Legislation was introduced in Britain in 1889, in France in 1889 and 1898, in the Netherlands in 1905 and in Belgium in 1912.²¹ However, the French cruelty legislation did not give the child protection organizations the same powers that British and American societies had to hunt out incidents of cruelty. Dominique Dessertine found that, partly as a result, few cases were prosecuted.²² In Australia, sexual and physical abuse were disregarded by the child protection bureaucracy as "it took on an essentially disciplinary role", according to Shurlee Swain.²³ In her study of child sexual abuse in Britain, Louise Jackson has noted the gap between the "vehement rhetoric" of moral entrepreneurs and the lenient treatment of perpetrators by the courts.²⁴

Historians also disagree on the implications of changing notions of gender for leniency towards male and female perpetrators. Wiener has argued that it led to the criminalization of men in England, as male violence against women became less acceptable. He shows that over the course of the nineteenth century, men were more likely to be prosecuted and convicted for serious sexual and physical violence against women and received more severe punishments. In rape cases, it became easier to secure a conviction without having to give proof of the victim's unblemished character or evidence of physical resistance, while in wife-killings former mitigating factors such as the man's drunkenness or the woman's infidelity no longer had such purchase. There was a strong class element in this: the law courts became an instrument for imposing new ideals of manliness on the

¹⁹ Eliza Earle Ferguson, *Gender and Justice. Violence, Intimacy, and Community in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 1-17; Spierenburg, *History of Murder*, 187-189.

²⁰ Jo Aitken, "'The Horrors of Matrimony among the Masses': Feminist Representations of Wife Beating in England and Australia, 1870-1914," *Journal of Women's History* 19, no. 4 (2007): 108-109, 117-119.

²¹ Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), 152-153; Behlmer, *Child Abuse*, 44-110; Dominique Dessertine, "Les tribunaux face aux violences sur les enfants sous la Troisième République," *Revue d'histoire de l'enfance « irrégulière »* 2 (1999): 129-130; Jenneke Christiaens, "A History of Belgium's Child Protection Act of 1912. The Redefinition of the Juvenile Offender and His Punishment," *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice* 7, no. 1 (1999): 17-19; Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 462-465.

²² Jacques Bourquin, "René Béranger et la loi du 19 avril 1898 sur les violences à enfants," *Revue d'histoire de l'enfance « irrégulière »*, special issue (2007): 146-147; Dessertine, "Tribunaux face aux violences," 130-132.

²³ Shurlee Swain, "The state and the child," *Australian Journal of Legal History* 4 (1998): 77.

²⁴ Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 3.

lower orders, with male upper-class judges and middle-class juries evaluating the behaviour of male working-class defendants.²⁵

Wiener's findings have, however, not necessarily been corroborated in other jurisdictions. Manon van der Heijden and Marion Pluskota looked at trial data (but not press reports) in the Netherlands in the period up to 1886. They conclude that there is no evidence of gender bias in the prosecutions and convictions for violent crimes; in other words, men were treated no more harshly than women for crimes of a similar nature. This, they suggest, could be due to the much more restricted possibilities for discretion in the codified Dutch judicial system.²⁶ Annmarie Hughes has looked at Scotland in the period 1850 to 1950 and finds continuity rather than change in the lenient treatment in the courts and press of men who assaulted their wives.²⁷ The increasing medicalization of criminal behaviour in the twentieth century may actually have reduced the extent to which men were held responsible for their domestic violence. Elizabeth Nelson finds that returned First World War soldiers in Australia who committed domestic violence were excused as they were seen as victims themselves of psychological problems caused by their wartime experiences.²⁸

Scholars see increasing leniency in the treatment of female criminals, but this was not universal. In Britain, women were less likely to be convicted than men and received lesser sentences.²⁹ Wiener found that husband-killers were treated more leniently over time, with fewer being executed.³⁰ In infanticide cases, 'puerperal insanity' was increasingly used as a defence and the last English woman to be executed for infanticide was hanged in 1849.³¹ Studies of Belgium, Ireland and Canada also show that by the early twentieth century, harsh sentences had become increasingly unacceptable for women who had committed infanticide. These women were now seen as the victims of male seducers rather

²⁵ Wiener, *Men of Blood*, 1-39. On the persistence of older values among juries and the provincial newspapers, see: Martin J. Wiener, "The Sad Story of George Hall: Adultery, Murder and the Politics of Mercy in Mid-Victorian England," *Social History* 24, no. 2 (1999): 178-185; Martin J. Wiener, "Convicted Murderers and the Victorian Press: Condemnation vs. Sympathy," *Crimes and Misdemeanours* 1/2 (2007): 110-111; Martin J. Wiener, "Judges v. jurors: courtroom tensions in murder trials and the law of criminal responsibility in nineteenth-century England," *Law and History Review* 17, no. 3 (1999): 476-481.

²⁶ Manon Van der Heijden and Marion Pluskota, "Leniency versus Toughening? The Prosecution of Male and Female Violence in 19th Century Holland," *Journal of Social History* 49, no. 1 (2015): 165; Manon van der Heijden, "Women and Crime, 1750-2000," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Crime and Criminal Justice*, ed. Rosemary Gartner and Bill McCarthy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 260.

²⁷ Annmarie Hughes, "'Non-criminal' Class," 32-33.

²⁸ Elizabeth Nelson, "Victims of war: The First World War, returned soldiers and understandings of domestic violence in Australia," *Journal of Women's History* 19, no. 4 (2007): 94-100.

²⁹ Shani D'Cruze and Louise A. Jackson, *Women, Crime and Justice in England since 1660* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 22.

³⁰ Wiener, *Men of Blood*, 123-169.

³¹ Katherine D. Watson, "Religion, Community and the Infanticidal Mother: Evidence from 1840s Rural Wiltshire," *Family & Community History* 11, no. 1/2 (2008): 118; Hilary Marland, "Getting away with murder? Puerperal insanity, infanticide and the defence plea," in *Infanticide. Historical perspectives on child murder and concealment, 1550-2000*, ed. Mark Jackson (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 168-192.

than immoral and promiscuous.³² Yet the new gender norms could also work to women's disadvantage. In Dutch rape cases in the early twentieth century, women were seen as prone to hysteria and therefore unreliable witnesses.³³ Linda Gordon found that welfare workers in the US were more likely to label mothers as immoral than fathers, and consequently negligent in the care for their children.³⁴

The very notion of 'leniency' for female perpetrators has also been critiqued by feminist historians. If women as a whole received softer sentences, women who failed to conform to gender ideals could be seen as doubly deviant and treated particularly harshly.³⁵ Lucy Bland argues that this was the case for Edith Thompson, a sexually transgressive woman who was hanged in Britain in 1922 against the evidence for her part in the murder of her husband.³⁶ Ballinger sees such selective leniency as essentially conservative. In her work on British women who killed, she argues that convicting women who killed their abusive partner and then granting them a pardon provided they conformed to dominant notions of femininity may seem 'lenient' but while it benefited individual women, it also confirmed the 'justice' of a legal system that put battered wives at a disadvantage.³⁷

Scholars have also pointed to the cost women paid for leniency in their loss of agency. In Britain, women were often acquitted or reprieved for reasons of mental instability. Zedner has argued that with the rise of psychiatric explanations of criminal behaviour in the late nineteenth century, deviant women were increasingly seen as mentally ill ('feeble-minded' in the language of the day) and diverted into psychiatric institutions rather than the prison system.³⁸ The medicalization of women's violence made

³² Rene Leboutte, "Offense against Family Order: Infanticide in Belgium from the Fifteenth through the Early Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 2 (1991): 184; Andrée Lévesque, "Mères célibataires et infanticides à Montréal," in *Femmes et justice pénale, XIXe-XXe siècle*, ed. Christine Bard et al. (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2002), 97-109.; Karen M. Brennan, "'A Fine Mixture of Pity and Justice:' The Criminal Justice Response to Infanticide in Ireland, 1922-1949," *Law and History Review* 31, no. 4 (2013): 796.

³³ Willemijn Ruberg, "Onzekere kennis. De rol van forensische geneeskunde en psychiatrie in Nederlandse verkrachtingszaken (1811-1920)," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 9, no. 1 (2012): 103-106.

³⁴ Linda Gordon, "Single Mothers and Child Neglect, 1880-1920," *American Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1985): 178-179.

³⁵ D'Cruze and Jackson, *Women, Crime and Justice*, 25.

³⁶ Lucy Bland, "The Trials and Tribulations of Edith Thompson: The Capital Crime of Sexual Incitement in 1920s England," *The Journal of British Studies* 47, no. 3 (2008): 647-648.

³⁷ Anette Ballinger, "'Reasonable' Women who Kill: Re-interpreting and Re-defining Women's Responses to Domestic Violence in England and Wales 1900-1965," *Outlines* 2, no. 2 (2005): 78; Anette Ballinger, "Masculinity in the Dock: Legal Responses to Male Violence and Female Retaliation in England and Wales, 1900-1965," *Social and Legal Studies* 16, no. 4 (2007): 460-462, 472-478. Carolyn Strange makes a similar point about leniency in male domestic violence cases in her study of Australian femicides. Leniency was used selectively to punish inappropriate forms of masculinity. See: Carolyn Strange, "Masculinities, Intimate Femicide and the Death Penalty in Australia, 1890-1920," *British Journal of Criminology* 43, no. 2 (2003): 333-334.

³⁸ Lucia Zedner, "Women, Crime and Penal Responses: A Historical Account," *Crime and Justice* 14 (1991): 343-349.

their actions seem irrational and invalidated any reasonable motives they might have, contends Ballinger.³⁹ In an in-depth study of Kitty Byron, who killed her violent lover in London in 1902 and was eventually released after only a short prison sentence following a public campaign built around notions of temporary madness, Ginger Frost concludes that this reprieve came “at the cost of confirming ideas of women’s ‘natural’ irrationality”. Moreover, this was “an example of how the criminal justice system mitigated the structural disadvantages of class and gender in exceptional circumstances, rather than addressing the underlying causes of cohabitation, alcoholism and violence”.⁴⁰

In conclusion, an increasing focus on private violence from the late nineteenth century has been postulated. It has been linked to greater condemnation of male violence against women and leniency for female perpetrators due to changing ideas about masculinity and femininity. However, the evidence for this is mixed. It is not clear whether the rhetoric about private violence translated into prosecutions or whether it had an effect that lasted into the twentieth century. Both condemnation and leniency were selective, and women did not necessarily benefit, whether individually or as a group. There were also differences between countries. In particular, the British experience, which has been the subject of much of the historiography, was not necessarily replicated elsewhere.

Studies of gender and violence in the press

The previous section looked at gender and the treatment of violence by the criminal justice system. In the past two decades, historians have also started to explore media representations of violent men and women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Here too, much of the work has been on Britain. Moreover, these studies have had a limited focus and have not taken sufficient account of the changing media landscape. Regarding the first point, most studies take trials as the starting point and use press reports to elucidate public attitudes to perpetrators and victims. The trial perspective dictates the kind of questions that historians have asked of the press sources. On the one hand, in-depth studies of high-profile cases have been used to give valuable insights into wider cultural concerns at the time and how these played out in crime stories.⁴¹ Yet as Garthine Walker has commented, these cases were by their nature exceptional and therefore give an unrepresentative impression of attitudes in newspapers to a given category of crimes. She

³⁹ Ballinger, “‘Reasonable’ Women,” 66.

⁴⁰ Ginger Frost, “‘She is but a Woman’: Kitty Byron and the English Edwardian Criminal Justice System,” *Gender & History* 16, no. 3 (2004): 556.

⁴¹ Examples include: Bland, “Edith Thompson”; Frost, ‘Kitty Byron’; Jessie Ramey, “The Bloody Blonde and the Marble Woman: Gender and Power in the Case of Ruth Snyder,” *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 3 (2004): 625-650; Wiener, “Story of George Hall”; Julie English Early, “Keeping ourselves to ourselves: violence in the Edwardian suburb,” in *Everyday violence in Britain, 1850-1950*, ed. Shani D’Cruze (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 170-184; John Carter Wood, *The Most Remarkable Woman in England. Poison, Celebrity and the Trials of Beatrice Pace* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Samantha Pegg, “Sweet Fanny Adams and Sarah’s Law: The Creation of Rhetorical Shorthand in the Print Press,” *Law, Crime and History* 1 (2013): 76-96.

argues that readers would also have seen these cases as exceptional because they read them against a background of routine crime reports.⁴² Other studies have taken a broader selection of trials and have used press reports to shed light on the courts' treatment of the accused. The key aim here has been to explain lenient or harsh treatment by considering how journalists portrayed the perpetrator and victim and the degree of sympathy shown.⁴³ But this was only one aspect of newspaper reporting. Other aspects, such as the overall importance attached to particular kinds of crimes, the way these crimes were constructed in the press narratives and the roles given to other social actors, have received much less attention from scholars. There is also a methodological issue in some studies (including in Wiener's own work) whereby scholars have used newspapers both as a cultural source for the public discourse and as the main legal record of what happened in court.⁴⁴ The danger is that such studies overestimate the alignment between attitudes in newspaper representations and the actual proceedings.

As the existing body of literature on newspaper coverage of private violence focuses on court trials, it largely excludes incidents that did not go to trial or where the trial was not reported. As these are likely to have been more minor, 'everyday' incidents, the focus on trials amounts to a bias away from press coverage of minor violence. Newspaper reports of foreign crime stories have also been neglected. This is a lacuna given the connections historians have identified between ethnicity, national identity and concepts of acceptable male violence.⁴⁵ Finally, a focus on trial reports cannot reveal the gaps and silences in newspaper crime reporting; this is only possible through a thorough and comprehensive survey of all violent crime items.

⁴² Garthine Walker, "Rape, Acquittal and Culpability in Popular Crime Reports in England, c. 1670-c. 1750," *Past & Present*, no. 220 (2013): 121-124. Walker's comments are in response to an article by Antony E. Simpson, which also discusses the benefits and pitfalls of studies of famous cases: Antony E. Simpson, "Popular Perceptions of Rape as a Capital Crime in Eighteenth-Century England: The Press and the Trial of Francis Charteris in the Old Bailey, February 1730," *Law and History Review* 22, no. 1 (2004): 27-29.

⁴³ Examples include: Wiener, *Men of Blood*; Carolyn Strange, "Masculinities, Intimate Femicide"; Annemarie Hughes, "'Non-criminal' Class"; Carolyn B. Ramsey, "Domestic Violence and State Intervention in the American West and Australia, 1860-1930," *Indiana Law Journal* 86 (2011): 185-255; Nelson, "Victims of War"; Joanne Jones, "'She resisted with all her might': sexual violence against women in late nineteenth-century Manchester and the local press," in *Everyday violence in Britain, 1850-1950. Gender and class*, ed. Shani D'Cruze (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 104-118; Estelle B. Freedman, *Redefining Rape. Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁴⁴ For examples of this double use of newspapers, see: Wiener, *Men of Blood*, xi-xiv, note 1; Carolyn Strange, "Masculinities, Intimate Femicide," 314-315; Carolyn A. Conley, *The unwritten law. Criminal justice in Victorian Kent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 13-14.

⁴⁵ John E. Archer, "'Men behaving badly?': masculinity and the uses of violence, 1850-1900," in *Everyday violence in Britain, 1850-1950*, ed. Shani D'Cruze (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 44-45; Lucy Bland, "The trial of Madame Fahmy: Orientalism, violence, sexual perversity and the fear of miscegenation," in *Everyday violence in Britain, 1850-1950*, ed. Shani D'Cruze (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 185-197; Clive Emsley, *Hard Men. The English and Violence since 1750* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), pp. 77-93.

Another limitation of the current historiography concerns the lack of attention paid to the changing media landscape. The period 1880 to 1930 saw the rise in many countries of populist newspapers aimed at a mass market that included the working class and women. This was accompanied by a change in style and content known as New Journalism, which involved among other things more human-interest stories and lively, accessible articles.⁴⁶ Yet historians of gender and crime have barely studied the influence of these changes on media representations of interpersonal violence.⁴⁷ This is particularly surprising given the feminization of newspapers during this period. Adrian Bingham's ground-breaking study of gender and the popular press in Britain shows how mass-market newspapers deliberately targeted the female reader in the first decades of the twentieth century. Women's sections were introduced, and general content was tailored to appeal to the female reader. He argues that historians have been too quick to dismiss popular newspapers as socially conservative and have not paid serious attention to their content.⁴⁸

If the crime and media historiography for the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has limitations, some of the most interesting work on press crime reporting is to be found in the historiography of eighteenth-century Britain. Garthine Walker, for example, questions facile assumptions of an alignment between newspaper discourse and court outcomes in her sensitive analysis of newspaper reporting of rapes: although most rape cases ended in acquittals, she finds that such acquittals were usually presented in the press as sexual assaults that did happen but could not be proved.⁴⁹ Historians have also investigated the process by which journalists obtained and selected stories. Peter King compared the Old Bailey Proceedings against crime reports in the London press to identify the criteria journalists applied when selecting crime stories.⁵⁰ Esther Snell, in her study of the *Kentish Post*, stresses the influence of the production process — the tight printing schedules and the availability of stories — on the content. She argues that newspaper crime

⁴⁶ Kevin Williams, "Anglo-American Journalism. The Historical Development of Practice, Style and Form," in *Form and Style in Journalism. European Newspapers and the Representation of News, 1880-2005*, ed. Marcel Broersma (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 1-26.

⁴⁷ Some work has been done on general changes in crime reporting with the rise of the mass media. See in particular: Judith Rowbotham, Kim Stevenson, and Samantha Pegg, *Crime News in Modern Britain: Press Reporting and Responsibility, 1820-2010* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 60-142; Dominique Kalifa, *L'encre et le sang. Récits de crimes et société à la Belle Époque* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 19-104. John Carter Wood examines gender and mass media coverage of the trial of Beatrice Pace in the interwar period, but this is a study of a single moment rather than an examination of changes over time. See John Carter Wood, *Most Remarkable Woman*, 132-151.

⁴⁸ Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Adrian Bingham, "Ignoring the First Draft of History. Searching for the Popular Press in Studies of Twentieth-century Britain," *Media History* 18, no. 3-4 (2012): 311-312. It is telling that the increasing importance of the female reader is not mentioned in a recent overview of the history of crime and the press, see: John Carter Wood "Crime news and the press," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Crime and Criminal Justice*, ed. Paul Knepper and Anja Johansen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 301-319.

⁴⁹ Walker, "Rape, Acquittal and Culpability," 124-140.

⁵⁰ Peter King, "Making Crime News: Newspapers, Violent Crime and the Selective Reporting of Old Bailey Trials in the late Eighteenth Century," *Crime, History & Societies* 13, no. 1 (2009): 91-116.

discourse was consequently fundamentally different to that of the crime pamphlets that preceded newspapers, with a shift from reassuring narratives of retribution to a chaotic and victim-centred discourse.⁵¹ Scholars have also explored the impact of crime news on readers. Robert Shoemaker has examined private documents (diaries and correspondence) to ascertain the public's reception of crime news; he finds that the press was an important source but also that readers were often sceptical about the veracity of the reports.⁵² Various historians have used the modern criminological concept of the 'moral panic', an exaggerated media-driven societal response to a perceived social threat, to analyse peaks in crime reporting and the effects on legislation and law enforcement.⁵³ All these studies of eighteenth-century crime news share a desire to place that content in a broader context.

In conclusion, the literature on press coverage of private violence in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gives a selective and therefore misleading picture of the crime news encountered by readers. It also does not take sufficient account of the context: the factors that determined journalists' selection and presentation of crime stories. In particular, historians have not explored the impact of the rise of the mass media and the expanding readership. The work done on the eighteenth century offers some pointers for taking account of the broader context. Finally, the dominance in this field of studies of Britain is a limitation as there were fundamental differences between countries in the period 1880 to 1930 in the media market and journalistic practices.⁵⁴ It is therefore not self-evident that findings for Britain would also apply elsewhere.

1.2 Research aim

The present study seeks to address the limitations identified above in the historiography of gender, private violence and media representations by looking at the Dutch case. Its subject is the Dutch media discourse on private violence perpetrated by men and women between 1880 and 1930. It aims to explore how and why newspaper representations of violence in the family and sexual violence changed during that period, and what role gender played in these changes. It focuses on newspapers, probably the main source of information about

⁵¹ Esther Snell, "Perceptions of Violent Crime in Eighteenth-Century England: a Study of Discourses of Homicide, Aggravated Larceny and Sexual Assault in the Eighteenth-Century Newspaper" (PhD thesis, University of Kent, 2004), 275-276.

⁵² Robert B. Shoemaker, "Worrying about crime: experience, moral panics and public opinion in London, 1660-1800," *Past and Present* no. 234 (2017): 94. That print media were a key source of information on crime for the general public is confirmed by Richard Ward, who also examined ego documents: Richard M. Ward, *Print culture, crime and justice in 18th-century London* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 33-50.

⁵³ John Carter Wood, "Crime News," 308-310; Peter King, "Newspaper Reporting, Prosecution Practice and Perceptions of Urban Crime: The Colchester Crime Wave of 1765," *Continuity and Change* 2, no. 3 (1987): 423-454.; Daniel Statt, "The Case of the Mohocks: Rake Violence in Augustan London," *Social History* 20, no. 2 (1995): 179-199; Richard Ward, *Print Culture, Crime*, pp. 157-203; Peter King, "Moral Panics and Violent Street Crime 1750-2000: a Comparative Perspective," in *Comparative Histories of Crime*, ed. Barry Godfrey, Clive Emsley, and Graeme Dunstall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), 53-71.

⁵⁴ Svennik Høyer, "An Invitation to Compare Journalism Histories," in *Journalism and Meaning-Making. Reading the Newspaper*, ed. Verica Rupar (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2010), 55-70.

crime for the general public at this time.⁵⁵ Four aspects of press coverage are examined. The first is the salience accorded to particular crimes: the amount of coverage and the prominence given to these stories. Secondly, the construction of these crimes is considered: what kinds of crimes were reported, what motives were assigned, what was the class setting and what stylistic genres were used? Thirdly, the journalists' attitudes to the protagonists are examined along with the influence that gender assumptions had on this. Finally, the factors influencing journalists' choices are explored, in particular the mediating effect of their sources and the desire to appeal to a certain target readership.

The present study aims to contribute to the debate on whether private violence was taken more seriously from the end of the nineteenth century by assessing media constructions of different forms of private violence in the period 1880 to 1930. It considers both male and female violence, directed against both adults and children. This adds to the literature on gender and violence by showing the impact of gender norms in different situations, including relatively neglected areas such as violence towards older children, and by allowing direct comparisons between male and female perpetrators. The study also addresses the limitations in the existing literature on media representations by taking a more holistic approach. Firstly, it looks at *all* press coverage of family and sexual violence, not just trial reports. Secondly, it seeks to explore the processes that led to this content – the sources, journalists' understanding of their role, their policies in selecting certain stories and the influence of the changing readership.

The main thrust of the argument presented in this thesis is that readership considerations were the primary factor driving the content. As newspapers started to target female readers, journalists increased their coverage of private violence that involved women and children, and showed greater sympathy towards female and child victims. But the increased coverage did not amount to a general criticism of violence by Dutch men – after all, the journalists were writing for male readers too. Instead, violent men were regularly positioned as being outside the community of readers, either because they were foreign or because they were of a lower class. Moreover, they were contrasted against chivalrous men within the community – neighbours, police or family members – who defended women and children. Nor was this a straightforward linear development, as stories of sexual and family violence were still seen as relatively trivial news that should be dropped in times of political and economic upheaval. Moreover, stories of Dutch parental violence virtually disappeared in the interwar period as newspapers became family papers that extolled the virtues of domesticity in their articles and their advertisements.

⁵⁵ Modern studies prior to the arrival of the Internet show newspapers along with television as the main source for crime news. See for example Helen Gavin, "The Social Construction of the Child Sex Offender Explored by Narrative," *The Qualitative Report* 10, no. 3 (2005): 400-401. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that newspapers were the main source in the period before television.

The Netherlands as a case study

The present study looks at media coverage in the Netherlands. The Netherlands makes an interesting case study as it went through similar socioeconomic and political developments to Britain (the focus of so much of the historiography) and many other Western countries, but its legal system differed in respects that are fundamental for the present study. This is not to deny that there were deviations in other respects, but these were differences of degree and periodization. Thus, the Netherlands also underwent industrialization and the demographic transition to smaller families, but both these processes started later in the Netherlands than in its neighbours.⁵⁶ The viewpoint in which the Netherlands is seen as essentially similar to other Western countries is not shared by all Dutch historians of this period. Ever since Arend Lijphart's 1968 book *The Politics of Accommodation*, the social and political compartmentalization along ideological and religious lines that is known as 'pillarization' (*verzuiling*) has been viewed as a defining and distinctive feature of the Netherlands in this period.⁵⁷ This pillarization, which developed in the late nineteenth century and reached its peak in the interwar period, gave a particularly influential role to the orthodox Protestant and Catholics blocs. Historians such as Jan Kok and Marloes Schoonheim argue that this resulted in an exceptionally moral and socially conservative society in the first half of the twentieth century.⁵⁸ Yet the Netherlands was hardly unique in this regard: married women's retreat from the labour market was an international phenomenon, social purity movements were active and influential in many other countries,

⁵⁶ On the relatively late industrialization, see: Van Zanden and Van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914*, pp. 237-248. On the late demographic transition, see: Hans Knippenberg and Sjoerd De Vos, "Tussen Crisis en Verzuiling: Regionale Verschillen in Vruchtbaarheid in Nederland tijdens het Interbellum," in *De Levenskracht der Bevolking. Sociale en Demografische Kwesties in de Lage Landen tijdens het Interbellum*, ed. Jan Kok and Jan van Bavel (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 109-140.

⁵⁷ Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968). The Protestants, Catholics, Socialists and Liberals are usually seen as the four blocs, or 'pillars'. For discussion and criticism of pillarization as a concept, see: Hans Blom, "Vernietigende kracht en nieuwe vergezichten. Het onderzoeksproject verzuiling op lokaal niveau geëvalueerd," in *De verzuiling voorbij. Godsdienst, stand en natie in de lange negentiende eeuw*, ed. J.C.H. Blom and J. Talsma (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2000), 203-236; Wielenga, *Nederland*, 80-86; Piet De Rooy, "Voorbij de Verzuiling?," *Low Countries Historical Review* 116, no. 1 (2001): 45-57; James C. Kennedy, Jan P. Zwemer, "Religion in the Modern Netherlands and the Problems of Pluralism," *Low Countries Historical Review* 125, no. 2-3 (2010): 237-268. For criticism of Dutch exceptionalism, see: Henk te Velde, "Inleiding. De internationalisering van de nationale geschiedenis en de verzuiling," *Low Countries Historical Review* 124, no. 4 (2009): 503-508; Benjamin Schmidt, "Dikes and Dunes. On Dutch History and Dutchness," *Low Countries Historical Review* 133, no. 1 (2018): 88-99.

⁵⁸ Jan Kok, "The moral nation. Illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy in the Netherlands from 1600 to the present," in *Economic and Social History in the Netherlands, Volume 2*, (Amsterdam: Netherlands Economic History Archive, 1991), 7-36; Marloes Schoonheim, 'Mixing Ovaries and Rosaries'. *Catholic Religion and Reproduction in the Netherlands, 1870-1970* (Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2005), 82-96; Jan Luiten van Zanden, *Een klein land in de 20e eeuw. Economische geschiedenis van Nederland 1914-1995* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1997), 28-31. Hanneke Hoekstra also stresses the moral dimension of Dutch society, although she assigns a key role to women's philanthropic and feminist activities: Hanneke Hoekstra, *Het hart van de natie. Morele verantwoording en politieke verandering in Nederland 1870-1919* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2005), 179-196.

while the Catholic Church was a political force with a strict moral agenda in countries such as France and Ireland.⁵⁹ In an article on pillarization and the position of women in the Netherlands, Mineke Bosch contrasts the exceptionalism of some historians with the more international approach of Dutch gender historians. The former take the specifically Dutch situation of pillarization as the starting point, along with a specifically Dutch cultural norm of domesticity, to explain Dutch women's limited economic participation. In contrast, the latter embed their studies in the international literature and see Dutch outcomes as the result of a certain constellation of socioeconomic conditions as opposed to uniquely Dutch values.⁶⁰ Boter, for example, argues that the lower female labour participation rates in the Netherlands were driven by structural factors, such as the share of certain industries in the economy, rather than divergent social norms.⁶¹ It is that broader approach that is adopted here.

The Netherlands did however differ fundamentally in one respect, namely its criminal justice system. In the period 1880 to 1930, it lacked elements such as juries and the death penalty that play an important role in the literature on violence and gender, both in Anglo-Saxon countries and in continental Europe.⁶² Juries served as a conduit for gendered understandings of violence. French juries, for example, were notorious for their high acquittal rates for intimate partner crime but Eliza Ferguson argues these decisions were not arbitrary; rather they were based on popular understandings of acceptable behaviour in relationships.⁶³ In jurisdictions with the death penalty, capital crimes had heightened cultural meaning, and defences that could turn the charge into a non-capital offence (such as evidence that a killing was provoked or unintended) took on magnified importance.⁶⁴ Once the death sentence had been passed, the possibility of mercy gave the general public and newspapers an opportunity to become involved by petitioning on behalf of the

⁵⁹ Jane Humphries, "Women and Paid Work," in *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945*, ed. June Purvis (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), 99-100; Corinne Boter, "Dutch Divergence? Women's work, Structural Change, and Household Living Standards in the Netherlands, 1830-1914" (PhD thesis, Wageningen University, 2017), 19; Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast. Feminism, Sex and Morality* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2001), xiii-xvii; Fabrice Cahen, "De 'l'efficacité' des politiques publiques : la lutte contre l'avortement 'criminel' en France, 1890-1950," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 58, no. 3 (2011): 92-96; Ciara Breathnach and Eunan O'Halpin, "Scripting blame: Irish coroners' courts and unnamed infant dead, 1916-32," *Social History* 39, no. 2 (2014): 213.

⁶⁰ Mineke Bosch, "Domesticity, Pillarization and Gender. Historical Explanations for the Divergent Pattern of Dutch Women's Economic Citizenship," *Low Countries Historical Review* 125, no. 2-3 (2010): 277-288.

⁶¹ Boter, "Dutch Divergence?," 71-72.

⁶² The death penalty was abolished in the Netherlands in 1870. Juries were briefly introduced at the start of the nineteenth century but abolished again in 1813. See: A.G. Bosch, *De ontwikkeling van het strafrecht in Nederland van 1795 tot heden* (Nijmegen: Ars Aequilibrum, 2011), 79-120; Hoekstra, *Hart van de natie*, 21-58; S. van Ruller and S. Faber, *Afdoening van strafzaken in Nederland sinds 1813: Ontwikkelingen in wetgeving, beleid en praktijk* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1995), 27-45.

⁶³ Eliza Earle Ferguson, *Gender and Justice. Violence, Intimacy, and Community in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 1-17.

⁶⁴ Wiener, "Judges v. Jurors," 472-473; Carolyn Strange, "Masculinities, Intimate Femicide," 319.

offender, and this too became a means of expressing gendered expectations of behaviour.⁶⁵ As the Netherlands had neither capital punishment nor juries after 1870, it did not experience these dynamics.⁶⁶ Using the Netherlands as a case study therefore enables the distinct effects of the legal system on the discourse to be disentangled from the wider societal influences.

The findings for the Netherlands are embedded in the international context in two ways, reflecting the distinction made above between similarities in socioeconomic developments and differences in the criminal justice system. Firstly, the Dutch media discourse on gender and violence is compared with information in the international literature on actual violence by men and women, both historical studies and criminological analyses of modern-day violence. The aim of this comparison is to identify ways in which the discourse may misrepresent actual violence. In part, the decision to use the international literature is a pragmatic choice as the Dutch historiography on crime, and in particular on family and sexual violence in the period 1880 to 1930, is limited compared with the rich body of work on countries such as Britain and France.⁶⁷ However, this approach is also valid as patterns of violence are often associated with socioeconomic factors such as poverty and the lack of a support system. It therefore seems plausible that if socioeconomic conditions in the Netherlands mirrored that in many other Western countries, patterns of violence found in multiple other countries would also be replicated in the Netherlands. Yet this assumption cannot be made for the societal response to private violence, particularly given the distinctive Dutch legal system. At this second level — the treatment of violence and gender in the courts and the media — the Dutch situation is compared and contrasted with that in other countries. This distinction can be illustrated by the case of infanticide. Studies of various countries for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries show that infanticide was often committed by unmarried servants. This reflected the fact that they would lose their job if found to have a child out of wedlock and their relatively isolated position within their employer's household. The Netherlands was no different in that respect. However, the legal response differed between countries. In Montreal, sympathy for the mother led to many cases not being brought to trial. In Britain, where infanticide was a capital offence until 1922, puerperal insanity was used as an explanation for the women's actions. And in the Netherlands, infanticide was a separate offence in the criminal code with a lower maximum sentence than for other forms of murder. Puerperal insanity hardly

⁶⁵ Wiener, "Convicted Murderers," 110-112; Annulla Linders, Alana van Gundy-Yoder, "Gall, galantry, and the gallows: capital punishment and the social construction of gender, 1840-1920," *Gender and Society* 22, no. 3 (2008): 325-327, 338-340.

⁶⁶ Whether similar dynamics applied in the Netherlands prior to the abolition of the death penalty is not known. In the period up to 1870, reprieves were common for offenders who had been sentenced to death, but as far as is known the influence of gender on these reprieves has not been studied. A.G. Bosch, *Ontwikkeling van het strafrecht*, 79-120.

⁶⁷ Ruberg, "Onzekere kennis," 87-88; Albert Eggens, "Van daad tot vonnis. Door Drenten gepleegde criminaliteit voor en tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog" (PhD thesis, Groningen University, 2005), 13-16.

played a role at all in Dutch trials.⁶⁸ The analysis in the present study of the representation of infanticide in Dutch newspapers therefore uses data from other countries to give an indication for the Netherlands of the kind of women who committed infanticide and the typical circumstances for this crime, but compares and contrasts the courts' treatment and media coverage of infanticide in other countries with that in the Netherlands.

1.3 Theoretical framework

In focusing on media discourse, this study is interested in "constructed knowledges" of family and sexual violence from the perspective of the reader.⁶⁹ It is guided by a theoretical framework (Figure 1) that sets out the factors that determine the newspaper content and the interaction between the paper and its readers. The framework, which is described below, forms the basis for the methodology and the analysis. This framework is in turn based on certain principles about media discourse and power, and it is these key underlying principles that are discussed first.

Underlying principles

Central to this study are the beliefs that the media discourse is the sum total of what is said *and* not said, that media discourse has a power effect, and that media discourse does not merely represent the worldview of the dominant group in society. An important source of inspiration here has been the ideas of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. Both see discourse as implicated in power but also recognize a role for subordinate groups in shaping that discourse. Gramsci's principal contribution is the concept of hegemony. This is the idea that the dominant, or hegemonic, group in society requires the active consent of subordinate groups to rule. In order to do this, it must incorporate aspects of subordinate groups' worldviews in its own worldview. The hegemonic worldview is effective in part because it is propagated through civil society (which includes the media). But this situation is unstable: the hegemonic group constantly has to decide how many concessions to make

⁶⁸ Willemijn Ruberg, "Travelling Knowledge and Forensic Medicine: Infanticide, Body and Mind in the Netherlands, 1811-1911," *Medical History* 57, no. 3 (2013): 360-361; G. Donker and S. Faber, "De ziekelijke zenuwoverspanning van Jannetje J. Een rapport van F.S. Meijers in een Amsterdamse kindermoordzaak uit 1912," in *Ziek of schuldig? Twee eeuwen forensische psychiatrie en psychologie*, ed. F. Koenraadt (Arnhem: Gouda Quint, 1991), 64-84; Jolie Ermers, "Kindermoord in de negentiende eeuw: en om de vrouw verging het kind," *Nemesis* 6, no. 3 (1990): 115; Cliona Rattigan, "I Thought from her Appearance that she was in the Family Way': Detecting Infanticide Cases in Ireland, 1900-1921," *Family & Community History* 11, no. 2 (2008): 142; Marland, "Getting Away with Murder?"; Daniel Grey, "Discourses of Infanticide in England, 1880-1922" (PhD thesis, Roehampton University, 2008), 201-261; Lévesque, "Mères célibataires".

⁶⁹ Discourses are defined as "socially constructed knowledges about some aspect of reality" by Theo van Leeuwen and Gunther Kress. Theo van Leeuwen and Gunther Kress, "Discourse Semiotics," in *Discourse Studies. A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Teun A. van Dijk (London: SAGE, 2011), 113; Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: SAGE, 1997), 15-74; Joel Best, *Social Problems* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), 10-14.

to subordinate groups and this in turn gives subordinate groups influence.⁷⁰ In Foucault's work, discourse is also an important element of power relations because of the inextricable link that he sees between knowledge and power. For him, knowledge relationships are also power relationships, and knowledge is produced through discourse. Thus certain ways of talking about a given topic are deemed acceptable and other ways are ruled out.⁷¹ He also sees power relations as having a productive role in which subordinates are actively involved. Foucault's concept of power is as a dispersed network in which resistance is everywhere and power relations are defined by resistance. That resistance can take the form of a "'reverse' discourse" in which subordinate groups use and adapt the discourse for their own ends.⁷²

The key principles have implications for the setup of the study. Firstly, if discourse concerns both the ways of talking about a subject and the silences, it is necessary to obtain a comprehensive picture of media coverage of family and sexual violence that enables silences to be identified. Secondly, the broad definition of power effects (as determining how people view a subject and what are acceptable ways of talking about it) implies that all types of coverage are relevant, including trivial, humorous and minor news. This is in contrast to much of the media and crime historiography, which has concentrated on high-profile cases and campaigns to change legislation. These are instances where press reporting has an obvious power effect, for example because it leads to the pardon of a perpetrator or the introduction of new laws.⁷³ Yet such an approach neglects the media's power effect through setting the terms of the debate and marginalizing certain viewpoints. Thirdly and finally, the role for subordinate groups in shaping discourse means that it is necessary to examine which groups influenced the discourse on family and sexual violence and through what means. It cannot be assumed that content invariably reflected the patriarchal worldview of middle-class men, even if that was the hegemonic group in Dutch society at that time.

⁷⁰ Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 32, 41-52; Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971).

⁷¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 27; Hall, "Work of Representation," 41-51; Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault. Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 114.

⁷² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 94-96.

⁷³ See for example: Bland, "Edith Thompson," 625-627; Rowbotham, Stevenson, and Pegg, *Crime News*, 126-131; Wiener, "Convicted Murderers"; Nicola Goc, *Women, Infanticide and the Press, 1822-1922. News Narratives in England and Australia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 145-170.

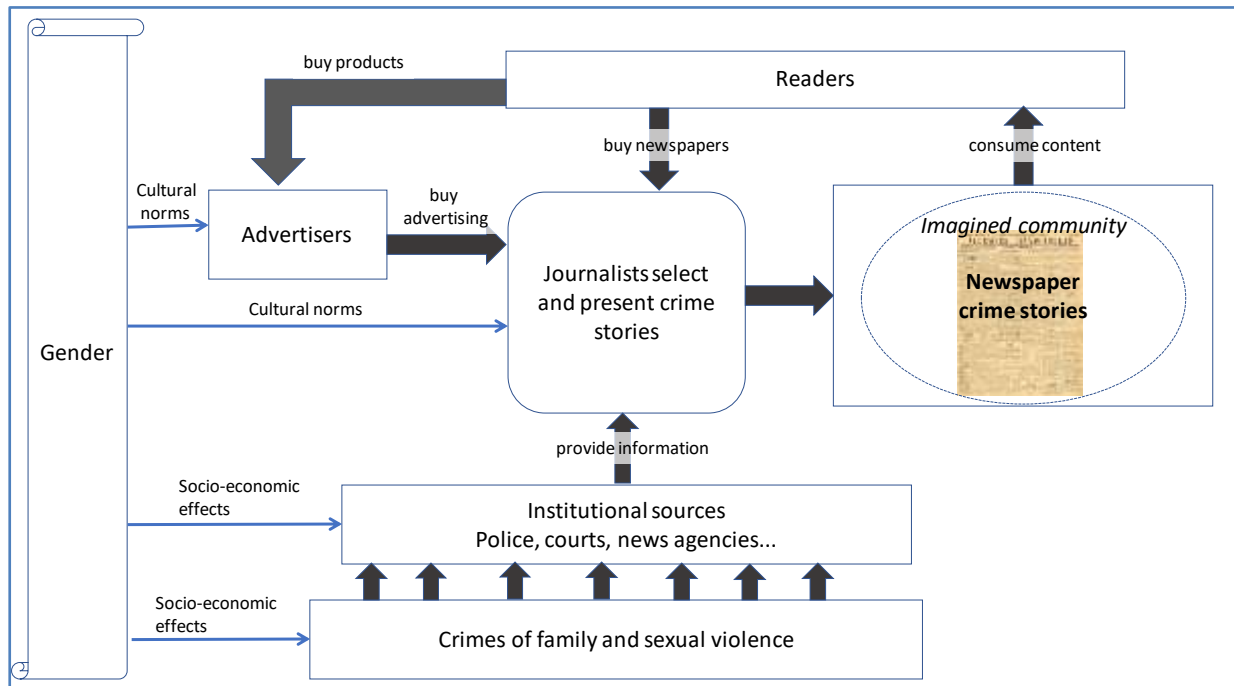
Model of determinants of news content

Figure 1 Model of the production of newspaper stories of private violence.

Figure 1 gives a model showing the factors that influenced the production by journalists of newspaper crime content. That content can usefully be thought of as a representation of an ‘imagined community’. The model assumes that the main factors driving journalists’ selection and presentation of crime stories were readers and sources. Journalists tailored content to appeal to readers, but the sources determined what information they had available. Gender played a role at all steps in this process. These assumed relationships are based on theories from media, gender and cultural studies. This is discussed below, along with the implications for the study setup.

The imagined community

The present study uses the concept of the ‘imagined community’ as a way of understanding how journalists tailored crime news content to appeal to readers. This concept was introduced by Benedict Anderson in his 1983 book *Imagined Communities* on the rise of nationalism. An imagined community is one in which most members will never meet one another “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”.⁷⁴ This national community is both horizontal and geographically limited. Print capitalism, and newspapers in particular, played an important role in creating and sustaining the imagined community of

⁷⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2016), 6.

the nation in Anderson's account, newspapers. Anderson talks of the daily ritual of "the almost precisely simultaneous consumption" of the same news that helped connect readers.⁷⁵ Moreover, the content created a picture of 'our' world as opposed to 'their' world; he gives the example of the Latin American newspapers in which 'their' world was both Madrid and the parallel worlds of other colonies.⁷⁶ Since its publication in 1983, Anderson's book has become part of the canon of nationalism studies while the concept of the imagined community has been widely applied to many different types of community beyond the field of nationalism.⁷⁷ Yet there have also been criticisms. The importance Anderson assigns to print capitalism as a causal factor has been questioned. He has also been accused of downplaying the significance of religion and ethnicity in modern nation formation. Furthermore, by positing the imagined community as a horizontal entity, he ignores the possibility of a form of nationalism developed by elites that excludes the masses, as was the case in some colonial societies.⁷⁸ Yet if these criticisms are taken on board, the imagined community offers a fruitful way of thinking about the journalistic process.

The boundaries of the imagined community in the Netherlands of 1880 to 1930 were the country's borders. However, it is important to note that the imagined community was not the same as the readership of any individual newspaper. While different newspapers targeted different readerships in terms of geography (local, provincial or national) and social class, they were agreed on who belonged to the imagined community and who did not. Yet neither was the imagined community 'all Dutch people' from its conception. In the mid-nineteenth century it was still an elite concept. With the ongoing process of nation formation and emancipation of women and the working class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the idea of who belonged to the nation as active citizens changed over time in parallel with the expanding newspaper readership. Journalists reflected this in

⁷⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 33-36.

⁷⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 64.

⁷⁷ Mark Hamilton, "New Imaginings: The Legacy of Benedict Anderson and Alternative Engagements of Nationalism," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 6, no. 3 (2006): 76; Enric Castello, "Anderson and the Media. The strength of 'imagined communities'," *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society* 1 (2016): 59-61; Gemma Blok, Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, and Claire Weeda, "Introduction," in *Imagining Communities. Historical Reflections on the Process of Community Formation*, ed. Gemma Blok, Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, and Claire Weeda (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 7-20. Recent applications in the history of crime and media include: Lizzie Seal, "Imagined communities and the death penalty in Britain, 1930-65," *British Journal of Criminology* 54, (2014): 908-927; Gemma Blok and Rose Spijkerman, "'De ongelukkigsten onder de mensen'. De verbeelding van zenuwzwakte in advertenties voor Pink Pillen, 1900-1920," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 16, no. 1 (2013): 50-53.

⁷⁸ Howard Wollman, Philip Spencer, "'Can such Goodness be profitably discarded?' Benedict Anderson and the Politics of Nationalism," in *The Influence of Benedict Anderson*, ed. Alistair McCleery and Benjamin A. Brabon (Edinburgh: Merchiston Publishing, 2007), 10, 13-15; Mark Hamilton, "New Imaginings," 79-80; Blok, Kuitenbrouwer, and Weeda, "Introduction," 11. For more general criticism of Anderson's theory of the origins of nationalism, see: Radhika Desai, "The inadvertence of Benedict Anderson. A review essay of Imagined Communities on the occasion of a new edition," *Global Media and Communication* 4, no. 2 (2008): 183-200.

their assumptions about who readers would see as 'one of us', and in doing so helped convey and reinforce the changing limits of the imagined community.

Crime news was one genre that journalists used to create that sense of community. Crime stories showed an imagined community in action, as journalists reported incidents from the perspective of the community, stressing the involvement of passers-by or the impact on the neighbours. This is particularly striking in the case of family violence: although these might seem to be inherently private crimes, the press reports stressed the wider impact and gave priority to incidents in public places, as will be seen in Chapters 4 and 5. Yvonne Jewkes, talking about modern media, argues that crimes stories are used to underline the shared moral values of the imagined community and to delineate its boundaries.⁷⁹

An analysis of press stories of private violence that takes the imagined community as the starting point offers several advantages when compared to the common approach among historians, which focuses on the gender, class and perhaps ethnicity of the perpetrator and victim, and the role played by societal norms. Firstly, the imagined community approach offers a way of understanding the role played by stories of foreign incidents. This is important as foreign stories accounted for a large proportion of the coverage of certain kinds of private violence in Dutch newspapers. Secondly, this approach explicitly recognizes the part played by social actors other than the perpetrator and victim in crime narratives, in particular, the general public. Finally, the expanding imagined community gives an alternative explanation of the changing representation over time to the standard argument of changing societal norms and is better able to explain instances where journalists presented a protagonist in a positive light despite their contravention of societal norms.

Readers

The model in Figure 1 assigns an important place to readers because of the big changes in the market for newspapers between 1880 and 1930, in particular the feminization of readership. Journalists had an incentive to make crime news interesting to readers as newspaper companies needed to attract readers in order to survive financially. Readers had a direct financial effect as buyers, but also an indirect effect through advertisers. In the period 1880 to 1930, newspaper businesses aimed to obtain about half their income from advertising.⁸⁰ To attract advertisers, newspapers needed large numbers of readers, but they also needed the right kind of readers. In their book *Manufacturing Consent*, Herman and Chomsky argue that news production is subject to a number of 'filters', one of which is advertising. Despite a liberal, free news market and journalists' professional norms of

⁷⁹ Yvonne Jewkes, *Media & Crime* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 285.

⁸⁰ H.J. Scheffer, *In vorm gegoten. Het Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad in de negentiende eeuw*, ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1981), 95-96.

neutrality and objectivity, such news filters operate to exclude dissident views and promote hegemonic viewpoints. In Herman and Chomsky's analysis, advertising leads news media to neglect less affluent groups; after all, they are less interesting to advertisers as they have less purchasing power.⁸¹ Thus for Herman and Chomsky, writing about the modern-day media, advertising is a conservative force. But in the period from the 1890s to the 1930s, advertising became a force driving a broadening of the target readership to include women of all classes, as Bingham's analysis of the popular press in Britain has shown. With the rise of mass consumer goods and brand articles, advertisers wanted to reach as many potential buyers as possible, not just a select group of affluent households. They were therefore now interested in all strata of society. Moreover, these buyers were assumed to be female. As a result, women "became crucial targets for the popular press".⁸² The present study assesses this development in the Netherlands by using the content (sections and topics covered) and advertisements to determine the target readership in different newspapers at different points in time.

This study does not attempt to measure the impact of crime stories on readers empirically, but the methodology is based on certain assumptions about the effect media coverage of private violence had. It assumes that journalists were effective in telling readers what to think *about*, even if they were not necessarily effective in telling readers *what* to think. This is the claim of agenda-setting theory, namely that by covering some issues and not others and by attaching different degrees of importance to different issues, the media influence the salience of these issues for the audience. While originally developed for the analysis of political campaigns in the 1970s, the agenda-setting theory has since been tested in hundreds of case studies covering numerous issues, including crime, and in numerous countries.⁸³ It therefore seems a plausible assumption for Dutch readers in this period. Consequently, the study takes account of the salience of crime news items, as measured by such aspects as the number of stories, article length, headlines and position in the paper.⁸⁴ It is assumed that types of family and sexual violence that are treated as salient by the journalists in particular periods will also have been thought important by readers. Conversely, categories of violence that received little coverage or were trivialized would, it is assumed, not have been thought important by readers.

⁸¹ Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent. The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (London: Random House, 2008), chap. 1; Dan Laughey, *Key Themes in Media Theory* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2007), 130-134.

⁸² Bingham, *Gender, Modernity*, 30-32.

⁸³ Laughey, *Media Theory*, 21-23; Eugene F. Shaw, "Agenda-setting and Mass Communication," *International Communication Gazette* 25, (1979): 96-105; Maxwell E. McCombs, Donald L. Shaw, "The agenda-setting function of mass media," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176-187; Maxwell E. McCombs, "A look at agenda-setting: past, present and future," *Journalism Studies* 6, no. 4 (2005): 543-557; Paul Manning, *News and News Sources. A Critical Introduction* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 207-219.

⁸⁴ McCombs and Shaw, "The agenda-setting function," 178-179.

More far-reaching general conclusions about the impact of crime news are not justified as research shows reader reception is highly individualistic. Early behaviourist “hypodermic syringe” models in which the media injects values into a passive audience have now been discredited as too simplistic.⁸⁵ One of the most sophisticated attempts to theorize the audience’s agency is Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model. In this model, the producers of media content encode the language, giving it a preferred meaning. The language is then decoded by the reader. They can choose between adopting the preferred, dominant code, or alternatively a negotiated code in which they accept some aspects but reject others, or an oppositional code that is globally contrary to the intended meaning.⁸⁶ In the case of crime news in Dutch newspapers, it is plausible that readers would respond in part based on their own experiences, and that women would have a different response to men. Without empirical evidence, their actual response remains impossible to gauge but it is important to be aware that reader reception was varied and not necessarily in line with the journalists’ intentions.

Sources

The available sources were another factor influencing journalists’ choice and presentation of crime stories. In addition to other media, the main institutional sources for crime news in this period were the police and the courts. Journalists did not have access to all the available information on all incidents of private violence; instead, they used the information revealed in trials and provided by the police. Herman and Chomsky contend in *Manufacturing Consent* that such institutional sources act as another news ‘filter’ privileging official views. Journalists prefer official news sources because they are more efficient; journalists need a reliable flow of daily news and institutional sources are able to meet that demand. Moreover, these sources are recognizable and credible. That gives them considerable scope to determine what information is made available and influence what is printed. What is more, journalists have an incentive to present institutions such as the police in a favourable light as they rely on their cooperation for news.⁸⁷ In the present study, the sources of the Dutch newspaper articles are determined where possible, and the effect on the selection and presentation of stories is examined.

Gender

This study is interested in gender as an explanatory variable for journalists’ reporting of family and sexual violence. In her seminal article ‘Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis’, Joan Scott describes gender as “a constitutive element of social relationships

⁸⁵ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 16; Laughey, *Media Theory*, 7-29; John Carter Wood, “Crime News,” 311-312.

⁸⁶ Stuart Hall, “Encoding/decoding,” in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, ed. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 128-138; Laughey, *Media Theory*, 60-64.

⁸⁷ Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, chap. 1; Laughey, *Media Theory*, 130-134; Manning, *News and News Sources*, 50-59.

based on perceived differences between the sexes". Scott identifies different ways in which gender plays a role in social relationships, including through social institutions and organizations, such as the labour market and the courts, and through normative concepts.⁸⁸ The gendered effect of social institutions led to differences in the kinds of crimes men and women committed and in their treatment by the courts, thus affecting the 'pool' of crimes available for newspapers to report on. Cultural norms were evident in advertisers' desire to target women as the assumed managers of the household budget. Finally, normative concepts affected the assumptions that journalists made about perpetrators' motives and their appraisal of criminal behaviour by men and women. The analysis in this study therefore looks on the one hand at differences between male and female perpetrators in the kinds of crimes they committed as reported by the newspapers and on the other hand at differences in the journalists' interpretation and evaluation of male and female violence.

The analysis of gender in this study assumes the co-existence of multiple masculinities and femininities, whereby the hegemonic masculinities and femininities were embodied by the imagined community. This hierarchy of masculinities and femininities draws on the sociologist R.W. Connell's theory of masculinity, which has been highly influential among gender historians. Connell contends that at any one time there is a hegemonic form of masculinity in which most men are complicit, even if they cannot live up to its ideals, as it maintains patriarchy and the overall subordination of women. At the same time, the hegemonic masculinity serves to exclude subordinate and marginalized male groups, such as homosexuals. Connell sees the media as one of the main vehicles for propagating hegemonic masculinity.⁸⁹ While Connell gives a sophisticated analysis of masculinities, this approach has limitations as a general theory of gender relations because it does not give a corresponding structure of hierarchical femininities. The assumption in the present study is that just as there were hegemonic and marginalized masculinities, so there were hegemonic and marginalized femininities and that the journalists conveyed those gender values through their representation of the imagined community. Thus, the newspaper content might show the orderly housewife and caring mother as part of that community but the unmarried mother and vagrant woman as outsiders.

⁸⁸ Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1067-1068.

⁸⁹ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 77-81; R.W. Connell, "The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History," *Theory and Society* 22, no. 5 (1993): 609-6122; John Tosh, "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain," *History Workshop*, no. 38 (1994): 191-192; Karen Harvey and Alexandra Shepard, "What have Historians Done with Masculinity? Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, circa 1500-1950," *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (2005): 277-278. For discussions of the usefulness and limitations of Connell's theory, see: John Tosh, "Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender," in *Masculinities in Politics and War. Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 41-58; Stefan Dudink, "Multipurpose Masculinities. Gender and Power in Low Countries Histories of Masculinity," *Low Countries Historical Review* 127, no. 1 (2012): 10-12.

1.4 Methodology

The Dutch media discourse on violence and gender between 1880 and 1930 was measured by collecting all reports of sexual violence, intimate partner violence and maltreatment by parents of their children from four Dutch newspapers in five sample years. Specifically, the categories of violence were: intimate partner violence (not just between married and cohabiting partners but also between current or former sweethearts and stories of unrequited passion); the physical maltreatment by parents or guardians of their own children that started while the children were minors (physical abuse, neglect, infanticide, filicide and familicide); and sexual assaults of adults and children (including those ending in murder and incidents that may have been consensual but were a crime under Dutch law for all or part of this period, for example homosexual acts with minors or sexual acts with a subordinate in a factory).⁹⁰ The selection of newspapers and years, data collection procedure and main analysis methods are described below. The choices made for specific analyses are explained in the relevant chapter.

Sample newspapers and years

The years 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930 were chosen as the five sample years. These years were selected to cover the whole period of 1880 to 1930 while avoiding times when war dominated the news. Various studies show that during wartime, newspapers' coverage of crime drops. Moreover, the pattern of crime and prosecution priorities change as young men are mobilized.⁹¹ The Netherlands did not fight in the First World War, but it was severely affected as it was caught between the belligerent powers. Troops were mobilized, large numbers of Belgian refugees flocked to the Netherlands at the start, trade was disrupted and the economy contracted.⁹² The chosen dates also avoid the Boer War (1899-1902). Again, the Netherlands did not fight in this war, but it dominated the media and created a furore among the Dutch general public, who sympathized strongly with the Boers.⁹³

Four newspapers were used for this study. The newspapers were selected to allow investigation of the influence of different kinds of readers and to give a representative impression of the Dutch newspaper market as a whole. In the period 1880 to 1930, that market was segmented along three dimensions: national versus local papers, upmarket versus populist papers, and unaffiliated newspapers versus 'pillarized' newspapers affiliated to a particular ideological bloc (mainly Socialist, orthodox Protestant or Catholic). To cover

⁹⁰ These are all categories customarily viewed as private violence by historians. Abortion (an offence under Dutch law), baby farming, human trafficking and other prostitution-related crimes have not been included as they often took the form of organized crime.

⁹¹ Yorick Smaal, "The 'leniency problem': a Queensland case study on sentencing male same-sex offences, 1939-1948," *Women's History Review* 21, no. 5 (2012): 796-797; Rowbotham, Stevenson, and Pegg, *Crime News*, 114-115; Snell, "Perceptions of Violent Crime," 73-75; Albert Eggens, "Van daad tot vonnis," 157.

⁹² Friso Wielenga, *Nederland in de Twintigste Eeuw*, (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009), pp. 65-77.

⁹³ Wielenga, *Nederland*, 64.

all three dimensions would have required at least six titles, which was beyond the scope of the current study. The decision was therefore made to focus on unaffiliated newspapers. This was based on market share (in 1939, the first year for which data is available, the unaffiliated segment accounted for over half the market and for the individual papers with the biggest circulations) and an expectation that the first two dimensions would be most relevant for crime reporting.⁹⁴ Specifically, it was expected that local papers would have a different mix of crime stories to national papers, with more local, minor offences, and that upmarket papers would take a different (more critical) attitude to working-class offenders and be less sensational than the populist papers. The assumption that these dimensions would be more important for crime coverage than the distinction between pillarized and non-affiliated papers was tested by taking the upmarket, neutral national paper *Algemeen Handelsblad*, the populist neutral local paper *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, and two Catholic papers — the national paper *De Tijd* and the local paper *Nieuwe Tilburgsche Courant* — and comparing their coverage of family and sexual violence in two three-month periods (the first three months of 1880 and 1930). This showed that the mix of crimes was similar in all four newspapers. The Catholic newspapers were, for example, no less likely than the neutral newspapers to cover sexual offences, despite the Catholic community's conservative moral code. Moreover, the content of the items in the Catholic papers was similar to that of the unaffiliated papers and even identical for some items in 1930 where the newspapers were obtaining their information from news agencies. To the extent that there were differences in content, it was the local populist *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* that stood out. Based on this analysis, the conclusion was drawn that an analysis using four unaffiliated papers was a valid approach.

The four selected newspapers represent the four possible combinations of upmarket versus populist and local versus national. Two of the four were the abovementioned *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* and *Algemeen Handelsblad*. The other two were the local upmarket paper the *Leeuwarder Courant* (based in Leeuwarden and serving the province of Friesland) and *De Telegraaf*, a populist national newspaper. As *De Telegraaf* was only launched in 1893, *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, another populist national paper that was later bought by the owner of *De Telegraaf*, was used for 1880.⁹⁵ These newspapers were chosen because they were available in digital form and because they had high circulations within their segment. In 1939, the chosen newspapers had a combined circulation of over 600,000, at a time when the Netherlands consisted of around 2 million households.⁹⁶ They have also

⁹⁴ Jan van de Plasse, *Kroniek van de Nederlandse dagblad- en opiniepers* (Amsterdam: Cramwinckel, 2005), 35, 193.

⁹⁵ M. Wolf, *Het Geheim van de Telegraaf. Geschiedenis van een krant* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009), 26, 171-174.

⁹⁶ This figure includes *De Courant*, a cheap, abbreviated version of *De Telegraaf* for working-class readers. Van de Plasse, *Kroniek*, 193; Broersma, *Beschaafde vooruitgang*, 221-251.

all been the subject of dedicated books, which means some information is available on the owners, journalists, policies and production processes during this period.⁹⁷

Data collection

This study makes use of digitized newspapers, available through the Delpher website.⁹⁸ The digitization of newspapers has been heralded by historians both as a practical revolution, removing obstacles of time and place in accessing these sources, and as a methodological revolution, enabling fundamentally different kinds of analyses with a greater focus on newspaper content and the use of language. Bob Nicholson has called this the 'digital turn'.⁹⁹ The current study would have been much more difficult without the availability of digitized titles, even if the Big Data techniques that are increasingly being used for their analysis were rejected as inappropriate in this case.¹⁰⁰

The data for the present study were collected by browsing all issues of the selected newspapers in the sample years.¹⁰¹ Any stories of violence in the chosen categories were logged in a database. This approach is different from the keyword search that is the most common method used by historians researching digitized newspapers. The keyword search may at first sight seem a more efficient approach for selecting relevant crime items, but it was explicitly rejected as it is not suitable for answering the kind of questions being asked here. The aim of the current study is to obtain an overview of both newspaper reporting and non-reporting (silences) of certain kinds of crime. It is therefore important that there should be as few 'false negatives' as possible – that is to say, relevant articles that were missed because of the methodology. Keyword searches have two disadvantages in that respect. The first problem is the poor quality of many of the digitized texts. In the digitization process, the newspapers are scanned, and the scan is then converted into text using optical

⁹⁷ The four books also give a good impression of developments in Dutch newspaper history. The oldest is on the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, an uncritical anniversary production from 1953 that does little more than describe changes in the content, see: W. Visser, *De Papieren Spiegel. Honderd-vijf-en-twintig jaar Algemeen Handelsblad. 1828-1953* (Amsterdam: Algemeen Handelsblad, 1953). On the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, H.J. Scheffer's 1981 book gives a detailed account of its early years in the nineteenth century with an emphasis on production processes, see: H.J. Scheffer, *In vorm gegoten. Het Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad in de negentiende eeuw* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981). The last two books appeared in the 2000s. M. Wolf's lively study of *De Telegraaf* concentrates on the individual journalists, see: Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*. Broersma's study of the *Leeuwarder Courant* seeks to place the newspaper's performance in the context of broader socio-economic changes, see: Broersma, *Beschaafde vooruitgang*. Interestingly, even the two studies from the 2000s do not include gender in their analysis. A general overview of changes in Dutch newspaper history is given in: Marcel Broersma, "From Press History to the History of Journalism. National and Transnational Features of Dutch Scholarship," *Medien & Zeit* 3 (2011): 17-27.

⁹⁸ www.delpher.nl.

⁹⁹ Marcel Broersma, "Nooit meer bladeren? Digitale krantenarchieven als bron," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 14, no. 2 (2012): 29; Bob Nicholson, "The Digital Turn. Exploring the methodological possibilities of digital newspaper archives," *Media History* 19, no. 1 (2013): 59-73.

¹⁰⁰ Nicholson, "Digital Turn," 67-71.

¹⁰¹ Some newspapers started to issue separate morning and evening editions in the course of this period. To ensure comparability between newspapers, only one edition a day was used for this study. As the evening paper was usually longer than the morning paper, this was the edition chosen for data collection.

character recognition (OCR) technology. However, this process often results in digital text with errors or even with large sections of text missing. In such cases, even if an article contains a particular keyword, it might not be found by the keyword search.¹⁰² What is more, in the Delpher website the problem is greater for specific newspapers and specific years, which would lead to distorted results if keyword searches were relied on.¹⁰³ The second problem lies in the contradiction of using keywords when the kind of language used to represent the crimes in question is one object of study. The danger is that only those articles will be found that fit the frames expected by the researcher.¹⁰⁴ This problem is particularly acute in the case of sexual assaults, where newspapers used opaque language and where it is often what is not said as much as what is said that signals the sexual nature of the assault. In view of these issues with the keyword search approach, using keywords would have given a misleading picture of actual newspaper crime reporting.

Analysis

The data collection resulted in a total of 4,342 items. For the analysis, all the newspaper items (the individual articles) were grouped into cases (collections of items covering the same story). This yielded 1,607 separate cases. The numbers of items and cases for the individual newspapers are shown in Table 1; the total number of cases is less than the sum for the individual papers as individual cases were often covered by more than one newspaper. The cases were categorized by type of crime: intimate partner violence (60 per cent of all cases), child maltreatment (13 per cent) and sexual violence (27 per cent).

¹⁰² Broersma, “Nooit meer bladeren?” 42.

¹⁰³ This became clear during data collection. The digitized records of *De Telegraaf* in the early years were of particularly poor quality.

¹⁰⁴ An example of this danger is a study of the representation of female criminals in New Zealand’s newspapers. It used keyword searches for various terms, including “adventuress”; it was then concluded that criminal women were represented through the trope of the “adventuress”. See: Jenny Coleman, “Incorrigible Offenders. Media Representations of Female Habitual Criminals in the Late Victorian and Edwardian Press,” *Media History* 22, no. 2 (2016): 143, 146.

Table 1 Key features of the study newspapers

Newspaper	Market segment	No. of items	No. of cases	Comments
<i>Algemeen Handelsblad</i>	National, upmarket	683	379	
<i>De Telegraaf/Het Nieuws van de Dag</i>	National, populist	993	537	<i>Het Nieuws van de Dag</i> in 1880, <i>De Telegraaf</i> (only founded in 1893) in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930
<i>Leeuwarder Courant</i>	Local, upmarket	1,043	543	
<i>Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad</i>	Local, populist	1,623	970	
Total		4,342	1,607	

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

The logged crime items were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis. The salience of a particular crime in a particular year was measured by the number of items, item length (number of lines) and the prominence (use of headings and place in the newspaper).¹⁰⁵ To see how a particular crime was represented, cases were classified according to the characteristics of the protagonists (for example, sex of the perpetrator and victim) and the incident (for example, weapon and location). Most of these category variables could be derived directly from the text, but some required a degree of interpretation. One such variable that is used extensively in the analysis is class, divided into 'working class', 'lower-middle class' and 'middle or upper class'. This classification was based on the occupation as given in the newspaper reports. Manual workers were classified as working class, tradespeople, shopkeepers and clerical workers were classified as lower-middle class and managers, members of the professions, landowners and members of the nobility as middle/upper class. The frequently occurring but ambiguous descriptions "*boer*" (which can mean farmer or peasant) and "*koopman*" (which can be anything from a street trader to a merchant) were classified as lower middle class unless there was additional information suggesting a higher or lower class. The protagonist was classified as working class if no occupation was given but other information was included suggesting poverty, for example living in an alley (*hofje*), being supported by the Poor Board or wearing rags. The

¹⁰⁵ For a similar operationalization of prominence in a study of modern-day media, see: Maria Elizabeth Grabe et al., "Gender in Crime News: a Case Study Test of the Chivalry Hypothesis," *Mass Communication & Society* 9, no. 2 (2006): 144-145.

rules used for coding the other variables that required interpretation of the newspaper reports are explained in the relevant section.

Close textual reading was also used to gauge the representation of a certain crime and the journalists' attitudes to the protagonists. For this, Critical Discourse Analysis was used. Critical Discourse Analysis is built on the assumption that texts have ideological goals, which fits in neatly with the theoretical framework for this study, in which media discourse is seen as being implicated in power relationships. More specifically, Critical Discourse Analysis provides tools for identifying the ideological work done by texts. For example, it shows how structural opposition, naming strategies, the use of active verbs and choice of quoting verbs can encourage the reader to align with or against a particular participant in the text.¹⁰⁶ Critical Discourse Analysis has been used in other historical studies of newspaper crime reporting, for example by Goc in an analysis of infanticide reports.¹⁰⁷

The use of Critical Discourse Analysis approach can be illustrated with a 1910 article in the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* on an incident in which a working-class woman, Aletta van den Heerik, stabbed her husband G.J.W. Nieuwendaal to death in Rotterdam after he returned home drunk.¹⁰⁸ The article used various lexical techniques to gain the reader's sympathy for the woman and convincingly present the incident as a desperate act in defence of her children. The start of the article presents a structural opposition of work versus no work, between the hard-working woman who ran a vegetable shop and the drunkard man who was "repeatedly unemployed" (*herhaaldelijk werkloos*).¹⁰⁹ That opposition continues in the description of the fight. The verbs used to describe the man's actions are proactive and aggressive - "he punched her head with both fists" (*hij met beide vuisten op het hoofd stompte*) - while her actions are described using reactive verbs, such as defend (*verdedigen*) and prevent (*beletten*). This has the effect of making him seem the clear aggressor.¹¹⁰ Naming is also used to align readers with the woman. She is described repeatedly as the "mother", a reference to her role in the family, which confirms her position as a decent member of society and adds weight to the interpretation of her actions as in defence of her children. The words used to refer to the man, on the other hand, are negative evaluations of his out-of-control behaviour: he is described as "the drunkard" (*de beschonkene*) and "the wild man" (*de woestaard*). Another technique to gain sympathy is individualization. The man is described as arriving at the house with "a brother and a couple

¹⁰⁶ David Machin and Andrea Mayr, *How to do Critical Discourse Analysis. A Multimodal Introduction* (London: Sage Publications, 2012); John E. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers. An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Norman Fairclough, Jane Mulderriig, and Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *Discourse Studies. A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Teun A. van Dijk (London: SAGE, 2011), 357-378; Teun A. van Dijk, "Discourse and Ideology," in *Discourse Studies. A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Teun A. van Dijk (London: SAGE, 2011), 379-407.

¹⁰⁷ Goc, *Women, Infanticide*, Introduction.

¹⁰⁸ "Doodslag uit noodweer door een vrouw," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 10 May 1910, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Machin and Mayr, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 39-42.

¹¹⁰ Machin and Mayr, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 104-107.

of half-drunk pub mates" (*een broeder en een paar half beschonken kroegvrienden*) but these men are not named. In contrast, one of the children who tried to intervene is described as "the 16-year-old daughter Jacoba" (*de 16-jarige dochter Jacoba*).¹¹¹ All these textual choices persuade the reader to side with the woman and her children and against the man and his mates.¹¹²

The factors influencing the content were investigated by examining background information on journalists' processes and policies in the literature on Dutch newspapers and combining this with information in the logged items on the sources used, such as news agencies. Information about the target readership was obtained through an analysis of the overall newspaper content and advertisements in the five sample years. Comparison between the four newspapers was also used to ascertain the impact of different reader segments.

For a number of reasons, the present study does not use frame analysis even though this is a common approach in studies of newspaper articles. As defined by Robert Entman, framing is the use of selection and salience to "promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation".¹¹³ Frame analysis accordingly works well for phenomena that are considered to be problems requiring policy solutions and it has been used successfully to understand modern-day and historical media representations of topics such as immigration, biotechnology and terrorism.¹¹⁴ However, as is discussed in Section 2.4, family and sexual violence never became constructed as a social problem in the Netherlands in the period 1880 to 1930. The violent incidents reported in the Dutch press were consistently ascribed by journalists to individual factors and the "treatment recommendation" was simply the operation of the criminal justice system. It was therefore not expected that frame analysis would yield many useful differences between newspaper articles. Another reason is that frame analysis has not been used in other historical studies of violent crime in the media. As a result, there was no relevant set of frames in the literature that could be used in a deductive frame analysis

¹¹¹ Machin and Mayr, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 79-83; Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 49-54.

¹¹² For more on this case, see: Clare Wilkinson, "Begrip voor geweldadige vrouwen. De veranderende verslaggeving over huiselijk geweld van vrouwen, 1880-1910," *Historica* 42, no. 1 (2019): 13.

¹¹³ Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52.

¹¹⁴ Marlou Schrover and Tycho Walaardt, "The Influence of the Media on Policies in Practice: Hungarian Refugee Resettlement in the Netherlands in 1956," *Journal of Migration History* 3, no. 1 (2017): 22-53; Baldwin Van Gorp, "Where is the Frame? Victims and Intruders in the Belgian Press Coverage of the Asylum Issue," *European Journal of Communication* 20, no. 4 (2005): 484-507; Zizi Papacharissi, and Maria de Fatima Oliveira, "News Frames Terrorism: A Comparative Analysis of Frames Employed in Terrorism in U.S. and U.K. Newspapers," *International Journal of Press/Politics* 13, no. 1 (2008): 52-74; Jorg Matthes and Matthias Kohring, "The Content Analysis of Media Frames: Toward Improving Reliability and Validity," *Journal of Communication* 58, no. 2 (2008): 258-279.

as a starting point.¹¹⁵ This also meant there was no benefit from a frame analysis in terms of comparability with other studies.

1.5 Thesis overview

The substantive part of this thesis consists of five chapters. The first two chapters present the wider context. Chapter 2 sketches the socioeconomic and political changes in the Netherlands between 1880 and 1930 and the repercussions on family life. It describes the increasing prosperity and political representation of the working class. It also shows how women acquired a voice in the public sphere and explores how this meshed with a new focus on domesticity and the protection of women and children. The second part of the chapter considers the Dutch criminal justice system and the differences with respect to other countries. A key element was the lack of lay involvement in the administration of justice in the Netherlands. Regarding the prosecution of private violence, the dominant trend was the criminalization of sexual violence.

Chapter 3 explores changes in the newspaper market and the role played by crime news. Population growth and rising living standards fuelled the emergence of a mass media consciously aimed at a broad stratum and at women readers. This was accompanied by a more empathic, accessible style of journalism and a greater focus on human-interest stories, including violent crime. But it would be misleading to term this crime content ‘sensational’: the institutional sources of the police and the courts had a mediating effect on both the selection and presentation of crime cases.

The subsequent three chapters discuss the press coverage of private violence. Chapter 4 looks at intimate partner violence. It shows how foreign stories of murder and passion among the rich were a key part of newspapers’ strategy of appealing to female readers, reaching a peak in the years before World War I. Coverage of Dutch stories of intimate partner violence was more realistic and increasingly sympathetic to the female protagonist. Most attacks were by men, often on women who had rejected them, which journalists depicted as an act of passion rather than controlling behaviour. Many accounts of intimate partner violence did not pass moral judgement on the perpetrator and victim. Instead, a range of genres were used, including humour and elements from romantic fiction and detective novels. Only those men – and women – who by virtue of their class were outside the imagined community of readers were truly condemned.

¹¹⁵ On the deductive approach, see for example: Holli A. Semetko and Patti M. Valkenburg, “Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News,” *Journal of Communication* 50, no. 2 (2000): 94-96. Frame analysis *has* been used for modern-day crime stories, for example femicides in: Tara N. Richards, Lane Kirkland Gillespie, M. Dwayne Smith, “An Examination of the Media Portrayal of Femicide-Suicides: An Exploratory Frame Analysis,” *Feminist Criminology* 9, no. 1 (2014): 24-44. However, the frames used in this article are little more than a categorization by motive. A similar categorization is discussed in the present study in Section 4.3.

Introduction

Chapter 5 examines newspaper reporting of the maltreatment of children. It argues that despite the rhetoric of child protection from the 1890s onwards, stories about parental violence only received significant attention in the newspapers in the early years, when they were used as examples of the depraved working classes. Journalists distinguished between different kinds of violence. A sudden attack by an otherwise loving parent was treated as an unfortunate tragedy, while parents who repeatedly assaulted their children or abandoned them were reviled. Gender affected patterns of violence, with single mothers particularly vulnerable, and journalists' assumptions about motives, but there is no evidence of mothers being held to higher standards than fathers.

The next chapter, Chapter 6, explores newspaper coverage of sexual violence. This coverage increased between 1880 and 1930, reflecting the feminization of the readership, and was dominated by high-profile sexual murders. Coverage focused on incidents rather than trials, in particular of attacks by strangers in remote places. The victims were portrayed as ideal victims, and the perpetrators as outsiders who were contrasted with the chivalrous police and community members intervening to protect the women and children. This contrasted with the stories of homosexual offences with adolescent boys, where the danger was portrayed as coming from the heart of society.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, draws together the findings in the substantive chapters to reach some general conclusions about the changing discourse in the Netherlands on family and sexual violence. It is concluded that the changes were driven by the increasing importance to newspapers of women readers, while the sources had a mediating effect on the content. Overall coverage of private violence increased after 1880 as part of the strategy of appealing to female readers and the stories demonstrated more sympathy for the women and children involved, but this was not a linear development. Moreover, male violence was not necessarily condemned. Many newspaper accounts avoided passing judgement, and private violence was never construed in the media as a social problem. In other stories, the violent perpetrator was positioned safely outside the imagined community and contrasted with the gallant masculinity of citizens and the police. This Dutch media discourse differed in a number of respects from what has been observed in other countries, particularly England, due to differences in social movements, the legal system and newspaper practices.

Chapter 2: The socioeconomic and legal context

This chapter sets the scene for the chapters that follow by examining the socioeconomic and legal developments in the Netherlands between 1880 and 1930. This was a period that saw big shifts in the relationships between the classes, between the sexes, between adults and children, and between the state and the family. Those shifts were partly economic, with the rising affluence of the working class and the move to a breadwinner model, but were also seen in civil society campaigns that focused on protecting the family and of children in particular. The state too was increasingly prepared to intervene to protect women and children and promote a domestic ideal. This chapter explores these developments and their impact on the prosecution of family and sexual violence.

Two specific questions are addressed in Chapter 2. The first question concerns the evidence for the increased condemnation of male private violence in the Netherlands. As discussed in the previous chapter, historians of Britain have argued that there was an increased focus on male private violence in the nineteenth century as part of a middle-class civilizing offensive in response to urban working-class disorder.¹ The question is whether this also applied in the Netherlands. Did Dutch moral entrepreneurs and the Dutch police and courts target family and sexual violence among the poor? The second question addressed in this chapter concerns participation by Dutch women in the public sphere. Again, the literature on Britain is the main point of reference. In that country, feminists and women in social purity organizations played an important role in turning private violence into a social issue and agitating for legal reform. Yet, as was seen in the previous chapter, while women became politically organized in other countries as well, they did not necessarily use their voice to place private violence on the agenda.² This chapter considers the situation for Dutch women: to what extent did they become organized as a group, and did they use their public position to address the problem of private violence?

Those questions are addressed in the following six sections. The first section sketches the process of economic growth and urbanization. Initially, large-scale migration to the cities led to social problems and a perceived threat of disorder. The middle class responded with a civilizing offensive, which was eventually supplemented by state action to improve living conditions. From the turn of the century, working-class families enjoyed rising incomes and workers achieved political representation. Section 2.2 examines two priority areas in the moral offensive, namely the philanthropic campaigns that targeted male drinking, and male sexuality. These campaigns problematized men's behaviour and gave

¹ Wiener, *Men of Blood*, 1-8; Shani D'Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage. Sex, Violence and Victorian Working Women* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 140; Emsley, *Hard Men*, 60-63; Carter Wood, "Criminal Violence," 82-83.

² Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, 97-101; Susan Hamilton, "Making history with Frances Power Cobbe: Victorian Feminism, Domestic Violence, and the Language of Imperialism," *Victorian Studies*, no. 3 (2001): 441-443; Aitken, "Horrors of Matrimony".

women a voice in the public sphere, yet they did not extend to private violence. The following section (Section 2.3) deals with the changing position of women and children in the family. With the rise of the male breadwinner model, women and children became economically dependent on the male head of the household while the home became a domestic haven. At the same time, family relations became the subject of public debate and state intervention. Feminists campaigned on marriage laws and the state set up a system for the protection of children. Section 2.4 compares Britain and the Netherlands and concludes that while both saw debates and campaigns on related issues, family and sexual violence as such were only construed as a social problem in Britain. The subsequent section (Section 2.5) introduces the Dutch criminal justice system. It examines the distinct nature of this system compared with other countries and its implications for the discourse on gender and violence. The sixth and final section looks at the law and prosecution of violence against family members and sexual violence. It shows increasing criminalization and prosecution of sexual acts involving the young, but relatively little change for other forms of private violence.

2.1 Political and economic developments

The Netherlands experienced economic growth and the rise of democracy between 1870 and 1939, which improved the socioeconomic and political position of the working class. The interests of workers were increasingly represented in national and local government. This was an important factor in establishing a welfare system, which reduced financial insecurity for most households. Such changes were not unique to the Netherlands, but the precise chronology was specific to the Netherlands and is important in understanding the changing perceptions of the working class in newspapers between 1880 and 1930, as detailed in the following four chapters.

The Netherlands was late to industrialize, lagging far behind not just Britain but also its southern neighbour Belgium. There was only a shift to a modern economy with consistently high growth in the 1860s. The acceleration of growth was fuelled by the integration of the domestic market. Internal tariffs and barriers to trade were dismantled while investments were made in railways and waterways that improved internal transport.³ This led to a shift in employment away from agriculture and towards industry and the service sector, especially transport and distribution. The Dutch economy had strong links to the German economy and benefited from the booming Ruhr area. Rotterdam became an important transit port for goods transported down the Rhine from Germany.⁴

³ Van Zanden and Van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914*, 377-387; Wielenga, *Nederland*, 44-54; E.H. Kossmann, *De Lage Landen 1780-1980. Twee eeuwen Nederland en België. Deel I: 1780-1914* (Amsterdam: Olympus, 2005), 340-345.

⁴ Van Zanden and Van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914*, 353, 387-393; Paul van de Laar, *Stad van formaat. Geschiedenis van Rotterdam in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000), 91-117.

The economic growth was accompanied by rapid population increases in the towns and cities, especially the working cities of Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Amsterdam's population increased by 79 per cent between 1879 and 1909 and Rotterdam's population rose by as much as 182 per cent in the same period.⁵ This was due to a combination of falling mortality plus migration from more rural areas in the Netherlands. Migrants were pushed towards the cities by the agricultural depression between 1882 and 1886, and attracted by the employment opportunities in the urban areas.⁶

This sudden influx of new workers put huge pressure on the housing and infrastructure of the Dutch towns and cities. The new migrants were accommodated by dividing large houses into smaller multiple units, building on vacant plots (infill) and on the sites of market gardens on the outskirts. The most notorious developments were the slum courts, accessible only via a narrow passageway and with insufficient air and light.⁷ Urban sanitation systems were unable to cope and infant mortality in particular was high.⁸ Cramped housing conditions also meant that working-class people lived much of their lives on the streets. Children were sent out onto the streets unsupervised by their mothers and women did their washing together in the courtyards.⁹ Problems such as male drunkenness and vagrancy were also more visible in the crowded urban environment where the middle classes and lower orders lived at close quarters.¹⁰

The fast-growing urban working class from the 1870s onwards and the associated social problems prompted a response from the elite. The 'social question' – the question of how to improve conditions for the working class – was placed high on the political agenda. This was not just altruism. There was an economic interest as the rise of the factory system meant that the business class had become dependent on disciplined, properly functioning working-class labour. Moreover, there was increasing fear among the elite of social unrest and socialism. These fears were intensified by public disorder incidents such as the *Palingoproer* in 1886, when police attempts to suppress a folk sporting event in a working-class district in Amsterdam resulted in a riot and 26 fatalities.¹¹

The initial response by the middle classes to the 'social question' was a civilizing offensive that aimed to teach working-class families the middle-class values of

⁵ Van Zanden and Van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914*, 354.

⁶ Auke van der Woud, *Koninkrijk vol sloppen. Achterbuurten en vuil in de negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010), 38-45; Van Zanden, *Klein land*, 21-47; Van Zanden and Van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914*, 353-376; Van de Laar, *Stad van formaat*, 181-199; K. Doevendans and R. Stolzenburg, *Stad en samenleving* (Groningen: Martinus Nijhoff, 2000), 225-242.

⁷ Van der Woud, *Koninkrijk vol sloppen*, 96-113; Doevendans and Stolzenburg, *Stad en samenleving*, 243-359.

⁸ Van der Woud, *Koninkrijk vol sloppen*, 269-272.

⁹ Martine van Leeuwen, "'De vrouw wascht zijn vuile goed'. Huiselijke normen op Scheveningen tussen 1900 en 1940," *Holland Historisch Tijdschrift*, no. 3 (2012): 142-154; A.J. de Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid: ontwikkelingen in Nederland 1870-1940* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1984), 125.

¹⁰ Gemma Blok, *Geschiedenis van de verslavingszorg*, 33.

¹¹ Van Zanden and Van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914*, 315-317; Kossman, *Lage Landen, 1780-1914*, 261-262.

industriousness and orderliness. There was a strong moral component to this approach: poverty was seen as the result of failings in the poor. Living conditions could be improved if housewives could only acquire hygienic habits and families' financial situations would be more secure if they could only learn the value of putting savings aside for the future.¹² These civilizing efforts had a long history. For example, the *Maatschappij tot Nut van het Algemeen* ('society for the benefit of all', known in short as '*t Nut*') was an upper-middle-class philanthropic organization founded in 1784 with the purpose of elevating working folk; it established its own savings banks, schools and lending libraries, among other things.¹³

Whether this civilizing offensive was effective is open to question. Some historians have pointed to the decline in macroeconomic indicators of 'uncivilized behaviour', such as rates of illegitimate births and alcohol consumption (see too Section 2.2), as evidence that it did have an effect, whether directly through disciplining by the middle classes or indirectly because middle-class values became something the lower classes aspired to as a means of improving their status in life.¹⁴ However, studies of specific civilizing activities show the working classes to be far from amenable to such efforts. A '*t Nut*' library in Utrecht struggled for custom and readers were more interested in novels than the religious, elevated literature the organizers wanted them to read.¹⁵ Attempts by a middle-class society in Amsterdam to offer rational entertainment to replace the uncivilized fairs also suffered from a lack of interest.¹⁶

At the end of the nineteenth century, overt middle-class attempts to impose a civilizing programme receded as the working-class acquired representation on the political stage. The proportion of adult men eligible to vote increased from 11 per cent in 1870 to 59 per cent in 1910 and 100 per cent in 1917. Women of all classes acquired the right to vote in 1919.¹⁷ Working-class voters were courted not just by the socialists but also by the Catholic and Protestant parties, which saw the socialists as a pernicious influence on workers and made great efforts to appeal to this group. These confessional parties were in government for most of the period 1901 to 1939. Although the socialists were never in government, they

¹² Van Zanden and Van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914*, 319-322; De Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid*, 72-73; Wielenga, *Nederland*, 31-33; Dirk Jan Wolfram, "Schikken en inschikken. Plaatselijke elites in tijden van verzuiling 1850-1920," in *De verzuiling voorbij. Godsdienst, stand en natie in de lange negentiende eeuw*, ed. J.C.H. Blom and J. Talsma (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2000), 80-102.

¹³ Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 554; Boudien De Vries, *Een stad vol lezers. Leescultuur in Haarlem 1850-1920* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2011), 259-300.

¹⁴ Van Zanden, *Klein land*, 28-29; Schoonheim, *Mixing Ovaries and Rosaries*, 92-96; Van der Woud, *Koninkrijk vol sloppen*, 379-396.

¹⁵ Ad Van der Neut, "Zeventig jaar lenen. De Utrechtse Nutsbibliotheek 1847-1917," *De negentiende eeuw* 14, no. 2 (1990): 204-216.

¹⁶ Betty Dekker, "De Vereeniging tot Veredeling van het Volksvermaak te Amsterdam, 1871-1910 : van volksverheffing tot Oranjevereniging," *De negentiende eeuw* 20, no. 3 (1996): 192-204.

¹⁷ Wielenga, *Nederland*, 34-38.

consistently held about a quarter of the seats in parliament after full suffrage was introduced and had significant influence at the municipal level, for example in Amsterdam.¹⁸

There was a cultural aspect to this development too: a soft process of nation formation to accompany the hard process of state formation, to use the terminology of the Dutch historian Van Sas.¹⁹ From about 1890, celebrations were used to cultivate a national sentiment that incorporated all the classes. Nationalist feelings reached a high point at the end of the nineteenth century, with local celebrations to mark the coronation of Queen Wilhelmina in 1898 and a surge of activity with collections and mass meetings in support of the 'fellow folk', the Boers in the Second Boer War (1899-1902); on both these occasions, men and women from all ranks of society now helped organize activities, making them truly populist events.²⁰ To use Anderson's concept, the working classes became incorporated as members of the imagined community of the Dutch nation from the final decades of the nineteenth century.²¹

Partly because of the increased representation of working-class interests, the state took a more active role from the start of the twentieth century in ensuring financial support for working families. Successive governments introduced elements of a state welfare system, starting with a national insurance scheme for accidents at work in 1901. Most schemes were only implemented after World War I. Dutch historians have emphasized the piecemeal nature of these initiatives compared with other countries and the fact that benefits were often administered by a mixture of state and private-sector organizations. Even so, these schemes provided an increasingly extensive safety net for Dutch workers who were unable to work due to ill health, old age or a lack of jobs.²² But not everyone was covered. Those who fell through the gaps – mainly unskilled and casual workers – were forced to turn to the municipal poor boards.²³ Begging and vagrancy were increasingly

¹⁸ Arko van Helden, "De 'kleine luyden' van Abraham Kuyper - een vorm van populistische retoriek?," *De negentiende eeuw* 35, no. 3 (2011): 139-153; Wielenga, *Nederland*, 90-94; Van de Laar, *Stad van formaat*, 205-210; Jan Luiten van Zanden, Arthur van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914. Staat, instituties en economische ontwikkeling*, (Amsterdam: Balans, 2000), 80-81. Jaap Talsma, "Voor u en voor ons. Initiatieven op het gebied van de sociale zorg," in *De verzuiling voorbij. Godsdienst, stand en natie in de lange negentiende eeuw*, ed. J.C.H. Blom and J. Talsma (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2000), 103-114.

¹⁹ N.C.F. van Sas, "De mythe Nederland," *De negentiende eeuw* 16, no. 1 (1992): 8-9.

²⁰ Anne Petterson, *Eigenwijs Vaderland. Populair nationalisme in negentiende-eeuws Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2017), 169-224; Betty Dekker, "Van volksverheffing tot Oranjevereniging," 200-202; J. Van Miert, "Nationalisme in de lokale politieke cultuur, Tiel 1850-1900," *De negentiende eeuw* 16, no. 2 (1992): 74-84.

²¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6. See too Section 1.3.

²² Marcel Hoogenboom, *Standenstrijd en Zekerheid. Een geschiedenis van oude orde en sociale zorg in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2004), 113-132, 203-237; Van Zanden and Van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914*, 339-341.

²³ Van de Laar, *Stad van formaat*, 248-253.

criminalized and after 1886 those convicted could be sent to state labour institutions (*rijkswerkinrichtingen*) for up to three years.²⁴

Improvements were also made to urban infrastructure. After hygienists (doctors interested in public health) had been advocating investments in sanitation and better housing for decades, municipalities finally took action from the end of the nineteenth century. Whereas canals had previously been used both for waste disposal and as a source of drinking water, now sewer systems and separate drinking water supplies were built. Many canals were filled in.²⁵ In 1901 the Housing Act (*Woningwet*) was passed, giving municipalities greater powers to clear slums and regulate housing construction. Urban planning took off from the 1910s with dedicated housing for the working class and the construction of new districts on the outskirts of the cities.²⁶ These actions were motivated not just by public health considerations; social reformers and politicians saw slum housing as a breeding ground for moral degeneration. The new homes were designed to encourage an orderly life.²⁷

The improvements in urban sanitation have been cited as one factor in the significant expansion of the Dutch population between 1880 and 1930. Infant mortality fell dramatically during this period, although the relative influence of changes in diet, sanitation and breast-feeding practices are disputed.²⁸ While fertility rates also declined in the twentieth century, they did so only slowly (more slowly than in Britain, France or Belgium). The result was rapid population growth throughout the period: the population of the Netherlands rose from 3.6 million in 1869 to 5.1 million in 1899 and 8.7 million in 1939. One consequence of fast growth was that the Dutch population was relatively young: 44 per cent was aged under 20 in 1900 (compared with 24 per cent in 2000).²⁹

The first three decades of the twentieth century were largely a period of sustained economic growth. By 1930 (the final sample year for the newspaper reports) GDP was three times higher than it had been in 1880 (the first sample year). While the Great Depression started to be felt in the Netherlands in 1930, unemployment was still only 2.3 per cent in that year.³⁰ Economic growth did falter during World War I. Although the Netherlands was

²⁴ Marian H.A.C. Weevers, Margo De Koster, and Catrien C.J.H. Bijleveld, "Swept up from the Streets or Nowhere Else to Go? The Journeys of Dutch Female Beggars and Vagrants to the Oegstgeest State Labor Institution in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 2 (2012): 418.

²⁵ Van der Woud, *Koninkrijk vol sloppen*, 243-250, 352-376; Van de Laar, *Stad van formaat*, 238-248.

²⁶ Doevendans and Stolzenburg, *Stad en samenleving*, 261-304; Van de Laar, *Stad van formaat*, 265-272; Van der Woud, *Koninkrijk vol sloppen*, 264-265.

²⁷ Christianne Smit, "'Het heele luidloos-rottend ellende-monument der hoofdstad'. Aandacht voor sloppen in Amsterdam," *De negentiende eeuw* 28, no. 2 (2004): 174-179.

²⁸ Evelien C. Walhout, "Is breast best? Evaluating breastfeeding patterns and causes of infant death in a Dutch province in the period 1875-1900," *History of the Family* 15, no. 1 (2010): 76-79.

²⁹ Statistics Netherlands, www.cbs.nl; Knippenberg and De Vos, "Tussen crisis en verzuiling"; Nederlands Interdisciplinair Demografisch Instituut, *Bevolkingsatlas van Nederland. Demografische ontwikkelingen van 1850 tot heden* (Rijswijk: Elmar BV, 2003), 134.

³⁰ Van Zanden and Van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914*, 345; Van Zanden, *Klein land*, 129, 132, 152.

neutral during the war, the economy was badly affected as routes for imports and exports were blocked off. Unemployment rose, and food and fuel rationing were introduced, prompting food riots in 1917 and 1918.³¹ But growth soon picked up again after the war ended.

Economic growth combined with the new welfare schemes and housing improvements translated into greater prosperity and better living standards for working families by the interwar period. Real wages more than doubled between 1860 and 1900 and wage growth remained steady in the twentieth century. The number of working hours fell, with an eight-hour working day being introduced in 1919. Households no longer had to spend such a high proportion of their income on food but were nevertheless eating more and becoming healthier.³² Higher disposable incomes for a broad section of society also created the conditions for the rise of consumerism. Standardized consumer goods (such as light bulbs, cocoa and margarine) were mass-produced and sold as branded products in an expanding range of shops and department stores.³³ The need to advertise the new mass consumer goods and retail stores was a key factor in the rise of the mass media, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

2.2 Problematising male behaviour: drink and sexuality

As explained in the previous section, the initial response to the rapid urbanization from the 1870s and perceived problems of public disorder was a civilizing offensive. Two key areas of philanthropic activity were the temperance movement and the abolitionist campaign to end prostitution. Both of these movements problematized male behaviour – drinking and the sexual double standard respectively – that had previously been seen as natural and acceptable. The abolitionist campaign turned into a broader social purity movement that tackled issues such as the dangers to young women travelling alone and the plight of unmarried mothers. In these campaigns, male activists took on a chivalrous role, defending women and children from the harm caused by other men's weakness and lack of restraint. But these movements also gave women a voice in the public sphere. According to Henk te Velde, the prominence of such social questions in the fin-de-siècle political debate focused attention on the 'feminine' virtue of caring. At the same time, the rise of pillarization was associated with a shift in the political style of male politicians to a more emotional style that

³¹ Wielenga, *Nederland*, 73-77.

³² Van Zanden and Van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914*, 354; Merijn T. Knibbe, "De hoofdelijke beschikbaarheid van voedsel en de levensstandaard in Nederland, 1807-1913," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 4, no. 4 (2007): 93.

³³ Chris Dols and Maarten van den Bos, "King Customer. Contested Conceptualizations of the Consumer and the Politics of Consumption in the Netherlands, 1920s-1980s," *Low Countries Historical Review* 132, no. 3 (2017): 97-98.

prized self-sacrifice. These developments gave room for female interventions in the public sphere based on public motherhood and compassion.³⁴

A useful concept for understanding women's roles in these philanthropic movements is that of 'caring power', introduced by Annemieke van Drenth and Francisca de Haan. Drawing inspiration from Foucault, they see care as a form of productive power that reshapes the identity of both the caregiver and the recipient. Moreover, they see the practice of caring power by women as an important step in creating a shared political identity. They distinguish between *women's activism*, defined as activities by women on behalf of 'others' (not necessarily female), the *women's movement*, defined as organized activities by women on behalf of other women and based on identification with their own sex, and *feminism*, defined as activities aimed at achieving equal rights.³⁵ This notion of caring power is incorporated in the analysis of women's contribution to the two movements.

Drink

Drink was seen as a problem of working-class men and a threat to their families. Women had an important part to play in combating alcohol abuse, both as wives creating a pleasant home environment as an alternative to the pub and as temperance campaigners. Men too were active in the temperance movement; they presented a chivalrous form of masculinity, protecting women and children from drunkards and setting an example in their moderation.

In the late nineteenth century, drunkenness became a public order problem that required legislation. Alcohol consumption was rising, from four litres of pure alcohol per capita per annum in around 1850 to seven litres by 1880. For the poor in the cities, alcohol was a part of everyday life: wages were paid in the pubs and it was standard practice for workers to turn up late on Mondays so that they could sleep off their hangover. However, the large-scale migration to the cities and the overcrowding that pushed people onto the streets also made the drinking problems of the poor more visible.³⁶ The first national attempt to tackle the drink problem was the 1881 Drink Act (*Drankwet*), which was repressive in nature and focused on drink as a social rather than a personal problem. Public drunkenness became an offence throughout the Netherlands. In 1886 the new criminal code introduced special state labour institutions for drunkards, beggars and vagrants.

³⁴ Henk te Velde, "Viriliteit en opoffering. 'Mannelijkheid' in het Nederlandse politieke debat van het fin de siècle," *Groniek* 132, (1996): 283-289.

³⁵ Annemieke van Drenth and Francisca de Haan, *The Rise of Caring Power* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 12-17, 46-47.

³⁶ J.C. van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap. Vijf eeuwen drankbestrijding en alcoholhulpverlening in Nederland* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995), 124-127; Gemma Blok, *Geschiedenis van de verslavingszorg*, 32-33; Johanneke van Vliegen, "Insania Toxica. Drankzuchtige mannen in het fin-de-siècle," in *Gender & Gekte. Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* 30, ed. Gemma Blok et al. (Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2010), 145-157; Chris Dols, *De geesel der eeuw. Katholieke drankbestrijding in Nederland, 1852-1945* (Zaltbommel: Aprilis, 2007), 17-22.

Drunkards sentenced for a repeat offence could be sent to one of these institutions for a period of one year.³⁷

Concerns about drunkenness remained despite the legislation, and the temperance movement gathered momentum at the end of the nineteenth century. New Protestant and Catholic temperance societies were founded, memberships of existing societies grew and the production of propaganda materials intensified. For the emergent pillars, the temperance societies were also a way of engaging the faithful and extending the pillar's reach.³⁸ The Catholic society *Sobriëtas* had separate divisions for men, women and children, and for specific occupational groups such as soldiers and railwaymen. At its peak in 1921, it had nearly 180 thousand members.³⁹ Women played an important role in the temperance organizations; this was an example of women's activism, to use Van Drenth and De Haan's terminology.⁴⁰ In 1914, the *Sobriëtas* divisions for women and girls had more members than the respective divisions for men and boys.⁴¹ It is telling that in 1911 the Catholics, who normally saw only a subservient role for women, allowed women to serve on the main board of *Sobriëtas* as recognition of their central position in the struggle against alcoholism.⁴²

The temperance movement saw drunkenness as a working-class problem, more specifically a male working-class problem. The effects on the family are a recurring theme in temperance propaganda. Posters and prints showed the drunkard squandering his wages on drink, leaving his wife and children destitute. For the man himself, drinking inevitably led to a life of crime, poverty, disease and madness. However, domestic violence did not feature prominently in temperance campaign material and there was no suggestion that a wife should leave her alcoholic husband. On the contrary, the wife had an important role in changing her husband's behaviour. As one pamphlet urged: "Housewife, make the home clean and cosy for your husband. If he feels truly happy there, he won't go to the pub."⁴³

If working-class drunkards were examples of 'bad' masculinity, the temperance societies presented an alternative kind of masculinity, one that emphasized self-control. Whereas drink made a man weak and a slave to 'King Alcohol', the man who had conquered the urge to drink was strong and independent. The male temperance campaigners

³⁷ Gemma Blok, *Geschiedenis van de verslavingszorg*, 43-44; Van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap*, 155-156, 178.

³⁸ Van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap*, 157-165; G. Blok, "Van 'zedelijke verheffing' tot 'harm reduction': verslavingszorg in Arnhem en Nijmegen, 1900-2000," in *Van streek: 100 jaar geestelijke gezondheidszorg in Zuid-West Gelderland*, ed. J. Vijselaar and L. de Goei (Utrecht: Matrijs, 2007), 153-167.

³⁹ Dols, *Katholieke drankbestrijding*, 76-96.

⁴⁰ Van Drenth and De Haan, *Caring Power*, 46.

⁴¹ There were 44,700 women members compared with 35,200 men, and 5,600 girls compared with 4,800 boys. Dols, *Katholieke drankbestrijding*, 96.

⁴² Dols, *Katholieke drankbestrijding*, 71.

⁴³ Van der Woud, *Koninkrijk vol sloppen*, 76-77; Van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap*, 169, 174, Dols, *Katholieke drankbestrijding*, 25.

presented themselves as the chivalrous protectors of the innocent victims, the wife and children affected by the husband's drinking. These men were sensitive and caring but at the same time strong, militant and ready to fight. In the iconography of the temperance print materials, they are frequently shown as crusaders.⁴⁴ According to Gemma Blok, the masculine model espoused by male temperance workers changed in nature around the turn of the century. They increasingly focused on the drunkards themselves rather than their families. They took a gentler, less critical and more personal approach to these men, while at the same time being harsher on themselves – heroically choosing abstinence as teetotallers rather than the easier option of moderation in the consumption of alcohol.⁴⁵

This shift presaged a wider change in attitudes to drunkards. Alcoholism increasingly became viewed as a disease to be treated rather than a public order problem and a moral failing that could be solved through self-discipline. It became the province of the medical profession, who received alcoholics in their sanatoriums and surgeries.⁴⁶ This medicalization extended to the criminal justice system. While public drunkenness remained a crime, with the introduction of the suspended sentence in the early twentieth century offenders with a drink problem could be ordered to seek treatment as a condition of their suspended sentence. This option was popular and probation work became an important source of income for temperance organizations; offenders on suspended sentences made up two-thirds of all clients attending the alcoholism surgeries in Rotterdam and Amsterdam by the late 1920s.⁴⁷

Alcohol consumption, as measured by the Dutch statistics agency in litres of pure alcohol per capita, fell sharply from around 1890 to the 1930s.⁴⁸ By the 1920s the temperance movement lost momentum too and membership fell.⁴⁹ As discussed in the previous section for the civilizing offensive in general, it is debatable whether the declining alcohol consumption was the result of the endeavours of temperance workers. Van der Stel maintains that the steep decline in drinking can only be explained by the civilizing efforts of the temperance campaigners.⁵⁰ Yet here too, evidence from specific temperance activities is less convincing. The alcoholism surgeries of the early decades of the twentieth century were able to report relatively few success stories.⁵¹ Other factors such as the reduction in the availability of alcohol and improved living standards for male workers may also have had an effect.

⁴⁴ See for example the illustrations in Dols, *Katholieke drankbestrijding*, 78, 79, 85, 89.

⁴⁵ Gemma Blok, "Gentle Knights. Masculinity, Teetotalism and Aid for Alcohol Abuse c. 1900," *Low Countries Historical Review* 127, no. 1 (2012): 101-126.

⁴⁶ Van Vliegen, "Insania Toxica"; Van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap*, 157.

⁴⁷ Blok, *Ziek of Zwak*, pp. 69-101, 92; Van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap*, 219-224.

⁴⁸ See graph and figures based on CBS (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek) data: Van Zanden, *Klein land*, 28-29.

⁴⁹ Van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap*, 184-185.

⁵⁰ Van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap*, 134-135.

⁵¹ Gemma Blok, *Geschiedenis van de verslavingszorg*, 90-91.

Sexuality

Alongside drink, another major concern among philanthropists in the late nineteenth century was prostitution. This led to the abolition campaign and the Dutch social purity movement, part of a transnational development. The social purity movement in Britain has been the subject of much debate among historians, with two distinct views emerging. Studies in the 1970s and 1980s painted it as repressive, a moral panic and an attempt to impose a Christian moral code on society as a whole. Feminist historians have challenged that view, pointing out that far from being ‘pruders’, social purity activists often had an emancipatory aim: they wanted an end to sexual double standards and the sexual abuse and harassment of women. More recent studies are more nuanced but still tend to see the movement either as essentially repressive or as essentially emancipatory.⁵² A comparable divide is seen in the Dutch historiography. Koenders, for example, sees an increasingly restrictive moral climate emerging in the early twentieth century as a result of the activities of Christian morality organizations. Bossenbroek and Kompagnie similarly view the abolitionists as repressive.⁵³ De Vries, on the other hand, places far more emphasis on the part played by women and secular socialists and on the extent to which the movement led to a rethinking of male sexuality.⁵⁴ De Vries is surely right to emphasize the gendered nature of the shift: male sexuality was problematized and sexually aberrant women were increasingly seen as victims. But age was also a factor: over time, morality campaigners came to focus on *young* women and girls.

The abolitionist campaign in the Netherlands sought to end the state regulation of prostitution. From the 1850s, various municipalities introduced the compulsory registration and medical examination of prostitutes in an effort to prevent the spread of syphilis. Underlying this approach was a belief that the male sex drive was naturally strong, and abstinence unhealthy and undesirable. Prostitutes therefore served a necessary function for bachelors and men separated from their families. The abolitionists challenged this assumption. They argued that men should be held to the same sexual standards as women. Men could and should control their urges, and chastity was the only acceptable option

⁵² Sheila Jeffreys, “Women and Sexuality,” in *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945*, ed. June Purvis (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), 193-299; Dean Rapp, “Sex in the Cinema: War, Moral Panic, and the British Film Industry, 1906-1918,” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 34, no. 3 (2002): 422-451; Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, xviii-xix; Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2012), 100-118; Deborah Gorham, “The ‘Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ Re-Examined: Child Prostitution and the Idea of Childhood in Late-Victorian England,” *Victorian Studies* 21, no. 3 (1978): 353-379.

⁵³ Pieter Koenders, *Tussen christelijk Réveil en seksuele revolutie. Bestrijding van zedeloosheid met de nadruk op repressie van homoseksualiteit* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG, 1996), 148-225; Martin Philip Bossenbroek and Jan H. Kompagnie, *Het mysterie van de verdwenen bordelen: prostitutie in Nederland in de negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1998).

⁵⁴ Petra De Vries, *Kuisheid voor mannen, vrijheid voor vrouwen. De reglementering en bestrijding van prostitutie in Nederland, 1850-1911* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997); Petra de Vries, “Duel met Hendrik Pierson”; For a similar viewpoint, see: Van Drenth and De Haan, *Caring Power*, 142.

outside of marriage. The abolition campaigners also changed the perception of prostitutes. Rather than being licentious temptresses, they were seen as fallen women who needed rescuing. Prostitution was likened to slavery and the recurring trope was of the prostitute as a passive victim who had been tricked into her profession.⁵⁵ The abolitionists' campaign was successful. Bowing to their pressure, municipalities ended the regulation of prostitution or introduced bans on brothels from the late 1880s onwards. In 1911, they achieved their main political goal with the Morality Act (*Zedelijkheidswet*), when the Christian coalition government made brothel-keeping and trafficking in women criminal offences.⁵⁶

The abolitionists, who had their roots in evangelical Protestantism, combined rescue work with political activism and lobbying by both men and women. The main political pressure group was the *Nederlandsche Vereeniging tegen de Prostitutie* ('Dutch society against prostitution', NVP), which was governed by a male-only committee. However its female counterpart, the *Nederlandsche Vrouwenbond tot Verhooging van het Zedelijk Bewustzijn* ('Dutch women's association for the advancement of moral awareness', known as the *Vrouwenbond*), which was established at the instigation of the British social purity campaigner Josephine Butler, also played an important part in the movement's success. The *Vrouwenbond* organized major petitions in 1885 (protesting against the international trade in women after the Maiden Tribute affair in London, in which articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* supposedly revealed large-scale underage prostitution) and in 1890 (against state-condoned prostitution). They also gave practical support for 'fallen women' and young women in danger of falling prey to prostitution. Van Drenth and De Haan regard the women's abolitionist organization as a feminist organization (that is, aiming for equality between men and women) as it demanded equal moral standards for men and women. De Vries too calls it as the first Dutch political woman's organization.⁵⁷ Nor were men only involved as political campaigners. While the women of the *Vrouwenbond* directed their attention towards the female victims, the all-male *Middernachtzending* ('midnight mission') addressed the male clients. They would stand outside brothels as 'soldiers' to persuade clients not to enter. Members of this activist Protestant organization espoused a militant

⁵⁵ Petra De Vries, "Josephine Butler and the Making of Feminism: international abolitionism in the Netherlands (1870-1914)," *Women's History Review* 17, no. 2 (2008): 259-261; Petra de Vries, *Kuisheid*, 111-119, 123-125; Bossenbroek and Kompagnie, *Mysterie*, 46-71.

⁵⁶ Bossenbroek and Kompagnie, *Mysterie*, 197-252; Petra de Vries, *Kuisheid*, 260-265; Gert Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit, een medische reputatie. De Uitdoktering van de Homoseksueel in Negentiende-eeuws Nederland* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SUA, 1987), 128-213; Koenders, *Christelijk Réveil*, 150-169.

⁵⁷ Van Drenth and De Haan, *Caring Power*, 46-47, 149-150; Petra de Vries, *Kuisheid*, 83-88, 93-136; Petra de Vries, "Josephine Butler," 265-267; Martin Bossenbroek and Jan H. Kompagnie, "De Stille Trom der Vrouwenzusters. De Vrouwenbond en de Strijd tegen de Bordeelprostitutie," *Leidschrift* 14, no. 1 (1998): 23-44.

form of chivalrous masculinity that is reminiscent of the chivalry of the temperance groups.⁵⁸

As social purity campaigners started to achieve their abolitionist objectives, they widened their scope to encompass the moral threats to unprotected single young women. From the turn of the century, there was a growing focus on trafficking in women, the so-called 'white slave trade'. This was part of an international campaign, with international conferences and treaties to tackle the alleged problem. The typical victim in the Dutch narrative was an innocent young girl travelling alone in an unfamiliar city who was tricked into prostitution by a foreigner. The campaigners were successful in promoting this as a social problem because it tapped into contemporary fears about globalization, expanding transport possibilities and the mobility of young women; moreover, sexual danger was now portrayed as coming from outside the community in the shape of foreign white slave traders. This was a period when large numbers of single, young Dutch women were migrating from the countryside to work in the cities. Concerned about their moral safety, philanthropic women's organizations (including the *Vrouwenbond*) took measures to protect them, setting up women-only lodging houses in cities and organizing 'station ladies' – women posted at major stations to offer help to young women travelling alone. When German maidservants migrated to the Netherlands in large numbers in the interwar years, the same infrastructure was used to protect them from moral danger.⁵⁹

Worries about the young in the interwar years were fuelled by their greater spending power and independence. Cycling, which had previously been a pastime of the middle classes, now became affordable for the lower classes. This brought them freedom and a wider radius of action, as they were no longer tied to the timetables and routes of public transport.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the rise of the cinema and public dance halls made it easier for girls and boys to meet one another without parental supervision. Cinemas and dance halls were also suspect because they were thought to arouse the 'wrong' urges. Local authorities tackled these problems by introducing age limits and banning films.⁶¹ As De Koster has shown in her discussion of the same phenomenon in Belgium, there were class and gender aspects to these concerns: the main target was working-class girls. They were thought by philanthropists to be too attracted to entertainment and fashionable clothes,

⁵⁸ Rudolf Dekker, "De Middernachtzending, een buitenparlementaire actiegroep," in *Criminaliteit in de Negentiende Eeuw*, ed. J.E.A. Boomgaard et al. (Hilversum: Historische Vereniging Holland & Uitgeverij Verloren, 1989), 109-113; Koenders, *Christelijk Réveil*, 85-86.

⁵⁹ Petra de Vries, *Kuisheid*, 111; Van Drenth and De Haan, *Caring Power*, 152-156; Barbara Henkes, "Gedreven door nood of avonturenlust? Mobiliteit en respectabiliteit van jonge, ongehuwde vrouwen in de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw," in *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis no. 21, 'Gaan en Staan'*, ed. Barbara Henkes et al. (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 2001), 123-154.

⁶⁰ Harry Oosterhuis, "Cycling, modernity and national culture," *Social History* 41, no. 3 (2016): 236-245.

⁶¹ Cas Wouters, *De jeugd van tegenwoordig. Emancipatie van liefde en lust sinds 1880* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum, 2012), 66-67; Andre van der Velden, Fransje de Jong, Thunnis van Oort, "De bewogen beginjaren van de Nederlandsche Bioscoop Bond, 1918-1925," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 16, no. 2 (2013): 24.

and to be prepared to have sex in return for these material rewards. They were both vulnerable and a danger to public morals.⁶²

Another target group for philanthropists was the unmarried mother, who was increasingly seen as a victim of male sexuality rather than a promiscuous seductress. The social purity lobby opposed birth control, which was thought to encourage promiscuity. The 1911 Morality Act included articles making it easier to prosecute abortionists and restricting the provision of abortifacients, contraceptives and information on birth control.⁶³ It might be expected that the increasingly vocal rejection of abortion and contraceptives for encouraging sex outside of marriage would be accompanied by increasing condemnation of unmarried mothers, but the reality was more complicated. In a study of abortion policies in early twentieth-century France, Fabrice Cahen has argued that it is important to look beyond the repressive measures imposed through the judicial system and see the broader picture. In France, the moral crusade was fought on many fronts, with financial incentives for having babies and homes for unmarried mothers as well as prosecutions of abortions.⁶⁴ The same could be said of the Netherlands. From the late nineteenth century, philanthropic organizations were set up to help unmarried mothers, providing homes where they could stay, arranging adoptions and giving financial support.⁶⁵ These were often women's organizations with the avowed aim of helping their less fortunate sisters, an example being the *Vereeniging Onderlinge Vrouwenbescherming* ('society for the mutual protection of women'), founded in 1897. In the terminology of Van Drenth and De Haan, these constituted a women's movement, in which women work on behalf of other women based on a notion of sisterhood.⁶⁶ At the same time, the men who had made the single women pregnant were being called upon to take responsibility for their action. This was the thinking behind the campaign for a new paternity law. In the nineteenth century, investigations into the paternity of an illegitimate child were forbidden by law in the Netherlands. The prohibition was intended to protect marriage as an institution. Underpinning it was a view of the unmarried woman as a temptress seducing the man rather than being seduced by him. From the 1870s there was increasing criticism of this law from feminists, socialists and evangelical Christians – the same groups who were campaigning for the abolition of prostitution. Indeed, their view was that the two problems were closely related. Unmarried

⁶² Margot De Koster, "Los van God, gezin en natie. Problematisering en criminalisering van ongeoorloofde seks en jonge vrouwen in de vroege twintigste eeuw.," in *De Levenskracht der Bevolking. Sociale en Demografische Kwesties in de Lage Landen tijdens het Interbellum*, ed. Jan Kok and Jan Van Bavel (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 355-384; Wouters, *Jeugd van tegenwoordig*, 59.

⁶³ Petra de Vries, *Kuisheid*, 197-201.

⁶⁴ Cahen, "La lutte," 114-116.

⁶⁵ For example, *Vereeniging Onderlinge Vrouwenbescherming*, founded in 1897, *Beth Palet Vereeniging tot redding van gevallen*, founded in around 1880, and *Nederlandsche Vrouwenbond tot Verhoging van het Zedelijke Bewustzijn*, founded in 1884. In 1930, a federation of organizations supporting unmarried mothers was established: *Nederlandse Federatie van Instellingen voor de Ongehuwde Moeder en haar kind*. Resources.huygens.knaw.nl, accessed 15 March 2017.

⁶⁶ Van Drenth and De Haan, *Caring Power*, 46.

mothers were the victims of male sexuality and the double sexual standard, and their male seducers should be held to account. In 1909 a paternity law was passed that made it easier for single mothers to obtain financial support.⁶⁷

The social purity movement enjoyed wide public support and the backing of politicians. The abolitionist campaign was a broad coalition of evangelical and Catholic Christians, socialists and feminists. Importantly, it involved both men and women, from different ranks in society. By the early twentieth century, social purity organizations were firmly embedded in civil society. They had large memberships, received government subsidies and had close personal links with key politicians, who themselves often held official positions in these organizations.⁶⁸ Social purists did not agree on everything. Socialists, for example, primarily saw prostitution in class terms as the exploitation of poor, working-class women by middle- and upper-class men, whereas Christians saw it more in moral terms. But they were all essentially agreed on promoting a new understanding of male sexuality in which men were expected to exercise self-control. This was associated with the greater importance now attached to the family and the man's role as the protector of his wife and children, as is discussed in the following section.

2.3 Women and children in the family

The first section in this chapter described the increasing prosperity of working households. This was accompanied by the spread of the male breadwinner model to all strata of society, which brought about what Anne Parrella terms a "reordering of family relationships".⁶⁹ Women and children became economically dependent on the male head of the household, and the home changed from a productive unit into a domestic haven meeting affective needs.⁷⁰ At the same time, family matters entered the political arena to an unprecedented degree. Marriage law, women's work and the protection of children were all the subject of political debate. By taking part in this debate, women acquired a voice in the public sphere even as their economic citizenship was curtailed. This section first considers the legal and economic position of married women before turning to the position of children and adolescents.

⁶⁷ Selma L. Sevenhuijsen, *De orde van het vaderschap. Politieke debatten over ongehuwd moederschap, afstamming en het huwelijk in Nederland, 1870-1900* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG, 1987); Petra de Vries, "Duel met Hendrik Pierson"; Ulla Jansz, *Denken over sekse in de eerste feministische golf* (Amsterdam: Sara/Van Gennep, 1990), 47-49, 87-88.

⁶⁸ Koenders, *Christelijk Réveil*, 88, 129, 189-190, 209; Bossenbroek and Kompagnie, "Stille trom," 36.

⁶⁹ Anne Parrella, "Industrialization and Murder: Northern France, 1815-1904," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 22, no. 4 (1992): 633.

⁷⁰ De Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid*, 91-100. This process started in the middle class, as has been described by Tosh and Davidoff and Hall for the British case: John Tosh, *A Man's Place. Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes. Men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2002).

Married women

There are two ways of looking at married women's legal and economic position between 1880 and 1930. One is to consider the changes in the laws and regulations. This paints a negative picture. Marriage law placed women in a dependent position and this remained the case with only minor improvements until after the Second World War. Increasing restrictions were placed on women's work, making them economically dependent too. Another perspective is to consider the debate on the marriage law and married women's work. From this perspective, Dutch feminists acquired a voice in the political arena by broaching these issues, agitating for reform and opposing proposed restrictions.⁷¹ Feminist organizations campaigning for equal rights and suffrage began to appear in the Netherlands from around 1890. The campaign for the vote was ultimately successful: the constitutional barrier to women voting was removed in 1919 and women were able to take part in national elections for the first time in 1922. Women also began to take seats on local municipal councils in the interwar period.⁷² The feminist movement and women's political representation ensured that women's viewpoints were increasingly heard in the debates about family matters.

Feminists' complaints about the marriage law were directed at wives' lack of control over their own earnings and lack of say over their children's upbringing.⁷³ Dutch wives were legally dependent on their husbands. Under Dutch law, a woman became incompetent to act in law (*handelingsonbekwaam*) on marriage, although she had a delegated right to make household purchases. The husband had marital authority, which meant that he had ultimate responsibility for decisions about their children's upbringing and about where the family should live, among other things. The wife had a duty of cohabitation, that is she was required by law to live with him. In return, the husband had a duty to protect and provide for his family.⁷⁴ The extent of women's dependency in practice is however open to question. Much of the work on marriage law has been by legal historians. De Regt's social-history study of working-class families shows that wives often had full control of household finances and it was generally the wife who arranged savings accounts and burial insurance.⁷⁵

Divorce was possible but uncommon. The permitted grounds for divorce included adultery and severe physical abuse. Amicable divorce became easier in 1883 following a ruling by the Supreme Court enabling divorce on the grounds of adultery to be granted if

⁷¹ Jansz, *Denken over sekse*, 86-88, 124; Corrie Van Eijl, *Het werkzame verschil. Vrouwen in de slag om arbeid. 1898-1940*. (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994), 222-229, 276-278.

⁷² Jansz, *Denken over sekse*, 75-78; Margit van der Steen, "'Het was het nieuwe geluid dat gehoord werd.' De betekenis van de Pacificatie voor de emancipatie van vrouwen" (lecture, conference '100 jaar Pacificatie 2017-2017', Upper Chamber of the States General, 29 November 2017).

⁷³ Jansz, *Denken over sekse*, 124, 159-160.

⁷⁴ Marianne Braun, *De prijs van de liefde. De eerste feministische golf, het huwelijksrecht en de vaderlandse geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1992), 15-38.

⁷⁵ De Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid*, 74, 78.

one of the parties failed to turn up or admitted guilt. But other barriers remained. For instance, neither the Catholics nor the orthodox Protestants, who together made up about half the population, recognized divorce.⁷⁶ Accordingly, while there was a slight upward trend, divorce rates remained low throughout the period.⁷⁷

Married women's dependency was all the greater because of their weak position in the labour market. There were few occupations open to them, their work was seen as inherently temporary and pay was much less than for men.⁷⁸ Moreover, married women withdrew from the labour market during this period 1880 to 1930. By the interwar years, the breadwinner husband and full-time housewife was the standard situation for all classes.⁷⁹ However, historians disagree about the reasons for this withdrawal. Poppel, Van Dalen and Walhout see it as the spread of a social norm whereby all families aspired to the ideal of the full-time housewife.⁸⁰ Other historians have argued that rising male wages and social insurance schemes enabled the shift as the wife no longer had to work to support the family.⁸¹ Corinne Boter however sees changes in the economic structure as the key driver for changing labour participation rates among married women.⁸²

Regardless of the reasons underlying married women's actual labour market participation, the issue itself increasingly became a matter for public debate. Married women who worked were seen as neglecting their homes and families, an argument that was already being aired by experts in 1887 in a Parliamentary enquiry into the labour market. This resulted in the 1889 Labour Act (*Arbeidswet*), which restricted the working hours of women and children but not men.⁸³ Further restrictions to married women working were debated at regular intervals between the 1890s and 1930s. The feminist movement took part in these debates through the *Nationaal Bureau voor Vrouwenarbeid* ('national

⁷⁶ Dirk Damsma, *Familiebond. Geschiedenis van het gezin in Nederland* (Utrecht: Kosmos-Z&K, 1999), 111-154; Braun, *Prijs van de liefde*, 39-63; Dirk Jaap Noordam, "Het Nederlandse gezin in de wet en de samenleving," *Pro Memorie* 2, no. 2 (2000): 288-301.

⁷⁷ Matthijs Kalmijn, Sofie Vanassche, and Koenraad Matthijs, "Divorce and Social Class During the Early Stages of the Divorce Revolution: Evidence from Flanders and the Netherlands," *Journal of Family History* 36, no. 2 (2011): 161-162.

⁷⁸ Marlou Schrover, "Gender en etniciteit. Overeenkomst en verschil in historisch perspectief," in *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* no. 21, 'Gaan en Staan', ed. Barbara Henkes et al. (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 2001), 180-207.

⁷⁹ Van Eijl gives participation rates for married women of 5 per cent in 1920 and 6 per cent in 1930: Van Eijl, *Het werkzame verschil*, 55. However, official figures must be considered an underestimate as the census failed to capture many forms of female labour, for example involvement in family businesses and in agriculture. For a discussion of married women's hidden work, see: Boter, "Dutch Divergence?" 73-96.

⁸⁰ Frans W.A. Poppel, Hendrik P. Van Dalen, and Evelien Walhout, "Diffusion of a social norm: tracing the emergence of the housewife in the Netherlands, 1812-1922," *Economic History Review* 62, no. 1 (2009): 99-127.

⁸¹ Van Eijl, *Het werkzame verschil*, 63-64; De Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid*, 66.

⁸² Boter, "Dutch Divergence?" 175-177.

⁸³ Ulla Jansz, "Sociale kwestie en sekse in de politieke geschiedenis. De arbeidswet van 1889," in *Op het strijdtoneel van de politiek. Twaalfde jaarboek voor vrouwengeschiedenis*, ed. Marjan Schwegman et al. (Nijmegen: SUN, 1991), 70-90.

bureau for women's work', founded in 1901).⁸⁴ Despite their efforts, bans on married women's work were implemented for specific professions (notably teachers and civil servants), certain factories and certain municipalities.⁸⁵

Criticisms of married women's work went hand in hand with a 'cult of domesticity'. This increased the pressure on women to devote more time to the home. The neat, welcoming home was a weapon against men's drinking, deterring them from resorting to the pub after work, and against delinquent behaviour by their children, deterring them from spending all their time on the streets. Housewives were expected to meet higher standards of cleanliness and hygiene, and mothers to feed, clothe and raise their children appropriately. These high standards were imposed on working-class families by housing corporation supervisors, charity workers and poor board officials.⁸⁶

Children

Children were at the heart of the domestic ideal. Throughout the Western world, three key interrelated developments changed the nature of childhood during this period: the removal of children from the labour market and into schools, the substitution of affective family ties for economic family ties, and increasing state intervention in family life. Underlying these developments was a new ideology of childhood. Under the influence of Romanticism, childhood came to be construed in the nineteenth century as a separate phase in life. It was seen as a time of innocence and dependency when children could be free to play and learn, protected from the harsh reality of the adult world. From the late nineteenth century onwards, governments and philanthropists developed child-oriented policies aimed at rescuing "children for the enjoyment of childhood".⁸⁷ There was a class element to these policies, as they were designed to give the children of the poor the same carefree childhood that middle-class children had long enjoyed.⁸⁸ This public action led Ellen Key in 1900 to herald the twentieth century as the Century of the Child. The extent to which conditions actually improved for children is open to question; initiatives to reform and protect children at risk could, for example, result in more children being institutionalized for lengthier

⁸⁴ Van Eijl, *Het werkzame verschil*, 107-154; Bosch, "Domesticity, Pillarization and Gender," 279-283.

⁸⁵ Van Eijl, *Het werkzame verschil*, 256-298; Jan van Bavel and Jan Kok, "Uitstel en afstel van ouderschap tijdens het interbellum in Nederland," in *De Levenskracht der Bevolking. Sociale en Demografische Kwesties in de Lage Landen tijdens het Interbellum*, ed. Jan Kok and Jan Van Bavel (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 197-227.

⁸⁶ Els Kloek, *Vrouw des Huizes. Een Cultuurgeschiedenis van de Hollandse Huisvrouw* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2009), 154-157; De Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid*, 143-239; Berteke Waaldijk, "Personeel van sociale instituties. Over het verband tussen vrouwenbeweging en maatschappelijk werk," *BMGN* 130, no. 2 (2015): 51-56.

⁸⁷ Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 137.

⁸⁸ Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 137-140; Harry Hendrik, *Children, childhood and English Society 1880-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 9-15.

periods.⁸⁹ Looking back in 2000, Jeroen Dekker concludes it is more accurate to call it the Child-oriented Century, focused on the child but not exclusively for the benefit of the child.⁹⁰

In the Netherlands, policies were enacted to restrict children's labour, ensure their education and protect them from inadequate parents. The first step in the removal of children from the labour market was the 1874 Children's Act (*Kinderwet*), which banned children under the age of 12 from working in factories. However, it was largely ineffective as no inspectorate was set up to enforce it. That was remedied in the 1889 Labour Act. Its scope was wider, banning all work by children under the age of 12 except on farms and restricting labour by teenagers. Crucially, a Labour Inspectorate was set up.⁹¹ Then in 1901, the Compulsory Education Act (*Leerplichtwet*) came into effect, making six years of schooling mandatory for all children. Although the practical impact was limited as by that time most children were already attending primary school anyway, it established the principles that education was for all children regardless of income and social status, and that the state could intervene to enforce this.⁹²

Historians have argued that the removal of children from the labour market changed the nature of parent-child relationships. When children were workers too, families were organized according to notions of reciprocal rights and responsibilities: they were expected to contribute through their wages and through work around the house. As children's economic contribution declined in importance, the balance shifted from instrumental to more emotional relationships. They became "economically 'worthless' but emotionally 'priceless'".⁹³ This was reinforced by the decline in family size and infant mortality. Parents were now able to spend more time and bestow more affection on individual children. Moreover, as housing conditions improved, children began to spend less time on the streets and more time in the home. However, this concept of an emotionalization of family life has its critics. Dorien Campfort finds that Belgian parents continued to describe their children's importance in terms of their economic contributions until into the twentieth century. Also, as Hendrick writes, it is not clear that the earlier instrumental relationship based on

⁸⁹ Margo De Koster, "Jongeren en criminaliteit. Een lange geschiedenis van de Middeleeuwen tot heden," *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 52, no. 3 (2010): 315-316; Heather Shore, "'Inventing' the juvenile delinquent in nineteenth-century Europe," in *Comparative Histories of Crime*, ed. Barry Godfrey, Clive Emsley, and Graeme Dunstall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 116-118.

⁹⁰ Jeroen J.H. Dekker, "The Century of the Child revisited," *International Journal of Children's Rights* 8, (2000): 143-146.

⁹¹ Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 240-242.

⁹² Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 575-577, 603.

⁹³ Hendrik, *Children*, 10

economic considerations “can be taken to be exclusive of other more ‘affectionate’ attendant practices”.⁹⁴

If young children were being removed from the labour market and put into schools, the situation was different for teenagers. Few Dutch working-class children continued their education beyond the minimum school leaving age. In 1930, only 17 per cent of children aged 12 to 18 attended some kind of full-time secondary education.⁹⁵ Teenagers were expected to find work and contribute their wages to the family budget. This could be a source of tension within the family. Children generally continued to live with their parents until they got married, and as they grew older, conflicts could arise about the amount of money they could keep for their personal expenditure. The wages of teenagers and young adults also gave them more power within the family in relation to the father as the main breadwinner, who could feel threatened by this.⁹⁶

A particular cause for concern for parents — and opinion-makers — was the kind of work suitable for daughters. Single young women were much in demand in the labour market, as many of the expanding sectors made extensive use of female labour. Whereas before they had worked mainly as maids hidden from view in private homes, now they were increasingly employed in factories, shops, in clerical positions and in teaching.⁹⁷ Factory work, where teenage girls made up a high proportion of the female workers, was particularly contentious. Young girls were thought to pick up bad language and be exposed to inappropriate sex talk. There were fears about the morally debilitating effects of working at close quarters with men and about the risk of sexual harassment. Factory employers tried to combat these complaints by providing separate areas for women workers and appointing female supervisors. But young female factory workers were cheap and therefore popular with employers. Indeed, much of the opposition to female employment came from male workers and their unions who thought the women were undercutting men’s wages and providing unfair competition.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Hendrik, *Children*, 20; Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 155; Dorien Campforts, “‘Son excuse est dans sa jeunesse’. Jongeren en jeugddelinquentie in het Gentse Quartier de Discipline vanuit een gezinsperspectief, 1887-1921,” *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 12, no. 1 (2015): 31-52.

⁹⁵ Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 641.

⁹⁶ De Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid*, 130-133; Megan Doolittle, “The Duty to Provide: Fathers, Families and the Workhouse in England, 1880-1914,” in *The Welfare State and the ‘Deviant Poor’ in Europe, 1870-1933*, ed. Beate Althammer, Andreas Gestrich, and Jens Gründler (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 64.

⁹⁷ Van Eijl, *Het werkzame verschil*, 46-48, 55; Greet Kooij and Gerard Pley, “Principe en profijt. Drie kwesties rond vrouwenarbeid in de Nederlandse sigarenindustrie tijdens het Interbellum,” in *Vijfde Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis*, ed. Jeske Reys et al. (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij, 1984), 63-90; Nelleke Bakker, “Een mooi beroep voor een meisje. Onderwijzeressen tijdens het Interbellum,” in *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis*, ed. Josine Blok et al. (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij, 1982), 98-128; Gertjan de Groot and Marlou Schrover, “Between Men and Machines: Women Workers in New Industries, 1870-1940,” *Social History* 20, no. 3 (1995): 279-296.

⁹⁸ Angelique Janssens and Ben Pelzer, “Did Factory Girls Make Bad Mothers? Women’s Labor Market Experience, Motherhood and Children’s Mortality Risks in the Past,” *Biodemography and Social Biology* 58, no.

In the eyes of philanthropists, the parental home too could be a source of moral danger for the young and they agitated for child protection legislation. After 1905, children and teenagers who were considered morally ‘neglected’ could be removed from their parents’ custody under the Children’s Acts (*Kinderwetten*) and placed in an institution or with a private family.⁹⁹ This was one example of a swathe of legislation passed by Western countries around the turn of the century to protect children from maltreatment by their parents, including in Britain in 1889 (the Children’s Charter), in France in 1898 and in Belgium in 1912.¹⁰⁰ The Dutch legislation was based on an 1898 advisory report by the philanthropic organization ‘t Nut, which looked at child protection measures in other countries in order to draw lessons. But the Dutch laws did not simply replicate foreign legislation; the focus in the Netherlands was on moral dangers rather than physical abuse and neglect as in Britain and France. The Children’s Acts stipulated that parents could lose custody of their child if there was a threat of the child’s “moral or physical ruin” (*zedelijke of lichamelijke ondergang*), but physical maltreatment was thought to be rare in the Netherlands and barely played any role in the Dutch debate.¹⁰¹ The key concept in the Dutch child protection campaign was *verwaarlozing*. This translates as “neglect”, but it was in fact a broad and usually undefined term that referred to a morally negligent upbringing. It evoked images of children who skipped school and were sent out to beg or steal while their parents drowned themselves in alcohol. These children had to be helped, it was argued, as they were potential criminals; the campaign, which involved both lawyers and philanthropists, was informed by a view that juvenile crime was largely the result of bad parenting. Thus, the Dutch legislation blurred the dangerous child and the endangered child. This is evident from the fact that the Children’s Acts combined a civil-law act for the protection of maltreated children and a criminal-law act on the treatment of juvenile offenders.¹⁰²

The child protection legislation gave an impetus to state intervention in working-class families and the removal of children from their homes. The number of institutions of various kinds increased, becoming an archipelago of more than 250 homes around the start

2 (2012): 134-135; De Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid*, 122-124; Van Eijl, *Het werkzame verschil*, 322-324, 330-333; Kooij and Pley, “Principe en profijt”.

⁹⁹ Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 462-465.

¹⁰⁰ Behlmer, *Child Abuse*, 78-110; Bourquin, “René Bérenger”; Christiaens, “Belgium’s Child Protection Act”.

¹⁰¹ Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 463; R.M. Damen, “Verwaarloosd, mishandeld of crimineel? Onwetendheid over kindermishandeling in Nederland van 1896 tot 1905.” (Bachelor’s thesis, Leiden University, 2014), 25. Dekker also examines the Dutch legislation from an international perspective but he points to the public-private system and the central role played by Protestant and Catholic institutions as the defining characteristic of the Dutch child protection legislation. Jeroen J.H. Dekker, “Entre Rousseau et péché originel. Le modèle néerlandais de la protection de l’enfance au XIXe siècle,” *Revue d’histoire de l’enfance* 5, (2003): 38-42.

¹⁰² Adri van Montfoort, *Het topje van de ijsberg. Kinderbescherming en de bestrijding van kindermishandeling in sociaal-juridisch perspectief* (Utrecht: SWP, 1994), 81-87; Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 452-457; Damen, “Verwaarloosd?” 9-20; Ido Weijers, “The Debate on Juvenile Justice in the Netherlands, 1891-1901,” *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice* 7, no. 1 (1999): 63-78.

of the First World War.¹⁰³ The number of children removed from their homes by the guardianship boards rose from 211 in 1906 to around 11,100 as at the end of 1929. In 1922, a new measure was introduced: preventive supervision in the home. This was intended to reduce the number of children being taken out of the home but in practice it had no effect on this and simply increased the total number of children who came into contact with the child protection apparatus.¹⁰⁴ Thus the Dutch legislation was highly ambiguous in nature: while the state now attached legal consequences to inadequate parenting, it was the children who felt the effects most rather than the negligent parents themselves. And at a time when domesticity and family life was being extolled, more children than ever were being removed from their families and placed in institutions.

The classic literature on the Dutch Children's Acts has seen the legislation as a milestone, taking a Whiggish view of progress in the interests of the child while assuming there was little protection before the acts.¹⁰⁵ Other scholars have been more sceptical. Historians influenced by Foucault and Donzelot see the protection apparatus in terms of expanding the social control of families, in particular among the poor.¹⁰⁶ Dekker however emphasizes the continuity with previous practices and the interests of the institutions themselves in lobbying for the child protection legislation.¹⁰⁷ As in other countries, there was a trend in the nineteenth century towards greater institutionalization of various categories of children. In the criminal justice system, more children were imprisoned and by the end of the century they made up one quarter of the prison population.¹⁰⁸ In the philanthropic sector, new Protestant and Catholic institutions were established to house neglected or abandoned children, while long-established orphanages widened their scope to include neglected children.¹⁰⁹ The philanthropists' motive in campaigning for the child protection legislation was therefore to give a firmer legal basis for an existing practice; children were already being removed from their families and placed in institutions 'voluntarily', for example at the advice of Poor Boards, which were able to exert pressure because they controlled the allocation of benefits. However, the institutions' governors complained that parents could demand their children back before they had been properly

¹⁰³ S. Groenveld, J.J.H. Dekker, and T.R.M. Willemse, *Wezen en boeffjes. Zes eeuwen zorg in wees- en kindertehuizen* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), 358-359.

¹⁰⁴ Van Montfoort, *Topje*, 113-116.

¹⁰⁵ This celebratory attitude is reflected in the fact that anniversary publications have appeared every 25 years since 1905. For the most recent publication, see: D. Lechner, *Honderd jaar kinderbewaking. Uitgave ter gelegenheid van het jubileum van de Raad voor de Kinderbewaking en de Kinderwetten (1905-2005)* (Amsterdam: B.V. Uitgeverij SWP, 2006).

¹⁰⁶ Van Montfoort, *Topje*, 73-76; Hendrik, *Children*, 39-40.

¹⁰⁷ Jeroen J.H. Dekker, *Straffen, redden en opvoeden* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp. BV, 1985), 302-308.

¹⁰⁸ Manon Van der Heijden and Valentijn Koningsberger, "Continuity or Change? The Prosecution of Female Crime in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Netherlands," *Crime, History & Societies* 17, no. 1 (2013): 115-119.

¹⁰⁹ Groenveld, Dekker, and Willemse, *Wezen en boeffjes*, 286-289.

rehabilitated.¹¹⁰ The 1905 Children's Acts gave the institutions the power to reject such demands *and* strengthened their financial position as they now received state funding. Because most institutions were either Protestant or Catholic, this amounted to the consolidation of the Protestant and Catholic pillars' activities in the field of child rescue.¹¹¹

2.4 Private violence and social problems in Britain and the Netherlands

To a large extent, the political debates and philanthropic and state actions described above for the Netherlands were part of transnational movements. Temperance, the white slave trade and child protection were all issues in many industrializing countries, and Dutch campaigners often had contacts with activists in other countries. That includes Britain, the country that has been the subject of most work on family and sexual violence. Yet whereas the British account of private violence revolves around campaigns that constructed this violence as a social problem and agitated for new legislation, that never happened in the Netherlands. Dutch campaigners were more interested in public disorder.

To analyse this requires an understanding of how social problems arise and how they spread across country borders. Joel Best's book on the subject states that social problems are constructed as a subjective response to a certain condition. The process starts with 'claimsmakers', for example activists or experts, making claims about this "troubling condition". The claimsmakers seek to persuade policy-makers to take action. The claimsmakers may do so by obtaining media coverage for their ideas and thereby changing public opinion, or by lobbying policy-makers directly.¹¹² Best also discusses the diffusion of social problems claims to other countries, where they might be adapted with modifications to suit local conditions, or alternatively resisted.¹¹³ The transnational diffusion and its limits have attracted increasing attention from historians of civil-society movements in recent years. With regard to the Netherlands, Maartje Janse has discussed why Dutch abolitionists rejected the methods of the British anti-slavery movement and Mieke Aerts has examined the rejection by Dutch feminists of the radical approach taken by British suffragettes. In both cases, knowledge among Dutch campaigners of British activities did not lead to the transfer of British priorities and methods to the Netherlands.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Addy Schuurman, "Enkele voorbeelden van kinderbescherming in Utrecht voor de totstandkoming van de kindwetten in 1905," *Oud-Utrecht* 0, December 1993, 130-135; Lechner, *Honderd jaar kinderbescherming*, 11-23.

¹¹¹ Groenveld, Dekker, and Willemse, *Wezen en boefjes*, 291-292, 358-361; Jeroen Dekker, "Le modèle néerlandais," 40-41.

¹¹² Best, *Social Problems*, 3-28, 66-67.

¹¹³ Best, *Social Problems*, 304-309.

¹¹⁴ Maartje Janse, "'Holland as a little England'? British anti-slavery missionaries and continental abolitionist movements in the mid nineteenth century," *Past and Present*, no. 229 (2015): 123-160; Mieke Aerts, "'Hollandsche vecht-suffragettes'? Een kwestie uit de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse feminisme," *Low Countries Historical Review* 124, no. 4 (2009): 599-617.

The physical abuse and neglect of children is another example of such imperfect diffusion. In Britain in the 1880s, this phenomenon was defined as a new social problem – cruelty to children. A new organization, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) was established and campaigned for legislation to combat the problem. George Behlmer has described how the organization publicized its activities through its magazine the *Child's Guardian* and by using the newspapers as a forum. In these accounts, the children were depicted as helpless little victims. According to Monica Flegel, the NSPCC portrayed parental abuse as something hidden from view, within the home. Only the NSPCC's inspectors would be able to recognize and deal with it.¹¹⁵ The Dutch child protection campaign in the 1890s adopted the same broad aim of legislation to protect children but gave this a different interpretation, even though the 't Nut report on which the Dutch Children's Acts were based specifically analysed the British situation. Physical cruelty within the home was assumed to be rare in the Netherlands, and the real problem was considered to be the public disorder caused by 'neglected' and potentially criminal children in the streets.

Wife-beating too was constructed as a social problem in Britain but not the Netherlands. In the mid-nineteenth century, the British reformers Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill were publicizing wife-beating among the poor and criticizing the judicial leniency towards the offenders. This subject was taken up again by feminists including Frances Power Cobbe thirty years later. Her article 'Wife-torture in England' has been credited as a key factor in the 1878 Matrimonial Causes Act, which enabled abused wives to obtain separation and maintenance payments. Further pressure for reform from feminists and activists led to new legislation in 1895 extending the circumstances in which women could be granted separation from abusive husbands.¹¹⁶ Changes to the marriage law were an important aim for Dutch feminists but they were primarily interested in achieving a more equal distribution of rights and duties within marriage rather than facilitating separation. Domestic violence played no role in their arguments.¹¹⁷ The Dutch temperance movement was potentially another forum for identifying wife-beating as a social problem but in practice the 'demon drink' was deprecated mainly for causing poor health and penury for the family; domestic violence was not seen as a major issue.¹¹⁸

Infanticide was another "condition" that became a social problem in Britain but not in the Netherlands. In the 1860s, the medical doctor Edwin Lankester caused a stir by claiming through the pages of *The Times* that thousands of infanticides were being

¹¹⁵ Behlmer, *Child Abuse*, 82-83; Monica Flegel, "Changing faces: the NSPCC and the use of photography in the construction of cruelty to children," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 39, no. 1 (2006): 4-6.

¹¹⁶ Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship*, 52-67; Susan Hamiltion, "Frances Power Cobbe," 441-443; Olive Anderson, "State, Civil Society and Separation in Victorian Marriage," *Past & Present*, no. 163 (1999): 165.

¹¹⁷ Jansz, *Denken over sekse*, 92-3, 124.

¹¹⁸ Van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap*, 169; Dols, *Katholieke drankbestrijding*, 40, 60.

committed every year in London.¹¹⁹ Infanticide was in the news again in 1921, when the conviction of Edith Roberts for infanticide prompted a campaign led by local newspapers. This eventually led to the 1922 Infanticide Act, whereby infanticide was effectively treated as manslaughter rather than murder.¹²⁰ In the Netherlands, the plight of single mothers received increasing attention from philanthropists and women's organizations, as was noted above. However, the problem of infanticide was never a prominent aspect of their discourse.¹²¹

Child sexual abuse is the final example of a condition that was turned into an issue by British philanthropists but not by the Dutch. In Britain, moral entrepreneurs campaigned to raise the age of consent and protect young girls. In 1885, that campaign drew international attention through the publication by W.T. Stead in collaboration with Josephine Butler of a series of articles entitled 'The Maiden Tribute of modern Babylon' in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on under-age prostitution. This coupled with mass rallies around the country helped bring about the successful passage of the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act with new age-of-consent legislation.¹²² Louise Jackson argues that although the campaign presented the problem as one of juvenile prostitution, the details of the debates show that "the sexual assault of children, by fathers, neighbours or employers as well as by strangers, was an issue of concern"; this was reflected in the activities of child rescue organizations.¹²³ Dutch abolitionists campaigning against prostitution had close contacts with Butler and were aware of the 'Maiden Tribute' affair. Yet the Dutch philanthropists were almost completely silent on the subject of child sexual abuse in any form other than juvenile prostitution. Incest was regarded as a rare event.¹²⁴

To summarize, parental cruelty to children, wife-beating, infanticide and child sexual abuse were all constructed as social problems at some point by claimsmakers in Britain. This led to media coverage, public debates and policy changes. In the Netherlands on the other hand, private violence was never politicized in this way. Dutch philanthropists focused on *public* disorder, for example due to drink, prostitution by 'public women', and morally neglected children. There is evidence that they assumed violence within the home was unusual in the Netherlands. This inevitably affected the media discourse, as will be discussed in the following chapters. Whereas in Britain, claimsmakers used the media to draw attention to private violence, there were no equivalent activists in the Netherlands to

¹¹⁹ Goc, *Women, Infanticide*, chap. 3.

¹²⁰ Goc, *Women, Infanticide*, chap. 6; Grey, "Discourses of Infanticide," 120-143.

¹²¹ Although it could be mentioned as one of the many undesirable consequences of the double sexual standard, see: Petra de Vries, *Kuisheid*, 173-174.

¹²² Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight. Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), chap. 3;

¹²³ Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 15-16; Louise A. Jackson, "'Singing Birds as well as Soap Suds': The Salvation Army's Work with Sexually Abused Girls in Edwardian England," *Gender & History* 12, no. 1 (2000): 107-126.

¹²⁴ Petra de Vries, *Kuisheid*, 211-212; Van Drenth and De Haan, *Caring Power*, 146-152.

publicize family and sexual violence. The theme of difference with respect to other countries is continued in the next section, which looks at the Dutch criminal justice system and its distinctive features when compared with Britain and other European and Anglo-Saxon countries.

2.5 Criminal justice system

It is argued in this study that the discourse on private violence and gender was affected by the legal system, in particular the punishment regime and the degree of involvement of laypeople and forensic experts alongside lawyers. In both regards, the Dutch criminal justice system differed from that in Britain and the other European and the Anglo-Saxon countries that have been the subject of much of the historiography on crime and gender. In particular, there was no death penalty and there were no juries. However, the Dutch system also changed between 1880 and 1930, with a shift to punishments tailored to fit the individual criminal and with a greater role for psychiatric evidence. This had implications for the influence of gender on the treatment of the accused, as is discussed below.

The Netherlands had (and has) a continental system similar to that of France and Belgium with a codified law and inquisitorial procedure, rather than the common law system and accusatorial procedure of countries such as Britain, the US and Australia. This system was introduced during the French Occupation. The Netherlands used the French Penal Code (*Code Pénal*), introduced in 1811, until it was finally replaced by a new Criminal Code (*Wetboek van Strafrecht*) in 1886.¹²⁵ If a possible offence was detected, the public prosecutor was in charge of the preliminary investigation by the police and also decided whether to take the case to trial. Up to 1886, serious crimes (*misdriften*) were tried in provincial courts (*gerechtshoven*) and minor crimes (*wanbedrijven*) in district courts (*rechtbanken*). After 1886 the district courts became the court of first instance for all crimes and the provincial courts were only used for appeals.¹²⁶ Unlike Belgium and France, the Netherlands had no jury system. Juries were introduced by the occupying French regime in 1811 but were abolished in 1813 after the country's liberation from the French.¹²⁷ In the trial, a panel of judges actively investigated the case, questioning witnesses and the defendant in an endeavour to discover 'the truth' in the public interest. The defence and public prosecutor had a supporting role in the proceedings. The judges then convened in private to decide on a sentence, which was generally announced one or two weeks after the trial.¹²⁸ Trials were in principle open to the public, but the court could make an exception,

¹²⁵ A.G. Bosch, *Ontwikkeling van het strafrecht*, 79-120; Marijke Malsch, "Een transparanter strafrechtssysteem in Nederland? Mogelijkheden en onmogelijkheden van meer openbaarheid," in *Speelruimte voor transparantere rechtspraak*, ed. Dennis Broeders et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 271.

¹²⁶ A.G. Bosch, *Ontwikkeling van het strafrecht*, 37-48.

¹²⁷ Van Ruller and Faber, *Afdoening van strafzaken*, 27-45.

¹²⁸ Eggens, "Van daad tot vonnis," 56-59; A.J. Blok and L.C. Besier, *Het Nederlandsche Strafproces. Tweede deel* (Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink, 1925), 167-169.

for example in the interests of public morals. In the period under review, this was standard practice for all sexual offences, which were almost invariably tried *in camera*.¹²⁹

The Penal Code was a product of the Enlightenment and based on the principles of equivalence (equivalent crimes should be treated the same) and proportionality (the sanction should be in proportion to the crime). The main aim of punishment was retribution. Underlying this was an assumption of crime as a moral failing and the individual offender's guilt and responsibility for their actions.¹³⁰ Minimum and maximum sentences were defined for each crime, leaving limited room for the discretion of the courts. The death penalty had been abolished in 1870 and other corporal punishments before that. The only possible sanctions as of 1870 were fines or incarceration. From the mid-nineteenth century, imprisonment took the form of solitary confinement as it was believed this would encourage prisoners to think about what they had done, realize the error of their ways and change their behaviour.¹³¹

While the 1886 Criminal Code still embodied this classical approach to criminal justice, the decades that followed saw an increasing emphasis on rehabilitation of the criminal and the protection of society rather than retribution.¹³² In the final decades of the nineteenth century, new ideas appeared in Europe about the causes of criminal behaviour in the young science of criminology. In 1876, Lombroso published his *L'uomo delinquente*, launching the notion of the born criminal, a throwback to more primitive times. He backed up his theory with skull measurements of criminals and primitive tribes. Lombroso's work was challenged by a French school that believed crime was the result of social conditions. Despite these differences between the schools, the criminologists were united by their determinism: whether the criminal was born or made, first there was the criminal and then there was the crime.¹³³ These new criminological ideas influenced thinking among lawyers in the Netherlands. This coalesced in a movement known as the *Nieuwe Richting*, or New Direction. The New Direction lawyers felt the main aim of the criminal justice system should be to protect society. This could best be achieved by distinguishing between different kinds of criminals and treating them accordingly. In the case of corrigible criminals, the focus should be on reform, whereas lengthy incarceration was more appropriate for incorrigible criminals and repeat offenders. The New Direction movement grew in influence from the

¹²⁹ Malsch, "Transparanter strafrechtssysteem?" 267-268; Blok and Besier, *Het Nederlandsche strafproces*, 26-34.

¹³⁰ A.G. Bosch, *Ontwikkeling van het strafrecht*, 69-78.

¹³¹ Herman Franke, *Twee eeuwen gevangen. Misdad en straf in Nederland* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1990), 265-338; Hoekstra, *Hart van de natie*, 21-58.

¹³² Harry Oosterhuis, "Treatment as punishment: forensic psychiatry in the Netherlands (1870-2005)," *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 37, (2014): 39.

¹³³ Clive Emsley, *Crime, police, & penal policy. European experiences 1750-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 188-193; David Garland, "The Criminal and his Science. A Critical Account of the Formation of Criminology at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *British Journal of Criminology* 25, no. 2 (1985): 109-137; Franke, *Twee eeuwen gevangen*, 451-538.

1890s.¹³⁴ Evidence of this is seen in the introduction of the suspended sentence in 1915 and in the 1901 criminal-law Children's Act, in which juveniles could be given a reprimand or sent to various types of state reformatory depending on whether they were judged to be opportunistic offenders or serious delinquents.¹³⁵

The new ideas on crime and punishment also affected how the law dealt with mentally ill offenders. Under the 1811 Penal Code and 1886 Criminal Code, if the perpetrator was fully insane at the time of the incident and therefore not responsible for their acts (*ontoerekenbaar*), no crime was deemed to have taken place. In such cases, the perpetrator could then be committed to a mental asylum. For most of the nineteenth century judges made little use of this option. The number of insanity rulings only started to increase in the 1890s.¹³⁶ This reflected the increasing involvement of psychiatrists in criminal court cases, largely at the instigation of New Direction lawyers.¹³⁷ But there was still the question of what to do with mentally deficient perpetrators who were not fully insane. According to the adherents of the New Direction, this category of perpetrator was particularly prevalent among habitual criminals who committed minor offences such as theft. The short prison sentences applicable for such crimes were not effective for these offenders with diminished responsibility (*verminderd toerekeningsvatbaar*). Instead, it was believed that they should be sent to specialized forensic asylums. This viewpoint was put into practice in the 1925 Psychopath Acts (*Psychopatenwetten*), which came into effect in 1928. The new legislation was explicitly founded on the principle of protecting society: offenders with diminished responsibility who constituted a danger to public order could be interned in a 'psychopath' asylum for a period of up to two years (a measure known as 'TBR' or *terbeschikkingstelling van de regering*). This internment could be extended indefinitely, for two years at a time, by the public prosecutor on the advice of a doctor. The offender in question had no right of appeal. Thus, while this internment was officially a measure aimed at rehabilitation, it could in practice be a harsh sanction for relatively minor offences.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Franke, *Twee eeuwen gevangen*, 451-538; D.T.D. de Ridder, "Voorlichting van de psychiater aan de strafrechter rond de eeuwwisseling: diagnose of vonnis," in *Ziek of schuldig? Twee eeuwen forensische psychiatrie en psychologie*, ed. F. Koenraadt (Arnhem: Gouda Quint, 1991), 35-48; Harry Oosterhuis and Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, *Verward van geest en ander ongerief. Psychiatrie en geestelijke gezondheidszorg in Nederland (1870-2005). Vol 1* (Houten: Bohn Stafleu van Loghum, 2008), 223-238.

¹³⁵ Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 463-465; Weijers, "Debate on Juvenile Justice", 63-78; Franke, *Twee eeuwen gevangen*, 609; Van Ruller and Faber, *Afdoening van strafzaken*, 7-25.

¹³⁶ For example, the number of perpetrators declared insane and sent to the government asylum of Medemblik increased from 16 in the period 1885-1890 to 130 in the period 1900-1905. Oosterhuis and Gijswijt-Hofstra, *Verward van geest*, 227.

¹³⁷ I. Weijers and F. Koenraadt, "Toenemende vraag naar expertise - een eeuw forensische psychiatrie en psychologie," in *Tussen behandeling en straf. Rechtsbescherming en veiligheid in de twintigste eeuw*, ed. F. Koenraadt, C. Kelk, and J. Vijselaar (Deventer: Kluwer, 2007), 1-74.

¹³⁸ Over half the TBR cases involved property crime in the period 1929-1932: Clare Wilkinson, "In een vlaag van waanzin: psychische stoornissen, gender en de tbr in krantenberichten over delicten in 1930," *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 57, no. 4 (2015): 389. On the history of TBR, see: Franke, *Twee eeuwen gevangen*, 451-538; Oosterhuis and Gijswijt-Hofstra, *Verward van geest*, 221-238, 343-348; E.J. Hofstee, *TBR en TBS. De TBR in*

The specific features of the Dutch criminal justice system affected the way gender interacted with the administration of justice, leading to very different results compared with the Anglo-Saxon countries and European countries that have been the subject of most of the crime and gender literature. Firstly, the 1811 Penal Code (in force until 1886), based on the principle of making the punishment fit the crime rather than the criminal, offered little room for differential treatment based on gender; this is in contrast to Victorian and Edwardian England, for example, where female offenders were treated more leniently for the same crimes.¹³⁹ This is the conclusion drawn by Van der Heijden and Pluskota. They examined trial data in the period up to 1886 and found no evidence of gender bias in the prosecutions and convictions for violent crimes, which they attribute to the restricted possibilities for discretion in the codified Dutch judicial system.¹⁴⁰ The increasing scope from the 1890s onwards for taking account of the criminal's circumstances potentially provided more opportunity for treating male and female perpetrators differently but this has not been tested for the period after 1886.

The absence of juries in the Netherlands was another factor limiting the room for gender bias; in other countries, juries were a means whereby lay understandings of gendered behaviour could affect trial outcomes. Trial by jury was used in the period 1880 to 1930 for serious offences in Anglo-Saxon countries and France and Germany at least. Juries had a reputation for acquitting against the evidence. In France, acquittal rates in the assizes courts, which had juries, were around 30 per cent in the period 1879 to 1931 compared to around 10 per cent in the lower correctional courts, where cases were tried by a panel of judges. This led to the practice of "correctionalization", in which magistrates downgraded offences to 'delicts', which could be tried in the correctional courts, thereby accepting a lighter punishment for greater certainty of a conviction.¹⁴¹ Juries were particularly likely to acquit the accused in infanticide cases and 'crimes of passion', with higher acquittal rates for female defendants in the latter case. Ferguson argues that these acquittals were not due to incompetence; rather, they applied a different understanding of the law which she terms "retributive justice": if the violence seemed deserved according to their notions of gendered behaviour, they refused to convict the perpetrator.¹⁴² In Britain too, juries are seen as conduits for lay interpretations of gender. Wiener argues that juries held on to older ideas

rechtshistorisch perspectief (Arnhem: Gouda Quint, 1987), 19-174; C. Kelk, "Honderd jaar debat over (straf)recht en psychiatrie," in *Tussen behandeling en straf. Rechtsbescherming en veiligheid in de twintigste eeuw*, ed. F. Koenraadt, C. Kelk, and J. Vijselaar (Deventer: Kluwer, 2007), 75-84; Oosterhuis, "Treatment as Punishment," 41-42.

¹³⁹ Barry S. Godfrey, Stephen Farrall, and Susanne Karstedt, "Explaining Gendered Sentencing Patterns for Violent Men and Women in the Late-Victorian and Edwardian Period," *British Journal of Criminology* 45, (2005): 696-720.

¹⁴⁰ Van der Heijden and Pluskota, "Leniency versus Toughening?," 165.

¹⁴¹ James M. Donovan, "Magistrates and Juries in France, 1791-1952," *French Historical Studies* 22, no. 3 (1999): 379-420.

¹⁴² Donovan, "Magistrates and Juries," 387; Ferguson, *Gender and Justice*, 2, 156-185.

about 'justified' spousal violence by the husband for longer than judges, who started to treat male violence more harshly in the latter part of the century.¹⁴³

The absence of capital punishment in the Netherlands also affected the arguments and degree of public involvement in trials of serious violence. Capital punishment still applied in most countries for murder (and in some, such as Australia, for rape) during this period.¹⁴⁴ This had the effect of concentrating public and media attention on trials for capital crimes. As Wiener writes, these were "trials in which the stakes were highest and the argument often most intense and of most public interest".¹⁴⁵ Individual trials could become caught up in campaigns for the abolition of capital punishment.¹⁴⁶ Even when this was not the case, defence arguments that could lead to a lesser charge or acquittal took on greater importance as they became a matter of life and death for the accused. In Britain, a successful argument in wife-killing trials of provocation by the spouse or intoxication of the perpetrator could result in a conviction for manslaughter, for which the sentence could theoretically be as little as imprisonment for one day.¹⁴⁷ Even if the perpetrator was sentenced to death, this was often followed by public campaigns and petitions for mercy.¹⁴⁸ Grants of mercy became a mechanism for leniency based on gendered understandings of appropriate behaviour and appropriate punishments. Thus in Australia the death penalty effectively ceased to apply to women in the late nineteenth century while men who committed intimate femicide were more likely to have their sentences commuted than men who committed other forms of murder.¹⁴⁹

Arguably because of the lack of capital punishment and juries, the insanity defence was less prominent in the Netherlands than in other countries and it was not gendered in the same way. In Britain, the insanity plea offered one way of escaping the death penalty and was accordingly primarily used in murder trials.¹⁵⁰ The M'Naghten rules on what constituted insanity, established in 1843, were designed to limit the use of this plea but from the late nineteenth century onwards defendants were increasingly found insane, reflecting greater involvement of psychiatrists in criminal trials. The use of juries meant that

¹⁴³ Wiener, "Judges v. Jurors," 478-488.

¹⁴⁴ Amanda Kaladelfos, "The 'Condemned Criminals': sexual violence, race, and manliness in colonial Australia," *Women's History Review* 21, no. 5 (2012): 698.

¹⁴⁵ Wiener, "Judges v. Jurors," 470.

¹⁴⁶ Kaladelfos, "Condemned Criminals"; Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution. Capital Punishment in Germany 1600-1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 591-605.

¹⁴⁷ Wiener, "Judges v. Jurors," 480; Annemarie Hughes, "'Non-criminal' Class," 39-41.

¹⁴⁸ For examples, see: Frost, "Kitty Byron," 545; Wiener, "Story of George Hall," 176; Kaladelfos, "Condemned Criminals," 702-704; Goc, *Women, Infanticide*, chap. 6; Sylvie Frigon, "Les représentations socio-pénales des femmes 'maricides' au Canada, 1866-1954," in *Femmes et justice pénale, XIXe-XXe siècle*, ed. Christine Bard et al. (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2002), 209-231. In the Netherlands too, petitions for mercy and acquittals against the evidence were common for capital offences in the early nineteenth century before the abolition of the death penalty; see: Van Ruller and Faber, *Afdoening van strafzaken*, 27-45.

¹⁴⁹ Carolyn Strange, "Masculinities, Intimate Femicide," 315-316.

¹⁵⁰ Jill Newton Ainsley, "'Some Mysterious Agency': Women, Violent Crime, and the Insanity Acquittal in the Victorian Courtroom," *Canadian Journal of History* 35, no. 1 (2000): 41-42.

common-sense notions of insanity prevailed. Defence arguments of temporary insanity were accepted by juries for acts that seemed to them incongruous.¹⁵¹ The insanity plea was also used to enable leniency when the official penalty was seen as too harsh. Infanticide was theoretically subject to the death penalty, but this was no longer considered an acceptable punishment for this crime by the second half of the nineteenth century and puerperal insanity was increasingly used as a defence, despite some hesitation among physicians. According to Hilary Marland, this allowed outrage to be expressed at the crime while treating the offender with compassion.¹⁵²

The use of insanity pleas in infanticide trials is one example of a tendency to pathologize female criminals that gender historians see in Britain and France. Women were thought to be naturally more susceptible to mental illness. The female reproductive system was seen as a potential source of nervous disorders: menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth and the menopause were all times of risk. Some nervous conditions such as hysteria were seen primarily as a woman's disease.¹⁵³ These assumptions, it is contended, encouraged the use of mental instability as a defence in trials of violent women. In France, Ruth Harris sees both doctors and female perpetrators of crimes of passion using the language of hysteria to explain their actions.¹⁵⁴ In Britain, Jill Newton Ainsley finds that women who committed murder were more likely to be declared insane than men, even for similar crimes. She argues that this deprived women of their agency and reinforced the picture of them as weak and not responsible for their violent acts.¹⁵⁵ For minor crimes too, by the early twentieth century women were being classed as feeble-minded and sent to institutions rather than prisons. Zedner writes that these women were viewed with sympathy; treating them as sick rather than criminal was considered a more humane option. However, the underlying assumption was that "to deviate in a criminal way is 'proof of some kind of mental imbalance in women'".¹⁵⁶

The notion that women were particularly prone to mental disorders was also prominent in the Netherlands but this did not translate into a medicalization of female

¹⁵¹ Tony Ward, "Law, Common Sense and the Authority of Science: Expert Witnesses and Criminal Insanity in England, ca. 1840-1940," *Social and Legal Studies* 6, no. 3 (1997): 343-362; Wiener, "Judges v. Jurors," 497-504; Lisa Appignanesi, *Trials of passion. Crimes in the name of love and madness* (London: Virago Press, 2014), 99-101.

¹⁵² Marland, "Getting Away with Murder?"; Grey, "Discourses of Infanticide," 201-262.

¹⁵³ Lisa Appignanesi, *Mad, Bad and Sad. A history of women and the mind doctors from 1800 to the present* (London: Virago Press, 2008), 118-119; Zedner, "Women, Crime," 336-337. Claims by historians such as Showalter in the 1980s that women were overrepresented in asylums have however since been disputed. See: Elaine Showalter, "Victorian Women and Insanity," *Victorian Studies* 23, no. 2 (1980): 157-181; Appignanesi, *Mad, Bad and Sad*, 107.

¹⁵⁴ Ruth Harris, "Melodrama, Hysteria and Feminine Crimes of Passion in the Fin-de-Siecle," *History Workshop Journal* 25, no. 1 (1988): 31-63.

¹⁵⁵ Ainsley, "Some Mysterious Agency," 40.

¹⁵⁶ Zedner, "Women, Crime," 348-350.

offenders.¹⁵⁷ Puerperal insanity was rarely used as a defence in infanticide trials in the Netherlands (the first recorded example is in 1912).¹⁵⁸ Ruberg contends that this was largely because Dutch criminal law had separate articles for infanticide that already took account of the perpetrator's mental status (see the following section and Appendix A for more on the infanticide articles).¹⁵⁹ No breakdown by sex of acquittals by reason of insanity is available for the Netherlands. Such a breakdown is available for the TBR measure for diminished responsibility; this shows that female offenders were *less* likely to be given a TBR measure than male offenders. This undoubtedly reflects the focus on protecting society: whereas the medicalization of female offenders in Britain and France was a form of leniency, the medicalization of male offenders in the Netherlands was prompted by a view that they formed a threat to society and needed to be detained for longer than their crimes as such warranted.¹⁶⁰

To summarize, there was less at stake in Dutch trials of violence when compared with other countries, because of the absence of the death penalty. There was also less public involvement without juries and without the mechanism of reviews and grants of mercy following the death sentence. The Dutch system was entirely in the hands of professional lawyers and other experts. As a result, there was less room for gender bias in sentencing based on popular understandings of acceptable gender behaviour. This formed the setting for the prosecution of private violence, which is discussed in the next section.

2.6 Prosecution of family and sexual violence

One of the questions posed at the start of this chapter is whether there was increasing condemnation of private violence, in particular when committed by men, in the Netherlands. This section looks at the evidence for criminalization of family and sexual violence in the form of tougher legislation, more convictions and harsher sentences. Where possible, it also examines the evidence for differential treatment of male and female offenders. It concludes that broadly speaking, a greater range of acts predominantly committed by men against women and children were criminalized while there was more leniency for female perpetrators of infanticide. However, the most notable change was the increasing prosecution of sexual offences against the young.

The analysis is based on the published judicial statistics for the years 1870 to 1939, and consequently on the crime categories specified in the 1811 Penal Code and 1886

¹⁵⁷ Wenneke Meerstadt, "Portret. Het ligt geheel in het vrouwelijk karakter. Gerbrandus Jelgersma over hysterie," in *Gender & Gekte. Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* 30, ed. Gemma Blok et al. (Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2010), 159-172; Ruth Weber, "De medische wereld over 'de vrouw'," *De negentiende eeuw* 6, no. 1 (1982): 3-12.

¹⁵⁸ Donker and Faber, "Ziekelijke zenuwoverspanning".

¹⁵⁹ Ruberg, "Travelling Knowledge," 376.

¹⁶⁰ Between 1929 and 1932, an average of 4.1 per 1000 convicted women received a TBR sentence compared with 7.3 per 1000 convicted men. Wilkinson, "Psychische stoornissen," 388-393.

Criminal Code.¹⁶¹ There were separate articles for violence against the parent, spouse or child, for infanticide, for abandonment and for sexual assaults (see Appendix A for the texts of the articles). All data are for trials in the court of first instance (provincial and district courts depending on the crime under the Penal Code and district courts only under the Criminal Code). Military courts are excluded. Figures on the number of convictions by perpetrator sex are available for all or nearly all years.¹⁶² As the Dutch population more than doubled during this period, all conviction figures are expressed as both absolute numbers and in relation to the population (per 100,000 citizens) to enable correct interpretation of changes over time. Information on other aspects – including the number of trials (and consequently conviction rates), the sentence and background information on the perpetrator – is available for some years only. This information is not usually broken down by sex, which limits the opportunity for exploring the possible differential treatment of male and female defendants. Conviction rates are only available for some years in the nineteenth century so that it is not possible to test for changes over time. The data do allow a test of whether sentencing changed over time by considering the proportion of convicted offenders who received a prison sentence of more than 12 months.¹⁶³

Changes to the legislation on family and sexual violence are also considered. Such changes were made in the Criminal Code of 1886 and the Morality Act that came into effect in 1911. An insight into the thinking behind changes to the law can be obtained from parliamentary proceedings and from an 1891 history of the 1886 Criminal Code that describes the process and debates from the establishment of the preparatory State Committee in 1870.¹⁶⁴ Legal commentaries from the period offer information on how the law was interpreted.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ *Geregtelijke Statistiek van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden 1870-1881; Gerechtelijke Statistiek van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden 1882-1899*; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. *Crimineele Statistiek over het jaar 1900-1921*; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. *Crimineele statistiek 1926-1929*; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. *Crimineele Statistiek, gevangenisstatistiek en statistiek van de toepassing der kindwetten over het jaar 1931-1939*. Hereinafter collectively referred to as “Dutch annual judicial statistical reports, 1870-1939”.

¹⁶² There are no data on family assaults for 1915 and 1922-1925, and no data on abandonment for 1912-1915 and 1922-1925.

¹⁶³ Data on sentences are available for 1887 to 1912, 1916 to 1919 and 1937 to 1939.

¹⁶⁴ The author Smidt was Minister of Justice from 1877 to 1879. H.J. Smidt, *Geschiedenis van het Wetboek van Strafrecht. Volledige verzameling van regeeringsontwerpen, gewisselde stukken, gevoerde beraadslagingen, enz. Vol. 2* (Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink, 1881); *Handelingen Tweede Kamer*, 14th to 18th Sessions, “10. Vaststelling van een Wetboek van Strafrecht,” 1-5 November 1880, 185-282; *Handelingen Eerste Kamer*, *Handelingen Eerste Kamer*, 21st to 22nd Sessions, “10. Vaststelling van een Wetboek van Strafrecht,” 1-2 March 1881, 277-305.

¹⁶⁵ M. Schooneveld, G.A. Van Hamel, and T.J. Noyon, *Het Wetboek van Strafrecht (Code Pénal) met aantekeningen* (The Hague: Gebr. Belinfante, 1876); B.J. Polenaar and T. Heemskerk, *Het Wetboek van strafrecht in doorlopende aantekeningen verklaard. Vol. 2* (Amsterdam: A. Alckeringa, 1890); M.S. Pols et al., *Het wetboek van strafrecht. Rechtspraak en de Nederlandse literatuur (tot 15 Mei 1892)* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1893).

Assaults on spouse and own child**Table 2** Convictions for assault on a family member.

Rate per 100,000 people (with the average annual number in brackets) and proportion of male offenders.

Offences	Years	Annual convictions Rate (average number)	% men
<i>Penal Code: assaults on parent</i>	1870-1886	0.16 (6)	91%
<i>Criminal Code: assaults on parent, spouse or child</i>	1887-1899	0.84 (39)	91%
	1900-1909	0.55 (30)	91%
	1910-1919	0.42 (26)	89%
	1920-1929	0.56 (41)	94%
	1930-1939	0.69 (58)	92%

Source: *Geregtelijke Statistiek*, 1870-1881; *Geregtelijke Statistiek*, 1882-1899; *Crimineele Statistiek* 1900-1939; CBS.

The 1886 Criminal Code extended protection to wives and children compared with the 1811 Penal Code. Attacks by one family member on another were prosecuted under the articles on assault. The Penal Code set harsher sentences for assaults on a parent than for ordinary assaults but this did not apply to other family members. Indeed, Article 336 provided for a *reduced* sentence for the husband who killed his wife or her lover after catching them *in flagrante delicto* in his home.¹⁶⁶ This shows a gendered understanding of violence and sexual standards in which adultery by women was worse than adultery by men and consequently a mitigating factor for the husband's violence. In Britain, such leniency was known as the 'unwritten law' and decried as a foreign practice.¹⁶⁷ However, Wiener finds sympathy among nineteenth-century judges and juries for husbands who killed unfaithful wives but also finds tolerance declining as the century wore on.¹⁶⁸ In the Netherlands too, by the time the Criminal Code was being debated in around 1880, the discriminatory nature of Article 336 had become problematic. According to the explanatory memorandum to the new bill, the purpose of Article 336 had been to allow for the fact that a husband in that situation would be overcome by such a strong emotion that he would not be able to contain himself, but the Penal Code article failed to recognize that a husband's

¹⁶⁶ This was a legacy of the Napoleonic Code. A similar article applied in France until 1907. See: Eliza Earle Ferguson, *Gender and Justice*, 128-155.

¹⁶⁷ Emsley, *Hard Men*, 80-81.

¹⁶⁸ Wiener, *Men of Blood*, chap. 6.

adultery was just as much an affront to the wife's honour.¹⁶⁹ It was therefore scrapped. At the same, harsher punishments now applied not just for attacks on a parent but also for attacks on a spouse or child. Indeed, the initial intention was to exclude attacks on a husband: tougher punishments for attacks on a wife were justified because a man who assaulted his wife was violating his duty to protect her. But in the debate in the Lower House of Parliament, this view of the wife purely as victim was questioned. After all, it was said, in cases of poisoning men were at the mercy of their wife rather than vice versa.¹⁷⁰

The extension of the scope of the articles on family assaults in the 1886 Criminal Code not surprisingly led to an increase in the number of convictions under these articles (Table 2). Unfortunately, the available data does not distinguish between the different categories of victims (parent, child or spouse). However, given that conviction rates were over five times higher immediately after the introduction of the new criminal code than convictions for assaults on a parent under the Penal Code, it seems likely that assaults on a spouse or child made up the majority of cases after 1886. The number of convictions (as a proportion of the population) was highest in the final years of the nineteenth century. This was when migration to the main urban centres was at its height. Poverty and poor housing put pressure on working-class families while alcohol consumption, which has been linked to domestic violence, was still high. Moreover, families were living at close quarters in overcrowded cities, which made it more likely that neighbours would notice and report family violence.¹⁷¹ Living conditions improved for working-class families in the twentieth century and we see a corresponding decline in convictions for assaults on family members, but it is not dramatic and convictions were increasing again by the 1930s. That may reflect the fact that this was another period of stress for the lower strata in society due to the economic crisis and high levels of unemployment. There is no evidence of sentences becoming tougher over time: throughout the period 1887 to 1939, around 5 per cent of perpetrators received a prison sentence of more than one year.

The vast majority of attacks on family members were committed by men. Indeed, this may explain the relatively low level of convictions in the 1910s as this coincided with World War I, a period when the Dutch army was mobilized in a state of readiness for a possible invasion and many Dutch men were therefore separated from their families. The predominance of male perpetrators is a known phenomenon in attacks on spouses: studies from the early modern period to the present day show men accounting for the

¹⁶⁹ Smidt, *Geschiedenis*, 453.

¹⁷⁰ Smidt, *Geschiedenis*, 453. This reflects a longstanding belief in poisoning as a women's crime, see: John Carter Wood, *Most Remarkable Woman*, 44-46. See Section 4.3 for more on this subject.

¹⁷¹ Caroline Miles, "Intoxication and homicide. A context-specific approach," *British Journal of Criminology* 52, (2012): 870-888; Manon Van der Heijden, "Domestic violence, alcohol abuse and the uses of justice in early modern Holland," *Annales de démographie historique* 2, no. 2 (2015): 74; Ferguson, *Gender and Justice*, 93-127.

overwhelming majority of attacks.¹⁷² There is less information on the breakdown by sex of assaults on children, but the few available studies show a higher proportion of female offenders than for spousal violence.¹⁷³ The high percentage of male offenders in Table 2 therefore makes it plausible that spousal violence accounted for the majority of these assaults. That would be consistent with modern-day studies; a recent Dutch survey gives a figure almost ten times higher for reported partner violence than for reported violence against children.¹⁷⁴

Abandonment

Table 3 Convictions for abandonment of dependants.

Rate per 100,000 people (with the average annual number in brackets) and proportion of male offenders.

	Years	Annual convictions Rate (average number)	% men
<i>Penal Code: abandonment of child under seven</i>	1870-1886	0.07 (3)	14%
<i>Criminal Code: abandonment of dependant</i>	1887-1899	0.16 (7)	46%
	1900-1909	0.05 (3)	56%
	1910-1919	0.06 (4)	28%
	1920-1929	0.11 (8)	68%
	1930-1939	0.06 (5)	67%

Source: *Geregtelijke Statistiek*, 1870-1881; *Geregtelijke Statistiek*, 1882-1899; *Crimineele Statistiek* 1900-1939; CBS.

¹⁷² See for example: Van der Heijden, "Domestic Violence," 79; Ferguson, *Gender and Justice*, 2, 9; Wiener, *Men of Blood*, chap. 4; Antoon Vrints, *Het Theater van de Straat* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 180-181; Marianne Hester, "Who does what to whom? Gender and domestic violence perpetrators in English police records," *European Journal of Criminology* 10, no. 5 (2013): 624-626; Henk Ferwerda, *Huiselijk geweld gemeten 2008* (Arnhem: Bureau Beke, 2009), 3; Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in Twentieth-Century England* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2011), 28. Note however that Jeffrey Adler finds a very different pattern for early-twentieth-century African American couples, where women accounted for half of spousal homicides. This suggests the dominance of men as perpetrators in other studies is culturally determined. Jeffrey S. Adler, "'I wouldn't be no woman if I wouldn't hit him': race, patriarchy, and spousal homicide in New Orleans, 1921-1945," *Journal of Women's History* 27, no. 3 (2015): 16.

¹⁷³ See for example: Sarah-Anne Buckley, "Child neglect, poverty and class: the NSPCC in Ireland, 1889-1939 - a case study," *Saothar* 33, (2008): 62-3; Jean-Jacques Yvorel, "La justice et les violences parentales à la veille de la loi de 1898," *Revue d'histoire du XIXe siècle*, no. 2 (1999): 16. The data on trials for cruelty to children in England and Wales between 1891 and 1938 show that men accounted for only 39 per cent of the accused: *Judicial Statistics, England and Wales, Criminal Statistics* for the years 1891 to 1938.

¹⁷⁴ Ferwerda, *Huiselijk geweld gemeten*, 4.

The 1886 Criminal Code further criminalized abandonment by extending the scope to cover a greater range of dependants. Under the 1811 Penal Code, leaving a foundling or abandoning a child up to the age of seven years was a crime. In the Criminal Code, a new article was added stating that the deliberate abandonment of any dependant (regardless of age) should be punished, although the maximum penalty was higher for the abandonment of children under seven. The commentary and illustrative cases in an 1893 book on the Criminal Code suggest that this article was primarily aimed at fathers who failed in their duty to provide for their families. For example, the authors cite an 1891 case in which a father who abandoned his wife and children was prosecuted and found guilty because he had sold the house and its contents and pocketed the proceeds, even though the children were still in the care of their mother. This can be seen as part of an effort to enforce the breadwinner model through the law, an endeavour that Doolittle also sees in Britain through the operation of the Poor Law.¹⁷⁵

The figures in Table 3 do indeed suggest the 1886 laws were used to discipline men in their role as provider. While convictions (as a proportion of the population) remained relatively constant, abandonment increasingly became a male crime, with a jump in the proportion of male offenders after the Criminal Code expanded the scope to include older children. Again, it is striking that the exception in this regard was the 1910s, the decade in which many Dutch men were called up for the army because of World War I, when nearly three quarters of the perpetrators were female. With this exception, the figures for the twentieth century point to criminalization of men who failed to provide for their families. However, this needs to be kept in perspective as the absolute numbers of convictions were low. It is also not possible to see from the published data whether sentencing became harsher as so few sentences exceeded the threshold of 12 months in prison: of the 286 offenders convicted for this crime throughout the period, only 10 (3 per cent) received a prison sentence of more than one year.

¹⁷⁵ Pols et al., *Wetboek van strafrecht*, 155-160; Doolittle, "The Duty to Provide," 64-66. However, Van der Klein argues that in the Netherlands the social insurance system was *not* used to promote the breadwinner model. See: Marian van der Klein, *Ziek, zwak of zwanger. Vrouwen en arbeidsongeschiktheid in Nederlandse sociale verzekeringen, 1890-1940* (Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2005), 455-463.

Infanticide

Table 4 Convictions for infanticide by women.

Rate per 100,000 people (with the average annual number in brackets).

Offence	Years	Annual convictions Rate (average number)
<i>Penal Code: first infanticide by unmarried mother</i>	1870-1886	0.13 (5)
<i>Criminal Code: infanticide by mother</i>	1887-1899	0.10 (5)
	1900-1909	0.05 (3)
	1910-1919	0.06 (4)
	1920-1929	0.07 (5)
	1930-1939	0.04 (3)

Source: *Geregtelijke Statistiek*, 1870-1881; *Geregtelijke Statistiek*, 1882-1899; *Crimineele Statistiek* 1900-1939; CBS.

The changes in 1886 to the law on infanticide signified more lenient treatment of the perpetrators. Dutch law had separate articles on infanticide when committed by the mother (but not the father) on a newborn baby, with lower sentences than for other kinds of murder. This was a sex-specific law that saw infanticide as an act caused by the “fear of the discovery” (*vrees voor de ontdekking*) of the birth; in other words, it assumed the motivation was shame rather than economic motives.¹⁷⁶ Under the Penal Code, the lower sentence only applied to the first such offence by an unmarried mother, but in the 1886 Criminal Code, the scope was extended to cover all killings of a neonate by the mother regardless of the marital status while the maximum sentence was reduced substantially. But not all baby-killings were automatically infanticides as defined in law. It is clear from the debate on the Criminal Code that politicians expected application of these articles to involve a judgement of the woman’s moral character: the infanticide articles would not apply in the case of a loose-living woman who killed her child so that she could continue her debauched life.¹⁷⁷

Although the scope of the infanticide articles increased with the introduction of the Criminal Code, infanticide convictions did not increase after 1886. Indeed, they fell in relation to the population (see Table 4). It is not clear why. There is not enough information

¹⁷⁶ Pols et al., *Wetboek van strafrecht*, 288.

¹⁷⁷ Smidt, *Geschiedenis*, 438439.

in the judicial statistics about the marital status to say whether the infanticide articles were used widely in practice for married women as well after 1886. We do know that some married women were convicted: of the nine women sentenced in 1897 and 1899, two were married and seven unmarried. It is clear too that not all perpetrators were young. While a third of the women convicted were below the age of majority, well over a quarter were 30 or older.¹⁷⁸ Convictions relative to the population fell further from the turn of the century. However, there is no evidence of more lenient treatment over time for the women who were convicted of infanticide. Around half of all perpetrators received a prison sentence of more than one year. If convictions failed to keep pace with population growth, the most likely explanation is therefore a fall in unwanted pregnancies in combination with more alternatives for unmarried mothers. In the Netherlands as a whole, the proportion of babies born out of wedlock decreased during this period. Moreover, as was mentioned in Section 2.2, philanthropic organizations were now providing homes and financial support for unmarried mothers. Finally, the increasing range of jobs open to women other than being a servant may have been a contributory factor: Jolie Ermers argues that live-in servants had a greater incentive to commit infanticide because of fear of losing their job but were also at greater risk of being caught because they lived at such close quarters with their employer and fellow employees.¹⁷⁹

Sexual Assaults

Table 5 Convictions for sexual assault by men.

Rate per 100,000 people (with the average annual number in brackets).

Law	Years	Annual convictions. Rate (average number per year)			
		Rape/assault of an adult	Rape/assault of a child under 16	Assault of subordinate	Homosexual act with a minor
<i>Penal Code</i>	<i>1870-1886</i>	0.65 (26)			
<i>Criminal Code</i>	<i>1887-1899</i>	0.81 (38)	1.01 (49)	0.08 (4)	n.a.
	<i>1900-1909</i>	0.97 (52)	1.37 (75)	0.11 (6)	n.a.
	<i>1910-1919</i>	0.92 (57)	1.83 (114)	0.21 (13)	0.17 (11)
	<i>1920-1929</i>	1.09 (79)	3.90 (284)	0.45 (33)	0.81 (53)
	<i>1930-1939</i>	0.92 (77)	6.22 (520)	0.87 (73)	0.94 (71)

Source: *Geregelijke Statistiek*, 1870-1881; *Gerechtigde Statistiek*, 1882-1899; *Crimineele Statistiek* 1900-1939; CBS.

¹⁷⁸ Based on data for 1896-1900, 1902, 1905, 1908, 1910 and 1931-1933.

¹⁷⁹ Kok, "Moral Nation," 10; Ermers, "Kindermoord," 150-151, 163.

The biggest change in the legislation on private violence concerned sexual violence. The 1886 Criminal Code increased the scope of the legislation on sexual offences compared with the Penal Code, and a further increase took place in the 1911 Morality Act. More minor indecent acts (*ontuchtige handelingen*) were criminalized and more protection was given to children and minors.

The guiding principles behind this legislation were the need to maintain public moral order and protect the weak.¹⁸⁰ The legislation and accompanying debates also suggest an interpretation of sexual assault that saw it in terms of shame and honour. Thus Article 331 of the Penal Code stipulated a prison sentence for anyone guilty of rape or “*feitelijkheid tegen de eerbaarheid*” – literally an “act against honour”. In an annotated guide to the Penal Code, Schooneveld et al. explained what this meant: any act that “from its nature must offend the sense of natural shame (such as throwing an 18-year-old girl on the ground and feeling under her skirts)”.¹⁸¹

The legislative changes extended protection of the young. Sex with children was not automatically a crime under the Penal Code. The 1811 Penal Code set tougher punishments for rape and indecent assault if the victim was younger than 15, but the use of violence or at the very least a lack of consent had to be proved. This was seen as a major shortcoming, and in the new Criminal Code, intercourse with girls younger than 12 became an offence regardless of their consent. Intercourse with girls aged 12 to 15 also became an offence but was only prosecuted if a complaint was lodged. The debates about the Criminal Code reveal a particular concern about the need to protect vulnerable minors from abuse by adults in a position of authority. Lawmakers clearly saw sexual danger as coming from people close to the victim – teachers or employers, for example. The Penal Code had already stipulated harsher punishments for a sexual assault by a perpetrator in a position of authority over the victim. This protection for the vulnerable was extended in the 1886 Criminal Code, which criminalized all indecent acts (not just assaults) between people in authority and their subordinates in a wider range of situations. This included indecent acts between a parent and a child who was a minor. It is noteworthy that incest as such was not a crime: it was only an offence when committed within the context of an unequal power relationship.¹⁸² The criminalization of indecent acts on minors and subordinates in factories was an amendment introduced by Parliament. The debate in Parliament shows that politicians were strongly influenced by the common notion of factory girls being at particular risk of moral

¹⁸⁰ Ed Leuw, Catrien Bijleveld, and Annelies Daalder, “Seksuele delinquenten,” *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 45, no. 4 (2003): 330-334; Renee Kool, “Vrijheid, blijheid? Over het dilemma van de strafbare seksualiteit,” *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 45, no. 4 (2003): 338-339.

¹⁸¹ Schooneveld, Van Hamel, and Noyon, *Wetboek van Strafrecht*, 314-327. See Section 6.1 for a detailed discussion of attitudes to sexual violence as revealed in the Parliamentary debates.

¹⁸² The reasons for not including incest in the French penal code of 1810, on which the Dutch code was based, are discussed by Giuliani. She concludes that lawmakers were concerned about the detrimental effect on public morals if such incidents were brought into the open through criminal prosecution. Fabienne Giuliani, *Les liaisons interdites. Histoire de l'inceste au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2014), 65-66.

dangers (as was discussed in Section 2.3) and the need to protect them. This was seen as a question of public morality, but politicians were reluctant to intervene in the private domain of the home: the possibility of including the work situation of the domestic servant in the scope was discussed but rejected.¹⁸³

Like incest, homosexual acts were not as such illegal in the Netherlands. This was a remnant of the penal code of the French Revolution, in which the decriminalization of these acts symbolized the break with the hated criminal system of the *Ancien Régime*.¹⁸⁴ However, both the Penal Code and Criminal Code articles on assaults other than rape applied explicitly to both male and female victims. In 1911, the Morality Act was introduced under a Christian coalition government. This added an article to the Criminal Code that prohibited all homosexual acts between a minor and an adult. In doing so, it was discriminating between homosexual and heterosexual acts, for the first time since 1811. Dutch historians of homosexuality, such as Hekma and Koenders, have tended to see this article as a new phenomenon, a sign of a more repressive regime under the influence of a Christian social purity lobby.¹⁸⁵ However, it also fitted with the general trend towards greater concern for the young that had been evident in the debates on the Criminal Code some thirty years previously.

The increased range of sexual offences in the 1886 Criminal Code led to an immediate increase in the number of convictions, from an annual rate of 0.65 per 100,000 in 1870-1886 to 1.9 per 100,000 in 1887-1899 (Table 5).¹⁸⁶ Interestingly, despite the long discussions in Parliament about the dangers to minors from people in authority, there were initially relatively few convictions under the new article. However, these few offenders received the toughest sentences, with 74 per cent of perpetrators in the period 1887-1899 being given a prison sentence of more than one year compared with 46 per cent for rapes of adults and 52 per cent for rapes of children. Convictions rose substantially from the 1920s onwards. Similar increases were seen in this period in the other categories of sexual assault of children and minors – but not in assaults of adults. Given that there is generally considered to be a large dark figure for sexual offences, the increases in convictions for sex offences against the young may reflect an increased willingness to report and prosecute these crimes rather than a rise in the underlying incidence. The sentencing data seems to point in that direction too, with a marked decline in the proportion of long prison sentences (over one year). For example, the proportion of perpetrators of child rape who received a prison sentence of more than twelve months fell from 52 per cent in the late nineteenth

¹⁸³ Smidt, *Geschiedenis*, 304-315.

¹⁸⁴ Giuliani, *Les liaisons interdites*, 25-26.

¹⁸⁵ Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit*, 183-213; Koenders, *Christelijk Réveil*, 150-169.

¹⁸⁶ Figures are given for male perpetrators only. Only a handful of women were convicted under sexual violence articles during this period.

century to 8 per cent in 1937-1939. That suggests convictions were rising because more minor cases were being brought to court.

One factor may have been the establishment of juvenile and vice squads (*kinder- en zedenpolitie*) in police forces across the country from the second decade of the twentieth century. For example, Rotterdam had a fully fledged juvenile and vice squad by 1918.¹⁸⁷ Women's organizations were often behind this development as they lobbied for the police to give more protection to women and children and take on a social task. Moreover, the juvenile and vice squads were also often the first parts of the police force to employ female officers and assistants, as they were thought to be particularly suited to working with children.¹⁸⁸ This must have encouraged victims and their families to report assaults while having a dedicated squad made it more likely that reports would be followed up and offenders prosecuted.

The prosecution of sexual violence was not just about protecting the young, it was also about policing the young, more specifically young men. Judicial statistics on the age breakdown of perpetrators show that a substantial proportion were under 21: about one quarter in the case of assaults on children, over one third in rapes of adult women (aged 16 and over), and about half in assaults on women.¹⁸⁹ Adolescent men were also victims in sexual offences, most notably in homosexual acts with minors after 1911. But here they were treated as both endangered and a danger; Hekma found that while adult offenders were sent to prison, the boy victims were often sent to reform school.¹⁹⁰

To summarize, there is clear evidence of increasing criminalization of sexual violence but only limited changes in the treatment of family violence. The tougher legislation and increasing prosecution of sexual assaults seem to have been primarily motivated by concerns about moral dangers to the young. There was more continuity in other forms of private violence, although the changes that did take place involved greater criminalization of male violence and more protection of women and children. Although age as much as gender seems to have been a motivating factor in these developments, the aggregate effect of all the changes was that women made up a declining proportion of the offenders convicted for private violence: in the period 1870-1886, women accounted for 20 per cent of the perpetrators whereas in the period 1930-1939 they formed 1 per cent of all perpetrators.

¹⁸⁷ J.A. Blaauw, *Twee eeuwen politie in Rotterdam. Gebeurtenissen uit de jaren 1814-2014* (Rotterdam: Coolegem Media, 2014), 165.

¹⁸⁸ Koenders, *Christelijk Réveil*, 220-222; Cyrille Fijnaut, *De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse politie* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2007), 209-544.

¹⁸⁹ Based on judicial statistics reports for 1900, 1902, 1905, 1908, 1910, 1931-3.

¹⁹⁰ Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit*, 80-127.

Conclusion

The first question posed at the start of this chapter concerned the evidence for increasing condemnation of male private violence in the Netherlands, as has been postulated for Britain. It has been shown that industrialization and urbanization in the final decades of the nineteenth century initially led to problems with crowding and public disorder in the cities, as in Britain. The Dutch middle classes responded with a civilizing offensive that problematized male drinking and sexuality and stressed the need to protect young women and children from moral dangers. However, Dutch campaigners and opinion-makers never treated male private violence as a social problem, in contrast with Britain, nor did the prosecution of physical violence within the family change significantly during this period. Sexual acts against the young were, however, increasingly criminalized.

The second question concerned women's participation in the public sphere. Women acquired a voice in public matters through their philanthropic work. They increasingly organized themselves as women and worked towards political goals. In the abolitionist movement, they criticized the male double standard while in the temperance movement they attacked male drinking behaviour. In both, they worked alongside male campaigners who embodied an alternative, chivalrous concept of masculinity. Organized feminism brought issues of particular concern to women, such as the marriage law, to the fore in the public debate but the actual results were mixed. Women achieved suffrage after the World War I but in the debates on married women working, the feminist voice was only one of many. However, one consequence of the increasing importance of domesticity was to make family life and issues that directly concerned women a matter for public debate and state policies.

The developments discussed in this chapter had consequences for the newspaper market, which is the subject of the next chapter. The rising prosperity and expanding population meant more customers for newspapers while the incorporation of the working class and women in the public sphere was reflected and reinforced in the newspapers' content. The criminal justice system, meanwhile, determined which stories were available and coloured journalists' reporting of crime stories. These influences are all discussed next.

Chapter 3: Newspaper dynamics and crime reporting

This chapter looks at the Dutch newspaper market and the factors that influenced the selection and presentation of stories of private violence. To do this, it draws on the model presented in Chapter 1, which identifies the sources and the target readership as the key determining factors. The media landscape changed dramatically between 1880 and 1930, with the rise of the mass-market newspaper and the feminization of the media. As was discussed in Chapter 1, the literature to date on press coverage of violence and gender has largely failed to take account of these changes. This has limited the explanatory power of these studies. Crime stories are seen as inevitably sensational and little insight is given into why the press crime discourse changed over time or differed between countries.¹ Moreover, the literature largely ignores the extensive body of scholarship in media studies on how journalists arrive at their content.² Some historical studies take a more holistic approach. For example, Nathaniel Wood looks at the influence of New Journalism and the interaction between the press, the authorities and a female-dominated public in the production and dissemination of sex crime news in early twentieth-century Cracow: this allows him to criticize simplistic assumptions that the press dictated the discourse on sex scandals.³

The current chapter addresses three questions. First, it considers how and why the target readership changed and how this affected the imagined community that was implicit in the newspapers' stories. The effect of the changing target readership on the style and content is also considered. The second question concerns the mediating effect of sources: what sources did journalists use and what impact did this have on crime coverage? Thirdly, the question of how the newspapers engaged readers in stories of private violence is considered. Chapter 2 already showed that the Dutch general public was not involved in the prosecution of justice to the same extent as laypeople in other countries. This chapter considers whether the press sought to engage readers emotionally in accounts of violent crimes and whether newspapers encouraged active involvement in the administration of justice.

The first section in this chapter deals with the Dutch newspaper market. That market expanded between 1880 and 1930 and the target readership broadened to include the working classes and women readers. Section 2 examines the significance of stories of family

¹ For examples where extensive crime coverage is assumed to equate to sensationalism, see: Linders and Van Gundy-Yoder, "Gall, Gallantry," 329-330; Ramey, "Bloody Blonde," 627-631; Christopher A. Casey, "Common Misperceptions: The Press and Victorian Views of Crime," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, no. 3 (2011): 372.

² Key texts used in the present study include: Laughey, *Media Theory*; Manning, *News and News Sources*; Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message. Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content* (White Plains: Longman, 1996); Jewkes, *Media & Crime*.

³ Nathaniel D. Wood, "Sex Scandals, Sexual Violence, and the Word on the Street: The Kolasówna 'Lustmord' in Cracow's Popular Press, 1905-1906," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 2 (2011): 243-269.

and sexual violence in the editorial content. Journalists increased coverage of such cases in the period prior to the First World War as part of the strategy of appealing to the new readers. Stories resonated with readers, but the press remained aloof from the administration of justice. Section 3 looks at journalists' representation of the accused, in particular the practice of using initials rather than full names. This gave journalists an additional tool for shaming perpetrators. In the fourth section, the news values are explored that journalists used to select and present stories. The fifth section deals with the sources journalists used, such as the police and other newspapers. The sources influenced the geographical spread of stories and encouraged homogeneity across newspapers. The final section looks at the form and style of the articles on family and sexual violence. It argues that sensationalism was used strategically, and most items fitted an institutional narrative.

3.1 Expanding market and rising importance of female readers

The expanding population and rising prosperity described in the previous chapter fostered the expansion of the market for newspapers. The Dutch newspaper market took off in the decades following the removal of taxes on newspapers (*dagbladzege*) in 1869.⁴ Circulation increased from 90,000 in 1866 to around 1 million in 1910 while the number of newspaper titles increased from 160 in 1869 to 760 in 1894.⁵ The market received another boost during the First World War, with the thirst for news that this produced. In 1939, circulation was over 2 million.⁶ The number of readers was always considerably more than the number of copies sold. Newspapers were available in cafes and lending libraries, and they could also be rented.⁷ By the interwar period, most Dutch people must have regularly read a paper: a survey in 1946 found that 97 per cent of men and 94 per cent of women read one or more newspapers daily.⁸

The burgeoning newspaper market was the combined result of democratization of reading and falling production costs. Boudien de Vries has charted the ownership of books and use of lending libraries from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. She concludes that the key factors in the spread of the reading habit to the lower middle and working classes were rising incomes and expanding leisure time, in combination with a proliferation of distribution channels for printed materials; there were more bookshops, more libraries and more door-to-door salesmen selling cheap editions of genre novels.⁹

⁴ Pier Abe Santema, "Jacob Hepkema en de introductie van de moderne journalistiek in Friesland," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 8, no. 1 (2005): 86.

⁵ Huub Wijfjes, "Modernization of Style and Form in Dutch Journalism, 1870-1914," in *Form and Style in Journalism. European Newspapers and the Representation of News, 1880-2005*, ed. Marcel Broersma (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 6869.

⁶ Marcel Broersma, "Botsende Stijlen. De Eerste Wereldoorlog en de Nederlandse Journalistieke Cultuur," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 2, no. 2 (1999):54-55; Van de Plasse, *Kroniek*, 202.

⁷ Boudien de Vries, *Leescultuur in Haarlem*, 88-104; Scheffer, *In vorm gegoten*, 217.

⁸ Schuit and Hemels, *Recepten en rolpatronen*, 21.

⁹ Boudien de Vries, *Leescultuur in Haarlem*, 88-104, 403-405.

Newspapers were generally the first step in the acquisition of the reading habit. Moreover, they became more affordable thanks to technical advances such as the introduction of the rotary press and the switch from cotton to wood pulp for paper. This enabled newspaper proprietors to increase the number of pages, and in some cases offer separate morning and evening editions, without raising prices.¹⁰

Three kinds of newspaper flourished in the expanding market of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: newspapers with a political or religious affiliation; regional and local newspapers; and national newspapers aimed at a mass market.¹¹ The first category was a feature of the pillarized society in which each pillar had its own newspapers as a way of engaging its rank and file and propagating its views. For example, the orthodox Protestants had *De Standaard* (founded in 1872), while the socialists had *Het Volk* (launched in 1900).¹² These ideological newspapers had a combined market share of 45 per cent in 1939. As explained in Chapter 1, this segment has not been included in the scope of the current study. The current study focuses on four politically neutral newspapers: the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *De Telegraaf* and *Algemeen Handelsblad*. It examines their coverage in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930. As *De Telegraaf* was only founded in the early 1890s, *Het Nieuws van de Dag* has been used instead in 1880.

The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* was an example of the category of regional and local newspapers. It was aimed at readers in and around the fast-growing industrial city and port of Rotterdam. Founded in 1878, it was initially conceived as a rival to the upmarket *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* and targeted local businessmen. But this strategy was a commercial failure and in the mid-1880s it reinvented itself as a mass-market paper for a broad social spectrum. Given that most of Rotterdam's population belonged to the working class or lower-middle-class, these became *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*'s target readership.¹³ It cut its quarterly subscription price from 2.25 guilders in 1880 to 1.25 guilders in 1895 and changed its content to focus on local affairs rather than foreign politics. The new strategy was a success. Circulation rose from around 4000 in 1880 to 50,000 in 1900 (when the city had around 65,000 households) and over 100,000 in 1939 (when the number of households was about 140,000), see Figure 2.¹⁴

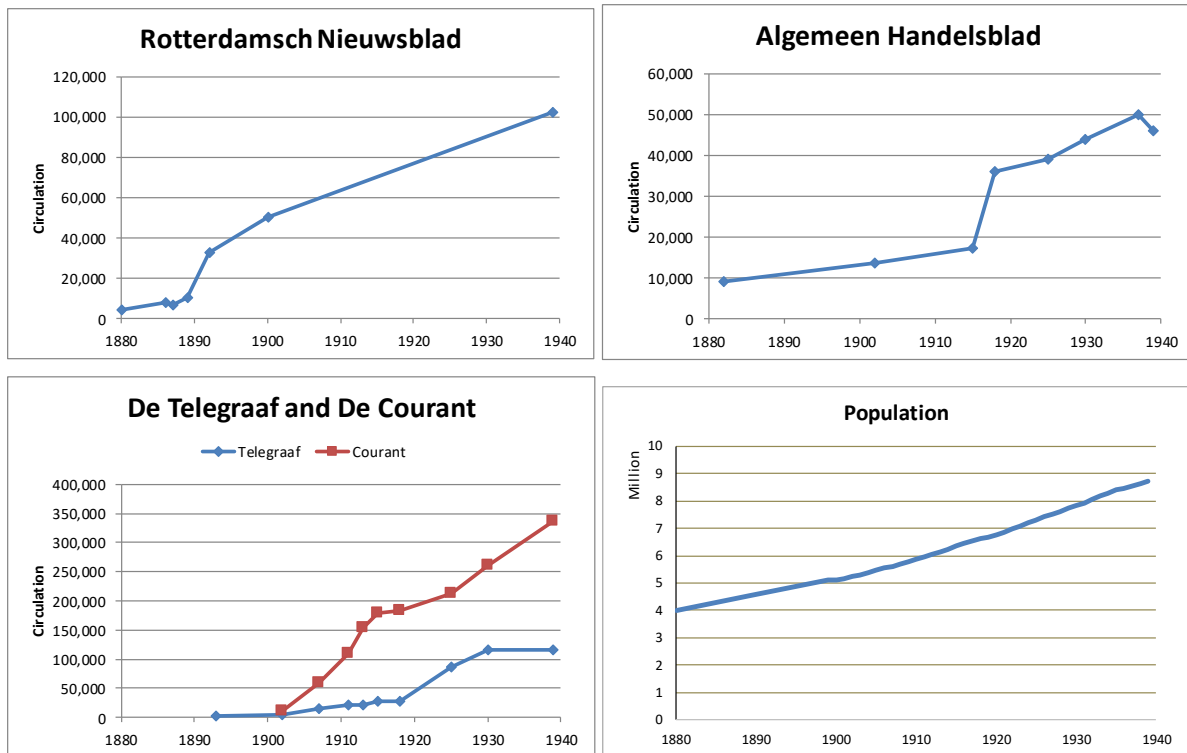
¹⁰ Scheffer, *In vorm gegoten*, 68-74; Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 7-25.

¹¹ Wijffjes, "Modernization," 69.

¹² Van de Plasse, *Kroniek*, 28, 41.

¹³ Nelleke Manneke, *Uit oogpunt van politie: zorg en repressie in Rotterdam tussen 1870 en 1914* (Arnhem: Gouda Quint, 1993), 50-53.

¹⁴ Scheffer, *In vorm gegoten*, 50-82; Van de Plasse, *Kroniek*, 192-193.



Source: Van de Plasse, *Kroniek*, 192-193; CBS. No circulation data available for *Leeuwarder Courant*.

Figure 2 Development in newspaper circulations and the Dutch population.

The *Leeuwarder Courant* was another regional paper but rather different in tone. It was based in Leeuwarden, a much smaller town (with a population of 55,000 in 1939) in the predominantly rural northern Netherlands and the capital of the province of Friesland. The *Leeuwarder Courant* was founded in the eighteenth century and became a daily paper in 1879, at which point it had around 4000 subscribers.¹⁵ It was an upmarket paper aimed at the local elite. However, competition from the end of the century from both new local papers and mass-market national papers forced it to widen its target market by making changes to its content and pricing. As a result, the number of subscribers increased, passing 10,000 in 1914 and 20,000 in 1928. Although the *Leeuwarder Courant* remained more highbrow than the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, by the interwar period its readership extended to the lower-middle-class and upper reaches of the working class.¹⁶

Het Nieuws van de Dag and *De Telegraaf* were examples of the category of national, mass-market papers. *Het Nieuws van de Dag* was founded in 1870 and was the first Dutch daily aimed at a mass market targeting the lower middle classes.¹⁷ It had a circulation of 31,800 in 1882, over three times that of its biggest rivals. But it was *De Telegraaf* that came

¹⁵ Subscription figures are available for the *Leeuwarder Courant* but not circulation data.

¹⁶ Broersma, *Beschaafde vooruitgang*, 253-321; Santema, "Jacob Hepkema," 87, 94-95.

¹⁷ Van de Plasse, *Kroniek*, 28; Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 26; Huub Wijfjes, *Journalistiek in Nederland, 1850-2000* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2004), 39.

to epitomize the Dutch mass-market press. *De Telegraaf* was founded in 1893 for a progressive, metropolitan readership. Although it enjoyed initial success, in the late 1890s it foundered as the owner, Henri Tindal, bled it dry to finance various madcap adventures. In 1902, the newspaper was acquired by H.M.C. Holdert. He pursued an aggressive marketing strategy and modelled himself on the British press barons such as Northcliffe, founder and owner of the *Daily Mail*. In 1923, he acquired *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, which he merged with *De Courant*. *De Courant* was a so-called *kopblad*, a cheaper sister paper with fewer pages and largely made up of the editorial content of the main paper, in this case the *De Telegraaf*, that was aimed at a less affluent market segment.¹⁸ As only *De Telegraaf* has been digitized, the research presented in this thesis is based on that newspaper rather than *De Courant*. However, a comparison between *De Telegraaf* and *De Courant* for a sample period (carried out for the purpose of the present study) showed that all items appearing in *De Telegraaf* were also printed in *De Courant*, with the exception of news that had become out of date (unlike *De Telegraaf*, *De Courant* had no Sunday edition and only appeared once a day).¹⁹ In other words, the data gathered for *De Telegraaf* can be assumed to be representative of the content of *De Courant* as well. *De Courant* was an important factor in *De Telegraaf*'s success as it enjoyed high circulations and brought in advertising revenue while the editorial costs were minimal. *De Telegraaf* also saw circulations increase, particularly after World War I when it became more politically neutral and targeted a broader middle-income segment (see Figure 2). In 1930, when the population was 7.8 million, the combined circulation of *De Telegraaf* and *De Courant* was 370,000, far more than any other national paper and the equivalent of about 20 per cent of all households.²⁰

De Telegraaf's journalists and owner saw the *Algemeen Handelsblad* as its main rival.²¹ *Algemeen Handelsblad* was a long-established national paper, founded in 1828. It became the first Dutch paper to appear daily in 1830.²² It was aimed at the elite, as is evident from its pricing: in 1895, a quarterly subscription cost six guilders, compared with three guilders for *De Telegraaf*. Like the other newspapers in the study, it increased its circulation, particularly after World War I (see Figure 2). An indication of the differences between the readerships of the three national newspapers in the interwar period is given by a survey held in 1938. This showed that six per cent of *Algemeen Handelsblad* readers belonged to the working class compared with 21 per cent for *De Telegraaf* and 84 per cent of the readers of the merged *De Courant/Het Nieuws van de Dag*.²³

¹⁸ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 82; M. Wolf, "An Anglo-American newspaper in Holland. Form and style of *De Telegraaf* (1893-1940)," in *Form and Style in Journalism. European Newspapers and the Representation of News, 1880-2005*, ed. Marcel Broersma (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 81-94; Wijfjes, *Journalistiek in Nederland*, 40.

¹⁹ Comparison based on all items on family or sexual violence involving women or children in *De Telegraaf* and *De Courant* in March 1920.

²⁰ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 82, 224; Wolf, "An Anglo-American Newspaper".

²¹ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 23-24, 83-84, 171.

²² Visser, *Papieren Spiegel*, 72.

²³ Schuit and Hemels, *Recepten en rolpatronen*, 19.

This survey of Dutch housewives, which was ordered by the Dutch *Bond van Adverteerders* ('association of advertisers'), was symptomatic of another change in the media market, namely the drive to attract female readers because of their importance to advertisers. The association wanted to know what housewives were reading "given that in the vast majority of cases advertisements are intended precisely to attract the housewife".²⁴ In the nineteenth century, advertisements consisted of notices from individual shops and advertisers were most concerned about reaching the right kind of reader, that is to say affluent readers. With the expansion of the retail sector and the rise of brand advertising, it became more important to reach as many potential buyers as possible. And because housewives were assumed to be in charge of spending the household budgets, they were the potential buyers that advertisers wanted to reach.²⁵

Thus with the rise of the mass media, the target readership expanded to include two new groups: the working class and women. As a result, these two groups became fully incorporated in the 'imagined community' that was constructed through the newspapers' content.²⁶ This imagined community operated at two levels. At one level was the community of readers of a specific newspaper. That sense of being part of a virtual community was fostered by such sections as readers' letters, where readers could see others responding to the issues of the day, and the small ads, where readers offered one another goods and services. But this community of readers was still limited to a particular class profile and, in the case of local newspapers, a particular geographical area. At another level, the newspapers' content portrayed an imagined community that extended to Dutch society as a whole. The incorporation of women and the working class in the imagined community meant that they were treated as full members of Dutch society and their views were taken seriously by all newspapers, regardless of their specific target readership. The *Algemeen Handelsblad*, for example, never saw working-class readers as a significant target group yet its portrayal of the lower classes changed from the end of the nineteenth century. In countless articles in 1880, the working classes were depicted as the unruly 'other', but the paper adopted a more respectful tone in the later sample years.

This more inclusive approach by the newspapers was tied to and bolstered the process of emancipation of the working class and women that was described in the previous chapter. In this regard, it is useful to make a distinction between civil society and the public sphere, as discussed by Maartje Janse. Civil society "refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values", whereas the public sphere is about the notion of debate and the expression of opinion, often facilitated by the press. Janse argues that it was often easier for new groups such as women to gain access to civil

²⁴ Schuit and Hemels, *Recepten en rolpatronen*, 19.

²⁵ Schuit, Hemels, p.19; Bingham, *Gender, Modernity*, 29-34.

²⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6, 33-36.

society – for example through philanthropic activities – than the public sphere.²⁷ The incorporation of women and the working class in the newspapers' imagined community can therefore be seen as a new stage in their emancipation as it gave them access to the public sphere.

Where women are concerned, this voice in the public sphere is evident in the serious attention paid to women's political demands in the newspapers from the 1890s. In 1895, the newly emergent feminist organizations received sympathetic treatment, with full reporting of their meetings and addresses to the government on subjects such as marriage law, employment rights and female suffrage.²⁸ This positive coverage continued throughout the period. The newspapers also provided a forum that feminists could use directly. The leading feminist Aletta Jacobs was a regular contributor to *De Telegraaf*.²⁹ Only in 1930 was the tone rather less exclusively emancipatory. On the one hand, the newspapers still gave room to feminist viewpoints but on the other hand the women's sections firmly addressed women in their domestic role with cleaning tips, fashion advice and articles on cooking and bringing up children. But even here, journalists often used the language of progress. For example, an article in the *Leeuwarder Courant* on women's fashions in 1930 started by marvelling at how far women had come; whereas in 1910 she was just a housewife and mother, the modern woman of 1930 could excel at all kinds of jobs.³⁰ The exception to this pattern was the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, which exemplified what Alison Light has termed 'conservative modernism', modern in form while espousing conservative values.³¹ The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* was an enthusiastic supporter of the modern woman with its articles on individual female achievements – the first woman to captain a boat across the Atlantic or swim across the Zuiderzee, for example, yet it was lukewarm about topics such as women's position in the labour market and female suffrage.³²

In order to appeal to the new categories of readers, Dutch journalists changed the style and content of the newspapers. They were influenced a new approach to journalism, termed 'New Journalism', that originated in the US and UK. The key elements of this New Journalism were an emphasis on news rather than 'views' (editorials and opinion pieces), more human-interest stories (including crime), a greater range of subjects that qualified as

²⁷ Maartje Janse, "Towards a History of Civil Society," *De negentiende eeuw* 32, no. 2 (2008): 104-121.

²⁸ For example: "De rechtstoestand der vrouw," *De Telegraaf*, 28 March 1895, 1; "Vrouwelijke Inspecteurs," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 12 April 1895, 3; "Mr. H.Ph. de Kanter en de vrouwen," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 15 February 1895, 6.

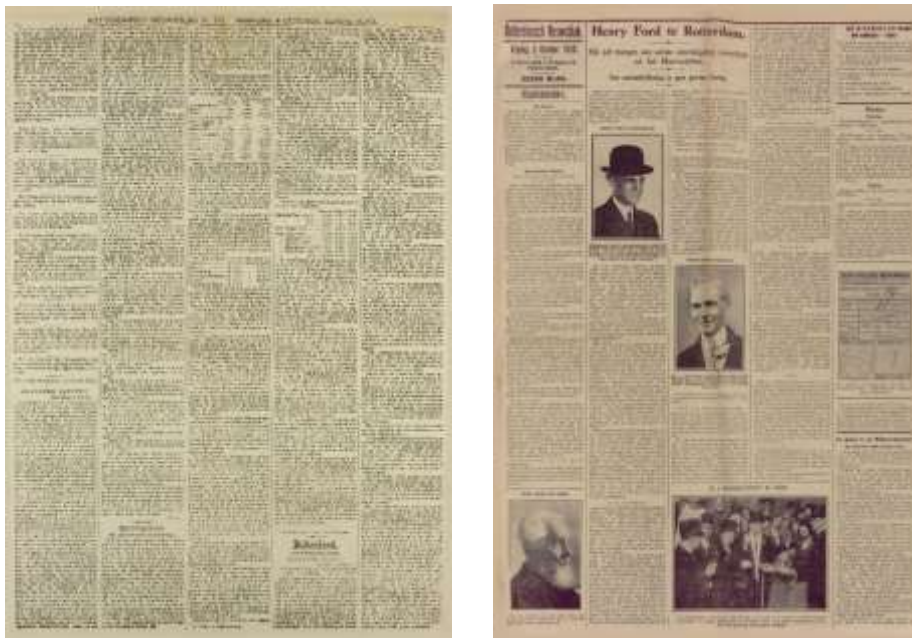
²⁹ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 98-99.

³⁰ "De vrouw van 1930," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 1 February 1930, 14.

³¹ Light, *Forever England*, 11.

³² "Een vrouwelijke kapitein," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 2 February 1920, 11; "Rotterdamsche zwemster over de Zuiderzee gezwommen," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* 28 August 1930, 13; "Geniet vrouwelijk personeel de voorkeur?" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 5 May 1930, 3; "Vereeniging ter behartiging van de belangen der vrouw," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 27 February 1895, 5; "De vrouw en het kiesrecht," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* 13 January 1910, 10. Bingham sees newspaper reports of heroic female swimmers and pilots as part of a discourse of modernity: Bingham, *Gender, Modernity*, 74-78.

newsworthy, such as sports, new genres such as interviews and reportages, a more attractive appearance with headlines and illustrations and a more accessible writing style with snappier articles. Articles became shorter and the inverted pyramid system was used in which the most important information was summarized in the first sentence and the rest of the article presented the facts in descending order of importance.³³ Dutch newspapers were relatively slow to adopt these new elements. Commentators and journalists working for the quality papers were resistant to many aspects of New Journalism such as interviews, headlines and illustrations. They were criticized as appealing to the readers' emotions rather than their reason, and trivializing and sensationalizing the content. Yet even the upmarket Dutch newspapers did eventually adopt many of the hallmark elements of New Journalism in the fifty years following 1880.³⁴



Source: *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 4 October 1880 (left) and 3 October 1930 (right), www.delpher.nl.

Figure 3 Shift to a more appealing visual style.

The changes in style and content in the newspapers covered in this thesis were analysed in detail as part of the present study. This involved cataloguing the sections and use of illustrations and other visual elements in a typical week in late October for each

³³ Kevin Williams, *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 119-122; Williams, "Anglo-American Journalism".

³⁴ Wijffjes, "Modernization"; Marcel Broersma, "Vormgeving tussen woord en beeld. De visuele infrastructuur van Nederlandse dagbladen, 1900-2000," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 7, no. 1 (2004): 7-17; Marcel Broersma, "Mediating Parliament. Form Changes in British and Dutch Journalism, 1850-1940," in *Mediatization of Politics in History*, ed. Huub Wijffjes and Gerrit Voerman (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 180-183; Bernadette Kester, "Breuk en continuüm. Erich Salomon en de personalisering van de politiek in geïllustreerde tijdschriften," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 15, no. 2 (2012): 63-66.

newspaper and sample year.³⁵ This was supplemented by analysis of the adverts on the biggest advertising day of that week (that is, the day with most advertising space). The newspapers in 1880 were austere, devoid of illustrations and dominated by news in the public sphere of business and politics. They were designed for the educated man of business who had the leisure to read the paper from cover to cover. But from 1895 onwards there was a shift in content away from the world of work and politics towards the private sphere of the home and leisure activities. Sections started to appear on sport. In the interwar years, newspapers added sections on the cinema, radio and children's cartoons and puzzles. Business news, on the other hand, took up less and less space. The newspapers became more visually attractive too, with headlines for the individual articles. The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* was the first of the study newspapers to include pictures, with several a day in 1895. In 1921, *De Telegraaf* introduced a separate photo page, with other Dutch newspapers soon following suit.³⁶ By 1930, all the papers in this study were using photographs.

Many of the changes in content were clearly designed for female readers. Indeed, according to Mark Hampton, New Journalism was associated by critics with the feminization of the press because it was seen as a "blurring of the distinction between the public (masculine) and private (feminine) spheres", giving prominence to what had previously been seen as domestic, commonplace matters.³⁷ In the Dutch newspapers of 1880, the only concession to the female reader was the serialized story (the *feuilleton*), but even in 1895 the papers were already starting to incorporate more items thought to appeal to women. The foreign news sections extended beyond politics to include descriptions of fashionable life in Europe's leading capitals. There were more travel reports, amusing sketches and book reviews, and in the twentieth century film and radio news.³⁸ The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* was the first of the study newspapers to explicitly target female readers. It had a daily fashion item in 1895 and a weekly woman's section (*Voor de Dames*) from 1910. By 1930 all the newspapers had a weekly woman's page. At this point, the newspapers also had dedicated sections for children. They had become all-round family papers, paying attention

³⁵ Specifically, the week beginning Monday 25 October in 1880, the week beginning 21 October in 1895, the week beginning 24 October in 1910, the week beginning 25 October in 1920 and the week beginning 20 October in 1930. Late October was chosen as it did not include any public holidays or festive or holiday periods in any of the sample years.

³⁶ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 184-186. In the Dutch literature, *De Telegraaf* is generally viewed as the pioneering Dutch newspaper in the use of elements of New Journalism — see for example: Wolf, "An Anglo-American Newspaper" — but that is because it has been compared to other national newspapers. Of the sample newspapers in the present study, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* often led the way.

³⁷ Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 120-121.

³⁸ For the kind of items thought to appeal to women, see: Gretchen Soderlund, *Sex Trafficking, Scandal, and the Transformation of Journalism, 1885-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 100; Siân Nicholas, "Media history or media histories?," *Media History* 18, no. 3-4 (2012): 385; Schuit and Hemels, *Recepten en rolpatronen*, 11-14.

to the private world of leisure and the domestic front as well as the public world of politics and business.



Source: *De Telegraaf*, 25 October 1930, www.delpher.nl.

Figure 4 Women's section in *De Telegraaf*.

3.2 The role of family and sexual violence in newspaper content

With the rise of New Journalism and the mass media, crime acquired a more prominent place in newspapers' content. It is therefore not surprising that coverage of family and sexual violence increased in the selected Dutch newspapers after 1880 (see Table 6). However, it is argued in the present study that an additional factor driving the changing coverage is that these crime stories were thought by journalists to interest female readers. They were therefore part of the strategy of producing content that appealed to women as well as men.

The argument that stories of family and sexual crime were thought to interest women may seem counterintuitive. After all, prevalent notions of femininity saw women as naturally weak, fragile and nonaggressive. However, there are several reasons for concluding that women were thought to like reading about cases of violence with a human-interest angle. Studies of journalists' policies in Britain show that this association was made there: *Daily Mail* journalists "expected women to be interested solely in knitting jumpers, in caring for their complexions, looking after babies, in a 'good murder' and in silly stories

about weddings”.³⁹ Violence in the family was seen as part of the private, domestic — and therefore feminine — sphere.⁴⁰ In the twentieth century, stories of intimate partner violence tied in with debates on marital relationships that were taking place in the women’s pages.⁴¹ Studies of Dutch journalists’ attitudes and policies from a gender perspective are lacking. However, the articles logged for the present study include comments by journalists on the considerable interest shown by women in cases of private violence. In the trial of a man for the murder of his two children in 1930 in a working-class district of Rotterdam, the spectators were mainly local women “who, as you can imagine, were *extremely* interested in the drama”.⁴² A 1910 trial involving an aristocratic student who had killed his married lover attracted numerous smartly dressed ladies “desirous of sensation, burning with curiosity for the details of this drama”.⁴³ The changing nature of the Dutch coverage is also an indication that journalists were selecting these stories at least in part with female readers in mind (as will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent chapters). The accounts were increasingly sympathetic to the female protagonists and some categories, such as foreign stories of intimate partner violence, appear designed specifically for women readers as they were placed in sections that women were thought to read and drew on romantic fiction, a genre associated with women.

The point being made here is that journalists thought women would want to read stories of family and sexual violence, not that women were necessarily interested in such stories in practice. That conclusion cannot be drawn in the present study as its scope does not extend to reading habits and reader reception. Even so, it is at least plausible that women were more interested than men in such stories. Studies of modern reading and viewing preferences find that women are more likely than men to watch fictional crime series, read crime fiction and read true crime stories.⁴⁴ Experiments by the psychologists Vicary and Fraley also suggest women may enjoy reading true crime because they identify with the female victims.⁴⁵ One of the few investigations of readers’ responses to crime news in a historical context, an analysis by John Carter Wood of readers’ letters concerning the trials of Beatrice Pace in the 1920s for the murder of her husband, found that letters from women outnumbered letters from men by a factor of five. He notes too that these women

³⁹ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity*, 28.

⁴⁰ Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, 121.

⁴¹ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity*, 105-110; John Carter Wood, *Most Remarkable Woman*, 70-71.

⁴² “welke naar zich begrijpen laat, zéér voor het drama interesseerden,” in “Het drama van de Rubroekstraat voor de rechtbank,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 17 October 1930, 10.

⁴³ “begeerig naar sensatie, brandend van nieuwsgierigheid naar de bijzonderheden van dit drama,” in “Het drama te Rijswijk,” *De Telegraaf*, 27 June 1910, 2.

⁴⁴ Will Atkinson, “The Structure of Literary Taste: Class, Gender and Reading in the UK,” *Cultural Sociology* 10, no. 2 (2016): 252-253; Amanda M. Vicary and R. Chris Fraley, “Captured by True Crime: Why are Women Drawn to Tales of Rape, Murder, and Serial Killers?,” *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 1, no. 1 (2010): 82-83, 85-86.

⁴⁵ Vicary and Fraley, “Captured by True Crime,” 84-85.

often identified with Mrs Pace, her hard life and her cruel husband.⁴⁶ In conclusion, there is evidence that stories of violence involving a female protagonist would indeed appeal more to women than men.

Table 6 Changing coverage of family and sexual violence in newspapers.

Newspaper	Year	No. of lines on family and sexual violence in year	Newshole (editorial pages) per week	Average no. of lines per page on family and sexual violence
<i>Leeuwarder Courant</i>	1880	1,306	18.9	1.3
	1895	4,247	30.3	2.7
	1910	6,852	42.2	3.1
	1920	1,628	31.6	1.0
	1930	6,046	63.5	1.8
<i>Algemeen Handelsblad</i>	1880	1,428	34.2	0.8
	1895	2,527	32.4	1.5
	1910	8,413	61.4	2.6
	1920	1,874	52.7	0.7
	1930	4,401	92.8	0.9
<i>Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad</i>	1880	1,261	20.2	1.2
	1895	10,374	42.4	4.7
	1910	12,060	50.5	4.6
	1920	3,568	38.4	1.8
	1930	14,665	83.6	3.4
<i>Het Nieuws van de Dag</i>	1880	1,019	32.6	0.6
<i>De Telegraaf</i>	1895	5,017	36.1	2.7
	1910	14,628	48.4	5.8
	1920	3,478	42.4	1.6
	1930	6,163	70.9	1.7

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

Table 6 details the changing coverage of family and sexual violence in the sample newspapers between 1880 and 1930. It shows an increase in the total number of lines between 1880 and 1910 for all newspapers. This in itself does not prove journalists were focusing more on these kinds of crimes, as newspapers were increasing in size anyway; for example, a week's issues of the *Leeuwarder Courant* totalled 42 pages in 1880 but 70 in

⁴⁶ John Carter Wood, *Most Remarkable Woman*, 175-182.

1910. The relative importance of articles on private violence can be deduced by comparing coverage to the total number of pages minus the space taken up by adverts – what is termed the ‘newshole’.⁴⁷ The final column in Table 6 does just that by expressing coverage as the number of lines per available page (newshole). It is clear that in relative terms too, the space devoted to private violence increased in the two decades leading up to the First World War.

The increase in column inches devoted to stories of private violence was not however a straightforward linear development: coverage was much lower in 1920 and while it rebounded by 1930, these stories were less significant as a proportion of the newshole than they had been in the pre-war decades. The decline in 1920 is connected with the aftermath of World War I. Historians have noted that wars were associated with falls in crime news, regardless of the actual level of crime.⁴⁸ As was noted in Chapter 2, the Netherlands was severely affected by World War I even though it was neutral. The war had ended by 1920 but it still cast a shadow over the press. Newspapers had fewer pages than in 1910 due to paper rationing and the exorbitant price of paper.⁴⁹ Moreover, the mood was sombre. The news was filled with the repercussions of the war – the revolution in Russia and unrest in Germany and Italy – while the Netherlands was hit by a series of strikes. Accordingly, we see a return in the Dutch newspapers to the ‘masculine’ topics of politics and economics. In such a context, crime stories were seen as trivial and not worthy of extended attention, as the *Algemeen Handelsblad* made clear in a caustic article criticizing the hype in Britain surrounding the trial of a man accused of poisoning his wife.⁵⁰ The coverage of violence within the family and sexual assaults was up again in 1930 but did not return to the pre-war levels. To some extent this reflected the new makeup of the interwar newspapers: reflecting the wider definition of ‘news’ under the influence of New Journalism, the newspapers of 1930 had special sections on sport and culture, women’s pages and children’s sections, leaving less space for crime stories.

Dutch stories of violent crime involving women and children clearly resonated with readers. There is evidence that the major stories in the newspapers were also events that mattered to local communities. The papers frequently mentioned the crowds drawn by an event or a trial and their emotional involvement. When a couple was tried in Amsterdam in 1880 for the murder of a two-year-old boy, the crowds attending were “very numerous” (*zeer talrijk*) and the public gallery was “packed” (*stampvol*).⁵¹ The arrest of a man for the rape and murder of a little girl from a village in the northern Netherlands in 1920 aroused a

⁴⁷ King, “Making Crime News”, 93.

⁴⁸ Rowbotham, Stevenson, and Pegg, *Crime News*, 131; Esther Snell, “Discourses of Criminality in the Eighteenth-Century Press: The Presentation of Crime in The Kentish Post, 1717-1768,” *Continuity and Change* 22, no. 1 (2007): 25.

⁴⁹ Visser, *Papieren Spiegel*, 360; “Het dure courantenpapier,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 19 April 1920, 1.

⁵⁰ “De vergiftigingszaak van Kidwelly,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 17 November 1920, 6.

⁵¹ *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 21 January 1880, 6; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, 14 January 1880, 7.

heated response among the local community. According to the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, they were raising their fists and threatening to attack the accused.⁵² It should be noted, though, that crime stories were less important in selling copies than in countries such as Britain and France, where dramatic murders were placed on the front page to boost sales in fiercely competitive markets.⁵³ In the Netherlands, most newspapers were sold by subscription so that front-page news did not serve the same purpose.⁵⁴

Once an incident caught the public's attention, the press could magnify that effect by publicizing the event and maintaining the public's interest. In the case of the funeral of a nurse who was raped and murdered in woods near the village of Bennekom in 1930, *De Telegraaf* informed its readers of the date and place in advance, effectively inviting them to attend.⁵⁵ The funeral attracted huge interest and afterwards the newspapers printed a photograph of the funeral procession winding its way through the streets of Arnhem.⁵⁶ The impact of the newspapers was enhanced too by the broader media ecosystem that included magazines, books and, in the twentieth century, cinema and radio. Because the newspapers appeared much more frequently than other media, it was the newspapers that decided what the big stories were, with the other media following suit.⁵⁷ Illustrated magazines complemented the newspaper coverage with extensive reports focusing on the human-interest angle and visualization in the form of prints and (from the 1910s) photographs. The most successful of these was *Het Leven*, founded in 1906 and with a circulation of 95,000 only two years later.⁵⁸ It was known for its focus on crime and other sensational events. Not surprisingly, it featured numerous photographs of the Bennekom case.⁵⁹ Radio and the cinema took off in the interwar period but remained less important as a source for crime news.⁶⁰ However, film was key in popularizing fictional crime narratives. Detective fiction flourished from the end of the nineteenth century. Authors such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (who created Sherlock Holmes) and Wilkie Collins were popular among Dutch middle-class readers while the adventures of the American detective Nick Carter were sold in cheap editions and consumed enthusiastically by the masses.⁶¹ The cinema fuelled the rage for detectives by transferring these stories to the silver screen.⁶² The newspapers in turn

⁵² "Gruwelijke moord te Beilen," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 13 October 1920, 1.

⁵³ Kalifa, *L'encre et le sang*, 21-25; Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, *Tabloid century. The Popular Press in Britain, 1896 to the present* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015), 8.

⁵⁴ For example, non-subscription sales made up six per cent of the total circulation of *De Telegraaf* in 1898. Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 486. See also: Van de Plasse, *Kroniek*, 122.

⁵⁵ "Arrestatie van den dader," *De Telegraaf*, 2 March 1930, 5.

⁵⁶ "De moord te Bennekom," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 5 March 1930, 6; "De moord te Bennekom," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 5 March 1930, 13; *Leeuwarder Courant*, 6 March 1930, 9.

⁵⁷ Kester, "Breuk en continuüm", 61-62.

⁵⁸ Van de Plasse, *Kroniek*, 232; Kester, "Breuk en continuüm", 68.

⁵⁹ See www.geheugenvannederland.nl, accessed 31 July 2017.

⁶⁰ See www.kb.nl/bronnen-zoekwijzers/kb-collecties/collecties-per-thema/radiobulletins-anp; www.eyefilm.nl/collectie/filmgeschiedenis/artikel/nederlandse-bioscoopjournaals, accessed 31 July 2017.

⁶¹ Boudien de Vries, *Leescultuur in Haarlem*, 185, 292.

⁶² Kalifa, *L'encre et le sang*, 29-43, 47-52.

serialized detective stories in their feuilleton sections and used elements from the detective genre in their real-life crime reports (as will be discussed in the next chapter).⁶³ Thus the press played a key part in encouraging the general public's interest in violent crimes.

The Dutch press did not, however, become actively involved in the judicial process. Chapter 2 already discussed the absence of a role for laypeople in the Dutch criminal justice system and the contrast in this respect with other countries. That contrast extends to press coverage of violent crime. The historiography on Anglo-Saxon countries shows intense and increasing involvement by newspapers in the pursuit of justice. British journalists in nineteenth-century papers discussed sentences and gave their opinions on whether the punishment was too harsh or too lenient. Wiener has shown that in the case of convicted murderers, newspapers increasingly became a player in their own right, influencing Home Office decisions on whether or not to execute the criminal.⁶⁴ In contrast, Dutch journalists never commented or editorialized on sentences by Dutch courts.⁶⁵ Indeed, when the *Algemeen Handelsblad* published a letter complaining about a lenient sentence, it added an editorial remark underneath noting how difficult it is for outsiders to assess the correctness of a sentence.⁶⁶ As there was no death sentence, there were no appeals for mercy for journalists to comment on. Nor did Dutch journalists need to educate the public (as potential jury members) in legal niceties as there were no juries. In the case of sexual offences, the lack of involvement was compounded by the fact that reporters were almost invariably excluded from trials of a sexual nature.⁶⁷

The reticence of the Dutch journalists was also a reflection of their understanding of their role in society. In his study of British newspapers, Hampton identified three ideal types for the press's role in society: educational, representational and entertainment-based. The educational model, which was in the ascendant in the mid-nineteenth century and was epitomized by *The Times*, envisaged the press as educating its citizens by providing them with the information they needed to exercise their democratic rights and by acting as a neutral forum for debate. The representational model, which was epitomized by W.T. Stead and the *Pall Mall Gazette* in the late-nineteenth century, saw newspapers as acting on behalf of citizens, campaigning on social issues and holding the government to account. The Maiden Tribute affair discussed in the previous chapter, which brought about a change in the age of consent, is a prime example of that approach. The entertainment model, in which

⁶³ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 55. On crime fiction and the interaction with crime news in England, see: Emsley, *Twentieth-Century England*, 110-122.

⁶⁴ Wiener, "Convicted Murderers", 110-111. A similar development is seen in Australia and the US: Kaladelfos, "Condemned Criminals," 703; Linders and Van Gundy-Yoder, "Gall, Galantry," 324-327.

⁶⁵ Dutch articles on foreign cases did sometimes include comments on the administration of justice, see for example: *De Telegraaf*, 7 July 1910, 5.

⁶⁶ "Te humane rechters?" *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 8 March 1930, 14.

⁶⁷ There seem to have been occasional exceptions in the nineteenth century: two cases in the north of the country in 1895 were reported in such detail that the press must have been in attendance. See: *Leeuwarder Courant*, 1 May 1895, 5; *Leeuwarder Courant*, 16 December 1895, 5.

the main purpose of the newspaper was to amuse its readers, dominated in the twentieth century with the rise of the tabloids.⁶⁸ The representational model was never widely adopted in the Netherlands although Stead was admired by the more progressive journalists of the 1890s and 1900s.⁶⁹ It was the educational and entertainment models that dominated in the Netherlands. The quality newspapers such as *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *Leeuwarder Courant* stayed true to the education model throughout the period 1880 to 1930, while the popular papers such as *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* and the post-war *De Telegraaf* embraced the entertainment model.⁷⁰ Both of these approaches fostered a passive, neutral attitude to the operation of the criminal justice system.

3.3 Naming and shaming the perpetrator

Dutch reports of family and sexual violence can also seem aloof when compared with the Anglo-American press because they contain relatively little information about the accused, usually giving no more than the initials and with no description of their appearance. British and American reporters paid considerable attention to the accused's physical appearance and attire in their trial reports. This was particularly the case with women. Shani D'Cruze writes that demeanour and clothes were a way of signalling respectability. Newspapers "linked appearance to character and thus to behaviour".⁷¹ The Dutch papers on the other hand rarely gave any physical description at all. It is possible that this was intended to preserve the privacy of the accused. That would fit with the practice, still adopted by Dutch newspapers today, of referring to the accused only by their initials.

Initials were not however used for all offenders. As in modern Dutch newspapers, the practice of using initials was restricted to Dutch stories. However, in contrast to the modern-day situation, the full names of Dutch offenders were regularly printed (see Table 7).⁷² The question is why some were named and others not. The Dutch historian Herman Franke examined naming practices in the nineteenth-century *Algemeen*

⁶⁸ Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Soderlund.

⁶⁹ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 99-100; Wijfjes, *Journalistiek in Nederland*, 33-34.

⁷⁰ Marcel Broersma, 'Form, Style and Journalistic Strategies. An Introduction', in *Form and Style in Journalism. European Newspapers and the Representation of News, 1880-2005*, ed. by Marcel Broersma, (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), pp. ix-xxix.

⁷¹ D'Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage*, 141-143. For the message conveyed by descriptions of appearance in specific cases, see: Ramey, "Bloody Blonde," 633-635; Andrew Davies, "Youth, violence, and courtship in late-Victorian Birmingham: the case of James Harper and Emily Pimm," *History of the Family* 11 (2006): 111; Frost, "Kitty Byron," 543.

⁷² Modern Dutch newspaper companies argue that initials should be used as suspects are innocent until proven guilty, while to name perpetrators would be an additional punishment. These arguments are given in the style guide of the NRC Media Company (which publishes the successor to the *Algemeen Handelsblad*). The main exceptions made by the media company are in the case of foreign stories, public or well-known figures and high-ranking officials where the press is serving the public interest by making their names known. apps.nrc.nl/stijlboek/5-wat-we-publiceren, accessed 18 July 2017.

Handelsblad.⁷³ He sees the naming of criminals as a public shaming exercise. The nineteenth century was a period in which public punishments declined. It has been argued that this was because the middle classes were increasingly repulsed by public displays of violence by the state. Moreover, according to Elias's theory of the civilizing process, public spectacles became less necessary as people increasingly internalized social norms.⁷⁴ However, more recent studies have argued that rather than shaming rituals disappearing in the nineteenth century, the emergent mass media took over this role.⁷⁵ In the case of the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, Franke traced the origins of the practice of using initials to the mid-nineteenth century, but the newspaper continued to print the full names on occasion. Franke interprets this as the persistence of shaming practices, although he could not discern a clear policy on when to use full names.⁷⁶

Table 7 Reporting the suspect's name in stories set in the Netherlands.

Newspaper	No information		Initials		Name		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<i>Algemeen Handelsblad</i>	221	75%	19	6%	53	18%	293	100%
<i>De Telegraaf/Het Nieuws van de Dag</i>	146	40%	148	41%	67	19%	361	100%
<i>Leeuwarder Courant</i>	149	35%	224	53%	51	12%	424	100%
<i>Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad</i>	320	49%	281	43%	56	9%	657	100%

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

An insight into the *professed* views of Dutch lawyers and journalists at the time on the practice of using initials comes from a debate on the topic in 1920. It was prompted by a sex crime case involving homosexual contacts between large numbers of minors and adult men in The Hague (a case discussed in detail in Section 6.6). Although sex crimes were almost invariably tried *in camera*, the standard procedure was to first call out the charge,

⁷³ H.J. Franke, *Van schavot naar krantekolom: over de ontwikkeling van de misdaadverslaggeving in het Algemeen Handelsblad vanaf 1828 tot 1900* (Amsterdam: Sociologisch Instituut, 1981).

⁷⁴ Elias, *The Civilizing Process*; Hoekstra, *Hart van de natie*, 21-58; Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering. Executions and the Evolution of Repression: from a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 200-207.

⁷⁵ Phil Carney, "Foucault's punitive society: visual tactics of marking as a history of the present," *British Journal of Criminology* 55, (2015): 240-242; David G. Barrie, "Naming and Shaming: Trial by Media in Nineteenth-Century Scotland," *Journal of British Studies* 54 (2015): 349-376.

⁷⁶ Franke, *Van schavot naar krantekolom*, 115-126.

name and other personal details of the accused before asking the public and press to leave and closing the doors. In this particular case, the names were not read out.⁷⁷ The press was incensed and smelt a cover-up (it was rumoured that high-ranking men were involved). The incident prompted *De Telegraaf* to ask a number of lawyers to give their opinion on the legality and desirability of publishing the defendant's names in trial reports. The lawyers were agreed that it was legally permissible to publish the full names but also that it was not generally desirable: publishing the full name was an additional punishment and it was not fair on suspects who might later be acquitted. The only exception they countenanced was in the case of crimes such as swindling where the general public was at risk and the publication of the culprit's name could act as a warning. Aside from the rational arguments put forward by the lawyers, their responses betrayed a deep-seated aversion to the intrusion of the press and the general public in the processes of the criminal justice system. They described the wish of readers to see the full names as the "base curiosity instincts of the masses" (*lagere nieuwsgierigheids-instincten der massa*) and a "craving for sensation" (*zucht naar sensatie*).⁷⁸ Commenting on the lawyers' contributions, *De Telegraaf* wrote that its wish to publish the names in the sex crime case was merely as a warning to parents and teachers to help them protect children against the dangers of homosexuality. Thus the avowed reason for printing full names was as a warning.

Examination of the actual use of names in the logged articles on family and sexual violence suggests however that full names were used primarily as a shaming device rather than a warning. If that had been the case, full names would have been used most often for perpetrators of sexual violence by strangers where the potential victims consisted of women and children in the general public, but in practice it was individuals who used violence against their partner or own children who were most likely to be named in the papers. The vast majority of cases where the full name was given involved exceptional violence or cruelty in the eyes of the press. Sex crime cases where the full name was printed tended to be gang rapes, multiple rapes or rapes followed by murder. Moreover, the naming practice betrays a lack of regard for the notion of 'innocent until proven guilty'. The full name was usually cited during the investigation or in the trial report, that is before the final verdict was given (as was noted in Chapter 2, the verdict was announced in a separate session up to two weeks after the end of the trial). In 1920, *De Telegraaf* gave the name, age, town, and profession of a man who was accused by his housekeeper of having poisoned his wife. Her body was exhumed but no evidence of poisoning was found and the man was released without charge.⁷⁹ Furthermore, while the lawyers approached by *De*

⁷⁷ "Het Haagsche zedenschandaal," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 23 May 1920, 11.

⁷⁸ "De pers en het vonnis," *De Telegraaf*, 16 July 1920, 5; "De pers en het vonnis," *De Telegraaf*, 17 July 1920, 5; "De pers en het vonnis," *De Telegraaf*, 18 July 1920, 5; "De pers en het vonnis," *De Telegraaf*, 22 July 1920, 5.

⁷⁹ "Vergiftiging te Leiden?" *De Telegraaf*, 17 February 1920, 6; "De vermoedelijke vergiftiging te Leiden," *De Telegraaf*, 22 February 1920, 6; "Geen vergiftiging," *De Telegraaf*, 6 March 1920, 6.

Telegraaf talked of a craving for sensation, the journalists themselves clearly did not see printing the full name in this light. After all, this practice was just as prevalent in the quality papers such as the *Algemeen Handelsblad* as in the popular papers. Rather, the ability to name or not name a suspect gave newspapers an additional tool for expressing their condemnation in particularly despicable cases.

3.5 News values as determinants of crime news content

How did journalists decide which crime stories to print? As discussed in Chapter 1, journalists select and present stories with a view to appeal to a particular readership but they are also influenced by the availability of sources. Crime news is consequently not a neutral record of actual crime. For example, violent crime tends to be over-reported while crime coverage declines during periods of war, regardless of actual crime levels. Rather than a window on the world, Yvonne Jewkes aptly calls the media “a prism, subtly bending and distorting the view of the world it projects”.⁸⁰

The influence of individual journalists in this process – and consequently of the sex of those journalists – is limited. As journalists have to work to tight deadlines and make fast decisions about which stories to chase up, organizational procedures are put in place and routines developed to make sure that the paper can obtain “unexpected events on a routine basis”.⁸¹ Most journalists in the period under review in the Netherlands were men. Women journalists started to be employed from the 1890s onwards, but were usually hired to produce ‘women’s’ articles on subjects such as fashion.⁸² There is no evidence of any female crime reporters during this period (although journalists wrote anonymously so it cannot be discounted completely). However, it is debatable whether the content would have been any different if women had been employed on crime stories, given the overwhelming impact of professional and organizational constraints.⁸³

Journalists use ‘news values’ as criteria for deciding which stories to select and how to present them. Often these are implicit: the journalists themselves are unable to say why they chose a particular story. But scholars analysing media content are able to elicit common features. Yvonne Jewkes has produced a list of twelve news values applicable to modern crime reporting that serve as a good starting point for analysing what made an appealing story in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Dutch newspapers. Some of her news values, such as ‘visual spectacle’, are specific to the modern media context, but eight of them have explanatory value for the historical Dutch situation too. ‘Simplification’, ‘predictability’ and ‘individualism’ shaped how the stories were presented.

⁸⁰ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 45.

⁸¹ Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 119; Manning, *News and News Sources*, 50-80; Marcel Broersma, “Form, Style and Journalistic Strategies. An Introduction,” in *Form and Style in Journalism. European Newspapers and the Representation of News, 1880-2005*, ed. Marcel Broersma (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), xiii.

⁸² Wijfjes, *Journalistiek in Nederland*, 196-197; Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 42, 55.

⁸³ Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 78.

‘Sex’, ‘celebrity’, ‘proximity’, ‘violence’ and ‘children’ influenced which stories were selected and which were given prominence.⁸⁴ Based on an analysis of the top Dutch stories, I have added a ninth news value, ‘mystery’.⁸⁵

Individualism refers to the tendency of journalists to ascribe criminal acts to individual motivation rather than looking at socioeconomic and cultural factors and the wider context.⁸⁶ In the Dutch stories, poverty and unemployment are sometimes mentioned as factors but they are seen purely as evidence of individual failings. Other social factors, for example the dependent position of maidservants in infanticide cases, are not touched upon. As a result, each crime becomes an isolated example of an individual flaw rather than symptomatic of larger forces.

Simplification refers to the need to have stories where the meaning is unambiguous and can easily be guessed by the reader.⁸⁷ In the Dutch newspaper stories, simplification is evident both in the nature of the crime and the designation of the aggressor. Journalists divided crimes into clear-cut categories (sexual assault by a stranger, domestic violence, infanticide and so forth), whereby each category had its own clearly recognizable script and tropes. One aspect of this simplified categorization was a clear dividing line between sexual assaults and physical assaults, with different language for these distinct categories. Thus stories of sweetheart violence were presented consistently in the newspapers as purely physical attacks devoid of any sexual connotation, although in practice such violence often incorporates a sexual element.⁸⁸ Another aspect of simplification is the tendency by the Dutch newspapers to deal in binary oppositions when describing the protagonists: there is a clear victim and a clear perpetrator. In domestic violence, there may not necessarily be a single aggressor but only a handful of domestic violence cases were presented in the newspapers as ‘a couple fighting’ with both parties equally culpable. Even in more complicated cases where multiple family members become involved in the fight, the newspaper accounts singled out one person as the ‘real’ aggressor.

Another key news value is predictability. While the events themselves have to be novel to be newsworthy, news organizations prefer predictable storylines as this helps them deploy resources efficiently. This explains the preference for trial reporting – trial dates for

⁸⁴ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 49-68. For another example of the use of Jewkes’ news values in a historical context, see: Heather Shore, “Rogues of the Racecourse. Racing men and the press in interwar Britain,” *Media History* 20, no. 4 (2014): 353-354.

⁸⁵ Jewkes uses the news value ‘Threshold’ to describe how newspapers continue with a story because they keep finding new angles. Each individual item has exceeded a threshold level of importance. But this does not capture the fact that once a story has been constructed as a mystery, the threshold is lowered – even a lack of information becomes ‘news’. Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 49-51.

⁸⁶ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 53-54; Gabriel Cavaglion, “Fathers who kill and press coverage in Israel,” *Child Abuse Review* 18, (2009): 130-136.

⁸⁷ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 51-53.

⁸⁸ D’Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage*, 18-25; Shani D’Cruze, “Sex, Violence and Local Courts. Working-Class Respectability in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century Lancashire Town,” *British Journal of Criminology* 39, no. 1 (1999): 45-47.

murder for example were known in advance so a reporter could be sent to cover the trial. Predictability also involves the preference for stories that fit existing conceptual frameworks and can be covered using standard angles.⁸⁹ In the Dutch situation, this is evident in the similarity of many of the reports on a particular category of crime. For example, in the five sample years there were over fifty items in the different newspapers concerning suspected infanticide that were all remarkably similar in structure. The following item can serve as an illustration:

“On the 23rd of this month, the little corpse of a newborn male baby was hauled out of the Wester Canal in this city, entirely naked with the exception of two loose ribbons wrapped around the body and the presumed remains of a little shirt. Anyone able to provide information on this matter is requested to contact the Spaarndammerstraat police station in this city.”⁹⁰

All the items started with one or two sentences announcing the discovery of corpse of a newborn baby, giving the location (“Wester Canal”), when the baby was found (“23rd of this month”) and any distinguishing features of the dead baby (“naked with the exception of two loose ribbons wrapped around the body and the presumed remains of a little shirt”). The items often ended with a sentence making clear that the police were investigating the case. It appears as if the journalists had standard scripts for dealing with certain situations.

The combined effect of the preference for predictability and simplification is that most of the Dutch crime stories fit a limited number of standard narratives, with a sharp distinction between sexual violence and physical violence. It is this classification used implicitly by the Dutch newspapers that is the starting point for the following three chapters. The stories of family and sexual violence are divided into stories of physical violence between current or former partners (Chapter 4), physical maltreatment by parents of their offspring (Chapter 5) and sexual violence (Chapter 6). Alternative classifications of family and sexual violence could theoretically be used, for example categorization by the relationship between the perpetrator and victim; incest would then be included with other forms of maltreatment of children. However, such alternative classifications require knowledge of the actual facts of the case and cannot be made on the basis of the information in the newspaper articles. Moreover, such an approach would obscure the constructed reality of the newspapers, which is the subject of the current study.

⁸⁹ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 50-51; Manning, *News and News Sources*, 60-67; Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 121.

⁹⁰ “Op 23 dezer is uit het Westerkanaal alhier, opgehaald het lijke van een pasgeboren kind van het mannelijk geslacht, geheel naakt, met uitzondering van twee losse bandjes gewikkeld om het lichaam en vermoedelijk restanten van een hemdje. Dengene, die inlichtingen omtrent deze aangelegenheid kan verstrekken wordt verzocht, zich in verbinding te stellen met het politiebureau Spaarndammerstraat, alhier.” In “Kinderlijkje gevonden,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 24 January 1930, 14.

News values were used not just in the presentation of crime stories but also in deciding which crime stories should be covered. In her discussion of news values, Jewkes concludes that modern newspapers over-report sex crimes, are more likely to report a crime if it involves a celebrity or high-status person or if it involves children (whether as victim or perpetrator), over-report violent crimes and focus on crimes that are proximate.⁹¹ To determine what criteria Dutch newspapers used, ideally a comparison would be made between the coverage and the pool of available stories.⁹² This is the approach used by Peter King, for example, who compares Old Bailey trial reports with late eighteenth-century London newspapers to see which trials they were picking out.⁹³ However, there is no equivalent Dutch source to the Old Bailey records giving the list of 'available' trials. As an alternative, I have examined which stories received most coverage.

The news values embodied by the top stories in each sample year give an indication of the criteria Dutch journalists were using to select stories. I identified the five top stories in each newspaper and year, based on the number of lines and number of articles.⁹⁴ I then examined whether they involved a sexual offence, high-status protagonists (middle- or upper-class protagonists), children or extreme violence (defined here as murder), whether the incident was geographically close to the newspaper's offices and whether the story involved a mystery. A story was classified as a mystery if it was not clear from the initial reports whether a crime had been committed (for example, because the death could have been accidental) and/or who had committed the crime. The results are shown in Table 8. As there was considerable overlap between newspapers in the top stories, the figures for all newspapers are not the sum of the figures for the individual newspapers.

⁹¹ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 55-68.

⁹² David Pritchard, Karen D. Hughes, 'Patterns of Deviance in Crime News', *Journal of Communication*, 47 (1997), 49-67.

⁹³ King, "Making Crime News"

⁹⁴ The stories were ranked by the total number of lines and by the number of articles. Then a weighted average was calculated, with a weight of 70% for the number of lines and 30% for the number of articles. This gave most weight to the space taken up with the story but avoided having a story ranked high simply because of one long article. The top five stories were the five stories with the highest average ranks.

Table 8 News values embodied in top stories.

The news values in the newspapers' top five stories in each year (measured by the number of lines and number of items).

Newspaper	No. of top stories	News values					
		Sex	High status	Geographical proximity	Violence (murder)	Children	Mystery
<i>Algemeen Handelsblad</i>	25	4	9	10	21	4	18
<i>De Telegraaf/Het Nieuws van de Dag</i>	25	5	7	12	23	5	18
<i>Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad</i>	25	5	5	11	19	6	13
<i>Leeuwarder Courant</i>	25	10	5	13	21	10	14
All newspapers	53	10	12	26	42	15	25
	100%	19%	23%	49%	79%	28%	47%

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

Table 8 shows that extreme violence was the leading criterion for Dutch journalists: 79 per cent of top stories were cases where the victim had died. Murder following a sexual assault was a particularly potent combination – some of the biggest stories concerned women or children who have been raped and then killed. Geography also mattered: newspapers were particularly likely to cover a story at length if the incident took place near the newspaper's home base. This did not just apply to the two local newspapers; the national newspapers were equally prone to focusing on news close to their offices in Amsterdam. In 1930, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* was the only newspaper to include a filicide in Rotterdam in its top stories, *Leeuwarder Courant* had two wife murders in Leeuwarden among its top stories and *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *De Telegraaf* were the only papers to give prominence to the story of a murder in Amsterdam of a louche character by his girlfriend. But it would be wrong to conclude from this that the papers were only interested in local stories. There were two or three foreign cases amongst the papers' top stories every year. Most of these foreign stories involved either mass murderers or protagonists of high social status. These were exceptional stories of the kind that were in short supply in the Netherlands itself.

A common feature in many of the top stories was an element of mystery – that is to say, it was not immediately clear what had happened and who was responsible. This explains why some ostensibly similar stories could receive very different coverage. The sexual assault and murder of a boy in May 1930 fulfilled several of the criteria for a high-

profile story, as it involved sex, extreme violence and a child victim. But the man who had killed him was arrested and confessed within a couple of hours of the body being found. This information was already available in the first newspaper articles on the event and the story effectively had nowhere to go after that.⁹⁵ But in the Bennekom case when a nurse was raped and killed in February 1930, it took several days before a suspect was arrested. Moreover, he did not confess, and the police investigation continued in an effort to collect sufficient evidence. This gave the newspapers an opportunity to print daily accounts of the investigation's progress.⁹⁶

Trials which went to appeal were another category where the lack of clarity about what has happened gave the press an opportunity to spin out the story. One of the big stories in 1930 concerned an event that had actually taken place and gone to trial in the previous year. A trader in The Hague had shot and killed his estranged wife in what he claimed was an accident when he attempted to commit suicide. The public prosecutor had demanded ten years, but the accused had been sentenced for six months for criminally negligent homicide (*dood door schuld*). As he had already been detained for more than six months, he was released. The case went to appeal in The Hague where the man was found guilty of manslaughter (*doodslag*) and was sentenced to five years but by then the man had absconded. Two months later, the case went to the Supreme Court. This court referred the case to the Court of Appeal in 's Hertogenbosch, which eventually found the husband not guilty. For the newspapers, this was an attractive story, both because of the mystery surrounding whether or not the man had meant to kill his wife and because each step in the legal procedure gave another opportunity to revive the story.⁹⁷

3.6 The mediating effect of sources

Crime news sources influenced journalists' selection of stories. In Chapter 1, Herman and Chomsky's theory of news filters was introduced in which they argue that journalists' sources act as a filter. While journalists see themselves as neutral and objective, their preference for official sources affects their message.⁹⁸ This section considers the main sources of crime stories for Dutch newspapers – the courts, the police, their own reporters

⁹⁵ "Acht-jarig knaapje vermoord. De moordenaar aangehouden. Hij heeft een volledige bekentenis afgelegd," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 18 July 1930, 15.

⁹⁶ For example, in the *Algemeen Handelsblad*: "De moord bij Bennekom," 28 February 1930, 18; "De afschuwelijke moord," 1 March 1930, 2; "De misdaad bij Bennekom," 2 March 1930, 11; "De moord te Bennekom," 3 March 1930, 3; 4 March 1930, 2; "De moord te Bennekom," 5 March 1930, 12.

⁹⁷ For example, in the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*: "Het drama Faber van Riemsdijkstraat Den Haag," 5 March 1930, 18; "Het drama Faber van Riemsdijkstraat Den Haag," 19 March 1930, 19; "Het drama Faber van Riemsdijkstraat, Den Haag," 24 April 1930, 10; "Het drama Faber van Riemsdijkstraat Den Haag," 27 May 1930, 10; "Het drama in de Faber van Riemsdijkstraat, Den Haag," 27 October 1930, 18.

⁹⁸ Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, chap. 1; Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 35-49.

and correspondents, other newspapers and news agencies. It looks at the effect the sources had in terms of the geographical setting and of convergence between newspapers.

The police were an important source for journalists, although rarely explicitly cited: half of all items on incidents in the Netherlands dealt with the police investigation. Haia Shpayer-Makov argues that there were both benefits and disadvantages for the police in cooperating with journalists. On the one hand, providing information during ongoing investigations could reduce the chance of catching the perpetrator and there was also the risk of bad publicity if the police had made errors or failed to solve the case. On the other hand, cooperation with journalists could burnish the police force's reputation and improve relations with the general public, while the police could use the press to appeal for information. For individual policemen, there was a chance of personal glory when their names were mentioned in the article.⁹⁹ Dutch newspaper reports in 1880 and 1895 give evidence of strained relations between the press and the police. The judicial authorities complained that the papers were impeding police investigations with their publications, but the journalists argued they were providing a public service in encouraging the public to come forward with useful information.¹⁰⁰ From the turn of the century, procedures were put in place in police forces to regulate press relations. Press passes were issued and rules introduced on which police officers could talk to the press and when. By 1920, the Amsterdam police were issuing daily press releases with a list of local crimes.¹⁰¹ The improved relations are reflected in the positive descriptions of the police. Reports regularly stress the speed with which they act and the effort they put into solving crimes.¹⁰²

Crime reporters could also gather news by keeping their eyes and ears open on the streets and asking around. Numerous reports concern incidents that caused a stir in the streets, attracting crowds. The hospitals were another possible source. In 1895, the *Telegraaf* reporter seems to have regularly visited the Binnengasthuis, the main Amsterdam hospital, on his beat round as a number of reports of family violence end with the victim being patched up in this hospital but make no mention of police involvement.¹⁰³

As the above-mentioned story of the trader from The Hague shows, court cases were a convenient and reliable source for the newspapers. Trials satisfied the news value of

⁹⁹ Haia Shpayer-Makov, "Journalists and Police Detectives in Victorian and Edwardian England: An Uneasy Reciprocal Relationship," *Journal of Social History* 42, no. 4 (2009): 963-987. An extreme example of personal publicity is seen in an article in the *Leeuwarder Courant*, which gave the names not only of the detective and police-dog trainer but also of the three police dogs. "De Misdaad te Renkum," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 26 August 1910, 10.

¹⁰⁰ "De moord te Rotterdam," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 16 December 1895, 1; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 5 June 1880, 5.

¹⁰¹ Blaauw, *Twee eeuwen*, 136-137; Wijfjes, *Journalistiek in Nederland*, 88-89; "Pers en criminaliteit," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 19 October 1920, 1.

¹⁰² For example: "Jongen ontvoerd op een motorfiets," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 20 March 1930, 2.

¹⁰³ For example: "Man en vrouw," *De Telegraaf*, 17 January 1895, 2; "Een hardhandige bestraffing," *De Telegraaf*, 1 June 1895, 2.

predictability; the date was set in advance and editors could therefore arrange for a reporter to attend. The *Leeuwarder Courant* seems to have covered the local court cases comprehensively throughout the period under review. The other newspapers were more selective, although the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* appears to be listing most local trials in 1910. The national papers covered high-profile trials at length throughout the period with verbatim accounts.

Many of the stories of private violence in the Netherlands concerned local incidents. Even the national papers were disproportionately likely to feature stories from the province in which their offices were based. This is clear from Table 9, where the figures for the 'home' province are shown in the grey cells. Just under 20 per cent of the Dutch population lived in the province of Noord Holland (1920 figures) but a substantially higher proportion of the stories in the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *De Telegraaf* and *Het Nieuws van de Dag* (all based in Amsterdam in Noord Holland) took place in this province. This was a question of both convenience and the importance of geographical proximity as a news value (as discussed in the previous section). To obtain news from other parts of the country, both national and local newspapers culled information from other Dutch newspapers. This was accepted practice and was not seen as stealing.¹⁰⁴ Political affiliation does not seem to have been a limiting factor either: the newspapers in the present study, which were unaffiliated, made use of a wide range of other newspapers, including pillarized publications such as the Catholic paper *De Tijd* and the socialist paper *Het Volk*. In total, other Dutch newspapers accounted for about one third of crime items where a source was specified. The national papers also built up a network of correspondents covering the whole country who sent in tips and were paid per article.¹⁰⁵ Dutch news agencies were another source. The most important was Belinfante-Vaz Dias, which later became the Correspondentiebureau. Founded in the mid-nineteenth century, this agency initially concentrated on political news from The Hague but by the interwar period it was also providing Dutch newspapers with crime news.¹⁰⁶

Poor communications were a limiting factor in the early years. Neither Rotterdam nor Leeuwarden had telephones in 1880. The main methods of communication were pigeon post and the telegraph, but even sending a telegram from The Hague to Rotterdam could still be a time-consuming procedure. Poor transport networks also complicated distribution of the national papers, which therefore relied heavily on a metropolitan readership.¹⁰⁷ Interlocal communications and transportation improved immensely in the decades that

¹⁰⁴ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 36-37; Scheffer, *In vorm gegoten*, 183-186.

¹⁰⁵ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 36.

¹⁰⁶ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 36; Scheffer, *In vorm gegoten*, 172-175. The Correspondentiebureau is explicitly mentioned as the source for a number of stories in 1920 and 1930.

¹⁰⁷ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 36-37, 486; Broersma, *Beschaafde vooruitgang*, 222; Scheffer, *In vorm gegoten*, 195-196; *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 30 October 1880, 1.

followed; this was an integral part of the economic growth described in Chapter 2.¹⁰⁸

Perhaps because of this, the crime news in the national papers became less skewed towards the local area in the twentieth century. Even so, the more outlying provinces of Overijssel, Zeeland and North Brabant remained under-represented, with fewer and shorter items.

Table 9 Location of stories.

Number of cases per province (Dutch cases) and country (foreign cases). Grey cells denote province in which newspaper offices are based.

Province/Country	<i>Algemeen Handelsblad</i>		<i>De Telegraaf/Het Nieuws van de Dag</i>		<i>Leeuwarder Courant</i>		<i>Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad</i>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
- Noord Holland	115	39%	100	28%	66	16%	89	14%
- Zuid Holland	58	20%	89	25%	73	17%	369	56%
- Friesland	11	4%	26	7%	121	29%	17	3%
- Other provinces	108	37%	145	40%	161	38%	181	28%
Total Netherlands	292	100%	360	100%	421	100%	656	100%
- France	15	17%	38	22%	30	25%	81	26%
- Germany	18	21%	45	26%	29	24%	83	26%
- Other countries	53	62%	93	53%	61	51%	150	48%
Total foreign	86	100%	176	100%	120	100%	314	100%
Total	378		536		541		970	
% foreign		23%		33%		22%		32%

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

A striking proportion of the stories about family and sexual violence came from abroad, mainly Europe. Foreign incidents accounted for almost one third of all such crime stories (see Table 9). This seems to be unusually high compared with the press in other countries. Dominique Kalifa for example writes that the French fin-de-siècle dailies paid little attention to foreign crimes. Rowbotham, Stevenson and Pegg see some reporting of foreign crime with a human-interest angle in the British Edwardian tabloids, mainly from the US and from British colonies.¹⁰⁹ This Dutch interest in foreign crime stories was not confined to the national papers: 32 per cent of the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*'s stories and 22 per cent of the stories in the *Leeuwarder Courant* concerned events that had taken place abroad.

¹⁰⁸ Wielenga, *Nederland*, 51-52.

¹⁰⁹ Kalifa, *L'encre et le sang*, 109-111; Rowbotham, Stevenson, and Pegg, *Crime News*, 109.

Some of the foreign stories came from the paper's foreign correspondents, at least in the case of *De Telegraaf* and *Algemeen Handelsblad*. These national newspapers had correspondents in all the main European capitals, who covered crime among other things in their regular reports. This reached a peak around 1910 with the feminization of foreign news when the correspondents were reporting on 'the talk of the town' in London, Paris and Berlin rather than just dry political news. That 'talk of the town' was often the latest trial for some crime of passion. In contrast to most crime news, the influence of the individual journalists can be seen here in their style and choice of subject.¹¹⁰ Thus in 1910 *De Telegraaf's* Berlin correspondent sent almost daily reports on the trial of Frau von Schoenbeck for inciting her officer lover to murder her husband, Major von Schoenbeck. These were lengthy items with verbatim accounts of the trial, sometimes in the original German as if the correspondent had not had time to translate and edit the articles.¹¹¹ This story, with officers, secret lovers and a mysterious murder on Christmas day, would undoubtedly be thought to appeal to female readers but also seems to have attracted the personal interest of *De Telegraaf's* correspondent. Coverage in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* was much more muted, for example.

In addition to foreign correspondents, foreign newspapers and agencies were important sources of information. The Dutch newspapers sometimes made a deal with foreign papers for the exchange of news. For example, *De Telegraaf* had arrangements with the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *The New York Times* and the *Daily Mail* in the pre-war years.¹¹² The foreign news agencies, such as Reuters, Wolff and the Dutch colonial agency Aneta, also became more important over time. They were first mentioned as a source in the crime items logged for the present study in 1910. In 1930 they accounted for two thirds of foreign crime items where the source was mentioned. They were a convenient and relatively cheap source of news from abroad for the Dutch newspapers.¹¹³

Foreign items had various functions. Most obviously, they enabled the Dutch press to feature the kinds of crimes that were rare: extreme violence with multiple killings or crimes involving the rich and famous. This may explain the fact that foreign stories were most prevalent in the newspapers targeting a populist market (see Table 9). Foreign items were often convenient fillers as timeliness was less important than with the Dutch items. In

¹¹⁰ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 102-104.

¹¹¹ See for example "Het proces-Schoenbeck," *De Telegraaf*, 11 June 1910, 5. The author was probably G. Simons, correspondent for *De Telegraaf* in Berlin at this point, see: Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 126-127. The use of German was indicative of *De Telegraaf's* middle-class readership at this point: as Boudien de Vries notes, middle-class readers were expected to be able to read French and German. In contrast, the policy of the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, which targeted a lower-middle-class and working-class market, was to avoid all foreign words. Boudien de Vries, *Leescultuur in Haarlem*, 163, 222-223; Scheffer, *In vorm gegoten*, 245.

¹¹² Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 89.

¹¹³ Scheffer, *In vorm gegoten*, 176-185; Donald Read, *The Power of News. The History of Reuters, 1849-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 53-58, 149; Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, "Propaganda that Dare not Speak its Name. International information services about the Dutch East Indies, 1919-1934," *Media History* 20, no. 3 (2014): 241-244; Broersma, "Botsende stijlen," 85.

many articles, the date of the event is left rather vague – it happened “recently” (“*dezer dagen*”). The newspaper could then print the item when it had space to fill. A Finnish story from 1895 in which a girl murdered her lover with the help of her family can serve as an illustration. It was printed in all four newspapers but on different dates over a period of more than one month.¹¹⁴

Foreign crime stories were also instrumental in setting the boundaries of the imagined community. They showed foreign countries as the ‘other’, places where people behaved differently and the criminal justice system operated differently. A recurring theme, for example, was that of the jury that acquitted an obviously guilty defendant.¹¹⁵ These stories served to reinforce confidence in the Dutch criminal justice system and the wisdom of having no jury. What is more, the foreign items painted a particular picture of each individual country, thus creating an ‘imaginative geography’ of violence. The term ‘imaginative geography’ was first used by Edward Said to denote the West’s conceptualization of the Orient as an idea as much as a physical space.¹¹⁶ In the Dutch newspapers, certain countries were associated with certain kinds of crime. This may explain the dominance of France and Germany as sources for stories of private violence: these two countries alone contributed between two fifths and half of all foreign stories, depending on the newspaper (see Table 9). This was not simply a result of the papers having foreign correspondents or agreements with news agencies in these countries as this applied to the UK and Belgium too, yet they contributed far fewer stories. The French stories largely concerned intimate partner violence, constructed as crimes of passion, while the German stories disproportionately featured excessive violence towards children.¹¹⁷

One result of the reliance on other newspapers and news agencies, both Dutch and foreign, for content was considerable overlap between the different newspapers in their content.¹¹⁸ On numerous occasions, the newspapers printed identical texts because they were simply reproducing agency material, changing only the headline.¹¹⁹ Not only were they

¹¹⁴ “Een vreeselijke geschiedenis,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 17 October 1895, 7; “Een drama,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 19 September 1895, 2; *Leeuwarder Courant*, 13 September 1895, 3; *De Telegraaf*, 11 September 1895, 1.

¹¹⁵ For example: “Het recht van de jury,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 24 April 1930, 3.

¹¹⁶ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), 49-72. This notion of an imaginary geography of crime is attracting increasing interest among historians. See: John Carter Wood and Paul Knepper, “Crime Stories. Criminality, policing and the press in inter-war European and transatlantic perspectives,” *Media History* 20, no. 4 (2014): 346; Dominique Kalifa, “Crime Scenes: Criminal Topography and Social Imaginary in Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *French Historical Studies* 27, no. 1 (2004): 175-194.

¹¹⁷ The extent to which this reflects differences in actual patterns of violence is an open question. Intriguingly, in a study of family murders among immigrants in Chicago in 1875 to 1920, Adler found that German immigrants were the most likely to kill their children. See: Jeffrey S. Adler, “We’ve Got a Right to Fight; We’re Married: Domestic Homicide in Chicago, 1875-1920,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34, no. 1 (2003): 32.

¹¹⁸ Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, 78-79.

¹¹⁹ For example: “Meisje meegetroond in een auto,” *De Telegraaf*, 18 March 1930, 5; “Zedenmisdrif,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 18 March 1930, 3; “Een minderjarig meisje aangerand,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 18

relying on the same sources, they were also reacting to and competing with one another. Even when the newspapers were generating their own content, there was therefore considerable agreement between the papers on which stories to cover and how much importance to attach to a story. About three quarters of the stories in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* appeared in at least one of the other papers. The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* was most divergent with a high proportion of minor local incidents and foreign stories of extreme or bizarre violence: only 36 per cent of its stories also appeared in the other newspapers. Where stories did appear in more than one newspaper, there was a high degree of agreement in the amount of coverage. The big stories almost invariably appeared in all the papers. The correlation between *De Telegraaf* and the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, which saw one another as rivals, was particularly high: if *De Telegraaf* devoted considerable space to a particular story, the *Algemeen Handelsblad* was very likely to do the same.¹²⁰

The phenomenon whereby newspapers converge in their content has been called 'media consonance'.¹²¹ Despite ostensibly targeting different readerships and covering different geographical areas, the newspapers were largely agreed on the salience to be accorded certain stories and there was considerable homogeneity in the content. As a consequence, the changes over time in the type of story covered were more significant than the differences between the newspapers. This chimes with the findings of other scholars.¹²² One possible result of this consonance is an amplification of the effect of media reporting. This is the view taken by Shaw, who considers consonance in the context of the agenda-setting model. Consonance increases the media's impact on public opinion because readers are not being exposed to a diversity of messages.¹²³ With regard to crime news in the Dutch media, this meant readers of all newspapers were being exposed to a similar assortment of stories carrying similar messages about gender and violence.

3.7 Form, style and the question of sensationalism

As discussed in Section 3.1, the rise of the mass media was accompanied by a change in form and style, known as New Journalism. That applied to crime articles too. Style elements such as headlines were used more frequently and the tone of the articles became more emotive and empathic. Yet these changes must not be exaggerated. In the literature, the crime reporting of New Journalism has often been termed sensationalist, but that is

March 1930, 13; "Aanranding door een Rotterdams automobilist," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 18 March 1930, 17.

¹²⁰ Correlation coefficient of 0.91 for the number of lines per case, for stories appearing in both newspapers in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

¹²¹ Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 59.

¹²² Claire Wardle, "'It could happen to you'. The move towards 'personal' and 'societal' narratives in newspaper coverage of child murder, 1930-2000," *Journalism Studies* 7, no. 4 (2006): 520.

¹²³ Eugene F. Shaw, "Agenda-setting and Mass Communication," *International Communication Gazette* 25, (1979): 102-104.

misleading.¹²⁴ Dutch journalists used sensationalism selectively as a strategy and most crime news fitted an institutionalist narrative.

Headlines for individual articles were a ‘new’ element in the late nineteenth century. They made it easier for the readers to navigate the newspaper. In 1880, almost none of the items logged for this study had their own heading but even in 1895 between 37 per cent (in the *Algemeen Handelsblad*) and 79 per cent (in *De Telegraaf*) of all the crime items had a headline. By 1930, nearly all the articles had their own headlines and many longer articles had crossheads as well. Headlines were an intrinsic part of the article, telling the reader what to expect. At their simplest, they were a short, neutral statement of the subject matter (“Murder in Tilburg”).¹²⁵ Longer headlines comprising a main heading and one or more subheadings summarized the content, letting the reader quickly absorb the main message (‘He stabbed his wife with a knife. Eight months demanded’).¹²⁶ Headings were also used to attract the reader’s attention and entice them to go on and read the article, for example by suggesting a mystery (“A mysterious poisoning case”, “Infanticide?”).¹²⁷ Many headlines were designed to arouse an emotion rather than simply designate the subject matter. That might be condemnation of the perpetrator (“Depraved parents”) or sympathy with the victim (“Poor wife and children”).¹²⁸ But in countless examples the headline simply aims to evoke shock and horror. An exclamation mark is added, the incident is described as a drama or scandal, or intensifying adjectives such as “horrific” (“*gruwelijk*”) are used.

A comparison of *De Telegraaf* and *De Courant* gives an interesting insight into the influence of the headlines and the wider context on the impact of crime news.¹²⁹ As explained earlier, *De Courant* was a *kopblad* using content from *De Telegraaf* but targeting a much more working-class readership. Accordingly, it had fewer pages than *De Telegraaf*, more sport and fewer articles on culture. In the news section, there was a much greater focus on accidents and crime. Moreover, these items appeared on the front page. The front page of *De Telegraaf* was always taken up with foreign news and even the story of the rape and murder of a nurse in Bennekom, one of the biggest crime stories of the year, was tucked away on the inside pages of the paper. The headings in *De Courant* were also adapted to suit the more working-class readership. This occasionally involved the replacement or elimination of ‘difficult’ words. Headlines were also often longer with more information and more explicit wording. The *De Courant* reader would be able to get all the information they needed from the headline. The headlines were no more emotive or

¹²⁴ Examples include: Rowbotham, Stevenson, and Pegg, *Crime News*, 86; Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, 36-37.

¹²⁵ “Moord te Tilburg,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 25 October 1920, 13.

¹²⁶ “Zijn vrouw met mes gestoken. Acht maanden geëischt,” *De Telegraaf*, 25 December 1930, 11.

¹²⁷ “Kindermoord?” *De Telegraaf*, 17 May 1920, 6; “Een geheimzinnige vergiftigingszaak,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 5 November 1920, 5.

¹²⁸ “Ontaarde ouders,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 12 January 1910, 3; “Arme vrouw en kinderen,” *De Telegraaf*, 6 February 1920, 7.

¹²⁹ Based on a comparison of articles on family and sexual violence in March 1930 and on general content in the week beginning 20 October 1930.

dramatic than in the *De Telegraaf*, but the stories gained in impact simply by being placed on the front page in a newspaper that clearly placed a high priority on crime news.

Another style element associated with New Journalism was the image, but even in the interwar period, images were still used only sparingly for crime stories. As early as 1895, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* occasionally printed illustrations alongside its crime reports. For example, a report on a local boy who had gone missing included a drawing of his head.¹³⁰ The use of photographs was restricted for a long time by technical limitations: printing photographs in newspapers was both costly and time-consuming. That changed after 1920 and all newspapers started including photographs, both in a separate photo-page and alongside articles. However, only the most prominent crime stories seemed to warrant such treatment. In the *Leeuwarder Courant* and *Algemeen Handelsblad*, only one story of private violence – the rape and murder of the nurse in Bennekom – was accompanied by photographs in the sample years covered in the present study. The relatively downmarket *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* was most profuse in the use of photographs to illustrate crime reports. That points to another reason why Dutch newspapers did not include many images before the 1920s: journalists resisted this innovation as they feared that “pictures would appeal to readers’ emotions, resulting in superficiality and sensationalism”.¹³¹ The more upmarket newspapers were happy to print photographs of sporting events and royal visits but remained reluctant to do so for murders.

¹³⁰ “Een knaap vermist,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 25 November 1895, 17.

¹³¹ Marcel Broersma, “Visual Strategies. Dutch Newspaper Design between Text and Image, 1900-2000,” in *Form and Style in Journalism. European Newspapers and the Representation of News, 1880-2005*, ed. Marcel Broersma (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 184-186.



This article reports on the rape and murder of a nurse in Bennekom, with a photograph of the suspect. Source: *De Telegraaf*, 3 March 1930, 5.

Figure 5 Headlines and photographs were a hallmark of New Journalism.

This raises the question of how sensationalist the Dutch crime reports were in practice. The rise of the mass-market media has often been associated with sensationalism but was that actually the case? As a term, sensationalism dates back to the nineteenth century when it had a pejorative connotation. It ran counter to the rationality that was prized at the time, and it was thought capable of leading to vice and depravity.¹³² This negative association is often still found among modern scholars, who dismiss sensational content as irrelevant and not worthy of study while failing to define what they mean by the term. This attitude has been critiqued by both Joy Wiltenburg, who has examined sensationalism in early modern German broadsides, and Gretchen Soderlund, who has explored its use in reporting on sex trafficking in the US and UK around the turn of the previous century. Wiltenburg defines sensationalism as “the purveyance of emotionally charged content, mainly focused on violent crime, to a broad public”.¹³³ Sensationalist accounts focus on the victim whereas the judicial process concentrates on the accused. Wiltenburg argues that sensational reports are persuasive precisely because they operate

¹³² “Misdaad en prikkel-literatuur,” *De Telegraaf*, 19 November 1910, 11.

¹³³ Joy Wiltenburg, “True Crime: The Origins of Modern Sensationalism,” *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 5 (2004): 1377.

through the emotions: they produce a shared response amongst readers to the violent crimes they are describing by using such textual elements as direct dialogue, emotive language, graphic descriptions of the violence and dramatic juxtaposition.¹³⁴ Soderlund sees sensationalism as a strategy that can have positive effects. For example, Stead, the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, thought sensationalism was justified as a way of revealing deep truths about social abuses and arousing the public to take action.¹³⁵

A close examination of the logged crime text shows that some headlines and articles were sensationalist and that the use of sensationalist elements increased from the turn of the century. But the sensationalist style was used sparingly and reserved for particular violent or horrific attacks. As might be expected, the relatively downmarket *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* was most likely to use emotive language. The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* also regularly used dialogue and graphic descriptions of the incident to dramatic effect, as in the following 1910 article about an attempted murder by a Groningen man of his former partner, Gepke. The impact is enhanced by the use of direct speech, active verbs and short sentences:

“In the middle of the night, P. jumped through her window and entered her room. ‘Let’s make things right again before it’s too late’, he said. In the last few days he had had a desperate criminal urge, he felt he had to kill Gepke and himself. Gepke cried for mercy as she jumped out of her bed. But he didn’t hear her, he lifted the revolver and shot, calling ‘You must die’. But he missed. Gepke ran around the table until he grabbed hold of her. Then he fired three more shots, one in her thumb. Now she rushed out of the room and collapsed below, on the threshold of the door. ‘You won’t get away,’ he screamed and shot again, hitting her in the shoulder. Gepke lay there unconscious.”¹³⁶

This extract is also an example of what Kobie van Krieken terms a narrative-internal discourse report, namely a report in which the narrative is dramatized “by revealing what the people involved were saying or thinking while the newsworthy event took place” but

¹³⁴ Joy Wiltenburg, “Formen des Sensationalismus in frühneuzeitlichen Kriminalberichten,” in *Verbrechen im Blick. Perspektiven der neuzeitlichen Kriminalitätsgeschichte*, ed. Rebekka Habermas and Gerd Schwerhoff (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2009), 323-338; Maarten Charles J. Franck, “‘Daer en is geen liefde of barmherticheyt meer in ons’. Percepties over criminaliteit en criminaliteitsberichtgeving in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden gedurende de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw,” *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 12, no. 1 (2009): 7.

¹³⁵ Soderlund, *Sex Trafficking*, 15-19, 23.

¹³⁶ “Midden in den nacht sprong P. bij haar door het raam en drong in haar kamer binnen. - Laat ons het nog in orde maken, voor het te laat is, zei hij. Hij had in de laatste dagen een wanhopigen drang tot misdaad, hij meende Gepke en zichzelf te moeten dooden. Gepke riep om genade, terwijl zij uit het bed sprong. Maar hij hoorde niet, hief de revolver op en schoot, daarbij roepend: — Dood moet je. Hij trof echter niet. Gepke liep om de tafel tot hij haar vast greep. Drie schoten loste hij toen nog, waarvan één in haar duim. Zij snelde nu de kamer uit en beneden op den drempel van de deur viel zij neer. — Ontkomen zul je niet, schreeuwde hij en schoot nogmaals, haar in den schouder treffend. Gepke bleef bewusteloos liggen.” In “Doodslag,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 27 October 1910, 10.

without presenting this narrative as a communication by a source.¹³⁷ In this particular case, the narrative is from a trial report and presumably a reworking of information that came to light at the trial but it is not presented as such (for example, the journalist does not write “P. said at the trial that he had jumped through her window”). According to Van Krieken’s analyses of murder stories in Dutch newspapers over the past 150 years, the narrative-internal discourse report was common up to the mid-twentieth century and was used to create lively accounts. Such reports make the reader a mediated witness, bringing them closer to the event being described and helping them develop “an emotional alignment with eyewitnesses to that crime”.¹³⁸

The emotive impact of the sensationalist and narrative elements was, however, counteracted by the institutional focus of most articles. The above extract is typical of many dramatic accounts in the Dutch press in that it was based on official sources and sandwiched between an opening section and closing section in more formal legal language. The dominance of the police and judicial perspective is also evident from an analysis of the words used in the articles. Frequency counts can be represented in a ‘word cloud’, where the size of the word corresponds to the frequency – the larger the word, the more often it appears in the texts. Word clouds have been created for the top 100 nouns in each of the Dutch newspapers.¹³⁹ Figure 6 gives the word clouds for the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant* and *De Telegraaf*. Institutional terms associated with the investigation and trial, such as ‘police’, ‘accused’, ‘suspect’ and ‘witness’, are far more prominent than sensational words such as ‘drama’. This is even the case for *De Telegraaf* and *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, the two more populist newspapers, which would be expected to make the most use of sensational language.

¹³⁷ Kobie Van Krieken, “Linguistic Viewpoint in Crime News Narratives. Form, Function and Impact” (PhD thesis, Radboud University Nijmegen, 2016), 138,

¹³⁸ Van Krieken, “Linguistic Viewpoint,” 31, 270-272.

¹³⁹ The application Word Cloud (www.wordcloud.com) was used for this. Proper nouns, that is names of people and places, were excluded. Singular, plural and diminutive forms were treated as one word.

Figure 6 Word clouds showing word frequencies in newspaper stories.

¹⁴⁰ Wardle, "It could happen," 520-521.

An examination of the Dutch items also shows that personal and societal narratives were rare: more than 80 per cent of the stories concerned the police investigation or the trial proceedings, and most of the remaining stories were simply a description of the incident. Personal narratives usually concerned the victim's recovery, or funeral if the victim had been killed, but there were only a few such items. Because journalists could not obtain this information through the usual channels, it required an additional effort, and such articles seem to be reserved for particularly appealing victims, namely young women and children.

The predominance of institutional narratives affected not just the language but also the content. It meant that stories reflected the perspective of the police and judiciary. Journalists were more likely to report information that was deemed relevant by the authorities and less likely to provide information that had a low priority for the criminal justice system. Journalists were also more likely to cover stories for which the police actively sought publicity. The implications of this for the reporting on family and sexual violence are explored in the following three chapters.

Conclusion

Three questions were set out at the start of this chapter. The first question concerned the changes in the target readership and the impact on press coverage of family and sexual violence. This chapter has shown that with the rise of the mass media, the target readerships expanded to encompass both female readers and (for some papers at least) the lower classes. This was accompanied by an expansion of the imagined community as constructed in the newspapers' content: women and the working class became fully fledged members of Dutch society. To appeal to these new readers, journalists developed a more accessible style known as New Journalism. Stories of violence involving women and children were also part of this strategy as they fitted in with the new emphasis on human interest stories and were thought to appeal to female readers. Journalists prioritized stories that involved extreme violence and mystery and applied simplification to convey a clear message.

The second question was about the mediating effect of the sources. Journalists obtained their stories from the police, the courts and other media. The sources affected the geographical spread of the coverage, with a predominance of local stories and (when reporting stories from abroad) of particular countries. Moreover, because journalists were using the same sources, this led to a high degree of homogeneity between newspapers. The use of the police and courts as sources also gave an institutional bias to the crime reports, with few personal narratives.

The third question concerned the role of the press in engaging readers with the crime stories. There is evidence that the papers were choosing stories that resonated with

the general public. With the advent of New Journalism, stories became more emotive but sensationalism as a strategy was used only selectively and most stories used the institutional language of the police and courts. Moreover, journalists adopted a respectful and passive attitude to the criminal justice system. The routine use of initials and lack of other information about Dutch perpetrators, along with the journalists' practice of never commenting on judgments and sentencing, reduced the potential for readers to engage in the prosecution process. Thus, the press reinforced the exclusion of laypeople from the administration of justice in the Netherlands, which was discussed in the previous chapter.

This chapter has considered press coverage of family and sexual violence as a whole. The following three chapters examine the individual categories of violence, focusing on newspapers' construction of violence and the role played by gender. Chapter 4 looks at intimate partner violence, which accounted for 60 per cent of the total coverage of family and sexual violence.¹⁴¹ Chapter 5 explores parental maltreatment of their children: physical abuse and neglect, abandonment, infanticide and other filicides. Such stories accounted for 13 per cent of the total coverage. Chapter 6 considers stories of sexual assault, which made up 27 per cent of the overall coverage.

¹⁴¹ Expressed as the number of lines.

Chapter 4: Intimate partner violence in the news

This chapter considers press coverage of intimate partner violence, defined as violence between courting, cohabiting or separated couples and cases of 'unrequited love'. It might be expected that this coverage would change between 1880 and 1930, given the developments discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. With the spread of the breadwinner model, the home became revered as a domestic haven and men were expected more than ever to protect and provide for their family. At the same time, women gained a voice in the public sphere from the 1890s and they became a key target group for newspapers. That was also true of the working class. This chapter looks at how these changes affected newspapers' coverage of intimate partner violence, a form of violence that fractured domestic peace, involved female protagonists and was widely associated with the working class.¹

The historiography on newspaper reporting of violence between partners in this period is characterized by two distinct but interrelated strands. Firstly, historians have been interested in misrepresentation in newspaper accounts and how that reflects gendered expectations. For example, historians of fin-de-siècle France have argued that women were portrayed as driven by passion in a way that concealed the economic basis for their violent actions.² Secondly, historians have examined journalists' moral assessments of male and female violence, asking why some perpetrators received sympathy while others were harshly criticized. Thus Strange argues that in Australia, men who committed intimate femicide were judged by newspapers according to notions of acceptable masculinity. Men who killed unfaithful wives out of jealousy received sympathy while cold men who had apparently never loved their partner did not.³ The two strands come together in Lucy Bland's study of Edith Thompson. Thompson was executed for incitement of her lover to murder her husband in 1922 following widespread vilification in the press, in what has since been seen as a miscarriage of justice. Bland argues that she was misrepresented in the newspapers as self-indulgent and a femme fatale because she "represented the danger of the post-war sexual modern woman".⁴

This chapter aims to build on this scholarship by shifting the focus of the questions asked and expanding the scope of the material studied. The first question addressed here concerns the construction of partner violence by newspapers. However, rather than focusing on the misrepresentation of actual violence, it asks what effect the changing

¹ Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship*, 34-67; Ferguson, *Gender and Justice*, 56-92.

² Ann-Louise Shapiro, "L'amour aux assises : la femme criminelle et le discours judiciaire à la fin du XIXe siècle," *Romantisme*, no. 68 (1990): 61-74; Eliza Earle Ferguson, "Domestic violence by another name: crimes of passion in fin-de-siècle Paris," *Journal of Women's History* 19, no. 4 (2007): 12-34.

³ Carolyn Strange, "Masculinities, Intimate Femicide".

⁴ Bland, "Edith Thompson," 647; Lucy Bland, *Modern women on trial: sexual transgression in the age of the flapper* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 102-131.

readership and the sources used had on journalists' presentation of male and female violence. The influence of the feminization of newspapers in particular is an area that has barely been touched upon in the literature, despite the obvious relevance. The second question deals with the responses journalists were aiming to evoke in readers and the strategies they used to achieve this. Moral judgement, with sympathy or disapprobation for the perpetrator, is viewed here as just one of several possible strategies for telling stories of partner violence. The present chapter also differs from much of the work on intimate partner violence in the press in that it covers all forms of intimate partner violence appearing in the papers, including minor incidents, incidents that ended in suicide and foreign stories. Most studies to date have concentrated on coverage of trials for lethal partner violence.⁵ The comprehensive data used in the present chapter gives a more accurate picture of the impression readers would have had of intimate partner violence from newspapers.

The chapter starts by looking at changes in the coverage of intimate partner violence over time. Coverage increased considerably up to the First World War as such stories were used to appeal to the new target group of female readers but fell thereafter. The second section looks at foreign stories. These were out-of-the ordinary tales, often involving high-status protagonists and extreme violence. Their function was to entertain readers and to provide a contrast to the Dutch imagined community. Section 4.3 looks at the representation of intimate partner violence in the Netherlands. It was portrayed as a working-class phenomenon. Male violence differed in nature from female violence: men were more dangerous, both for their victims and the wider community. But male violence was also romanticized as an act of passion, while chronic violence was ignored. The fourth section considers attitudes to male and female perpetrators. It is shown that arguments of provocation did not play a big role in the Dutch media discourse, in part reflecting the specific legal situation in the Netherlands. The final section looks at the strategies journalists used as an alternative to moral judgements: they used humour, presented cases as whodunnits or depicted the incident as a tragedy for all involved.

4.1 Changing coverage of intimate partner violence

Stories of violence between couples were a significant part of the newspapers' coverage of private violence. About half the space devoted to private violence (based on the number of lines) involved articles on partner violence in the two local newspapers (47 per cent in the *Leeuwarder Courant* and 55 per cent in the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*) and around two thirds in the two national newspapers (68 per cent in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* and 71 per cent in *Het Nieuws van de Dag* and *De Telegraaf*).

⁵ See for example: Carolyn Strange, "Masculinities, Intimate Femicide"; Bland, "Edith Thompson"; Wiener, *Men of Blood*, Chapters 4-7; Eliza Earle Ferguson, *Gender and Justice*, 1-17.

The number of lines dedicated to intimate partner violence increased from 1880 to reach a peak in 1910, just before the First World War. Coverage fell sharply in 1920 and rose again in 1930 but never regained pre-war levels (see Table 10). Moreover, because the newspapers had far more pages in 1930 than in the pre-war period, domestic violence stories made up a smaller proportion of the available news hole in the interwar period than before the war. There is, however, a difference between the local and the national papers: both the *Leeuwarder Courant* and the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* saw coverage rise in 1930 because they were covering local incidents of severe domestic violence at great length. For all the newspapers, the number of distinct cases fluctuated less over time than the number of lines. In other words, when coverage increased, it was mainly because newspapers were writing more about individual cases rather than because they were covering more stories.

The peak in coverage prior to the First World War was due to a confluence of factors. In the previous chapter, we saw that newspapers started to target female readers in the late nineteenth century as these were the consumers whom advertisers wanted to reach. In 1895 and even more in 1910, journalists were using foreign stories of murders and romance as part of their strategy to attract women readers. This was particularly marked for the two national newspapers, which could make use of their foreign correspondents in the main European capitals. In 1910, foreign cases accounted for about three quarters of the coverage of intimate partner violence in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *De Telegraaf*. Press coverage in that year was also boosted by the Crippen case, a British story that caused an international sensation, in which Hawley Crippen and his lover Ethel Le Neve were tried for the murder of his wife Cora Crippen. As Julie Early writes, “The case had everything: transatlantic escape, cross dressing, the first capture by wireless, an office romance” and it was covered in exhaustive detail by all the Dutch newspapers.⁶ This story alone accounted for half of the coverage of domestic violence by the *Algemeen Handelsblad* in 1910.

⁶ Early, “Keeping ourselves to ourselves,” 171.

Table 10 Coverage of intimate partner violence, 1880-1930.

Newspaper	Year	No. of cases	No. of lines	Average no. of lines per page
<i>Leeuwarder Courant</i>	1880	29	479	0.5
	1895	35	1,304	0.8
	1910	53	4,429	2.0
	1920	25	655	0.4
	1930	43	2,485	0.8
<i>Algemeen Handelsblad</i>	1880	30	855	0.5
	1895	39	1,691	1.0
	1910	41	7,468	2.3
	1920	33	1,197	0.4
	1930	40	1,464	0.3
<i>Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad</i>	1880	35	606	0.6
	1895	139	4,949	2.2
	1910	116	8,581	3.3
	1920	57	2,343	1.2
	1930	141	6,625	1.5
<i>Het Nieuws van de Dag</i>	1880	33	588	0.3
<i>De Telegraaf</i>	1895	40	2,709	1.4
	1910	69	13,006	5.2
	1920	34	2,455	1.1
	1930	68	2,849	0.8
All newspapers	1880	75	2,528	0.5
	1895	180	10,653	1.5
	1910	157	33,484	3.2
	1920	82	6,650	0.8
	1930	189	13,423	0.8

Source: www.delpher.nl, Algemeen Handelsblad, Leeuwarder Courant, Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; Het Nieuws van de Dag, all issues in 1880; De Telegraaf, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

Another factor in the peak in coverage in 1910 was a surge in stories of sweetheart violence. This reflected rising concern about the moral dangers facing girls and young women. As was noted in Chapter 2, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, social campaigners and opinion-makers voiced worries about the dangers young women faced

from men when travelling unsupervised or at work. Newspaper crime reporting keyed into these fears by focusing on stories of girls in their teens or early twenties attacked by their sweetheart or former boyfriend. The articles seem to address the readers in their capacity as parents who would empathize with the victim's parents. A recurring theme is the powerlessness of the victim's parents to prevent the attack and protect their daughter. In January 1910, a 17-year-old factory worker called Juliana van Driest was shot dead by her 21-year-old boyfriend J. Vlootman. She had got to know him while out skating a year earlier. Her parents approved of the relationship initially but ordered it to end when they discovered the boyfriend had a criminal record. But Juliana continued seeing Vlootman in secret, meeting up when she came out of the corset factory where she worked. The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* began its account of the murder from the point of view of her mother and father, waiting at home that evening for their daughter, who never appeared.⁷ At her funeral, her father uttered a word of warning to young people "to be careful when they begin courting" (*om voorzichtig te zijn wanneer zij een verkeering beginnen*).⁸

Coverage of intimate personal violence declined in the interwar period. Firstly, there were fewer foreign stories. In the aftermath of the First World War, with new regimes in many European countries, the newspapers' foreign correspondents were now concentrating on political and economic news. The society news from foreign capitals in which intimate partner violence stories featured and that were designed to appeal to women readers declined in importance. Female readers were now catered to in a wide range of specialist sections (for example, on the cinema and travel). It is also possible that the tales of romance and murder in high places that had dominated the pre-war foreign items were in shorter supply following the social upheavals and more egalitarian societies in many countries. Secondly, stories of sweetheart violence received less attention in the interwar period. This was not because fears about young girls had subsided; as was seen in Chapter 2, there was widespread concern in the interwar period about the dangers posed by new forms of entertainment such as the cinema and dance halls. In the newspapers too, young women still featured as victims in many articles. However, now the threat came from strangers in the form of *sexual* violence rather than from lovers in the form of *physical* violence (see Chapter 6). By 1930, most stories concerned violence between married or cohabiting couples in the Netherlands. Dramatic incidents, particularly if occurring locally, could still command long articles but intimate partner violence no longer played an important role in newspapers' overall content. By this point, the newspapers had become family papers that venerated the home life and presented an idealized picture of domesticity in their women's sections and in advertising images. Stories of domestic strife sat uneasily with this cult of domesticity.

⁷ "Liefdesdrama," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 21 January 1910, 2; "De moord achter het Rijksmuseum," *De Telegraaf*, 13 May 1910, 6.

⁸ "Het vermoorde meisje," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 27 January 1910, 2.

The next two sections, Sections 4.2 and 4.3, deal with the construction of intimate partner violence in stories from abroad and Dutch stories respectively. Foreign stories are handled separately for a number of reasons. They were a significant element in the overall coverage of intimate partner violence, accounting for some 43 per cent of all cases. They were also different in nature and had a different purpose to the stories of incidents in the Netherlands.

4.2 Representation of intimate partner violence: Foreign stories

The foreign stories of intimate partner violence were out-of-the-ordinary tales of love and passion intended to entertain readers, especially female readers. But they also carried an implicit message about the imagined community of the Dutch nation and affirmed the community's values through the contrast they presented. A key feature of Anderson's concept of the imagined community is that it is geographically delimited. In his discussion of the early newspapers' role in creating an imagined community in the Americas, he talks of the "provinciality" of the colonial papers, which constructed a world distinct from the metropolis but also distinct from, if similar to, other colonies.⁹ In the Dutch newspapers, the foreign crime items were stories from different worlds, a fact that was underlined by the physical location of these items in separate parts of the paper to the Dutch stories. In the pre-war *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *De Telegraaf*, the foreign stories were printed in the 'Foreign News' (*Buitenland*) section. In the interwar period, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* printed short articles on foreign domestic violence alongside other bizarre or amusing stories from abroad in its 'Miscellaneous News' (*Gemengd Nieuws*) section. The content too often emphasized the 'otherness' of the incident, and indeed of the society in which the case took place. Items refer to capital punishment or trial by jury, often putting these 'un-Dutch' judicial practices in a bad light. For example, a recurring trope was the jury that acquits a clearly guilty perpetrator.¹⁰ These stories provided confirmation of the unreliability of juries and hence of the superiority of the Dutch criminal justice system.

The contrast that foreign crime stories presented with the Dutch imagined community was also tied to an imaginative geography of partner violence: different countries contrasted with the Netherlands in different ways.¹¹ Crimes of passion were not exclusive to France but that country – and Paris in particular – was the most common setting for such stories. In these stories, the protagonists were portrayed as driven to act by love and jealousy; they were creatures of their emotions. Moreover, French society displayed sympathy and understanding for their actions. In 1880, the Dutch papers reported the trial of Marie Bière, who had shot her unfaithful lover but was acquitted by the jury,

⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 64-65.

¹⁰ *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 1 November 1880, 9; *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 11 April 1910, 17; "Het recht van de jury," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 24 April 1930, 3.

¹¹ As discussed in Chapter 3, the concept of an 'imaginative geography' comes from Said, see: Said, *Orientalism*, 49-72.

“not because the fact of her assassination was not proven, as this had happened in public and had been admitted by her, but because she confessed that she had done it out of desperation”. In acquitting, the jury was doing no more than reflecting the public mood, according to the *Leeuwarder Courant*.¹² At the other extreme were the stories of non-European perpetrators in the colonies. They were portrayed as cruel, superstitious and prone to extreme violence for trivial reasons. In one story, a “native” (*inlander*) hacked his wife almost to death in a row about the paltry sum of less than two guilders. In another story, a Chinese “field coolie” (*veldkoelie*) immediately assumed when his girlfriend failed to visit him in hospital that she must have another lover and accordingly murdered her.¹³ Both the French protagonists and the non-Western offenders had in common that they lacked self-control and were governed by their emotions. Because such behaviour is positioned in the newspapers as un-Dutch, the implicit message is that the Dutch do not behave this way.¹⁴

The foreign stories were entertaining and newsworthy because they were not run-of-the-mill domestic violence. Journalists had a much wider range of foreign intimate partner violence stories to choose from compared with Dutch incidents, and they could select stories that had particularly appealing news values. We therefore see a high proportion of cases involving high-status individuals, extreme violence and elements of mystery – all news values that were identified as important in the previous chapter. In foreign stories where the social status could be deduced, 42 per cent involved middle-class or upper-class protagonists (the rest were lower-middle or working class). This is much higher than would be expected based on their share of the population. Moreover, stories about the middle or upper classes were distinctly longer: a typical foreign story about a middle or upper-class couple received 292 lines in the study newspapers, compared with 34 lines for working-class couples. Foreign stories also overwhelmingly involved murder: 76 per cent of the cases resulted in the death of the victim, and such cases accounted for 93 per cent of the coverage.¹⁵ Another sign that journalists were selecting foreign stories precisely because they were out of the ordinary is the relatively high proportion of cases with a female perpetrator. Women perpetrators accounted for about one third of all cases whereas – as was argued in Chapter 2 – the evidence suggests a smaller proportion in practice.

¹² “niet omdat het feit harer sluipmoord niet bewezen was, want deze was in 't openbaar geschied en door haar zelve erkend, maar omdat zij bekende, dat zij het gedaan had uit wanhoop,” in *Leeuwarder Courant*, 14 April 1880, 1. The case of Marie Bière is discussed at length in: Appignanesi, *Trials of Passion*, 146-205.

¹³ “Moord om f 1.70,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 23 December 1930, 15; “Moord in Deli,” *De Telegraaf*, 10 November 1910, 3.

¹⁴ The use of structural oppositions as a way of conveying an ideology, often while only overtly stating one of the two opposing concepts, is discussed in: Machin and Mayr, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 39-42.

¹⁵ Only cases where the outcome was known.

Some stories were selected because of the bizarre nature of the incident. In 1895, the papers reported the story of Bridget Cleary in Ireland, who was murdered by her husband and associates because they thought she was a witch.¹⁶ In other cases, it was the extreme nature of the violence that ensured attention. There were several stories of serial killers. One of the top stories in 1920 was that of the Frenchman Landru, dubbed the 'Bluebeard of Gambais' by the Dutch press. He was suspected of the murder of eleven women who had answered his 'lonely hearts' advertisements. Although he was only tried in 1921, the Dutch papers reported throughout 1920 on the progress of the investigation. Yet rather than describing his crimes in lurid language, the journalists instead adopted an ironic tone that portrayed Landru as quite a character, someone who frequently outwitted the detectives with his jokes and gallows humour.¹⁷

In other stories, the entertainment value lay in the mystery surrounding the perpetrator. With the improvements in international communications after 1880, it became easier for Dutch newspapers to track developments in an investigation abroad as they unfolded, which increased the suspense. This is evident in a story from Como in Italy. On 13 June 1910, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* reported that the body of a woman had been fished out of Lake Como. At that point it was only known that she was an actress staying at a local hotel. In the two weeks that followed, the newspaper printed almost daily reports on the investigation. Readers learnt that she was married, that a Russian acquaintance of the couple had been arrested and subsequently released, that the husband had fled to America and finally that he had been arrested on his arrival in New York and had confessed to the murder. At one level this was a fairly standard domestic homicide: the husband Porter Carlton drank a great deal and had killed his wife with a hammer during a quarrel. But the glamorous setting in a holiday destination, connections with the world of theatre and New York and the mystery surrounding the body turned it into a very different kind of story.¹⁸

Other cases received attention because they featured rich or aristocratic protagonists – high-status individuals. Such stories were as much about entertaining readers with gossip about these circles as they were about the act of violence itself. These stories were most popular in *De Telegraaf* and the *Algemeen Handelsblad* in the pre-war period and seem designed to appeal to female readers. They were often printed alongside items about fashions and society in the 'Foreign News' section, which was increasingly geared to women readers around this time. The crime stories were often framed as the latest

¹⁶ "Het verbranden eener 'bezetene'," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 13 June 1895, 6. This was a real event, although the circumstances were somewhat more complicated than portrayed in the press, see: Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary* (London: Pimlico, 2006).

¹⁷ "Monsieur Landru en zijn eindeloze instructie," *De Telegraaf*, 9 June 1920, 1.

¹⁸ "Raadselachtige moord," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 13 June 1910, 13; "De moord aan het Como-meer," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 15 June 1910, 7; "De moord aan het Como-meer," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 21 June 1910, 13; "De moord aan het Como-meer," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 23 June 1910, 12; "De moord aan het Como-meer," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 27 June 1910, 16.

sensation that ‘everyone’ was talking about. One such sensation in 1910 was the trial of Countess Tarnowska in Venice, which was covered at length by both national papers. Tarnowska was the ultimate femme fatale who was accused of persuading one of her lovers to kill another after he had changed his will in her favour.¹⁹ The *Algemeen Handelsblad* adopted a moralistic tone disapproving of the licentious circles in which Tarnowska moved: it opened its article on 16 March 1910 with the words “We will not regale our readers with all the details that the trial of Tarnowska in Venice is revealing: it is a disgusting world [...]” Yet it still provided countless anecdotes illustrating the decadent world of the Russian aristocracy.²⁰ Thus Dutch readers were given a glimpse of a society far removed from their own while at the same time receiving affirmation that its values were not theirs.

Many of these foreign stories were reminiscent of the romantic fiction of the day, involving love in aristocratic circles and melodramas in bourgeois settings.²¹ Stories contain elements from the genre of romantic novels, such as star-crossed lovers unable to marry, officers acting from reasons of honour, or the seduced and abandoned woman seeking revenge.²² In fact, explicit comparisons between stories of intimate partner violence and the world of fiction are a recurring theme in the foreign items. In the above-mentioned article on Countess Tarnowska, the *Algemeen Handelsblad* remarked that the Venetian jury members must have felt they were reading a novel.²³ Cross-fertilization with fictional genres has been seen by historians in both British and French newspaper reports of intimate partner violence, which drew on the language of melodrama.²⁴ According to these historians, the use of melodramatic motifs made the stories more accessible for readers but could be limiting. Frost argues it led to more simplified and superficial accounts while Shapiro sees it as misleadingly portraying female perpetrators as prey to passion. The Dutch situation was somewhat different because the fictional style elements were specifically being used for foreign stories. In that context, they served to position the story even more firmly in a world separate from that of the reader while also making it appeal specifically to female readers, the primary consumers of romantic fiction.

To what extent did the sources influence the discourse on foreign crime in the Dutch newspapers? Many of the items are likely to have come from the newspapers’ foreign correspondents: 60 per cent of cases concerned Britain, France, Germany or Belgium: all countries where the national newspapers at least had correspondents. In some instances,

¹⁹ “The Crime of Marie Tarnowska,” *The Lotus Magazine* 7, no. 2 (1915): 85.

²⁰ “Wij zullen onzen lezers niet vergasten op alle details die het proces Tarnowska te Venetië aan den dag brengt: het is een walgelijke wereld [...]” in “Russische zeden,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 16 March 1910, 6.

²¹ Boudien de Vries, *Leescultuur in Haarlem*, 285.

²² See for example: *De Telegraaf*, 11 February 1895, 1; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, 10 April 1880, 5; “Moord op de Avenue de l’Opéra,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 2 December 1930, 5; “Het drama van Allenstein,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 7 June 1910, 5.

²³ “Russische zeden,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 16 March 1910, 6.

²⁴ Frost, “Kitty Byron,” 543-544; D’Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage*, 180; Harris, “Melodrama,” 43-48; Shapiro, “L’amour aux assises,” 67-68.

these journalists obtained their information directly by attending trials; it is known that *De Telegraaf's* correspondent Van der Veer in Edwardian London did this.²⁵ In other cases, they culled information from foreign newspapers, which was often helped by the fact that they also wrote for the newspapers in question.²⁶ Yet this did not mean they imported the foreign discourse wholesale; stories were adapted to suit a Dutch readership. The Crippen case gives a good example of the adaptation process. Early writes that British journalists saw this case first and foremost in terms of class. The accounts in British newspapers keyed into British concerns about the suburban lower-middle class and the victim Cora Crippen became seen as a prime example of the shallow, flashy suburban wife.²⁷ This context of worries about blurred class lines in the suburbs did not apply in the Netherlands. The Dutch Crippen articles therefore have a different focus. The house is described as in London with no details about the type of neighbourhood, and Cora Crippen described neutrally as a music-hall singer with no information about her character. The Dutch articles concentrate instead on the excitement of the investigation, the apprehension of the suspects and the trial, with explanations for Dutch readers of the unfamiliar aspects of the British criminal justice system. The story was primarily presented as a whodunnit in a somewhat exotic setting.²⁸

4.3 Representation of intimate partner violence: Dutch stories

This section looks at stories of violence against partners in the Netherlands. It considers first the circumstances (who did what to whom, when and how) and then the motives attributed by the press. It was suggested in the previous section that foreign stories were designed to entertain and to provide a contrast with the values and systems of the Dutch imagined community. Dutch stories, on the other hand, were informational and showed the imagined community in action; they were selected to inform readers of local disturbances and more serious violence from further afield. These accounts were in different sections of the paper to the foreign items (in 'City News', 'Domestic News' and 'Court Trials') and appeared to give a more realistic picture of intimate partner violence. They are likely to have had more influence on readers' perceptions of intimate partner violence, which is why the Dutch stories are considered here in more detail than the foreign stories. Based on agenda-setting theory (as introduced in Chapter 1), we can assume that the picture presented by the newspapers influenced what readers saw as salient forms of family violence. Forms of

²⁵ Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 102-103.

²⁶ For example, Van der Veer wrote for the *Daily Mail*, and *De Telegraaf's* correspondent in Paris at this time worked for *Le Figaro* and *Le Temps*; see: Wolf, *Geheim van de Telegraaf*, 102.

²⁷ Early, "Keeping ourselves to ourselves".

²⁸ See for example: "Een geheimzinnige moord," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 15 July 1910, 5; "De vermoorde zangeres," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 19 July 1910, 10; "De arrestatie van dr. Crippen," *De Telegraaf*, 28 July 1910, 5; "De vermoorde zangeres," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 15 August 1910, 16; "Dr. Crippen voor het onderzoekingsgerecht," *De Telegraaf*, 7 September 1910, 5.

violence that received a great deal of attention in the press would have been considered salient while other forms would not.²⁹

Circumstances

Whereas the foreign stories frequently involved high-status couples and female perpetrators, male working-class violence dominated the Dutch stories. Dutch stories were also less heavily skewed towards extreme violence: 13 per cent of cases resulted in the victim's death. The coverage as measured by the number of lines was rather more distorted (52 per cent was devoted to lethal attacks) as murders inevitably attracted the most media attention.

The vast majority of Dutch perpetrators were male. As was discussed in the previous chapter, journalists' preference for simplification meant that they usually distinguished between a clear aggressor and a clear victim. In the intimate partner assault stories, only a small proportion (about five per cent) of the cases were presented as a couple fighting with no clear aggressor. In stories where a single perpetrator was identified, women accounted for only 16 per cent. The dominance of men is in line with the literature, as discussed in Section 2.6.³⁰ However, there is evidence that journalists found female aggressors inherently more newsworthy and were therefore still over-reporting female violence. Firstly, the judicial statistics for assaults within the family show women as responsible for only 9 per cent of attacks (see Table 2 in Chapter 2). This includes assaults on children and parents but there is no reason to think the figure for assaults on the spouse only would be higher.³¹ Furthermore, a much higher proportion of the stories in the newspapers where the alleged perpetrator was female ended with the law apparently taking no action (40 per cent of cases compared with 24 per cent of cases with male perpetrators).³² This suggests that the threshold for what counted as a story worth printing was lower for women who were alleged to have used violence compared with men.

In cases where the class can be deduced (from data on the occupation or place of residence), 83 per cent involved working-class protagonists, 14 per cent the lower-middle class and only three per cent middle-class or upper-class partners. To some extent these statistics merely reflect the make-up of Dutch society. The highest class, of professionals, businessmen and high-ranked civil servants, accounted for only about five per cent of the population of Utrecht province in this period, for example, while around 87 per cent of

²⁹ McCombs and Shaw, "The agenda-setting function," 184.

³⁰ See for example: Van der Heijden, "Domestic Violence," 79; Ferguson, *Gender and Justice*, 2, 9; Wiener, *Men of Blood*, chap. 4; Vrints, *Het Theater*, 180-181; Marianne Hester, "Portrayal of women as intimate partner domestic violence perpetrators," *Violence Against Women* 18, no. 9 (2012): 1075.

³¹ The proportion of female perpetrators for the period 1870-1886 when only assaults on parents were included was also 9 per cent, while studies show higher proportions of women as perpetrators of assaults on children. See for example: Buckley, "Child neglect," 62-3.

³² This excludes cases where the perpetrator committed suicide.

Rotterdam's population belonged to the working class or lower-middle class at the end of the nineteenth century.³³ But these stories also fitted with the widely held view at this time throughout Western society of domestic violence as a working-class phenomenon.³⁴ Moreover, studies in Britain, France and Belgium show that those accused of assaults in the criminal courts were overwhelmingly from the lower classes.³⁵ However, the extent to which intimate partner violence was actually confined to the poor is a matter of debate. Hammerton argues that in Britain the lower classes used the criminal courts, but the middle classes used the divorce courts to deal with marital cruelty. His analysis of nineteenth-century divorce court records shows physical abuse occurring among all classes.³⁶ Other historians point out that domestic violence among the working classes was particularly difficult to keep hidden because of the lack of privacy in urban working-class quarters. People lived in cramped conditions, often in a house shared with other families, with communal areas and thin walls.³⁷ Perhaps the Dutch newspapers were not covering middle-class violence because such incidents could remain hidden in the privacy of the home. It is notable that of the eight cases in the Dutch newspapers involving higher-status couples, seven involved either deaths or protagonists who were not cohabiting – in other words, they were incidents that unavoidably became public.

While most cases in the Dutch newspapers throughout the period concerned the working class, the representation of class changed over time, in parallel with the expanding readership and the incorporation of the working class into the Dutch imagined community. In 1880, when newspaper readerships consisted of a relatively small group of middle-class men, domestic violence was virtually synonymous with the working class. This was also the period of rapid urbanization, in which the new urban poor seemed to be posing a threat of social disorder (see Chapter 2). In the newspapers, item after item told of lower-class men returning home drunk and beating up their wives. This was seen as a deplorable but inevitable state of affairs. These stories are reminiscent of Ellen Ross's portrayal of marriage among the poor of London in the same period, in which antagonism and conflict in relationships were both acknowledged and expected.³⁸ At the same time, plebeian women are portrayed in the Dutch press as able to give as good as they got. One item described a notorious local wife-beater being chased down the street by a group of ten women

³³ Marco H.D. van Leeuwen and Ineke Maas, "Social Mobility in a Dutch Province, Utrecht 1850-1940," *Journal of Social History* 30, no. 3 (1997): 625-626; Manneke, *Uit oogpunt van politie*, 50-53.

³⁴ Aitken, "Horrors of Matrimony"; Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship*, 56-57.

³⁵ Eliza Earle Ferguson, *Gender and Justice*, 128-155; D'Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage*, 11-18; Behlmer, "Summary Justice," 232-233; Vrints, *Theater*, 26-35.

³⁶ Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship*, 102-133. Fingard finds the same in Nova Scotia in a study of the records of cruelty organizations, see: Judith Fingard, "The Prevention of Cruelty, Marriage Breakdown and the Rights of Wives in Nova Scotia, 1880-1900," *Acadiensis* XXII (1993): 86.

³⁷ Eliza Earle Ferguson, "Domestic Violence," 22; Céline Regnard-Drouot, *Marseille la violente. Criminalité, industrialisation et société (1851-1914)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009), 74-75.

³⁸ Ellen Ross, "Fierce Questions and Taunts: Married Life in Working-Class London, 1870-1914," *Feminist Studies* 8, no. 3 (1982): 575-602.

screeching at him who “bore little resemblance at that moment to members of the fairer sex”.³⁹ In the newspapers of 1880, working-class protagonists, both male and female, were presented as the ‘other’, far removed from the world of the reader and his family.

By 1895, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* had reinvented itself as a paper for all Rotterdam’s inhabitants regardless of class. As such, it carried more reports on local crimes, including domestic violence. But there was no longer such a social gap between its readers and the protagonists: the readership had expanded to include the working class. This new context is reflected in the stories. A more differentiated picture is given of the lower-class people involved in the incidents. Neighbours and people on the streets, both male and female, were now reported as intervening to demonstrate their condemnation of men who used violence against women. Wife-beating had become an individual pathology rather than a class attribute and abusive men were positioned as men outside the community.

A similar process can be seen in the other newspapers as they too extended the social range of their readerships and as the working class became incorporated in the idea of the nation. Over time, a greater distinction was made between different strata within the working class. In the interwar period, many cases involved the most marginal groups: people living in lodging houses, casual labourers and prostitutes.⁴⁰ Moreover, the women even in these groups were no longer depicted as coarse and unfeminine. One of the biggest stories in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *De Telegraaf* in 1930 concerned a prostitute, Black Riek (Zwarte Riek), who had killed her lover, a waiter in Zeedijk, a street in Amsterdam’s red-light district. Much of the fascination of the case for these national newspapers seemed to lie in the insight it gave into the world of ‘darkest Amsterdam’ (*donker Amsterdam*), geographically close to the newspapers’ offices but socially far removed from both the journalists and their readers. In fact, so far removed from ordinary life that although the incident happened in the street with numerous eyewitnesses, no one ‘snitched’ to the police, who accordingly did not find out about the killing until the next day, as the *De Telegraaf* noted in amazement. Yet its account also turned Black Riek into a passive victim: it started with background information on her partner’s habitual maltreatment of her, and its description of the incident had the waiter attacking first and the woman striking out “randomly” (“*in het wilde weg*”) in defence.⁴¹

Intimate partner violence was gendered as male perpetrators differed from female perpetrators in who they attacked. Men attacked women at all stages in the relationship

³⁹ “op dat oogenblik weinig deden denken aan leden van het schoone geslacht.” In *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 11 October 1880, 5.

⁴⁰ A similar process has been observed in England: as the profile of the working class improved, wife-beating came to be associated with the residuum. See: Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship*, 45; Davies, “Youth, Violence, and Courtship,” 108.

⁴¹ “Kellner gedood na een twist. Noodlottige steekpartij op des zeedijk. Man in beschonken toestand door zijn vriendin met een mes gestoken,” *De Telegraaf*, 19 October 1930, 3; “Zwarte Riek. Drama op den Zeedijk,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 28 November 1930, 8.

whereas women primarily attacked their cohabiting spouse (see Table 11). This made men's violence seem more dangerous and more widespread. The threat from men was underlined by the high proportion of cases in which men attacked former partners or women who had rejected them – nearly one third of male attacks were on women who were not in a relationship with them at that point. Even moving to a new town was no guarantee of safety. The wife of C. in Arnhem left him and moved to Rotterdam. He followed her there and stabbed her in a café in full view of everyone.⁴²

Table 11 Perpetrator's relationship with the victim in Dutch intimate partner violence.

Number of cases by perpetrator sex, excluding cases where both partners are presented as the aggressors, and where the relationship is unknown.

Relationship with victim	Perpetrator sex			
	Female		Male	
	No.	%	No.	%
<i>Unrequited</i>	0	0%	18	6%
<i>Sweetheart</i>	5	8%	37	12%
<i>Former sweetheart</i>	5	8%	40	13%
<i>Cohabiting spouse</i>	47	78%	172	56%
<i>Separated/former spouse</i>	3	5%	35	11%
<i>Adulterous lover</i>	0	0%	5	2%
Total known	60	100%	307	100%
<i>Total not in relationship at time of attack</i>	8	13%	93	30%

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

Many items give a palpable sense of the danger presented by these men. The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*'s report of a murder that took place in May 1910 can serve as an illustration. A 28-year-old man shot and killed a teenager as she was on her way to work and then committed suicide. He had been a lodger in her family's home and had asked her to go out with him, but she had refused. The man, A., had been lying in wait since five in the morning.

⁴² "Zijn vrouw met een mes gestoken. Huiselijke oneenigheid op den Schiedamschedijk te Rotterdam. De dader in arrest gesteld," *De Telegraaf*, 15 October 1930, 5.

“When the 16-year-old girl, who was with a younger sister, saw A., she said to her sister: ‘We must give A. a friendly greeting’. Hardly had the sisters approached A. when he thrust the younger sister to one side so that he could attack his victim. He immediately drew his revolver. He shot three times; all the shots hit their target.”⁴³

The report gives a dramatic account of the event, using short sentences and active verbs. The juxtaposition of her intended friendly greeting – her final words – with his violence adds to the pathos. This incident was typical of many serious assaults by men in that it happened in a public place with bystanders. Ginger Frost finds the same in her study of violence between cohabiting couples. She argues that men used violence in public where there would be witnesses as a way of demonstrating their mastery and asserting their honour.⁴⁴

The papers based in Rotterdam or Amsterdam also reported numerous local minor incidents, in the newspapers’ own backyard, often attacks that had caused a public disturbance.⁴⁵ Figure 7 shows the location of all intimate partner assaults (including severe and fatal cases) in Amsterdam that were reported in the papers. The incidents were clustered in certain kinds of places rather than spread evenly across the city. On the one hand were assaults in and around parks (the green areas in the map). As places of recreation, these areas were frequented by the general public and any incident would therefore have been noticed by members of the public. On the other hand were incidents in the harbour areas and crowded working-class districts in the centre and west such as the Jordaan.⁴⁶ These were precisely the kind of areas mentioned earlier where there was little privacy and any domestic violence was likely to be noticed by neighbours or spill out onto public spaces. The focus on cases that caused public disorder may reflect police priorities but also the interests of the community. Anton Vrints concludes in his study of violence in interwar Antwerp that the police only took action against domestic violence when it caused a disturbance in the street, but he also finds that neighbours worried most about domestic violence when it caused a public nuisance and threatened the reputation of the neighbourhood.⁴⁷ From the perspective of readers familiar with the urban geography of the big cities, these stories would have helped cement the association of intimate partner violence with the urban working class.

⁴³ “Toen het 16-jarige meisje, dat in gezelschap was van een jongere zuster, A. zag, zeide ze tegen haar zuster: ‘Wij moeten A. vriendelijk groeten.’ Nauwelijks waren de gezusters A. genaderd, of hij smeed de jongere zuster ter zijde om op zijn slachtoffer te kunnen aan vallen; aanstonds trok hij zijn revolver. Hij vuurde drie malen; alle schoten troffen doel.” In “De moord en zelfmoord in Limburg!” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 17 May 1910, 10.

⁴⁴ Ginger Frost, “‘He Could Not Hold His Passions’: Domestic Violence and Cohabitation in England (1850-1905),” *Crime, History & Societies* 12, no. 1 (2008): 48.

⁴⁵ However, no minor incidents at all were reported in Leeuwarden.

⁴⁶ On the characteristics of the different districts, see: Owen Lammertink, “Kwetsbare vrouwen of sterke moeders? De kwetsbaarheid van ongehuwde en gehuwde moeders in het 19de-eeuwse Amsterdam,” *Holland Historisch Tijdschrift*, no. 3 (2015): 118-126.

⁴⁷ Vrints, *Theater*, 48-51.



Map of Amsterdam (1900) showing the locations of intimate partner violence incidents reported in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930 in *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, *De Telegraaf*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* and/or *Leeuwarder Courant*. Source: www.delpher.nl, www.amsterdamhistorie.nl/kaarten.

Figure 7 Locations of intimate partner violence incidents in Amsterdam.

Male violence as portrayed by the newspapers was more dangerous than female violence, not only for the woman but also for the wider community. Male perpetrators were more likely to kill or injure other people in addition to their partner. Male perpetrators were also more likely to commit suicide or end up being killed themselves. Over time, as the newspapers became papers for all the family with sections and cartoons for children, journalists also showed greater interest in the impact of domestic violence on other family members. For example, in a 1910 incident involving a husband and wife fighting in Rotterdam, readers were told that their sixteen-year-old daughter Jacoba came between them and was wounded as a result.⁴⁸ If other people became involved in an incident, that could overshadow the original domestic violence that sparked off the event. A particularly striking example was a case that came to trial in early 1930. In December of the previous year, a publican whose wife had left him went to the house where she was staying armed with a gun and threatened to kill her if she did not return. He shot a bullet through the front door. At this point the police arrived to arrest the man. He resisted and a gunfight with the policemen ensued. According to the newspaper accounts of the trial, no mention was made in the writ of summons of the shot through the door and the threats to the man's wife; he was tried exclusively for firing at the policemen.⁴⁹

Stories of male violence often involved other men coming to the rescue of the victim. Many newspaper items from 1895 onwards contrast the negative picture of the abusive partner with positive images of chivalrous neighbours, relatives or bystanders intervening to protect the woman. This contrast between gallant men protecting women

⁴⁸ "Een huiselijk drama," *De Telegraaf*, 9 May 1910, 5.

⁴⁹ "Een wildeman," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 14 February 1930, 14.

and male abusers is reminiscent of the language of chivalry used by the temperance and social purity movements as discussed in Chapter 2. It also served to portray the abusers as outsiders – outside the community as constructed through the newspapers’ stories. In later years there are several stories of male family members injuring or killing an abusive husband in defence of their female relative. The newspapers treated this use of male violence to protect women sympathetically. When 15-year-old G. Rol stabbed his father in the neck, the newspapers made it clear that the father was to blame:

“Although he has been unemployed for a year, he spends the money that he demands of his wife and children and the financial support from the municipality on drink. [...] This afternoon he was also very much under the influence of liquor. He threatened his wife several times and she had to flee into the street a few times. [...] When R. threatened her again later, his son G. got angry and stabbed his father”.⁵⁰

The other group that featured prominently in the defence of battered women was the police. The journalists’ reports were invariably complimentary about the police – unsurprisingly given that the police were probably the source of many of the stories (see Chapter 3). The journalists’ accounts stress the speed with which the police responded to calls for help and the physical risk that they themselves ran in intervening. This can be illustrated by the story mentioned earlier about the publican and the gunfight. At one point in the trial, the presiding judge asked one police officer why the policemen had started shooting when at that stage they had only heard the man had a gun and did not yet know about the shot through the door. “[...] after all, they knew him and could arrest him later for the violation [of the Gun Law]” (*omdat ze hem toch kenden en hem later wel konden arresteren voor die overtreding*). The officer replied that “[t]he policemen, learning that S. was armed, thought only of that one thing: ‘S.’s wife is in danger!’” (*De politiemannen, vernemend, dat S. gewapend was, dachten slechts aan dit ééne: ‘S.’ vrouw loopt gevaar!’*)⁵¹

Men and women differed in the weapons they used (see Table 12). Where a weapon was mentioned, men were more likely to use a gun or knife than women. Guns became more accessible from the end of the nineteenth century as prices came down, and they were regularly used in Dutch incidents from 1910 onwards.⁵² Guns were more dangerous than weapons such as knives as they were deadlier and more likely to cause collateral damage, that is, inadvertently injure bystanders. The use of guns was partly what made men more dangerous to the people around them. Women tended to resort to household objects,

⁵⁰ “Hoewel hij reeds een jaar werkloos is, verdrinkt hij het geld, dat hij van zijn vrouw en kinderen eischt en ook den geldelijken steun van de gemeente. [...] Ook hedenmiddag was hij sterk onder den invloed van sterken drank. Meermalen bedreigde hij zijn vrouw, die eenige keeren de straat op moest vluchten. [...] Toen R. later nieuwe dreigementen uitte heeft zijn zoon G. zich driftig gemaakt en zijn vader gestoken.” In “Noodlottige huiselijke twist te Hilversum,” *De Telegraaf*, 11 May 1930, 3.

⁵¹ “Bedreiging met doodslag. Een vuurgevecht tusschen politie-agenten en een verbolgen echtgenoot,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 6 February 1930, 21.

⁵² Regnard-Drouot, *Marseille la violente*, 272.

suggesting that their violence was probably more spontaneous and taking place in the family home. In general, women were more likely to use a weapon than men: 28 per cent of male attacks were performed using nothing more than their own body, compared with 11 per cent of female attacks. This reflects women's relative physical weakness: they needed a weapon to compensate for this.⁵³

Table 12 Weapons used in Dutch intimate partner violence.

Number of cases by perpetrator sex, excluding cases where both partners are presented as the aggressors and where the weapon is unknown.

Weapon	Perpetrator sex			
	Female		Male	
	No.	%	No.	%
<i>Gun</i>	4	7%	55	22%
<i>Knife</i>	14	25%	86	34%
<i>Own body</i>	6	11%	70	28%
<i>Poison</i>	9	16%	5	2%
<i>Household items</i>	9	16%	8	3%
<i>Other weapons</i>	13	24%	29	11%
Total known	55	100%	253	100%

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

Poisoning was a relatively rare method of harming the partner: only fourteen cases involved poisoning. However, poisoning stories made good copy and there is evidence that the journalists were particularly eager to print such stories: most cases never went to trial and only three women and one man were found guilty of poisoning throughout the period. An accusation of poisoning was easily made. In 1920, "public rumour" (*volksmond*) saw a suspicious connection between the deaths in quick succession of a local man and woman and the adulterous relationship between their respective partners. This was apparently enough for the law to have the two bodies exhumed.⁵⁴ Suspected poisonings also had an element of mystery that was appealing for the crime journalists. While in most domestic violence cases it was clear that a crime had been committed and who the perpetrator was, proving an act of poisoning was not straightforward. Experts did not necessarily agree on

⁵³ That women are more likely to use a weapon is shown in both modern-day and historical studies, see: Hester, "Portrayal of Women," 1072; Frigon, "Les représentations socio-pénales"; Gemma Gagnon, "L'homicide conjugal et la justice française au XIXe siècle," in *Femmes et justice pénale, XIXe-XXe siècle*, ed. Christine Bard et al. (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2002), 139-147.

⁵⁴ "Vergiftiging," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 20 April 1920, 2.

what constituted a lethal dose. In a poisoning case in 1895, *De Telegraaf* published conflicting views from experts on the poison used, antipyrine. They were disagreed on how toxic it was and whether it could be dissolved in water or alcohol.⁵⁵ Even if the presence of a toxic substance could be demonstrated in a corpse, there was still the question of whether it had intentionally been administered by the alleged perpetrator. There was always the possibility of accidental ingestion or suicide. This offered the newspapers plenty of scope for speculation.

Women were more likely to be accused of poisoning their partner than men (16 per cent of female perpetrators compared with 2 per cent of male perpetrators). Poisoning was traditionally seen as a woman's crime in Western countries. It did not require physical strength and it fitted with women's task of preparing food. It was also considered to be particularly horrific as it was unpredictable and obviously premeditated.⁵⁶ A closer examination of the stories behind the Dutch figures in Table 12 shows a more complex picture, however. Firstly, two of the biggest poisoning stories involved men as the suspects.⁵⁷ Secondly, women accused of poisoning were not necessarily maligned. A striking example is the case of Sophie van Wermeskerken-Junius, who was accused by her husband of poisoning his drink in 1895. She was a successful author and the editor of a magazine for girls. She epitomized the modern woman and would have been a household name to the kind of new middle-class woman reader the newspapers were trying to attract. Accordingly, the journalists chose her side in the affair and suggested that the husband's accusation was false. When Van Wermeskerken-Junius was released from detention during the investigation, *De Telegraaf* even printed a sympathetic interview with her.⁵⁸ The interview was a new genre typical of New Journalism and ideally suited to letting readers empathize with the interviewee.⁵⁹

Motives

The motives given in Dutch newspapers for partner violence were gendered (see Table 13). Men's assaults were depicted as a loss of control due to love and jealousy, while women's attacks were largely attributed to undefined 'quarrels'. Modern studies of domestic violence also show fundamental differences between male and female violence, but these differences are not in accordance with the picture in the Dutch newspapers. In contrast to

⁵⁵ "Anti-pyrine," *De Telegraaf*, 27 November 1895, 1; *De Telegraaf*, 1 December 1895, 1.

⁵⁶ Lisa Downing, "Murder in the Feminine: Marie Lafarge and the Sexualization of the Nineteenth-Century Criminal Woman," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18, no. 1 (2009): 134; Eliza Earle Ferguson, *Gender and Justice*, 79-80; Wiener, "Convicted Murderers," 113-115.

⁵⁷ One case in 1895 where the defendant was found innocent, see: "Uitspraak vergiftigingszaak," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 22 December 1895, 1; one case in 1910 where the defendant was found guilty and sentenced to ten years in prison, see: "Vergiftiging zijner vrouw," *De Telegraaf*, 29 September 1910, 2.

⁵⁸ "Johanna van Woude," *De Telegraaf*, 16 December 1895, 1.

⁵⁹ Broersma, "Mediating Parliament".

the modern-day evidence, chronic male violence barely featured in the newspaper reports and female assaults were rarely seen as retaliatory.

Table 13 Reason for attack in Dutch intimate partner violence.

Number of cases by perpetrator sex, excluding cases where both partners are presented as the aggressors and a reason is stated.

Reason given for attack	Perpetrator sex			
	Female		Male	
	No.	%	No.	%
<i>Passion (jealousy, rejection)</i>	14	30%	99	44%
<i>Quarrel</i>	16	34%	48	21%
<i>Madness</i>	3	6%	10	4%
<i>Victim's brutality</i>	4	9%	0	0%
<i>Drink</i>	1	2%	33	15%
<i>Other</i>	9	19%	36	16%
Total stated	47	100%	226	100%

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

Table 13 shows the reasons given by the journalists for the attack. The reason was categorized as 'passion' if the emotional state of the perpetrator at the time of the attack was described using words such as 'jealousy' or 'love', or if the act was described as due to the fear of losing the victim, an inability to live without the victim, emotional distress at rejection, or revenge for rejection. If an attack was described as originating in an argument without further information, this was classified as a 'quarrel'. The reason was classified as 'madness' if the journalists described the attack as committed 'in a fit of madness' or similar terms, or if it was reported that the criminal justice system had found the perpetrator fully or partially insane. 'Victim's brutality' was used for stories that pointed to the victim's (habitual) physical abuse of the perpetrator and presented the perpetrator's violence as an act as self-defence. The reason was classified as 'drink' if the act of violence was presented as the *result* of heavy drinking by the perpetrator. If the perpetrator was described as drinking before the act but the attack was presented as motivated by fear of losing the lover, for example, the reason was coded as an act of passion.

Male violence was often presented as motivated by love and jealousy. Fully 44 per cent of cases where a motive was given were described as an act of passion (see Table 13). This was the explanation given when men's attacks were precipitated by the wife leaving, but even attacks on young girls who had never wanted anything to do with them were

described as a 'love drama' (*liefdesdrama*).⁶⁰ This terminology was particularly prevalent in the twentieth century, when demonizing working-class male violence had become unacceptable. As mentioned above, in the nineteenth century working-class marriages were portrayed as a battlefield, far removed from the companionate ideal of the middle classes. But over time, journalists started to use the language of love to describe working-class relationships too. In the interwar period, the men themselves were explaining their actions as driven by love. One man who had stabbed his girlfriend in a pub after she flirted with someone else, told the court: "She is everything to me and I'm everything to her. I love her far too much to harm her."⁶¹

Drink was another reason given for men's violence in the newspaper articles. Dutch accounts in the nineteenth century connect men's drinking and consequent wife-beating to working-class culture, thereby collectivizing the problem.⁶² In later years, however, drink became an individual pathology, reflecting the medicalization of alcohol abuse in the early twentieth century (see Chapter 2). The extent to which drink explains domestic violence in practice is a matter of some debate. Historical studies certainly show a correlation between alcohol consumption and male violence, but this does not necessarily mean otherwise peaceable men became violent because they were drunk. Gordon points out that drinking behaviour differs between cultures and Hammerton notes that drunken abusers chose their victims with care. A recent modern study of homicides concludes that intoxication interacts with other personal, social and economic risk factors in complex ways and is not the sole cause of the lethal outcome.⁶³

Although valued very differently, both passion and drink involved a loss of control. Male perpetrators were frequently described as wild – a wild man (*een wildeman*), savage (*woest*), heated (*driftig*), like a man possessed (*als een bezetene*) – and the newspaper reports often emphasized the difficulty the police had in controlling the attacker.⁶⁴ Again, this was part of a picture in which wife abusers were presented as a danger to all around them. To a large extent, this was a class-related construction: as Hughes writes in her work on domestic violence in Scotland, working-class men were thought to be less capable of

⁶⁰ For example: "De moord en zelfmoord in Limburg!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 17 May 1910, 10; "Liefdestreuspel," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 14 July 1930, 3.

⁶¹ "Zij is alles voor mij en ik ben alles voor haar. Ik houd veel te veel van haar om haar kwaad te doen." In "Die vrouwen ook!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 7 February 1930, 14.

⁶² Hughes finds a similar process in her study of domestic violence in Scotland in the interwar period. She argues that both the men themselves and social workers linked men's wife-beating to the working-class drinking culture, which effectively collectivized male violence and absolved individual abusers from responsibility: Annmarie Hughes, "Representations and Counter-Representations of Domestic Violence on Clydeside Between the Two World Wars," *Labour History Review* 69, no. 2 (2004): 175-177.

⁶³ Linda Gordon, *Heroes of their own lives. The politics and history of family violence, Boston 1880-1960* (London: Virago, 1989), 264-266; Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship*, 46; Fingard, "The Prevention of Cruelty," 92; Van der Heijden, "Domestic Violence," 69; Miles, "Intoxication and Homicide," 884-885.

⁶⁴ For example: "Een wilde man," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 20 January 1920, 11.

exercising self-control than the middle classes.⁶⁵ The few middle-class and upper-class perpetrators in the Dutch newspapers' reports were not portrayed as wild, but they *were* described as losing control of their situation prior to the attack, abandoning their studies or their work and becoming depressed.

Women's violence was treated very differently to men's violence in the Dutch media reports. Only 30 per cent of cases involving female perpetrators were ascribed to jealousy or rejection, while undefined 'quarrels' or other reasons such as arguments about the children or money were more prevalent. Strikingly, the word "love" was almost completely absent from descriptions of female violence: it was mentioned only three times, compared with 107 times in reports of male violence. Women's violence was rarely portrayed as a loss of control and almost never resulted from drunkenness, nor were words such as "wild" used to describe their behaviour. This is not to say they were depicted as cold or calculating. They were often portrayed as highly emotional, and their own violence could have a devastating effect on their state of mind as if they themselves could not cope with what they had done. When a 58-year-old woman in Rotterdam hit her husband on the head with an axe, the *De Telegraaf* reported that *she* had to be taken to hospital "because of her overwrought state" (*in verband met haar overspannen toestand*).⁶⁶

Conflicts about everyday matters were rarely mentioned by the journalists as the motive for intimate partner violence. Studies of domestic violence in this period have shown that conflicts were often about money, men's drinking behaviour, jobs or the children.⁶⁷ Yet there is little sign of this in the Dutch domestic violence stories. Many incidents were said simply to be the result of an escalating 'quarrel' (*twist*). Journalists may have chosen this formulation from a preference for simple explanations (the news value of simplification discussed in Section 3.5). Only in detailed trial reports did the messy reality of claims and counterclaims sometimes come to light. A good example is the 1920 case of a 22-year-old waiter who had thrown vitriol at his estranged 19-year-old wife. The *Algemeen Handelsblad* printed a lengthy account of the trial. In it, the victim complained that he had been unemployed and she had had to work, while the waiter, backed up by his relatives, claimed that she was a spendthrift and he had had to pawn his gold chain.⁶⁸ The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*'s much briefer account merely stated that there had been "unpleasant incidents" (*onaangenaamheden*).⁶⁹

Much of the male violence is consistent with proprietary behaviour and a desire to regain control, although not described as such in the newspapers. In the previous

⁶⁵ Annemarie Hughes, "'Non-criminal' Class," 34.

⁶⁶ "Man door zijn overspannen vrouw gewond. Drie slagen op het hoofd," *De Telegraaf*, 12 October 1930, 6.

⁶⁷ Eliza Earle Ferguson, "Domestic Violence," 21-30; Gordon, *Heroes*, 250-288; Shapiro, "L'amour aux assises," 72; Fingard, "The Prevention of Cruelty," 94-95.

⁶⁸ "Vitrioolwerper," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 16 March 1920, 15.

⁶⁹ "Een vitrioolwerper!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 18 March 1920, 2.

subsection, it was concluded that men often attacked women who had left them or rejected them. Male violence precipitated by the wife leaving or against an estranged partner is a common pattern in the literature.⁷⁰ Modern studies of domestic violence see this refusal to let women leave or lead a life apart from them as symptomatic of controlling behaviour that combines chronic violence with instilling fear. This has been termed ‘intimate terrorism’. It is gendered behaviour, that is demonstrated virtually exclusively by men. Women’s violence, on the other hand, is largely retaliatory, that is to say in response to their partner’s brutality.⁷¹

There was little mention of chronic male violence, however, in the Dutch newspaper reports of intimate partner violence. Male assaults are presented as a single attack due to a loss of control rather than a pattern of repeated abuse, while women’s attacks are rarely portrayed as retaliation or self-defence in a violent relationship. In trials, past violence might be mentioned in passing but was relatively unimportant in the overall argument. That was the case when H. Nijp was tried for the murder of his estranged wife in Leeuwarden in 1930. The *Leeuwarder Courant* covered this local case in great detail, but only mentioned in passing that the woman had said, “I have never been beaten so much as by him [the accused]” (*Ik heb nog nooit zooveel slaag gehad als van hem*). Far more space was devoted to his work and financial situation.⁷² Chronic male violence barely featured in the stories of attacks by women either. Only when the woman’s attack was retaliatory during a violent encounter was the man’s history of aggression taken into account in the newspaper reports.

This disregard of chronic male violence may reflect the institutional sources for the journalists’ crime stories. In other words, the newspapers ignored or downplayed past male violence because the police and courts did. The reports of the case of H.Nijp suggests that his previous history of violence was considered much less relevant by the court than his employment record and his refusal to allow a divorce. In her study of modern police forces and domestic violence in Britain, Hester writes that an incident-based criminal justice system struggles to deal with *patterns* of abuse.⁷³ Ballinger examined trials of women who killed their abusive partner in the early twentieth century. She concludes that the law had difficulty taking account of the partner’s chronic brutality. Women were treated more harshly if there was a delay between the man’s violence and the woman killing him, particularly if he was asleep when she killed him. This was seen as premeditated and unprovoked, despite the history of abuse.⁷⁴ Frigon, in a study of Canadian mariticides, found that half the women had experienced domestic violence but that this played little or no role

⁷⁰ Frost, “Domestic Violence and Cohabitation,” 3; Adler, “Race, Patriarchy,” 15; Fingard, “The Prevention of Cruelty,” 98-99.

⁷¹ Hester, “Portrayal of Women,” 1068; Hester, “Who does what,” 628-629; Gordon, *Heroes*, 251, 274-275; Frigon, “Les représentations socio-pénales”; Ballinger, “‘Reasonable’ Women,” 69-71.

⁷² “De moordaanslag op het Pieterseliewaltje te Leeuwarden,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 16 April 1930, 3.

⁷³ Hester, “Who does what,” 633-635.

⁷⁴ Ballinger, “‘Reasonable’ Women,” 70-71; Ballinger, “Masculinity in the Dock,” 465-472.

in the trial.⁷⁵ By downplaying chronic male abuse, the newspapers were misrepresenting intimate partner violence.

What is to be made of the use of the language of passion to describe these acts of violence, and in particular male rather than female assaults? Two opposing views can be seen among historians on so-called crimes of passion: either the ascribed motives of love and jealousy are seen as a way of masking the underlying socio-economic factors or they are considered a defining feature of a specifically modern kind of violence. Shapiro, in her discussion of female violence in fin-de-siècle France, argues that the judicial records show economic motives were also important but there was no room for this in the press reports. Women's actions were interpreted as the result of jealousy because they were seen through the prism of love. Ferguson also argues that French domestic violence was portrayed in the press and in elite discourses as an individual outburst of emotion while the court records show that it was usually the result of power struggles between the working poor. Both historians see the language of passion as misrepresentation and an insidious development, even though the perpetrators themselves adopted the language of passion. It diverted attention from the structural and gendered nature of domestic conflict, and marked women in particular as creatures of their emotions and dependent on men.⁷⁶ Other historians see violence motivated by love and jealousy not as a media construction but as a cultural phenomenon related to socioeconomic changes. Parrella, in her long-term study of murder in northern France, finds a shift towards non-instrumental domestic murder, which she connects to industrialization. As families became a focus of affective needs rather than a productive unit, conflicts became more emotionally loaded.⁷⁷ Cottier and Raciti see a similar shift in Switzerland. They use the term 'fatalistic violence' to describe a new kind of violence, evident from the mid-nineteenth century, that is driven by subjectivity. It is characterized by strong emotions with respect to the victim, premeditated attacks that are often followed by suicide or attempted suicide, and a tendency by perpetrators to explain their actions in terms of their inner life and feelings.⁷⁸ Adler sees an important role for culture and consequently differences between ethnic communities in the nature of domestic violence in the United States. In interwar New Orleans, white men killed women who tried to leave them, often committing suicide as well, but African American femicides were usually prompted by mundane arguments about the wife's disobedience. Adler explains this by the differences in their socio-economic conditions. African American couples were generally in common-law relationships where the woman was economically

⁷⁵ Frigon, "Les représentations socio-pénales".

⁷⁶ Shapiro, "L'amour aux assises"; Eliza Earle Ferguson, "Judicial Authority and Popular Justice: Crimes of Passion in Fin-De-Siècle Paris," *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 2 (2006): 296-298; Eliza Earle Ferguson, "Domestic Violence," 13, 28-29.

⁷⁷ Parrella, "Industrialization and Murder".

⁷⁸ Maurice Cottier and Silvio Raciti, "From Honour to Subjectivity : Interpersonal violence in Basel 1750-1868 and Berne 1861-1944," *Crime, History & Societies* 17, no. 2 (2013): 112-117.

independent. The woman leaving was not a threat to the man's status in the way it was for white men, but disobedience within the relationship was all the more damaging because of the informal basis.⁷⁹

The attacks by men as described in the Dutch newspapers often have the hallmarks of fatalistic violence as defined by Cottier and Raciti. Nineteen men committed suicide and many others attempted or threatened to do so. Their attacks were premeditated and in public. They also defined their actions in terms of their innermost feelings. The journalists were therefore not necessarily misrepresenting the cases from the man's point of view in describing these incidents as acts of passion. However, this effectively prioritized the man's interpretation of his act over that of the female victim. When "Love drama" (*liefdesdrama*) was used as a headline in a report on a 31-year-old carpenter who had shot his 15-year-old former girlfriend in the face, this inevitably put a romantic gloss on what was in fact an unprovoked attack on a minor in her own home.⁸⁰

Why was Dutch female violence not romanticized in the same way, in such marked contrast to the French crimes of passion discussed by Shapiro and Ferguson? Firstly, female violence in the Netherlands (as reported in the papers) was different in nature to male violence and did not fit the label of fatalistic violence. Suicides were rare. Most violence was directed at the cohabiting partner, whereas men frequently assaulted estranged partners or women who had rejected them for reasons of jealousy.⁸¹ Secondly, the Dutch stories need to be placed in the context of the imagined community, the idea of the Dutch nation and of Dutch women. As discussed in Chapter 2, increasing importance was attached to domesticity and to women's roles as housewife and mother. This domesticity (*huiselijkheid*) became an increasingly important aspect of the Dutch national identity.⁸² Dutch newspapers bolstered this by creating an imagined community in which women were addressed in both articles and advertisements primarily as practical, down-to-earth housewives and mothers. That picture carried over into the stories of domestic violence by women, which was so often ascribed to mundane quarrels. The effect was enhanced by the contrast provided by the foreign stories of love-struck women driven to kill their paramours, as discussed in Section 4.2.

⁷⁹ Adler, "Race, Patriarchy," 30-31; Adler, "Domestic Homicide in Chicago," 29-30.

⁸⁰ "Liefdesdrama," *De Telegraaf*, 12 March 1920, 7.

⁸¹ This fits with the general observation that women's marital violence is usually retaliatory and with Adler's findings for white couples in New Orleans: Adler, "Race, Patriarchy," 22-23.

⁸² A.J. Schuurman, "Is huiselijkheid typisch Nederlands? Over huiselijkheid en modernisering," *Low Countries Historical Review* 107, no. 4 (1992): 757-759.

4.4 Condemnation and sympathy

This section looks at the journalists' attitudes to the perpetrators and victims – the extent to which they empathized with the one or the other, and the factors that determined their attitudes. Dutch journalists did not pass moral judgement in all domestic violence cases: to do so was a choice. Moreover, when they did so, they used subtle means. Journalists never commented on the sentences offenders received, as was noted in Chapter 3. They also seldom used condemnatory epithets to refer to perpetrators of domestic violence (such as *vrouwenbeul* ['torturer of women']).⁸³ As will be seen in the next two chapters, this is in contrast to the press treatment of sex offenders and parents who mistreated their children, and suggests that such perpetrators were rarely beyond the pale in the same way that abusive parents and rapists were. But while reporters did not denounce perpetrators or victims of intimate partner violence explicitly, they did frequently express their opinion in more indirect ways, for example by referring to positive or negative characteristics of the perpetrator or victim, (in Dutch cases) by using the perpetrator's full name as a shaming tactic, or by describing the positive or negative reaction of the local community.

The literature on media representations of intimate partner violence has largely seen this in terms of a moral judgement that is examined in conjunction with trial outcomes. Historians of Britain, France and other Anglo-Saxon countries argue that both the media and the courts weighed up the behaviour of the perpetrator and victim against gendered notions of acceptable conduct. Provocation and mitigating factors played a key role in the discourse. Violent men could be treated leniently if they were seen as driven to attacking their wives by these women's adultery, drunkenness, poor housekeeping skills or nagging. A man who was drunk at the time of the incident could claim he was not responsible for his acts, but women who killed their partner could gain sympathy if he was a habitual drunkard and had failed to provide for her.⁸⁴

It is argued here that this discourse of provocation and mitigating factors was strongly influenced by the legal systems in these jurisdictions and is not adequate for understanding attitudes in the Dutch newspapers. The countries in question had the death penalty for murder. There was therefore a great deal at stake in demonstrating that the act was unpremeditated or had been provoked. This could get the charge downgraded to one of manslaughter, which was not a capital offence and often meant a relatively light sentence. Alternatively, arguments of provocation that fitted with common understandings of acceptable masculine and feminine behaviour could become the grounds for

⁸³ For a rare exception, see: "Weerzinwekkend," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 21 February 1910, 7.

⁸⁴ D'Cruze and Jackson, *Women, Crime and Justice*, 22-25; Wiener, *Men of Blood*, chaps. 4-6; Eliza Earle Ferguson, "Judicial Authority," 305-307; Eliza Earle Ferguson, *Gender and Justice*, 128-155; Frost, "Kitty Byron," 542-550; Conley, *The Unwritten Law*, 74-79; Frost, "Domestic Violence and Cohabitation," 49-51; Annemarie Hughes, "'Non-criminal' Class," 39-41; Vivien Miller, "Wife-Killers and Evil Temptresses: Gender, Pardons and Respectability in Florida, 1889-1914," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (1996): 53-44-68; Carolyn Strange, "Masculinities, Intimate Femicide," 317-334; Bland, *Modern Women on Trial*, 102-175.

commutation of the capital sentence.⁸⁵ There was much less focus on provocation and mitigating factors in the Dutch newspaper articles. Some tropes, such as the nagging wife and the poor housekeeper, do not appear at all. Others, such as infidelity, do play a role but not in a straightforward way.

A more appropriate approach for the Dutch newspaper stories is to take the imagined Dutch community as the starting point. How journalists approached the perpetrator and victim in a story was affected by the couple's position relative to that imagined community. Journalists' evaluation of infidelity, industriousness and drinking depended crucially on that position. Moral judgements in which journalists weighed up the relative merits of the two protagonists were used to define the values of the community, and criticisms were reserved for those on the edge of the imagined community. It is noticeable that such assessments were rare in stories set in other countries, with the exception of the culturally close societies of Belgium and the European community in the East Indies. It is as if protagonists in more alien cultures were exempt from moral judgement because they could not be expected to abide by the same standards as the Dutch. Journalists also avoided siding with one or other protagonist in stories involving respectable members of the Dutch community. Instead, they used different strategies, such as presenting the case as a tragedy for both partners (as discussed in the next section).

Because the imagined community as portrayed in the newspapers changed over time, so did journalists' attitudes to the couples involved in intimate partner violence. In 1880, when the newspapers painted a community consisting of middle-class men, the working classes were depicted as unruly outsiders. Consequently, stories of working-class violence usually condemned the offenders in no uncertain terms, while presenting the abuse as a typical element of working-class culture. Lower-class women were particularly criticized. One woman who poured paraffin on her drunkard husband and set it alight (the man later died from his wounds) was lambasted in the press. Journalists called her the *Petroleuse*, an unflattering reference to the *petroleuses* of the Paris Commune a decade earlier, lower-class women who were rumoured to have used paraffin to burn down Parisian buildings. Her private violence was thus linked to their political violence, positioning her as a member of the dangerous classes. Her husband's alcoholism, which had brought penury on the family, might have been expected to arouse sympathy for her plight but journalists downplayed the problem instead.⁸⁶ In later years, as women entered the public sphere and became an important target group for newspapers, journalists began to treat female protagonists with greater empathy. That empathy was extended first to settled, respectable women, but by 1930 even prostitutes were embraced as fully fledged members of the

⁸⁵ Carolyn Strange, "Masculinities, Intimate Femicide," 319; Gagnon, "L'homicide conjugal".

⁸⁶ *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 13 November 1880, 7; "Een Petroleuse," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 13 November 1880, 2.

community and deserving of sympathy, as was seen above in the case of Black Riek.⁸⁷ At the same time, male violence was no longer depicted as inherent to working-class culture. Violent men who were denounced in the press were portrayed as outsiders, rejected by the community. Equally, the men who were most stigmatized were those who presented a danger to the community at large. This is clear from an examination of the Dutch perpetrators who were named by the papers. Men who had a prior criminal record for assaults on people other than their partner, men who were considered a nuisance by local residents and men whose attack endangered other people in addition to their partner were particularly likely to have their name printed in full.

Within these shifting parameters, journalists pointed to protagonists' drunkenness, idleness and infidelity as reasons for censure. Drunkenness was associated almost exclusively with male perpetrators. Wiener writes that in nineteenth-century England, being drunk was popularly thought to decrease the man's responsibility; only towards the end of the century did it become an aggravating rather than mitigating factor.⁸⁸ Dutch journalists never considered drunkenness as an excuse for the man's actions; it was condemned throughout the study period. The question of drunkenness and responsibility actually came up in 1880 during the debate on the new criminal code. The original proposal for an article on criminal responsibility stated that "he who commits an act that cannot be attributed to him because of a state of unconsciousness [...] is not punishable by law".⁸⁹ In the Parliamentary debate, it was feared that the general public might interpret this as excusing acts committed while drunk. The reference to unconsciousness was therefore scrapped, in a move that the newspapers approved of. As the *Leeuwarder Courant* noted, this took away all hope the drunkard might have of preferential treatment.⁹⁰

A man's poor work ethic was also a reason for criticism as it meant he was failing in his masculine duty to provide for his family. Conversely, his industriousness was a point in his favour. Consequently, whether the man was a perpetrator or victim, his employment record was considered relevant information. In reports on the story of a Belgian lithographer who had killed his wife, chopped her up and left her remains in a suitcase in an attic in Antwerp, the newspapers approvingly noted the good impression he had made on his former employers and workmates. Apparently "he was an excellent worker, he never arrived a minute late, and always industriously did his duty." This gave credit to his version

⁸⁷ "Zwarte Riek," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 12 December 1930, 7. On the changing representation of women who attacked their partner, see: Clare Wilkinson, "Begrip voor gewelddadige vrouwen. De veranderende verslaggeving over huiselijk geweld van vrouwen, 1880-1910," *Historica* 42, no. 1 (2019): 10-14.

⁸⁸ Wiener, *Men of Blood*, chap. 5.

⁸⁹ "Niet strafbaar is hij [...] die een feit begaat dat hem, hetzij wegens den staat van bewusteloosheid waarin hij verkeert, [...] niet kan worden toegerekend." In "Van 't Haagsche Binnenhof," *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 30 October 1880, 2.

⁹⁰ *Leeuwarder Courant*, 30 October 1880, 1.

of the event whereby he had momentarily lost control.⁹¹ On the other hand Nijp, the man who shot and killed his estranged wife in Leeuwarden, was severely criticized because he had been a pimp living off his wife's earnings as a prostitute rather than earning an honest living.⁹²

If men were reproached for failing to provide for their family, married women who worked were not similarly criticized for neglecting their household duties or their offspring. This is at first sight surprising given the fierce debates and criticism of married women's work during this period, as discussed in Chapter 2. In the twentieth century, outright bans were introduced on the employment of married women in some sectors, municipalities and factories. The newspapers too addressed married women primarily in their domestic role as housewives and mothers. It might therefore be expected that married women in intimate partner violence stories who worked would be criticized by journalists, but this was not the case. This shows the primacy of belonging to the community: if journalists saw the woman as part of the community and someone readers would identify with, the ostensibly negative attribute of being a working wife was reinterpreted in a positive light. The wife's work was, for example, taken as a sign that the husband was failing to perform his duty in providing for her and as evidence of her devotion to her children.⁹³ The magazine editor Sophie van Wermeskerken-Junius, mentioned above as having been accused of poisoning her husband, understood the importance of stressing a mother's love. As a working mother married to a lawyer, she clearly did not need to work for money and was consequently open to criticism. But in the interview with *De Telegraaf*, rather than talking about her work, she underlined how important her children were to her. On hearing she would be released, "the first thing I did was telegraph my oldest son" (*Het eerste wat ik deed was te telegrafeeren aan mijn oudsten zoon*).⁹⁴

Women, and to a lesser extent men, could be criticized for being unfaithful. Cases in which a spouse conspired with a lover against their marital partner were always condemned. This was striking at the very heart of the institution of marriage. A case in November 1880 and which a man and his lover, a household servant, were found to have locked up and half-starved the wife caused a particular stir in the local community. People threw stones at the man's front door and cheered when the two culprits were taken off to prison by the police. This was partly because of the class implications. The wife's authority over her servants was sacrosanct and for a husband to undermine this was particularly

⁹¹ "De man staat bij zijn patroons en kameraden bekend als eèn voortreffelijk werkman, die nooit een minuut te laat kwam, en altijd ijverig zijn plicht deed." In "Weer een moord," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 8 January 1910, 6.

⁹² "De moordaanslag op het Pieterseliewaltje te Leeuwarden," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 17 April 1930, 21.

⁹³ "Doodslag uit noodweer door een vrouw," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 10 May 1910, 1; Similar attitudes to working wives in domestic abuse cases are found in the USA in this period; see Carolyn B. Ramsey, "The Exit Myth: Family Law, Gender Roles, and Changing Attitudes toward Female Victims of Domestic Violence," *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law* 20, no. 1 (2013): 23.

⁹⁴ "Johanna van Woude. Interview," *De Telegraaf*, 16 December 1895, 1.

mortifying. Hammerton finds that for English middle-class families, elevation of the maid over the wife came to be seen as an act of cruelty in itself in the nineteenth-century divorce courts.⁹⁵

In 1880, the law provided some basis for seeing infidelity as a reason for mitigation. The 1811 Penal Code, which was only replaced in 1886 and therefore still applied in 1880, explicitly took account of female adultery as a reduced sentence could be given if a man attacked his wife after finding her with her lover in the family home (see Chapter 2). Although none of the reported cases in 1880 – or indeed any of the subsequent years – met this criterion, it set the tone by implying that the wife’s adultery was a mitigating factor, as became evident in the following case. A 53-year-old porter called P.L. Baltus was tried in Amsterdam for the murder of his wife who had left him a few days earlier to go and live with a sailor. The prosecution spoke of mitigating circumstances and the defence even referred to the criminal code article in question: “it is acknowledged that here too the woman was adulterous. Although the article is not applicable in full, we have an analogous situation”. The defence counsel also referred to France, drawing on its media-fuelled reputation for clemency in crimes of passion (as discussed in Section 4.2): “If the counsel had been standing before a French jury, which recently acquitted individuals who had thrown vitriol in the face of others in similar circumstances, he would be hoping here too for an acquittal”.⁹⁶

After 1880, the situation became more nebulous as newspapers’ stance on female adultery became less clear-cut and less consistent. The 1910 case of a young sailor, Ijsbrand van Goslinga, can serve as an illustration. He shot at his wife who had left a year previously and was apparently seeing other men. The *Algemeen Handelsblad* gave a relatively negative picture of the perpetrator: the article about the incident was entitled “A violent man” (*een geweldenaar*) while the article on the trial quotes the judge as pointing out that the man should have obtained a divorce if he did not approve of his wife’s conduct. The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, on the other hand, failed to state that the wife had lived separately from him for the past year, and described her as “his wife who had become unfaithful” (*zijn hem ontrouw geworden vrouw*).⁹⁷ Throughout the period there are similar stories where the newspapers differ in the stress they put on the wife’s unfaithfulness.

⁹⁵ *Leeuwarder Courant*, 23 November 1880, 2; Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship*, 128-129.

⁹⁶ “Het is erkend, dat ook hier de vrouw in overspel leefde. Hoewel dit artikel hier niet volledig van toepassing is, hebben wij een analoog geval”; “Stond pleiter voor een Fransche jury, die nog onlangs uithoofde van soortgelijke omstandigheid personen vrijspak, die anderen met vitriool in het aangezicht wierpen, hij zou ook hier hoop hebben op vrijpraak.” In *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 30 September 1880, 7; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, 30 September 1880, 6.

⁹⁷ “Drievoudige moordaanslag,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 15 September 1910, 3; *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 29 September 1910, 3; “Poging tot drievoudigen moord!” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 22 December 1910, 23; “Een geweldenaar,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 26 July 1910, 2; “Poging tot moord,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 14 September 1910, 7.

In part, this inconsistency reflects the tension between the press's idealization of domesticity and the greater attention paid in the papers to the women's movement from the 1890s. As was noted in Chapter 2, reform of the marriage laws was a key demand for Dutch feminists. In 1910, the Minister of Justice proposed tightening the divorce law to prevent divorce by mutual consent, which was possible at the time via a loophole. The newspapers were critical of this move: it would be better, they argued, to change the law in line with accepted practice.⁹⁸ They were therefore sympathetic to the principle of divorce. Also, when so many attacks were on women who had left their spouses, the dividing line between a woman who was committing adultery and a woman starting a new relationship following separation became less clear. This was all the more relevant as divorce without mutual consent was still very difficult.

Women's adultery or unfaithfulness was inevitably a more prominent issue than men's infidelity in stories of intimate partner violence as most stories involved male perpetrators and their violence was often prompted by their inability to accept rejection by the object of their affections. But men's unfaithfulness did play a role in some cases. Married men who 'seduced' young women were portrayed very negatively. This ties in with the changing attitudes to male sexuality as discussed in Chapter 2, whereby unmarried mothers for example were increasingly seen as victims of male seducers who had failed to take responsibility for their acts. In an agency article printed in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *De Telegraaf* about a young woman who had shot at the man she had been living with after she discovered he was married, even the public prosecutor described the male victim in denigrating terms: it was doubtful whether there was anything noble about him and an attack on someone like that was not such a serious offence.⁹⁹

4.5 Avoiding moral judgements

The above section dealt with newspaper articles that invited readers to make moral judgements about the relative merits of the perpetrator and victim, but this was only one of several strategies open to journalists. Many newspaper stories were designed to arouse quite different responses. Some were closer to whodunnits while others used humour. Finally, there were stories in which the event was presented as a tragedy for both the perpetrator and the victim.

One fictional genre that numerous stories in the Dutch newspapers drew on was that of the detective novel.¹⁰⁰ As noted in Chapter 3, the newspapers were part of a wider

⁹⁸ "Echtscheiding met onderling goedvinden," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 23 February 1910, 5; "Echtscheidingspraktijken," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 26 February 1910, 7; "Het Weekblad van het Recht over het echtscheidingsontwerp," *De Telegraaf*, 14 September 1910, 5; "Echtscheiding!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 7 February 1910, 1.

⁹⁹ "Poging tot doodslag," *De Telegraaf*, 14 July 1920, 7; "Poging tot doodslag," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 14 July 1920, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Frigon finds the same in Canada, see: Frigon, "Les représentations socio-pénales".

media ecosystem in which crime fiction fuelled crime reporting. The genre of the detective story originated in the mid-nineteenth century and reached a peak in popularity with Conan Doyle, whose stories were regularly serialized in the Dutch newspapers. The interwar period was the golden age of the whodunnit. In these stories, the crime was presented as a puzzle, an intellectual conundrum. There is a lack of emotional engagement and the violence is downplayed.¹⁰¹ In many Dutch press stories of intimate partner violence, it was only too clear who the perpetrator was, but murder stories where this was a matter of doubt often used stylistic elements from whodunnits. A case in point is that of Antonia Van Gaans in the Netherlands. A married woman, she had disappeared in May 1919 after withdrawing a large sum of money and telling relatives she was planning to run off with her lover. Her body was found two months later. In December 1920, her lover stood trial for her murder. The journalists could have chosen to delve into the victim's amorous relationships, but instead the trial reports in the newspapers concentrated on the clues that linked the victim to the accused (a hair matching the accused found in the victim's larynx, a piece of rubber hose and so on). Most space was devoted to the expert witnesses. The overall effect was for the victim to be reduced to a body, the site of clues, rather than a personality with emotions and character traits. Moreover, attention was detracted from the *act* of violence and the reports were rather cold and unsensational.¹⁰²

Another tactic the newspapers used was humour. This could take the form of an ironic headline, for example "Pleasant husband" (*prettig echtgenoot*) for an item on a man who had kicked his wife in the face.¹⁰³ Or it might take the form of hyperbole – inappropriately high-blown language in the description of an incident. Humour was often used to describe minor incidents among the Dutch working class, for whom such high-blown language would seem 'naturally' comic.¹⁰⁴ The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* used this approach to describe the revenge of a 35-year-old Rotterdam woman on her former lover, a cinema doorman. Entitled "The nose of the cinema doorman", the first article stated that when she found out that "the object of her tender love was married and the father of five children", she "swore she would hurt him and do so via the most beautiful thing that L. possessed, namely his well-formed nose".¹⁰⁵ The trial report has the headline "The drama of the almost-cut-off tip of the nose".¹⁰⁶ In the interwar period, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* and *De Telegraaf* started to include regular courtroom scenes. These were humorous sketches

¹⁰¹ Light, *Forever England*, 65-71.

¹⁰² "Moord en diefstal," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 20 December 1920, 6; "Moord en diefstal," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 18 December 1920, 7; "De moord bij Rozendaal!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 20 December 1920, 8.

¹⁰³ "Prettig echtgenoot," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 8 December 1920, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 65. In northern England, D'Cruze finds dialect used in newspaper reports with a similar function: D'Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage*, 186-187.

¹⁰⁵ "dat haar teerbemide gehuwd en vader van vijf kinderen was. Dies zwoer zij hem te zullen treffen en wel in het mooiste wat L. bezat, n.l. in zijn welgevormden neus." "De neus van den bioscoop-portier," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 1 October 1930, 9.

¹⁰⁶ "Het drama van het bijna-afgesneden neuspuntje," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 4 December 1930, 21.

of trials in the local courts, making gentle fun of the little people. They usually concerned property crimes but occasionally dealt with minor violence in the family.¹⁰⁷ The effect of the humorous articles was to trivialize the incident, while the reader was invited to laugh at all the protagonists rather than feel emotionally involved with any particular one of them.

At the other extreme were the stories that were constructed as tragedies for all those involved. These stories used highly emotive language and portrayed the perpetrator as a kind of victim as well. This frame was often used in murder-suicide cases and for respectable members of Dutch society – in other words, where both perpetrator and victim were firmly entrenched in the imagined community. One such case involved a butcher and his wife that took place in the Dutch town of Deventer in July 1930. *De Telegraaf* caught the reader's attention with the headline "Horrific drama in Deventer". The item created suspense by introducing the story from the point of view of an employee setting off unsuspectingly to work in the morning. Finding the shop still closed, he rang repeatedly until one of the children opened up. "It turned out something awful had happened in his boss's house" (*Het bleek, dat ten huize van zijn patroon iets onzettends was gebeurd*). Later in the article, the journalist reports that the preliminary investigation suggested the butcher killed his wife first and then himself "but nothing is certain in this regard" (*hoewel hieromtrent niets zekers vaststaat*). This reluctance to explicitly label the man a killer was also evident in the other newspapers' reports. The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, in an item entitled "The drama in Deventer" about the funeral, ambiguously referred to "the married couple P. who died in such a tragic way" (*de beide echtelieden Ph., die op zoo tragische wijze zijn om het leven gekomen*).¹⁰⁸

Allied to the concept of the 'tragedy for all' was the notion of the complicit victim. *De Telegraaf* implied this in its report on the Deventer case: the correspondent understood that the wife's death may not have been a crime as her bedroom, where she had been found dead, had been in an orderly state. This was despite the fact that the couple's four young children were in the house at the time.¹⁰⁹ The idea of the willing victim played a key role in two 1910 cases. The first concerned monsieur Parat, a pharmacist in Paris who, as the *Algemeen Handelsblad* put it, had "chained his wife up in a dark room because he loved her so much" (*die zooveel van zijn vrouw hield, dat hij ze in een donkere kamer aan den ketting legde*). According to this initial report, the wife found this behaviour quite acceptable. When asked by the head of the investigation whether her husband had treated her badly, she apparently replied, "Not at all, Sir, he was passionately in love with me and he was jealous. That excuses a great deal of violence". The *Algemeen Handelsblad* went on to quote the French writer Myriam Harry at length; she had spent much time in the East,

¹⁰⁷ For example: "Gebroken huisvrede," *De Telegraaf*, 4 November 1930, 9.

¹⁰⁸ "Het drama te Deventer," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 25 July 1930, 10; "Ontzettend drama te Deventer. Echtpaar dood in zijn woning aangetroffen. Financiële moeilijkheden?" *De Telegraaf*, 23 July 1930, 5.

¹⁰⁹ "Het drama te Deventer," *De Telegraaf*, 24 July 1930, 14.

where women considered such tyrannical jealousy to be the ultimate proof of love.¹¹⁰ Here, the alleged submissiveness of Parat's wife was construed as something foreign, even Oriental.¹¹¹

It was unthinkable that a Dutch woman would allow herself to be abused by her partner, but a suicide pact in which the woman was killed at her express wish was conceivable. This was the main question in a case that came to trial in the summer of 1910. The student and aristocrat G. v. S. had shot and killed his lover, the wife of an industrialist, in his room before attempting suicide. The defence argued that the couple had agreed in advance that he would kill her and then himself. Much was made of the fact that the victim was not wearing a corset, which would have impeded the path of the bullet. The implication was that she had gone to his room prepared for the event. G. v. S. had a legal interest in proving the woman's complicity as Dutch law allowed for a reduced sentence if a premeditated killing was at the victim's "express and earnest desire" (*op uitdrukkelijk en ernstig verlangen*) – this was in fact the final verdict. But this reading of events also reduced his moral responsibility, transforming the event from a cold-blooded murder into a tragic love affair gone wrong.¹¹²

Conclusion

This chapter aimed firstly to examine how the changing readership and the sources affected newspaper reporting of intimate partner violence. The expansion of the readership to include female and working-class readers was a key factor behind the changing coverage. Newspapers printed more items on violence between partners, particularly cases involving high-status protagonists in foreign settings, in the years leading up to the First World War as part of the strategy of appealing to women readers. Moreover, the articles showed more empathy over time for the women involved. The portrayal of Dutch lower-class domestic violence changed too as the working class became incorporated in the Dutch imagined community as 'us' rather than 'them'. In the early years, domestic violence was depicted as endemic among the urban working class, part of a general narrative of the drunk and disorderly lower classes. In later years, stories were more likely to involve individuals on the margins of society, and the disruptive male perpetrator was contrasted against chivalrous local citizens and police protecting the female victims.

¹¹⁰ "Volstrekt niet, mijnheer, maar hij hield hartstochtelijk veel van mij, en hij was jaloersch. Het verontschuldigt veel gewelddadigheden." "De jaloersche apotheker," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 22 February 1910, 6.

¹¹¹ In later reports, it transpired that the woman had not submitted willingly at all. The man was committed to a mental asylum, his wife took over the pharmacy and filed for divorce. When he was released from the asylum after only a few months, she called it scandalous. See: *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 9 September 1910, 11; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 3 December 1910, 6.

¹¹² "De moord te Rijswijk," *De Telegraaf*, 26 July 1910, 2; "Het drama te Rijswijk," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 29 June 1910, 10.

The sources had a mediating effect on the content. They affected the geographical spread of stories. Foreign items largely concerned countries where the newspapers had foreign correspondents while stories of minor violence in the Netherlands in the national papers were concentrated in the urban vicinity of the newspapers' offices. There is also evidence that the Dutch stories reflected the priorities of the institutional sources. At the most obvious level, they invariably presented the police in a positive light. The focus on public disturbances and the neglect of chronic violence are also consistent with what is known about the priorities of the criminal justice system.

The second question concerned the strategies journalists used in presenting stories of intimate partner violence. It is argued that the moral assessment in which the perpetrator was weighed up against the victim was just one of several strategies. Moreover, that moral assessment depended crucially on whether the protagonists were deemed to 'belong'. Journalists could be critical of men who drank and were idle and of men or women who were unfaithful, but such evaluations were directed primarily at those positioned outside the imagined community. Thus married women's work could be a positive attribute if journalists chose to empathize with the woman in domestic violence articles. Many stories, however, were not aimed at inviting a moral judgement. Foreign items frequently drew on romantic fiction, with glamorous settings and protagonists motivated by passion and honour. Other stories were framed as whodunnits and reflected the influence of the detective novel. Humorous items on minor violence among the 'little people' were intended to amuse the reader. Other cases were presented as a tragedy in which the perpetrator was as much a 'victim' as the person they had attacked.

We have seen that newspapers printed numerous stories of intimate partner violence throughout the period, stories that demonstrated that men could be a danger to women at all stages in the relationship. Yet we have already seen in Chapter 2 that domestic violence never became a social problem in the Netherlands. Potential claimsmakers such as feminists or temperance campaigners never took up this issue. Child protection, on the other hand, was the subject of major policy initiatives between 1880 and 1930. This was the context for the second form of family violence – the maltreatment by parents of their own children – which is considered in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Parents who maltreated their children in the news

This chapter looks at various forms of parental cruelty to children that were reported in the newspapers. These were stories of parents who killed their offspring (including infanticides), or who abused, neglected or abandoned their children.¹ The period it covers, from 1880 to 1930, was one in which children became the focus of attention in politics and civil society. The Swedish feminist Ellen Key famously proclaimed the twentieth century to be the Century of the Child because 'saving the child' had become of such fundamental importance.² Chapter 2 has already discussed the shift in the Netherlands to child-oriented policies, with the introduction of child protection legislation in 1905. In Chapter 3, moreover, it was argued that Dutch newspapers increasingly became papers for all the family, with separate children's sections in the interwar period. This would suggest increasing sensitivity to parents' maltreatment of their children over time. But did that result in greater media interest in stories of cruelty to children? That is the main issue addressed in this chapter.

The question of media coverage of child maltreatment in this period of heightened interest in child welfare has received relatively little attention in the historiography. While some studies have been published on media representations of perpetrators, these have explored the influence of gender rather than of changing ideas about childhood.³ Indeed, historians have seen gender as central to understanding the maltreatment of children, both in explaining patterns of parental violence and in explaining the responses of experts and the general public. The literature on the ill-treatment of children in this period is uneven. There is a large body of work on infanticide. Much of this work has focused on unmarried women and used infanticide as a way in for examining ideas about female sexuality and illegitimacy. Sometimes the killing of new-born babies has been considered in conjunction with abortion or the abandonment of foundlings, which are seen as constituting a range of strategies for dealing with unwanted babies. Historians of infanticide have looked at both the circumstances that drove women to commit this crime and their treatment in the law courts. A key debate has been on leniency: historians have found increasing leniency shown

¹ Stories were only included if children were below the age of 23 when the offence started. This was the age of majority until 1905. In some respects, parental authority extended beyond the age of majority. Thus young people up to the age of 30 needed parental consent to marry. See: Pieter R.D. Stokvis, "Van kind tot volwassene: overgangsrutuelen in Nederland van de Franse tijd tot de Eerste Wereldoorlog," *De negentiende eeuw* 17, no. 2 (1993): 51-52.

² Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 171.

³ Studies of media coverage of child killings from a gender perspective include: Goc, *Women, Infanticide*; Grey, "Discourses of Infanticide," 37-87; Jade Shepherd, "'One of the best fathers until he went out of his mind': paternal child-murder, 1864-1900," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 18, no. 1 (2013): 17-35; Amanda Kaladelfos, "The dark side of the family: paternal child homicide in Australia," *Journal of Australian Studies* 37, no. 3 (2013): 333-348; Anne Rodrick, "Melodrama and Natural Science: Reading the 'Greenwich Murder' in the Mid-Century Periodical Press," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 50, no. 1 (2017): 66-99.

to infanticidal women since the early modern period but have debated what form it took in different countries, the relationship with marital status and notions of femininity, and the role of medicalization.⁴ Historians of child abuse and neglect have largely used the records of child protection services rather than judicial sources. They have accordingly focused on the operation of those services, how they constructed cruelty to children and the extent to which they acknowledged poverty as a factor, and how their responses were shaped by assumptions about maternal and paternal roles. Historians have argued about a shift in focus by the agencies from abuse to neglect, and about the extent to which neglect was construed as a female offence.⁵ Abuse and neglect could in exceptional circumstances result in the death of the child. Historical studies that focus on child-killings other than infanticide are however rare. A few historians have examined cases of paternal child-killings from the perspective of the perpetrators' motives and notions of masculinity.⁶ No studies were found of the abandonment of children by their parents other than of foundlings.

This chapter aims to add to the literature by concurrently considering press coverage of *all* kinds of ill-treatment of children by both mothers *and* fathers. This comprehensive approach should give a better picture of journalists' understanding of parental roles. Given the Dutch context of child protection campaigns and policies, the first question addressed in

⁴ For general overviews of the debates, see: Anne-Marie Kilday, Katherine D. Watson, "Infanticide, Religion and Community in the British Isles, 1720-1920: Introduction," *Family & Community History* 11, no. 2 (2008): 85-88; Mark Jackson, "The trial of Harriet Vooght," in *Infanticide. Historical perspectives on child murder and concealment, 1550-2000*, ed. Mark Jackson (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 1-17. For infanticide in conjunction with abandonment and abortion, see: R. Sauer, "Infanticide and Abortion in Nineteenth-Century Britain," *Population Studies* 32, no. 1 (1978): 81-93; Rachel Ginnis Fuchs, "Crimes against Children in Nineteenth-Century France," *Law and Human Behavior* 6, no. 3-4 (1982): 237-259; Jeffrey S. Richter, "Infanticide, Child Abandonment, and Abortion in Imperial Germany," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28, no. 4 (1998): 511-551. On the changes since the early modern period, see: Mary Clayton, "Changes in Old Bailey trials for the murder of newborn babies, 1674-1803," *Continuity and Change* 24, no. 2 (2009): 337-359; Spierenburg, *History of Murder*, 143-164; Leboutte, "Offense against Family Order". Leniency, the use of the insanity plea and differences between countries are covered in: Marland, "Getting Away with Murder?"; Ruberg, "Travelling Knowledge"; Simone Caron, "'Killed by its mother': infanticide in Providence County, Rhode Island, 1870 to 1938," *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 1 (2010): 213-237; Tony Ward, "The sad subject of infanticide: law, medicine and child murder, 1860-1938," *Social and Legal Studies* 8, no. 2 (1999): 163-180; Breathnach and O'Halpin, "Scripting Blame"; Brennan, "A Fine Mixture"; Grey, "Discourses of Infanticide," 201-261.

⁵ Classic studies of child abuse and neglect and the child protection agencies are: Behlmer, *Child Abuse*, 161-192; Gordon, *Heroes*, 82-203. Patterns of abuse are discussed in: Yvone, "La justice". On the attitudes of agencies to poverty, neglect and parental responsibility, see: Ashley Hogan, "'I Never Noticed She Was Dirty': Fatherhood and the Death of Charlotte Duffy in Late-Nineteenth-Century Victoria," *Journal of Family History* 24, no. 3 (1999): 305-316; Gordon, "Single Mothers"; A0459 Buckley, "Child Neglect"; Gary Clapton, "'Yesterday's men': the inspectors of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 1888-1968," *British Journal of Social Work* 39, (2009): 1043-1062; Swain Shurlee, "'I am directed to remind you of your duty to your family': public surveillance of mothering in Victoria, Australia, 1920-40," *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 247-259; Flegel, "Changing Faces"; Gary Clapton, Vivienne E. Cree, Mark Smith, "Moral panics and social work: towards a sceptical view of UK child protection," *Critical Social Policy* 33, no. 2 (2013): 202-205.

⁶ Kaladelfos, "The Dark Side"; Daniel A. Cohen, "Homicidal Compulsion and the Conditions of Freedom: The Social and Psychological Origins of Familicide in America's Early Republic," *Journal of Social History* 28, no. 4 (1995): 725-764; Shepherd, "One of the Best".

this chapter is whether the Dutch press also increasingly highlighted and criticized child maltreatment, and why this did or did not happen. The second question concerns the effect of gender on child ill-treatment as represented in the newspapers. As discussed in Chapter 1, a distinction is made here between the gendered effects of socioeconomic structures that led to different patterns of violence between mothers and fathers, and cultural norms that affected how journalists interpreted and evaluated the actions of mothers and fathers.

The chapter starts with the newspapers' coverage of the 1905 Children's Acts. That coverage was uncritical and muted. But after the acts were implemented, an alleged miscarriage of justice involving a widow whose children were removed from her care became a *cause célèbre*. This story appealed to journalists because it fitted with their view that poverty did not cause child maltreatment. The second section looks at the space newspapers dedicated to child maltreatment stories. It shows that these crimes received relatively little attention from the press. Furthermore, different kinds of maltreatment were consistently presented using different narratives and sources, giving a typology with four categories: abandonment, abuse and neglect, infanticide, and filicide. Section 5.3 discusses the construction of these categories in the newspapers: the style of the articles, the source of the information, the characteristics of the perpetrators and the setting. It shows that women committed different crimes to men and their motives were interpreted differently. The fourth section looks at sympathy and condemnation. The journalists were sympathetic to the children but did not portray them as individuals. Parents were treated with sympathy if their acts could be interpreted as delusional love, but abandonment, abuse and neglect were condemned vehemently.

5.1 The Children's Acts

This section looks at newspaper coverage of the campaign for the child protection legislation and the operation after 1905 of the new laws. The 1905 Children's Acts put the operation of the child protection organizations on a firm legal footing. The civil-law act provided for parents to lose custody of their child if there was a threat of their 'moral or physical ruin' (*zedelijke of lichamelijke ondergang*) and was therefore in theory a means of protecting children from physical abuse or neglect by their parents.⁷ However, as was discussed in Chapter 2, the key concept in the campaign by lawyers and philanthropists for the child protection legislation was '*verwaarlozing*', referring to moral neglect. It conjured up images of drunken and idle parents who kept their children from school and sent them out to beg and steal. According to Van Montfoort, physical maltreatment by parents was of secondary importance in this discourse.⁸

⁷ Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 463.

⁸ Van Montfoort, *Het topje*, 81-85.

To date, historians' analyses of the child protection discourse have focused on publications by experts and philanthropists rather than media accounts. For the present study, an investigation was carried out of newspapers' reports of the campaign leading up to the Children's Acts and on the implementation and operation of child protection legislation after 1905. This showed that the discourse of the morally deficient upbringing was adopted without question by the press in their coverage of the campaign. Once the Children's Acts were implemented, their operation took place largely out of sight of the media. In 1910, however, a case of the alleged wrongful removal of children from the care of a widow was seized upon by the newspapers as a scandalous affair. This was a story where the mother was the 'victim' of the child protection institutions. A consideration of the reasons why the media gave it so much attention helps understand the relative silence (as will be seen in Section 5.3) on cases where children were the victims of their parents.

Coverage of child protection campaign and system

The Dutch newspapers covered the debates inside and outside Parliament in the lead-up to the new legislation, which was passed in 1901. However, their reporting was passive. They did not act as a forum for public debate, for example by publishing letters airing alternative views. Nor did journalists question the campaigner's central concept of moral neglect. Of forty-three articles examined in the four newspapers in the period 1897 to 1901, not one mentioned physical abuse or neglect as a potential reason for removing children from the parental home. Interestingly, although historians have seen the acts purely in terms of children's rights, journalists at the time stressed the implications for women's rights too. The legislation was seen as progress for women because it removed some inequalities between fathers and mothers with regard to guardianship.⁹ Framing the Children's Acts as an advance for women ties in with journalists' attempts to appeal to women readers in this period and the positive attention paid by the press to feminist organizations (see Section 3.1).

Dutch newspapers' passive role in the campaign for child protection legislation is in marked contrast to the UK, reflecting differences in the importance of the media to campaigners in the two countries. In Britain, the main child protection society used the media to construct 'cruelty to children' as a concept and a crime and to mobilize public support for its views. Its secretary, Waugh, cultivated close relationships with influential national papers such as the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *The Times*. They publicized cases prosecuted by the society and

⁹ "De voogdij," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 8 May 1900, 5; "De ouderlijke macht," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 14 June 1897, 17; "Ouderlijk gezag," *De Telegraaf*, 2 June 1897, 5. Detailed discussions by historians of the Children's Acts that do not consider the implications for women's rights include: Bernard Kruithof and Piet De Rooy, "Liefde en plichtbesef. De kinderbescherming in Nederland rond 1900," *Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 13, no. 4 (1987): 637-668; Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 452-465; Jeroen Dekker, "Le modèle néerlandais," 38-41.

provided space for the society's letters on the subject.¹⁰ This fits the standard model for a social problem process as described by Joel Best (see also Section 2.4). In this model, claimsmakers (for example, experts or philanthropists) identify a troubling condition and then seek publicity for their claims in the media to draw attention to the problem and change the public's views. Policymakers respond to the media coverage and public opinion, for example by passing legislation.¹¹ However, the Dutch historian Janse contends that this is only one model of the relationship between the state and civil society. She argues that the Netherlands in the nineteenth century fitted a harmonious model of constructive collaboration between civil society and government. Pressure groups were seen by the state as having a positive role in debating the task of the state and making proposals for legislation. Civil society groups often had small, select memberships and close personal ties with politicians. Although Janse concludes that this harmonious model was in decline from the 1880s, the campaign for the Children's Acts fits this description well. There was a close working relationship between the philanthropic organizations and lawyers lobbying for the new legislation and the politicians, and the legislation was largely based on an 1898 report published by the leading philanthropic organization 't Nut. In these circumstances, there was no need to raise public awareness or sway public opinion through a publicity campaign in the press.¹²

Two further factors encouraged the newspapers' wholesale adoption of the campaigners' discourse of '*verwaarlozing*' in the lead-up to the Children's Acts. The first was the tendency of reporters to rely on institutional sources. The philanthropic organizations agitating for new child protection legislation were largely long-established, respectable bodies, whose activities were regularly reported in the newspapers. In the 1890s, the newspapers were still largely targeting middle-class readers who were likely to either be members of these organizations or at least attend their talks and meetings. For the newspapers, reports of such meetings were a relatively easy way of filling space and satisfied the demand for information amongst their readers.¹³ Journalists were therefore receptive to information provided by the campaigning organizations and unlikely to approach the material critically. A good example is the newspapers' coverage of the publication of the above-mentioned report by 't Nut in 1898. All four newspapers printed an identically worded article on this publication. The article has the appearance of being a press release that the papers simply incorporated in full.¹⁴

¹⁰ Behlmer, *Child Abuse*, 56-57, 83; Flegel, "Changing Faces," 2-5.

¹¹ Best, *Social Problems*, 3-28.

¹² Maartje Janse, "Op de grens tussen staat en civil society. Samenwerking tussen hervormers en politici, 1840-1880," *De negentiende eeuw* 35, no. 4 (2011): 169-187; Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 457; "Ouderlijke macht en voogdij," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 12 May 1900, 2.

¹³ Broersma, *Beschaafde vooruitgang*, 259260.

¹⁴ "Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen," *De Telegraaf*, 19 May 1898, 2; "Verwaarloosde kinderen," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 21 May 1898, 1; "Verwaarloosde kinderen!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 21 May 1898, 2; "Verwaarloosde kinderen," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 23 May 1898, 2.

The second factor was readers' own interest in public nuisances rather than private abuses. The focus in the campaign rhetoric on the public disorder caused by delinquent children chimed with readers' own concerns. As was discussed in Chapter 2, large-scale migration to the cities in the 1880s and 1890s was putting pressure on urban spaces. As more and more working-class people moved into the cities, urban streets became a site of conflict. According to Jan Hein Furnée, there was a class and gender aspect to this. With the rise of shopping as a leisure activity for middle-class women, they were using the streets more. But they were regularly subjected to harassment from lower-class boys, which Furnée sees as a form of resistance to the takeover of public spaces by the middle classes.¹⁵ Readers' letters provide evidence that readers were concerned throughout the period 1880 to 1930 about the nuisance caused by street children. Readers wrote in to complain about boys urinating in the street, smashing windows, and trying to knock down women when cycling past.¹⁶ It was these public problems caused by lower-class children that directly affected readers, rather than the private problems suffered by children in the home.

After the Children's Acts were implemented in 1905, there was little coverage in the papers of the day-to-day operations of the child protection system. Hundreds of children were removed from the custody of their parents every year, yet there was little mention of this in the newspapers.¹⁷ It is possible the press were not reporting on these cases because they did not have access to the information. Court proceedings for the removal of custody were held *in camera*. The rulings were made public and were reported on occasion by the two local newspapers, but the language in these reports (and presumably the rulings themselves) is formulaic and vague. It is, for example, not possible to differentiate between physical deprivation and moral neglect.¹⁸

While individual cases were rarely reported, journalists produced favourable coverage of the meetings and publications of child protection organizations and wrote articles about the good work being done at residential homes. These items tied in with newspapers' desire to appeal to women readers, as child-saving was one area where women were thought to be able to make an important contribution.¹⁹ In 1930, the first

¹⁵ Jan Hein Furnée, "Winkelen als bevrijding? Vrouwen en stedelijke ruimte in Amsterdam, 1863-1913," *BMGN* 130, no. 2 (2015): 109-111.

¹⁶ "Schaamteloosheid," *Rotteramsch Nieuwsblad*, 17 October 1910, 9; "Politietoezicht op de Marnixkade," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 24 March 1880, 6; "Vreemdeling en straatjeugd," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 27 July 1920, 7;

¹⁷ Figures for the period 1921 to 1930 show 500 or more children were removed from the custody of their parents each year, see: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, *Crimineele Statistiek, gevangenisstatistiek en statistiek van de toepassing der kindwetten over het jaar 1930* (The Hague: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1932), 74.

¹⁸ For example: "Voogdijraad," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 3 February 1910, 1. The institutions themselves also had no need to publicize the cases. Fingard writes that in Nova Scotia, protection agency reports were confidential and the press rarely found out about the cases. Fingard, "The Prevention of Cruelty," 88.

¹⁹ "Een kwart eeuw kindwetten," *De Telegraaf*, 30 November 1930, 5. This is evident from the fact that when women were first admitted to the police force, it was to work in the new juvenile squads: "Kinderpolitie," *De*

quarter-century of the Children's Acts was celebrated on a grand scale. The newspapers covered the speeches to mark this event at length and printed articles reflecting on the first twenty-five years. All were agreed that the Children's Acts were a watershed moment, but also that the battle was not yet won — there were still children out there who needed help.²⁰

A miscarriage of justice

Yet not all the newspaper coverage was favourable after the acts came into effect. One case in particular became a *cause célèbre* in the Dutch newspapers in 1910 as an alleged miscarriage of justice. It received far more coverage than any story of abuse, neglect or abandonment of children in this period; the *Algemeen Handelsblad* devoted more than twice as much space to this story than to all other stories of abuse and neglect combined in all five of the study years. The case is discussed at length here because it sheds light on why stories of actual child maltreatment never became politicized in this way by the newspapers. It had ingredients that encouraged the press to embrace it as a cause and that incidents of child maltreatment lacked: it had active claimsmakers, it touched on issues of principle about the power of the Christian pillars in public institutions, it fitted with the idealization of motherhood and it fitted with journalists' views that poverty was not a cause of abuse and neglect.

The story involved a widow, Mrs De Rijk, whose children had been removed from her custody and sent to Catholic children's homes in 1908. In 1910 she went to court challenging the decision to remove the children. The court ruled in her favour and ordered the children to be returned to their mother. However, it took several weeks to track down and recover the children due to misinformation and an apparent lack of cooperation on the part of the child protection organizations. Although the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* barely paid any attention to the case, the liberal-leaning newspapers *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *De Telegraaf* covered the story at great length, making their opinions clear with headings such as "A wrong put right" (*een onrecht goed gemaakt*) and "From pillar to post" (*van het kastje naar de muur*).²¹

The newspaper coverage of the De Rijk case gives every appearance of having been the result of an orchestrated publicity campaign by the lawyer who took up the woman's

Telegraaf, 28 April 1920, 6; Nelleke Manneke, *Korps zonder kapsones. Geschiedenis van de Rotterdamse gemeentepolitie, 1340-1993* (Bussum: Thoth, 1993), 50-51.

²⁰ "De zilveren kindervetten," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 27 November 1930, 1; "Welke functie heeft de voogdijraad?," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 28 November 1930, 15; "Een kwart eeuw kindervetten," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 30 November 1930, 5; "Kwart eeuw kinderbescherming," *De Telegraaf*, 29 November 1930, 5; "Een kwart eeuw kindervetten," *De Telegraaf*, 30 November 1930, 5; "Een kwart eeuw Kinderwetten," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 1 December 1930, p. 26; "Vereeniging „Kinderzorg", *Leeuwarder Courant*, 9 December 1930, 5.

²¹ "Van het kastje naar den muur," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 30 July 1910, 1; "Een onrecht goed gemaakt," *De Telegraaf*, 22 July 1910, 3; "Een onrecht goed gemaakt," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 21 July 1910, 6.

case, Mr J.A. Levy, and the local newspaper in her town, the *Hilversumsche Courant*. The story appeared in the *Hilversumsche Courant* first, and several of the items in the other newspapers were taken from this local paper.²² Moreover, when Mrs De Rijk went to fetch her two sons from one of the children's homes, she was accompanied by a reporter from the *Hilversumsche Courant*.²³ Her lawyer Levy was also a prominent liberal and a former MP with a particular interest in child protection issues – just the kind of claimsmaker who journalists would take seriously.²⁴ He made sure interest in this case was maintained with a series of letters to the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, which was one of the leading elite liberal newspapers.²⁵ The *Algemeen Handelsblad* was clearly already well disposed to the lawyer as it had reported his anniversary as a lawyer earlier that year.²⁶

The story also appealed to the liberal newspapers because it spoke to concerns among liberals about the rising power of the Christian pillars in politics and civil society. The Children's Acts had increased the institutionalized power of the religious blocs: the religious pillars were represented in the custody boards, which advised on custody cases, and most children's homes were private institutions run by the Protestant and Catholic pillars with government funding.²⁷ This had been necessary to get the Christian parties to agree to this intrusion into family life by the state, but was now viewed with suspicion by liberals.²⁸ The papers presented the De Rijk case as misuse by the Catholic institutions of their authority, punishing Mrs De Rijk for her desire to convert to the Protestant faith. It was alleged that a parish priest, upon finding her reading the Bible at home, had tried to seize it from her, and that Catholic officials had been behind the termination of her social welfare payments and the request to take away custody of her children.²⁹ In the newspapers' accounts, the mother was portrayed as a poor, simple creature, pitted in an unequal battle against the bureaucratic might of the Catholic organizations.

Another attraction of Mrs De Rijk's story was that she could be portrayed as the epitome of the devoted mother battling for her children. This tied in with a rhetoric of motherhood as an essential aspect of the female condition and a common experience that united women of all backgrounds. The fact that she was a widow only increased the pathos: she was a single mother without a man to support her but unlike the unmarried mother,

²² "Een onrecht goed gemaakt," *De Telegraaf*, 22 July 1910, 3; "Een onrecht goed gemaakt," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 21 July 1910, 6.

²³ "Een onrecht goedgemaakt," *De Telegraaf*, 8 August 1910, 1.

²⁴ J. Charité, "Levy, Isaac Abraham (1836-1920)," in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*.

URL: <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn3/levy> [12-11-2013], accessed 7 January 2018.

²⁵ "Een onrecht goed gemaakt," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 1 August 1910, 7; "Een onrecht goed gemaakt," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 4 August 1910, 1; "Een onrecht goed gemaakt," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 5 August 1910, 1; "Een onrecht goed gemaakt," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 7 August 1910, 1.

²⁶ "Jubilee Mr. J.A. Levy," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 25 April 1910, 1.

²⁷ Lechner, *Honderd jaar kindbescherming*, 25-54.

²⁸ Bakker, Noordman, Rietveld-van Wingerden, 465.

²⁹ "Een onrecht goed gemaakt," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 23 July 1910, 6.

there could be no doubt about her virtue. Here was a mother who was going to great lengths to get her children back but who was thwarted by the authorities in what the *Algemeen Handelsblad* called “bitter denigration for the bonds that bind a mother’s heart to her child”.³⁰ She was presented as someone who female readers would be able to identify with despite the very different social class.³¹

The case also enabled journalists to draw a firm distinction between the sad fact of poverty and deliberate neglect by bad parents. In these early days of the Children’s Acts there was some unease about the fine line between poverty and neglect. This issue had arisen earlier that year in a meeting of the *Bond voor Kinderbescherming* (‘Association for Child Protection’) when the question was discussed of whether children should be forcibly removed from their parents if the parents were too poor to raise them properly.³² In the De Rijk case, the custody board defended its decision not to return the children to their mother by arguing among other things that the mother had at one point been evicted and unable to find a new abode immediately and that it was highly unlikely she would ever be able to support her five children financially unaided. This made her lack of money in itself an argument for removing her children. This view was opposed by Mrs De Rijk’s lawyer. According to his application to the court, which was reported in the papers, “if poverty were a crime, half the Dutch population would have to be removed from custody”.³³ The journalists supported this interpretation. However, this position also made it easier to deny the role of poverty in cases of actual child maltreatment.

³⁰ “*hier eene algeheele en bittere kleineering aan den dag komt ‘voor den band die ‘t harte bindt der moeder aan het kind.’*” In “De kinderen der weduwe De Rijk,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 27 August 1910, 1.

³¹ The notion of motherhood as a unifying experience across the classes has also been seen as an important argument justifying middle-class women’s social work in this period: Waaldijk, “Personeel,” 47-49.

³² “Ned. Bond voor Kinderbescherming,” *De Telegraaf*, 11 June 1910, 2; “Ned. Bond voor Kinderbescherming,” *De Telegraaf*, 12 June 1910, 5.

³³ “*Ware armoede een misdrijf, de helft van Nederlandse bevolking moest worden ontzet.*” In “Een onrecht goedge maakt,” *De Telegraaf*, 8 August 1910, 1; “De kinderen der weduwe De Rijk,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 27 August 1910, 1.

5.2 Coverage of maltreatment stories in the newspapers

Table 14 Coverage of parental maltreatment of their children, 1880-1930.

Newspaper	Year	No. of cases	No. of lines	Average no. of lines per page
<i>Leeuwarder Courant</i>	1880	50	798	0.8
	1895	29	677	0.4
	1910	30	489	0.2
	1920	18	355	0.2
	1930	30	719	0.2
<i>Algemeen Handelsblad</i>	1880	32	557	0.3
	1895	30	533	0.3
	1910	14	379	0.1
	1920	21	338	0.1
	1930	29	572	0.1
<i>Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad</i>	1880	33	513	0.5
	1895	65	1,276	0.6
	1910	67	1,082	0.4
	1920	32	745	0.4
	1930	69	2,672	0.6
<i>Het Nieuws van de Dag</i>	1880	32	351	0.2
<i>De Telegraaf</i>	1895	47	724	0.4
	1910	28	576	0.2
	1920	32	405	0.2
	1930	48	962	0.3
All newspapers	1880	93	2,219	0.4
	1895	128	3,210	0.4
	1910	106	2,526	0.2
	1920	70	1,843	0.2
	1930	104	4,925	0.3

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

The amount of space dedicated to stories of parents' maltreatment of their children was relatively modest (see Table 14). This form of family violence received far less attention than

stories of intimate partner violence (see Table 10). Only in 1880 was the coverage of the two forms of family violence comparable, with an average of 0.4 lines per page on child maltreatment and 0.5 lines per page on violence between partner. Throughout the period, newspapers were less invested in the individual stories of child maltreatment: items were shorter than items on intimate partner violence (averaging 16 lines as opposed to 31 for partner violence), and fewer stories were followed up with multiple items. The difference was particularly large in the years leading up to World War I, when the number of column inches dedicated to partner violence shot up but coverage of cruelty to children remained on a level. Thus in 1910 the combined newspapers printed over 33,500 lines on intimate partner violence but only about 2,500 lines on the maltreatment of children.

The relative paucity of stories about parents maltreating their children would probably have affected readers' perceptions. According to the agenda-setting theory, issues that receive a great deal of coverage are seen as salient by readers, even if they do not necessarily accept the journalists' views on those issues. Conversely, issues that receive little coverage are not seen as salient.³⁴ The Dutch newspapers were not presenting the physical ill-treatment of children as a salient issue. This might seem surprising, given the notion of the twentieth century as the Century of the Child.³⁵ One reason could be that Dutch stories of abuse and neglect were not coming into the public domain as they were being dealt with behind the scenes by the child protection organizations. However, that does not explain the lack of investment in the stories that did get reported or the lack of coverage of other forms of violence against children such as homicides. It is also possible that there were fewer incidents of extreme violence against children than against partners; a modern Dutch study found that just over 10 per cent of victims of family violence were aged under 18.³⁶ Another possible reason for the lack of coverage after 1880 is an assumed limited appeal to readers. In 1880 and to a certain extent in 1895, child maltreatment was portrayed as a working-class phenomenon and part of the same narrative of the degenerate masses as the stories of domestic violence discussed in the previous chapter. This was a period when the lower classes were emphatically not part of the Dutch imagined community as constructed in the newspapers. In the decades that followed, the working classes became an integral part of the Dutch nation and stories that portrayed them as outsiders and inherently bad parents were no longer appropriate. In the case of domestic violence, these stories were replaced by romanticized tales of crimes of passion that were used in the fin-de-siècle to attract female readers. However, stories of violence against children did not lend themselves to this romanticizing treatment; attacks on one's own children could not be construed as an act of passion.

³⁴ McCombs and Shaw, "The agenda-setting function," 184.

³⁵ Dessertine also mentions in a study of the operation of the child protection laws in France that there was little press interest in child maltreatment cases except during the campaigns for the new laws. Dessertine, "Tribunaux face aux violences," 130-131.

³⁶ Ferwerda, *Huiselijk geweld gemeten*, 3.

Table 14 gives a picture of stability over time: the amount of coverage (expressed as the number of lines per page) did not change much between 1880 and 1930. However, this apparent stability hides big shifts in the kinds of story covered. In order to understand these shifts, the cases have been categorized into different kinds of stories. A dedicated typology was developed for this purpose based on the characteristics of the Dutch stories. Although historians routinely differentiate between various kinds of child maltreatment, there is no current consensus on the appropriate subdivisions. For example, infanticide studies may be limited to the killing of new-borns or they may include babies up to the age of twelve months or even older.³⁷ Nor is the distinction between foreign stories and incidents set in the Netherlands that was made in the previous chapter appropriate here. While there were differences (foreign stories were for example more likely to involve extreme violence), this was not the main fault line for the differences in style and content. Differences between types of violence were much more decisive.

Typology

The starting point for the typology is the newspapers' narratives. As was discussed in Chapter 3, simplification and predictability are important news values for journalists and this results in them adopting standard scripts. The reporting on violence against children used a limited set of scripts, with different scripts being used for different kinds of violence.³⁸ The various categories of violence are characterized not only by differences in their circumstances (such as the perpetrator's sex and the outcome for the victim) but also in their style elements (for example, sensational or matter-of-fact), sources (agencies, foreign correspondents, the police or court reports) and attitudes towards the perpetrator (empathic or critical).

Based on these differences, a typology of newspapers' maltreatment stories has been developed, with four different categories of maltreatment story. The four categories and some key characteristics are shown in Table 15. Abandonment concerns stories of parents abandoning babies (foundling cases) or older children, which was a criminal offence under Dutch law (see Chapter 2). Infanticides concern stories in which a new-born baby is killed (by the mother or father). Filicides are defined here as stories of the sudden killing of one or more children. This category includes familicides (in which the spouse is killed too). The final category is stories of abuse and neglect. This covers stories of harm caused by physical attacks on the child or by withholding food and physical care. It includes cases involving the death of the child where this is the unintended result of abuse or neglect.

While this typology is based on newspaper representations, it has affinities with modern criminological classifications of child killings. In the typology set out in Table 15, a

³⁷ This issue is discussed in: Kilday and Watson, "Infanticide, Religion and Community," 85-86; Grey, "Discourses of Infanticide," 8-10.

³⁸ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 50-53. An example of scripts for infanticide stories was given in Section 3.5.

story that ends with the death of the child can fall in any of the four categories, depending on the type of violence. These subdivisions are in line with those made by criminologists. For example, Resnick differentiates between the killing of an unwanted baby within the first twenty-four hours (the infanticide category), other deliberate killings of children (the filicide category) and child battering in which death is an unintended result (abuse here). In a classification specific to women, d'Orban distinguishes between neonaticides (infanticide here), the mentally ill and retaliation (both included in filicides) and battering and killing by neglect (both covered by the abuse and neglect category).³⁹

Table 15 Typology of parental maltreatment stories.

The four categories with their key features and the number of cases.

Category	Description	No. of cases	Perpetrator			Setting	Victims	
			Mother	Father	Both	Foreign	Multiple	Killed
<i>Abandonment</i>	Permanent abandonment of a child	85	30%	37%	33%	5%	62%	4%
<i>Filicide</i>	Sudden killing of a child	141	36%	60%	4%	79%	70%	89%
<i>Infanticide</i>	Killing of a new-born child	157	87%	4%	9%	8%	4%	99%
<i>Abuse and neglect</i>	Physical abuse or neglect of a child	118	36%	50%	15%	33%	22%	30%

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930. Own analysis.

The construction by the press of these different categories of violence is discussed in the next section. It explores the differences in the circumstances (who committed these crimes and where) and the typical style elements. It also looks at the treatment of gender in these stories.

³⁹ Josephine Stanton and Alexander Simpson, "Filicide: a review," *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 25 (2002): 1-14; Peter Sidebotham, "Rethinking Filicide," *Child Abuse Review* 22 (2013): 305-310; Ania Wilczynski, "Child-killing by parents. Social, legal and gender issues," in *Gender and Crime*, ed. R. Emerson Dobash, Russell P. Dobash, and Lesley Noaks (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), 167-180. Resnick's classification has also been used by Cohen in his study of American filicides between 1780 and 1840: Cohen, "Homicidal Compulsion," 743-747.

5.3 Representation of abandonment, abuse and neglect, infanticide, and filicide

Abandonment

Abandonment was a criminal offence in the Netherlands. Abandonment of a child up to the age of seven was a crime under the 1811 Penal Code, which was in effect in 1880. The 1886 Criminal Code extended this to cover all children, regardless of age, and any other dependents the perpetrator was legally obliged to care for. As the husband had a duty under marriage law to provide for his wife and family, men who abandoned their families could be prosecuted under the Criminal Code. Throughout the period 1880 to 1930, a handful of men and women were convicted every year under these laws (see also Section 2.6 and Appendix A for more on the legislation and prosecution). Abandonment also ran counter to all notions of parental devotion and responsibility. Moreover, because it left the dependants in penury and was often a product of poverty, it was particularly contentious in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the extent of state support for the 'deviant' poor was a subject of debate.⁴⁰

The newspaper stories of parents abandoning their children were both brief and highly critical of the parents. As can be seen in Table 15, the stories almost always concerned children abandoned in the Netherlands, and rarely ended in the death of the victims (three deaths were reported, all of which involved foundling babies). The items were short and the headlines moralistic, either expressing compassion for the abandoned children (for example, "Poor little ones!") or disgust at the parents (for example, "Depraved parents!").⁴¹ The items seem primarily designed to convey the newspaper's condemnation of the parents' behaviour and there was rarely any follow-up with information on what happened to the children.

The interest in abandonment stories therefore has to be seen in the light of the debates about neglected children that fuelled the 1905 Children's Acts. The stories often involve children who were discovered in public spaces, roaming the streets or parks. Reporting on abandonments reached a peak in the years prior to World War I, a period of crowded cities and concern about unsupervised street children.⁴² By 1930, abandonment stories had virtually disappeared from the newspapers: only two cases were reported, compared with 33 in 1910. This was not due to a decline in the number of convictions – absolute numbers were stable and low anyway – but the newspapers no longer saw these

⁴⁰ Beate Althammer, "Introduction: Poverty and Deviance in the Era of the Emerging Welfare State," in *The Welfare State and the 'Deviant Poor' in Europe, 1870-1933*, ed. Beate Althammer, Andreas Gestrich, and Jens Gründler (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 9-17.

⁴¹ "Arme kleinen!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 30 May 1910, 16; "Ontaarde ouders!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 30 June 1910, 10.

⁴² Manneke, *Uit oogpunt van politie*, 53-67; Bakker, Noordman, and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen*, 458-461.

stories is newsworthy. This may have been because by then an extensive social welfare and child protection system had been established to deal with these children. As a result, they were less visible and the question of who should support them was less urgent.

Many abandonment stories, when read against the grain, reveal the precarious position of poor families. Some items were about foundling babies, others about older individual children who had been thrown out of the house, but most stories concerned entire families of young children who had been left to their fate by their parents. Poverty and family breakups were key factors in these cases. Some cases involved parents on the margins of society such as vagrants or pedlars, where the children may have been left behind because the parents could no longer afford to keep them. In 1895, three children were found wandering around the streets of Rotterdam. They had been staying in a lodging house with their mother and had spent all day with her begging. In the unsympathetic words of the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*: "...this apparently did not bring in enough for the woman and yesterday she vanished into thin air, without the slightest concern for her children whom she left behind in the lodging house".⁴³

Another vulnerable moment for children was when parents split up. If both parents walked out, children had to rely on other family members to take care of them but that too could be an insecure solution. In May 1910, police found two children aged three and five roaming outside early one morning in Breda. Their mother had left for another town some time ago, their father was away on a job and the grandparents had been looking after them. But it now turned out the grandparents had suddenly left for Rotterdam, abandoning the two children.⁴⁴

Abandonment was a gendered crime. Both the law and socioeconomic conditions operated differently for fathers compared with mothers. As a result, it was effectively a crime committed by married fathers and single mothers. In the Dutch newspaper reports, just over a third of the abandonment cases involved fathers abandoning their families. The majority were married men who had deserted their wife and children; by law, this was a crime for men but not women. Mothers made up a further third of the cases but when information was given on their marital status, they were almost invariably single mothers (unmarried, widowed or divorced). In over half the cases of abandonment by the mother, their marital status was not given but as no mention was made of the children's father, it seems likely that these would have been single mothers too. This reflects the vulnerability of these women. While more help was being provided for single mothers by philanthropic

⁴³ *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 21 March 1895, 5.

⁴⁴ "Dit scheen der vrouw [...] niet genoeg op te leveren en gisteren verdween zij met de Noorderzon, zonder zich om het lot harer kinderen te bekommeren, die zij in het logement achterliet." In "Arme kleinen!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 30 May 1910, 16.

organizations from the 1890s onwards, this often came with conditions attached: mothers had for example to be judged a victim of seduction rather than promiscuous.⁴⁵

To conclude, while the facts of the cases suggest poverty was often a factor, the journalists adopted a moralistic tone that denied the relevance of socioeconomic factors. Rather than seeing abandonment as an act of desperation, they depicted it as a selfish move by parents eager to be rid of the burden of their offspring.

Abuse and neglect

Historians have studied conceptions of abuse and neglect among philanthropists and social workers, but have paid little attention so far to the representation of abuse and neglect in newspapers (except in the context of the child protection campaigns). Examination of the Dutch newspapers shows that stories usually featured extensive violence, presented as a kind of torture. Neglect only appeared when extreme in nature. Especially in the early years, the stories of abuse and neglect were used to paint a picture of the working classes as bad parents.

Abuse and neglect were portrayed as a working-class phenomenon. Stories came from both the Netherlands and abroad (33 per cent were foreign cases). Many of the foreign stories were relatively detailed trial reports from France and Germany, where the newspapers had correspondents, and these correspondents are likely to have been the source of the stories (perhaps taking them from foreign newspapers). In the chapter on intimate partner violence, it was contended that foreign stories provided a counterpoint to the imagined community of the Netherlands because they were out-of-the-ordinary tales involving un-Dutch behaviours and customs. The foreign tales of abuse and neglect provided a different kind of counterpoint: they were on a continuum with the Dutch stories from the late nineteenth century of degenerate working-class parents treating their offspring with callous cruelty. This transnational picture reinforced the message that such behaviour was a class-bound phenomenon. The stories of abuse and neglect took place amongst settled families rather than the marginal families in the abandonment stories. In the early years in particular, drink was regularly mentioned as a factor. In fact, the child-battering narratives in this period were closely connected to the accounts of spousal violence discussed in the previous chapter.

The articles on abuse and neglect were just as critical of the parents as the abandonment items but were more lurid. The items were almost twice as long on average. The headings were moralistic while at the same time stressing the cruelty (For example

⁴⁵ Jansz, *Denken over sekse*, 87-88. The effect of the absence of the father on child mortality is discussed in: Jan Kok, Mattijs Vandezande, Kees Mandemakers, "Household Structure, Resource Allocation and Child Well-Being. A Comparison across Family Systems," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 8, no. 4 (2011): 78-79, 92-96.

“Seven years of torture”; “An inhuman father”).⁴⁶ That set the tone for the article that followed. The articles on abuse often contained graphic descriptions of the acts of violence and the victims’ injuries and aimed for a sensational effect. For example, in 1895 readers of the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* learnt that a man in Chemnitz had been sentenced to prison for maltreating his sons aged five and ten. “He often tied their legs together and hung them up by the legs while holding their nose and mouth closed. During a meal, he stuck a thick end of steel wire in one boy’s mouth without any reason, so hard that the blood gushed out of the boy’s mouth; another time, he dragged him around the room by one ear, giving the boy a heavily bleeding skin tear”.⁴⁷ Although many cases involved extreme violence that ended in the victim’s death, the newspapers took a similar approach for more minor assaults too. The violence was presented as an act of torture and while sometimes ostensibly intended as punishment, out of all proportion to the child’s misdemeanour.

The stories of abuse often emphasized that the abuse had been going on for a long time. This is in contrast to the accounts of partner violence discussed in the previous chapter, where chronic abuse was downplayed or ignored. The stress on the structural nature of the abuse here serves to underline the cruel nature of the perpetrator. However, it also makes the position of neighbours rather ambiguous. The domestic violence stories showed chivalrous neighbours and bystanders intervening to protect the victim, thus emphasizing the abuser’s position as an outsider. Neighbours might also intervene in child abuse stories, but it often became clear from the accounts that the neighbours had been aware of the mistreatment for some time. An extract from the report of a Rotterdam trial in 1895 of a mother for abusing her eight-year-old daughter can serve as an illustration:

‘The child had been brought up by a grandmother from a very young age and had returned to her mother in no. 3 Breedestraat when she was seven. The witness C. Looij stated that the child had been healthy and sturdy when she came from the grandmother, but the girl soon went into decline. The neighbours often heard the child crying and the mother loudly scolding and raging at the child. The girl was covered in bruises and scratches in the face and hands.

The child said that these injuries had been caused by her mother, and also said that she didn’t get any food and was not allowed home sometimes. One of the

⁴⁶ “Zevenjarige marteling,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 17 May 1920, 3; “Een onmenselijke vader,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 22 November 1930, 5.

⁴⁷ “Dikwijls bond hij hunne beenen vast en hing hen aan de beenen op, terwijl hij hun neus en mond dichthield. Een der knapen stak bij hij het eten zonder eenige oorzaak een dik eind staal draad zoo hevig in den mond, dat het bloed den knaap uit den mond gudsste; een anderen keer sleurde hij hem aan een oor door de kamer, zoodat de knaap een hevig bloedende scheurwond bekwam.” “Een onmens,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 16 July 1895, 6.

neighbours, Mrs Van Dijk, had seen the mother kick the girl in the stomach, making her fall over. The other four witnesses had not seen any abuse but had heard it.⁴⁸

Lacking the violence of abuse cases, neglect was not as inherently newsworthy and generally tended to be reported only if it resulted in serious injury or death. Historians in Anglo-Saxon countries have seen a shift in focus by the child protection societies from abuse, when they started operating in the late nineteenth century, to neglect in the early twentieth century. For Shurlee, this is related to the professionalization of the societies as they became part of the wider welfare apparatus policing the poor. Ferguson puts the shift in the context of the medicalization of childhood and the increasing importance placed on hygiene.⁴⁹ This shift, if it indeed took place in the Netherlands too, was not evident in the newspapers as such everyday stories of physical neglect were not being reported. One form of neglect that did repeatedly appear in the newspapers was the ‘imprisoned child’ story, in which a child was locked away out of sight and uncared for, often over many years. Fifteen such stories were reported in all during the five sample years. Most were foreign cases but two ‘imprisoned children’ came to light in the Netherlands in 1920. In one, a boy of 19, one of three children, had been locked up for about ten years in Amsterdam. He had apparently worn the same underwear for three years and was filthy when discovered by the police.⁵⁰

This story is typical of abuse and neglect stories in one regard, namely that they tended to involve a single victim. Whereas the victims in abandonment and filicides stories usually encompassed all the children in the family, in abuse and neglect stories one child would often be picked out (see Table 15). The phenomenon in which one particular child is targeted is known from modern studies and was also seen by Gordon in the US and by Yvorel in his analysis of nineteenth-century French court cases of child abuse.⁵¹ The single victims in the Dutch newspaper stories were disproportionately likely to be boys, particularly if cases involving very young children (under five) are discounted. This may reflect newspapers’ judgement of what was newsworthy, but could also point to the greater potential for conflicts between boys and their parents. In several stories, there is a suggestion that the boy was physically deficient. In the aforementioned Amsterdam case,

⁴⁸ “Het kind was bij eene grootmoeder van hare vroegste jeugd al grootgebracht en met haar 7e jaar was het weder bij de moeder in de Breedestraat no. 3, teruggebracht. De getuige C. Looij, verklaart, dat het kind, toen het pas van de grootmoeder kwam er gezond en flink uitzag, doch dat het meisje spoedig begon te verminderen. De burens hoorden het kind meermalen huilen en de moeder luide tegen het kind schelden en razen. Het meisje zat vol blauwe plekken en krabben in het gelaat en aan de handen. Het kind vertelde, dat deze mishandelingen haar door hare moeder waren toegebracht, ook deelde het mede, dat het geen eten kreeg en soms niet thuis mocht komen. Een der burens, vrouw Van Dijk had gezien, dat de moeder het meisje een trap tegen den buik gaf, zoodat het achterover viel. De overige vier getuigen hadden geen mishandelingen zien plegen, doch hadden het wel gehoord.” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 7 May 1895, 6.

⁴⁹ Harry Ferguson, “The protection of children in time: child protection and the lives and deaths of children in child abuse cases in socio-historical perspective,” *Child and Family Social Work* 1 (1996): 208-209; Shurlee, “I am directed,” 247-250; Buckley, “Child Neglect,” 57-59; Emsley, *Hard Men*, 71.

⁵⁰ “Verwaarloozing,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 29 September 1920, 2.

⁵¹ Gordon, *Heroes*, 196-198; Yvorel, “La justice,” 22-23.

the boy had had to leave school because of a lung disease and general ill health. Such physical problems increased the burden on the parents, in particular as boys grew older and were expected to work and contribute to the family income.⁵²

Both mothers and fathers featured in Dutch stories of abuse and neglect. There is evidence, as in the abandonment cases, that single mothers were in a particularly precarious position but that this was not being recognized by the journalists. For example, in 1910 the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* printed an unsympathetic story under the heading "Neglected child". Alerted by neighbours, the police gained access to the home of J.H., a woman who worked all day at a snack stall, leaving her two-year-old son unattended. The police found him in such a state that he had to be taken to hospital. Given that the newspaper report did not mention a husband, it seems likely that the mother was a single woman.⁵³ Gordon has given an excellent analysis of the double bind for single mothers wishing to avoid accusations of neglect by child protection agencies in this period. If they did not work, they were too poor to maintain the high standards of care expected of them. If they did find work, they were often unable to obtain or pay for childcare; they had to leave their children unattended and could therefore be accused of neglect for that reason.⁵⁴

Gordon's analysis follows from her conclusion that the child protection services saw different roles for father and mothers: fathers were expected to be providers and mothers to be responsible for day-to-day care. Other historians also see gendered assumptions of parental roles at play in the child protection agencies and the criminal justice system. As a consequence, mothers rather than fathers were held responsible for neglect. Hogan, however, uses a late-nineteenth-century case of fatal neglect in Australia to argue that lay attitudes were changing, with an expectation that fathers too should be directly involved in the care of their children.⁵⁵ The Dutch newspaper articles do not point to a gendering of the crime of neglect – there are simply too few 'ordinary' neglect cases to make that connection. However, some stories suggest dispute about the extent of the father's responsibility. In the 1920 Amsterdam imprisonment case, the father, Mr Pietersen, claimed he was not responsible. He said he could do nothing about the fact that the boy did not even have clothes because he handed over his entire weekly pay packet to his wife. This interpretation of his role as limited to that of a financial provider was accepted by the police, but apparently not by the neighbours. While only the mother was charged for the

⁵² "Ergerlijk verwaarloosd," *De Telegraaf*, 30 September 1920, 6; De Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid*, 130-132.

⁵³ "Verwaarloosd kind," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 26 July 1910, 9.

⁵⁴ Gordon, "Single Mothers".

⁵⁵ Hogan, "I Never Noticed," 309-310; Harry Ferguson, "The Protection of Children," 209; Shurlee, "I am directed," 252-255; Clapton, "Yesterday's Men," 1052-1056; Gordon, *Heroes*, 165-167.

boy's confinement, the father eventually had to move house because of the hostile reaction of the neighbours.⁵⁶

Some of the stories of abuse by fathers involved spousal violence as well. Modern-day studies point to frequent coexistence of intimate partner violence and physical child abuse, often with the father as the perpetrator in both cases.⁵⁷ There was however little acknowledgement in the newspapers' accounts of the difficult position the mother with a violent partner might be in. This is evident in the reporting on the trial in 1880 of a mother, Anna Fasting, and her cohabiting partner Johannes de Raad for the beating to death of her two-year-old son.⁵⁸ De Raad regularly beat the child and had broken his arm one day. The next night, the boy started crying and De Raad attacked him 'like a madman'. After De Raad left for work, Anna took the child into bed with her; when she woke up later, he was dead. The *Algemeen Handelsblad* reported at great length on this case and was highly critical of the mother, calling her "culpable and appalling" (*laakbaar en afschuwelijk*) for allowing De Raad to abuse her child. Yet various facts revealed in the trial reports suggest a more nuanced situation. Fasting said she had been pregnant with De Raad's baby and was afraid he would abandon her if she did not cooperate with him. It also turned out that she had arranged to leave the child with another woman on occasion because she did not trust De Raad alone with the child. Despite this, the *Algemeen Handelsblad*'s verdict on Anna Fasting was devastating: "no regret, no tears, not a trace of maternal feeling" (*geen berouw, geen tranen, geen zweem van moederlijk gevoel*).⁵⁹

Infanticide

As was discussed in Chapter 2, the law on infanticide became more lenient in the Netherlands. In 1880, a separate article applied to infanticide by single mothers (subject to certain conditions) with a lower maximum sentence than for other homicides. In the 1886 Criminal Code, the scope was expanded to cover married women as well. In the decades that followed, unmarried women were increasingly viewed by philanthropists and women's organizations as victims of male irresponsibility and initiatives were taken to care for them. Given that convictions for infanticide (relative to the population) fell from the 1890s, it might seem that infanticide was becoming less of a problem.

The infanticide stories in Dutch newspapers do not give the impression that infanticide was fading as a phenomenon. While press coverage had the greatest impact in 1880, the newspapers continued to report on infanticide stories throughout the period.

⁵⁶ "De verwaarloosde jongen," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 2 October 1920, 10; "De jongen uit de alcoof!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 4 October 1920, 6; *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 15 October 1920, 5.

⁵⁷ Chris Goddard and Gillinder Bedi, "Intimate Partner Violence and Child Abuse: A Child-Centred Perspective," *Child Abuse Review* 19, (2010): 7-8. See too: Gordon, *Heroes*, 263-264.

⁵⁸ This is the case mentioned at the start of Chapter 1.

⁵⁹ *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 21 January 1880, 6; "Doodslag," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 14 January 1880, 7; "Doodslag van een kind," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 15 January 1880, 6.

Moreover, the number of stories featuring alleged female perpetrators in the Netherlands was consistently two to three times higher than the number of convictions in that year, which suggests a low threshold – in other words, infanticide stories were considered inherently newsworthy. At the same time the articles were unemotional and painted a picture of infanticide as regrettable but a fact of life.

Dutch infanticide stories were of two types: items reporting the discovery of a dead baby and stories of the investigation and trial of alleged perpetrators. Very few of these cases took place outside the Netherlands. The items on dead babies were short, usually without a heading and included towards the end of the local 'City News' section. They were factual and unemotional with no expression of horror, even when the baby had been found by children.⁶⁰ The main source was likely to have been the local police: in some instances, the item explicitly asked anyone with any information to contact the police. It was rare for the discovery of a dead baby to be followed up by a report that the perpetrator had been found.⁶¹ The overall impression given by these items is of infanticide as a common if regrettable crime, moreover one in which the perpetrator was unlikely to be caught.

Like the reports of dead babies, items on infanticide investigations and trials were matter-of-fact throughout the period. Emotive terms like 'drama' were almost never used. The most common heading was 'Infanticide' ('*Kindermoord*'), referring to the subject matter without any attempt to pass moral judgement or sensationalize the story. Items were often short; there were no long trial reports with verbatim dialogue comparable to the stories on lethal domestic violence. However, the impact of these infanticide stories was greater in the early years before the advent of New Journalism, when most articles were brief and sober. In 1880, three of the top five stories on private violence in the *Leeuwarder Courant* were infanticide cases. By 1930, the unemotional infanticide stories took up a much smaller proportion of the available column inches and they were overshadowed by more lurid crime items. Thus although the nature of the reports changed relatively little between 1880 and 1930, their function and effect did change.

The stereotypical infanticidal perpetrator is the single young woman, probably a servant girl, driven by a mixture of shame and poverty. Live-in servants were particularly vulnerable because they lacked the support of a family network and would also have lost their jobs immediately upon discovery of the pregnancy. Moreover, they were closely watched and therefore likely to be caught. Many studies of infanticide appear to confirm

⁶⁰ A similar style of reporting for infanticide corpses has been observed in nineteenth-century England; see: Pegg, "Sweet Fanny Adams," 94.

⁶¹ One exception involved a baby in a canal in Kampen and the subsequent arrest of a maid: *Leeuwarder Courant*, 1 July 1880, 2; *Leeuwarder Courant*, 9 July 1880, 2. Other studies also find that discoveries of a baby's corpse did not usually result in the perpetrator being tracked down: Lévesque, "Mères célibataires"; Leboutte, "Offense against Family Order," 164; Caron, "Killed by its Mother," 217.

this picture.⁶² However, the reality is somewhat more complex. The definition of infanticide in a country's legislation or that used by the historian may exclude male perpetrators and married women *a priori*.⁶³ The involvement of men in infanticide has received very little attention in the literature.⁶⁴ Infanticide by married couples may often have gone undiscovered as they were more able to present baby deaths as accidental.⁶⁵ The dominance of servants is also to some extent simply a reflection that this was the largest occupational group for women; an American study covering the early twentieth century shows greater heterogeneity in infanticidal women's occupations. Nor were all female perpetrators that young.⁶⁶ In the Netherlands, it was already seen in Section 2.6 that older women in their thirties made up over a quarter of the infanticide offenders.

The Dutch newspaper reports give a relatively diverse picture of the perpetrator that reflects this more complex reality. To be sure, most reports concerned unmarried women, a significant proportion of whom are described as domestic servants. However, a few women were or had been married. In these cases, the baby may have been killed because it was evidence of extramarital sex.⁶⁷ Female perpetrators were not always that young, either: they could be in their late twenties or thirties. One such woman was Eltje Boelens, who was convicted in 1880 of the murder of her newborn baby. Although her position as an unmarried servant fits the typical profile of the infanticidal mother, she was 34 and had already given birth to two illegitimate children.⁶⁸

Not all infanticides reported by the newspapers were committed just by the baby's mother. Some women were aided by the partner or other family members. Stories involving the woman's father or stepfather as a co-offender may actually have been incest cases. Fabienne Giuliani, in her study of incest in nineteenth-century France, calls infanticide was the "privileged companion" (*compagnon privilégié*) of incest; the incest provided a motive

⁶² Kilday and Watson, "Infanticide, Religion and Community," 88; Rattigan, "I Thought," 141-143; Margaret L. Arnot, "Understanding women committing newborn child murder in Victorian England," in *Everyday violence in Britain, 1850-1950*, ed. Shani D'Cruze (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 58-59; Spierenburg, *History of Murder*, 150-151; Randolph Roth, "Child Murder in New England," *Social Science History* 25, no. 1 (2001): 113-114; Frédéric Chauvaud, *Les criminels du Poitou au XIXe siècle* (La Crèche: Geste éditions, 1999), 163-72; Jolie Ermers, "Kindermoord in de negentiende eeuw: en om de vrouw verging het kind," *Nemesis* 6, no. 3 (1990): 115-116. On the vulnerable economic position of Dutch servants, see: K.P. Companje, "Geneeskundige zorg voor inwonend dienstpersoneel, 1890-1910," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 1, no. 2 (2004): 27-29.

⁶³ Examples of a restrictive legal definition can be found in studies of the Netherlands and Germany, see: Richter, "Infanticide, Child Abandonment," 511; Ruberg, "Travelling Knowledge," 364-365. Leboutte defines infanticide as a crime by the mother, see: Leboutte, "Offense against Family Order," 162. Other studies use a broader definition but choose to focus solely on unmarried women, see for example: Rattigan, "I Thought," 135-136.

⁶⁴ Grey, "Discourses of Infanticide," 46-65.

⁶⁵ Leboutte, "Offense against Family Order," 163; Caron, "Killed by its Mother," 218.

⁶⁶ Caron, "Killed by its Mother," 217-218.

⁶⁷ For instance, one woman whose husband had been at sea for a long time killed the baby she had conceived out of wedlock: *Leeuwarder Courant*, 11 March 1880, 2.

⁶⁸ *Leeuwarder Courant*, 16 October 1880, 3.

for the murder of the baby, while the discovery of the infanticide was often the event that brought the incestuous relationship into the open.⁶⁹ Dutch journalists never explicitly spoke of incest, but the information in some cases seems to point in this direction (although it remains unknowable whether readers would have interpreted the stories in this way).⁷⁰ In a 1920 case, a 63-year-old smith and his 31-year-old daughter were tried for the murder of the daughter's newborn baby. The father had killed the baby in February that year by leaving it naked and exposed in his smithy, and had then buried it secretly. The daughter was accused of giving the father information and opportunity to carry the murder out. The possibility of incest is suggested by the fact that the case was tried *in camera*, which was not standard practice for infanticide trials but was for sex crimes, and that the father was eventually given the relatively harsh sentence of eight years while the daughter was found not guilty.⁷¹

Historians have debated the relative importance of shame and poverty in infanticide cases. For single mothers, both could be factors: the social stigma attached to illegitimacy could lead to ostracism and consequently destitution.⁷² Jeffrey Richter, in a comparative study of German regions, argued that poverty was more important than shame even among single mothers; infanticide was also prevalent in areas where illegitimacy was common.⁷³ Married women may also have killed their babies because they lacked the financial resources to care for them, according to Katherine Watson.⁷⁴ The Dutch law on infanticide assumed it was an act driven by shame: it applied when the baby was killed for fear of discovery of the birth. However, some of the Dutch stories suggest material considerations rather than shame. The above-mentioned Eltje Boelens is a case in point. She had already had two illegitimate children so would be unlikely to feel the need to hide her pregnancy. On the other hand, she was clearly unable to support her children as her previous surviving child was being cared for by the poor board.⁷⁵ A case in 1910 shows that poverty could still be a reason even with the greater support being offered in this period. A 33-year-old single woman in Rotterdam was tried for infanticide. Like Boelens, she had also already had two children. She freely confessed that she had planned to kill the baby, not to conceal the birth but because she felt she could not possibly care for the child. Yet one of the witnesses at the trial was from *Vereeniging Onderlinge Vrouwenbescherming*, a woman's organization that helped unmarried mothers. This witness had been in contact with the woman for over a

⁶⁹ Giuliani, *Les liaisons interdites*, 186-187.

⁷⁰ Rodrick has given a detailed analysis of a case of incest and infanticide in mid-Victorian where the newspapers had no compunction in mentioning the incest, see: Rodrick, "Melodrama and Natural Science," 75.

⁷¹ "Kindermoord," *De Telegraaf*, 4 June 1920, 6; "Vader en dochter," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 28 September 1920, 2.

⁷² Arnot, "Understanding Women," 57-58; Watson, "Religion, Community," 117.

⁷³ Richter, "Infanticide, Child Abandonment," 542-545.

⁷⁴ Watson, "Religion, Community," 117.

⁷⁵ *Leeuwarder Courant*, 16 October 1880, 3.

year and gave a good report of her character. Despite this contact, the woman had apparently felt she would be unable to cope with the new baby.⁷⁶

Stories of women arrested and tried for infanticide largely took place in rural and small-town environments. However, the reports of dead babies were mainly of corpses found in urban public places not far from the newspaper headquarters. Bodies were often dredged up from canals or other waterways. Roth has noted that the increasing mobility in the nineteenth century made it easier for single women to commit infanticide and remain undetected. They could move to a city where they were anonymous, give birth to the baby and dispose of the body in rivers, lakes or garbage dumps, then move on.⁷⁷ In the Netherlands, the decades after 1880 saw rapid expansion of the big cities in the west and considerable migration from more rural areas, in particular of single young women. The corpses found in urban waterways suggest that Dutch women were indeed using the increased mobility and anonymity in the big cities to kill and dispose of illegitimate babies. The prevalence of rural and small-town settings in investigations and trials may therefore reflect the greater risk of discovery in those locations. In close-knit communities, other women in particular kept a sharp watch over single women's bodies and were aware of any signs of pregnancy.⁷⁸

Filicides

In this study, filicide is defined as the deliberate and sudden killing of children other than new-born babies. Whereas infanticides were predominantly committed by the mother, filicides were perpetrated by both mothers and fathers (see Table 15). However, filicides too were highly gendered: there were differences between men and women in who they killed, and in the reasons that journalists gave for their actions.

Most filicide stories took place outside the Netherlands. Filicide was a rare event that was also frequently characterized by extreme violence: 70 per cent of the newspapers' cases involved multiple victims, often with entire families being wiped out.⁷⁹ The rarity and violence made filicides stories inherently newsworthy. Yet by the same token there was a limited 'supply' of filicide cases in the Netherlands and many of the stories accordingly came from abroad. Filicide articles were therefore particularly strongly influenced by trends in international newsgathering. In 1920, when international news was dominated by political stories in the aftermath of World War I, filicides stories virtually disappeared from the newspapers, having previously made up a quarter of all child maltreatment stories. Yet in

⁷⁶ "Kindermoord," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 11 January 1910, 10.

⁷⁷ Roth, "Child Murder," 124.

⁷⁸ Willemijn Ruberg, "The tactics of menstruation in Dutch cases of sexual assault and infanticide, 1750-1920," *Journal of Women's History* 25, no. 3 (2013): 29-30; Rattigan, "I Thought," 138-139.

⁷⁹ Modern studies bear out that multiple deaths are a feature of filicides, see for example: Thea Brown, Danielle Tyson, Paula Fernandez Arias, "Filicide and Parental Separation and Divorce," *Child Abuse Review* 23, (2014): 83.

1930, reports of filicides were appearing about once a week on average. By this point, the newspapers were obtaining much of their foreign crime news from agencies, and 84 per cent of filicide items where a source was mentioned came from news agencies. A large proportion of the filicide stories took place in Germany or Eastern Europe, which was the domain of the Wolff news agency.

Like the foreign stories of partner violence, filicides stories were often out-of-the-ordinary tales involving high-status protagonists and reported in sensational language. One quarter of the foreign filicides were committed by middle-class or upper-class perpetrators. The items had attention-grabbing headlines that regularly described the event as a ‘drama’. Whereas the headlines in the abandonment, abuse and neglect cases gave moralizing statements about the perpetrator, the filicide headlines evoked horror at the incident (For example, ‘Appalling family drama’; ‘Madman kills his wife and four children’).⁸⁰ It is no coincidence that the populist papers *De Telegraaf* and the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* reported more of these sensational filicide cases than the upmarket *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *Leeuwarder Courant*.

Despite the sensational headlines, the accounts were usually brief with no follow-up, reducing the emotional impact of the items. There was relatively little detail on the actual act of violence, in contrast to the lengthy accounts of the ‘torture’ in abuse stories. That was particularly true of the foreign stories, which were generally covered in just one item a few lines long and with little information on the victims. But filicide stories in the Netherlands also often faded quickly because the perpetrator had committed suicide or was taken off to a mental hospital. After the newspapers had covered the initial incident, there was no trial to report on in subsequent items.

In the entire five years, only one Dutch filicide case went to trial, namely the 1930 murder by P. Stap in Rotterdam of his two children.⁸¹ The coverage of this case in the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* shows the kind of extensive and emotive reporting a child-killing could attract given the ‘right’ circumstances: a crime that took place locally, with appealing victims and a lengthy investigation and trial. The first article set the tone with a poignant description of the murder: “[...] they found a man standing with a revolver in one hand and a knife stained with blood in the other. On the ground, in a large pool of blood, lay two children, a girl and a little boy; both had severe shot wounds in their heads.” This violence was contrasted with the everyday domestic scene just before (the landlady had dished out dinner and wanted everybody to sit up to table).⁸² Subsequent articles informed readers of

⁸⁰ “Vreselijk familiedrama,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 25 September 1930, 21; “Waaninnige doot zijn vrouw en vier kinderen,” *De Telegraaf*, 23 June 1930, 1.

⁸¹ Arrests were reported in five other cases but no information followed about a trial.

⁸² “[...] vonden zij een man staan, die in een hand een revolver had en in de andere een mes, dat met bloed bevlekt was. Op den grond lagen in een groote bloedplas twee kinderen, een meisje en een jongetje; beiden hadden zij ernstige schotwonden in het hoofd.” “Dubbele kindermoord in de Rubroekstraat,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 12 July 1930, 13.

the background to the man's act, the children's funeral, the investigation and the trial. The two victims acquired more relief than in other filicide stories; the newspaper printed photographs of them and in the trial witnesses talked about what they were like.⁸³ The local newspaper's interest in this story reflected – and may have reinforced – the impact on the local community. The paper reported on local residents lining the street for the funeral procession, raising money for the children's gravestones after the insurers refused to pay up and crowding the public tribunes during the trial.⁸⁴ The detailed and empathic reporting on this story by the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* also serves to highlight the limited impact that other reports of child-killings had, despite their sensational language.



Report of a child murder in Rotterdam with photographs of the two victims and local residents outside the house. Source: "Dubbele kindermoord in de Rubroekstraat," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 12 July 1930, 13.

Figure 8 Item about a filicide in Rotterdam.

⁸³ "Het drama van de Rubroekstraat voor de rechtbank," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 17 October 1930, 10; "De kindermoord in de Rubroekstraat," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 30 October 1930, 29; "Dubbele Kindermoord in de Rubroekstraat," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 12 July 1930, 13.

⁸⁴ "Het drama in de Rubroekstraat," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 16 July 1930, 15; "De dubbele moord in de Rubroekstraat," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 6 October 1930, 21; "Volte op de tribune," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 16 October 1930, 13.

An analysis of the Dutch newspaper reports of filicides shows differences between mothers and fathers in who they killed (see Table 16). Of the 121 filicides that were committed by only one parent, about two-thirds were perpetrated by the father. As in intimate partner violence, men were more dangerous than women, both to their family and themselves. Whilst the majority of mothers killed only their offspring, fathers were more likely to kill their spouse and themselves as well. The effect of gender on filicide patterns has been considered in modern criminological studies, although direct comparisons of paternal and maternal filicides are rare and often involve samples that are too small to be more than indicative.⁸⁵ These studies confirm that both women and men commit filicides, although there is no conclusive evidence that fathers dominate. Stanton and Simpson do conclude in their review of filicide studies that “familicide, where spouse and children are killed, is virtually totally a male crime”, which tallies with the Dutch newspaper reports.⁸⁶

Table 16 Filicide victims by perpetrator sex.

Killed	Perpetrator			
	Father		Mother	
	No. of cases	%	No. of cases	%
<i>Children</i>	27	35%	25	58%
<i>Children and spouse</i>	15	19%	3	7%
<i>Children and suicide</i>	11	14%	14	33%
<i>Children and spouse and suicide</i>	25	32%	1	2%
<i>Total</i>	78	100%	43	100%

Source: www.delpher.nl, Algemeen Handelsblad, Leeuwarder Courant, Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; Het Nieuws van de Dag, all issues in 1880; De Telegraaf, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

A particular concern of both criminologists and historians working on child-killings has been to understand the motives of the parents. Various classifications have been developed by criminologists, as was mentioned in Section 5.2 in the discussion of the typology of child maltreatment used in the present chapter.⁸⁷ Three common categories of intentional homicide (excluding neonates) emerge from these classifications that are also

⁸⁵ Li Eriksson et al., “Maternal and Paternal Filicide: Case Studies from the Australian Homicide Project,” *Child Abuse Review* 25, (2016): 18, 23; Stanton and Simpson, “Filicide: a Review,” 11; Brown, Tyson and Arias, “Filicide and Parental Separation,” 83.

⁸⁶ Stanton and Simpson, “Filicide: a Review,” 7; Ania Wilczynski, “Child Killing by Parents: a Motivational Model,” *Child Abuse Review* 4, (1995): 367; Marieke Liem, Michiel Hengeveld, Frans Koenraadt, “Kinderdoding gevolgd door een ernstige poging tot zelfdoding. Drie modaliteiten van geweld,” *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 51, no. 3 (2009): 267; Brown, Tyson and Arias, “Filicide and Parental Separation,” 83.

⁸⁷ Some of the best known are by Resnick, Wilczynski and (for women only) D’Orban, see: Wilczynski, “Child Killing by Parents,” 365-369; Stanton and Simpson, “Filicide: a Review,” 3-4.

seen in the Dutch newspaper reports and in other historical studies. The first is killing during a psychosis or some other mental illness. The second is altruistic killing, in which the child is killed because this is thought to be in its best interests. Often this is followed by suicide because the parent feels they are failing to live up to society's standards and are unable to look after their offspring properly; the child's death is then a form of extended suicide. The third category is the retaliatory killing: killing the child as an act of retaliation against the partner after the breakdown of the relationship. The anger against the partner is displaced onto the child.⁸⁸ Sidebotham observes that the intentional killings covered in the second and third categories can be thought of as a form of excessive control. From that perspective, killing the entire family, including the partner, and then committing suicide can seem the only way to maintain control and the sacred unity of the family.⁸⁹

Some filicides reported by the Dutch newspapers fitted the description of altruistic killings. These were often murders followed by suicide when the parent felt unable to provide for their children for financial reasons. In the view of the parent, there was no future for the children and it was an act of love to kill them. In 1910, a woman in Zeist killed herself and her four-month-old baby, leaving a letter for her husbands in which she said she preferred death to this poverty. The family had been living in impoverished circumstances as the father was frequently unemployed for long periods at a time.⁹⁰ The perpetrator in this story was the mother but the explanation of financial worries was mainly used for filicides perpetrated by fathers. It fitted with a worldview in which the father's role was to provide financially for his family. Even when the family was not on the breadline, financial worries could still be seen by the reporters as a credible explanation for the act. In 1930, a miller in the east of the Netherlands killed his fifteen-year-old daughter and attacked his wife before hanging himself. The man had had several businesses, all of which had failed. He had recently sold his last company and now the lease on his home had ended; the family had nowhere to go. The consensus of the newspapers was that the man had acted in desperation, driven by his financial problems.⁹¹ In her study of Australian paternal filicides, Kaladelfos also finds that financial ruin was used as an explanation by fathers and seen as a plausible motive by others. She explains this by pointing to the importance of being the breadwinner to men's sense of identity. Similarly, Shepherd argues that in Victorian Britain,

⁸⁸ Stanton and Simpson, "Filicide: a Review," 3-4; Wilczynski, "Child Killing by Parents," 366-368; Liem, Hengeveld, and Koenraadt, "Kinderdoding," 263-264. These three categories are explicitly used by Cohen in his study of familicides in the early American Republic: Cohen, "Homicidal Compulsion," 743-747. Most of the cases in Kaladelfos' study of paternal filicides in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Australia also fit these three categories, although she does not refer to them explicitly: Kaladelfos, "The Dark Side". Shepherd's study of paternal filicides in Victorian Britain focuses specifically on the insane: Shepherd, "One of the Best," 2-3.

⁸⁹ Sidebotham, "Rethinking Filicide," 307; Liem, Hengeveld, and Koenraadt, "Kinderdoding," 272-273.

⁹⁰ "Het drama te Zeist," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 19 January 1910, 1; "Het drama te Zeist," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 29 January 1910, 1.

⁹¹ "Familiedrama te Steenderen," *De Telegraaf*, 5 May 1930, 5.

the “man’s desire to provide for his family was viewed as innate” and there was sympathy for men who committed filicide for reasons of poverty.⁹²

In other cases, the filicide is described by the newspapers as the result of marital conflict and an act of deliberate revenge. This is the category of retaliatory murders in which the aim is to make the spouse suffer. For example, a labourer in Rennes confessed to killing his three-year-old daughter, saying he wanted to take revenge on his wife “because she made his life unbearable” (*omdat zij hem het leven ondraaglijk maakte*).⁹³ In other stories, the revenge element is absent: these are murder-suicides, acts of desperation in an unhappy marriage in which the parent takes their children with them.

The most common single explanation for filicides, however, was ‘madness’, accounting for about 40 per cent of filicides where a reason was given. In fact, ‘madness’ seems to have been the default assumption for filicides stories. In an 1880 story of a man in Alsace who tried to drown his three children, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* wrote that “It has not yet been established whether the man acted in an attack of madness”.⁹⁴ Some perpetrators were clearly psychotic from the description of the incident. A woman in The Hague killed her seven-year-old daughter with an axe, went out to tell a policeman and explained she had been told by God to sacrifice her child just like Isaac.⁹⁵ However, even when financial worries were given as the reason for the act, a perpetrator could still be described as acting in a fit of madness.⁹⁶ This gave expression to the incongruity of a seemingly loving parent using such violence against their own child. Kaladelfos sees the same reaction in her study of Australian cases: onlookers say the perpetrator must have been demented as that is the only way they can make sense of the incident.⁹⁷ The question of parents’ natural bonds with their children and madness as an ‘explanation’ for the inexplicable is one of the subjects explored in the following section on journalists’ attitudes to child maltreatment.

5.4 Sympathy and condemnation

Section 5.2 showed that despite the public debate about child protection and the introduction of the Children’s Acts, newspapers devoted relatively little space to stories of physical maltreatment. On the other hand, we have also seen that journalists could be highly critical of parents who abandoned or abused their children. This section looks further at journalists’ expressions of sympathy and condemnation and how this ties in with debates about gender, leniency and parental bonds. As in the chapter on intimate partner violence,

⁹² Kaladelfos, “The Dark Side,” 340; Shepherd, “One of the Best,” 6-7.

⁹³ “Uit wraak zijn kind vermoord,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 19 March 1930, 14.

⁹⁴ “Of de man in een aanval van waanzin gehandeld heeft, is nog niet uitgemaakt.” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 9 November 1880, 2.

⁹⁵ “Kindermoord,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 10 July 1930, 3.

⁹⁶ “Wederom: de vlaag van waanzin...,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 14 November 1930, 23.

⁹⁷ Kaladelfos, “The Dark Side,” 343-344.

it is argued that the imagined community is a good starting point for understanding journalists' attitudes to different kinds of perpetrators.

The journalists invariably expressed great sympathy for the child victims, regardless of the category of crime or age or sex of the victim. There was no sign of the blurring of the endangered child and dangerous child that was often seen in the discourse of '*verwaarlozing*' in the child protection campaign.⁹⁸ There is never any suggestion that the children might have done anything to provoke their treatment, thus excluding the possibility that the maltreatment was simply excessive chastisement. Articles use the Dutch diminutive form even for teenagers to emphasize the smallness and vulnerability of the victims, and they were referred to by tender terms such as "poor lambs" (*arme schapen*).⁹⁹ Yet there is an ambivalence to the sympathy as the victims in these stories are rather generic – they are an 'idea' of children rather than real, individual children.¹⁰⁰ Very little information was given about the children in any particular case. Sometimes the age and sex were given, but over 90 per cent of the newspaper stories never mentioned the children's names. There is no background information about the children in the articles, and the victims play a passive role in the description of the events, with no reported speech. As a result, the child victims remain indistinct and it is difficult for the reader to empathize with them. Only in one or two exceptional cases, such as the above-mentioned murder by P. Stap of his two children, did the victims acquire more relief.

If the articles were uniform in their sympathy for the victims, the same cannot be said for their attitude to the perpetrators: some were roundly condemned while others were treated as tragic unfortunates and yet others were described in neutral terms. Journalists' attitudes need to be seen in the context of the imagined community created by the newspapers' content. Jewkes states that crime news bolsters "the consensual values of an 'imagined community'" by stigmatizing perpetrators and sentimentalizing victims.¹⁰¹ With the increasing focus on domesticity in Dutch society at this time, one of the most important values was that parents should love and protect their children. Parents who violated this norm by abusing, neglecting or abandoning their children or by killing them as an act of revenge against the partner were treated as outsiders who were acting selfishly or cruelly. These parents were regularly described as depraved (*ontaard*), cruel (*wreed*) or inhuman monsters (*monster, onmenselijk*). In the early years, when the Dutch imagined community as constructed in the newspapers excluded the working class, such behaviour was associated with the lower classes, part of a narrative of the depraved 'other' that also

⁹⁸ Weijers, "Debate on Juvenile Justice," 74-78.

⁹⁹ "Ergerlijke verwaarlozing," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 21 March 1930, 2; "Wie zal voor de kinderen zorgen?" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 11 February 1910, 1.

¹⁰⁰ This phrase comes from Ambroise-Rendu, who speaks of "idées de victimes" in a study of newspaper reporting on the sexual abuse of children: Anne-Claude Ambroise-Rendu, "Un siècle de pédophilie dans la presse (1880-2000) : accusation, plaidoirie, condamnation," *Le Temps des médias* 1, no. 1 (2003): 34.

¹⁰¹ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 285.

encompassed the accounts of domestic violence discussed in the previous chapter. Around the turn of the century, as the idea of the nation expanded to encompass the respectable working classes, newspaper accounts of maltreatment focused on people on the margins of society in abandonment stories. By the interwar period, there were few stories of abuse, neglect and abandonment involving Dutch parents, and the perpetrators were presented as deviant individuals rejected by their local community. At the other end of the spectrum were the filicide stories where the motive ascribed by the journalists was altruism or madness. Rather than violating society's norms, these perpetrators were seen as loving parents who performed a delusional act. Accordingly, these parents were treated with sympathy. Moreover, most of these stories came from abroad, reassuringly outside the Dutch imagined community. Where they involved Dutch families, it is noticeable that these were often respectable members of society firmly embedded in the imagined community, such as the miller mentioned in the previous section who killed his daughter before committing suicide. These stories were similar to the partner violence stories that were presented as a 'tragedy for all'.

The infanticide stories form a special case as their neutral tone and lack of empathy seems surprising. In the previous chapter, it was argued that journalists became increasingly sympathetic to the women involved in intimate partner violence as female readers became a target for newspapers and women acquired a voice in public life. Moreover, unmarried mothers were increasingly seen by philanthropists as the victims of male sexuality, as was discussed in Chapter 2. Studies of newspaper coverage of infanticide in Britain have shown that journalists were often sympathetic to the female perpetrators, but that is not what we see in the Dutch newspapers.¹⁰² The infanticide items were matter-of-fact with little evidence of sympathy for the perpetrator. The articles paid little attention to the events leading up to the killing. Articles involving single women were almost invariably silent on the subject of the father: these women were not being presented as victims of unscrupulous seducers or of a courtship gone wrong.

A number of points can be made clarifying the tone of Dutch infanticide coverage. Firstly, there was some softening over time in journalists' attitudes to infanticidal women. In 1880, the full name of the perpetrator was given as a shaming device in the relatively high number of four investigations and trials, but such harsh reporting was rarely seen in later years.¹⁰³ Secondly, the British findings need to be placed in the context of the British legal system. Until 1922, infanticide was not a separate crime and the murder of a new-born baby carried a mandatory death sentence. Even if the sentence was invariably commuted, the law

¹⁰² Goc, *Women, Infanticide*, chap. 6; Grey, "Discourses of Infanticide," 37-87.

¹⁰³ *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 20 January 1880, 2; *Leeuwarder Courant*, 11 August 1880, 1; *Leeuwarder Courant*, 11 December 1880, 2; *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 14 December 1880, 2; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 22 July 1880, 3; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, 28 July 1880, 2; *Leeuwarder Courant*, 29 July 1880, 1.

was out of step with public opinion, which found the punishment disproportionate.¹⁰⁴ In the Netherlands, on the other hand, the death sentence had been abolished and prison sentences were low.¹⁰⁵ There was no sense that the perpetrator deserved sympathy because the punishment was out of proportion to the crime. Finally, it is noticeable that the few occasions when the Dutch journalists did express some sympathy for the perpetrator concerned women who were already mothers. Their actions could be explained as a wish to do the best for their other children, and consequently fitted better with Dutch society's ideal of the loving, caring mother.¹⁰⁶ Infanticide by childless women was an act against the family, aimed at preventing motherhood.¹⁰⁷ The greater availability over time of facilities for unmarried mothers may in fact have made this act seem more inexcusable.

In their coverage of child maltreatment cases, reporters' views of what constituted excessive cruelty were not necessarily aligned with the criminal justice system: the press often particularly criticized parents who had committed relatively minor offences in the eyes of the law. The journalists reserved their greatest criticism for the kinds of incidents, such as abandonment, that received relatively light sentences. One incident took place in 1895 that was considered horrific enough to be reported in all four newspapers, even though it occurred in the relatively inaccessible north-east of the country. A skipper watched his son drown without making any attempt to save him. As the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*'s headline put it, this was a "Father without a father's heart".¹⁰⁸ Yet the prison sentence was only three months. What offended the reporters was the violation of 'natural' parental bonds.

The extent to which fathers as well as mothers were – and are – assumed to have an innate bond with their offspring is the subject of debate among scholars. In a study of modern-day child killings, the criminologist Wilczynski observes that female perpetrators are more likely to receive psychiatric treatment while men receive custodial sentences. She concludes that the justice system treats women's violence against their own children as irrational and aberrant whereas men's child-killings are seen as less surprising. Men's acts of violence against their own children are not seen as surprising.¹⁰⁹ Gabriel Cavaglion sees the same distinction being made in modern Israeli press coverage of parents who kill.

¹⁰⁴ Goc, *Women, Infanticide*, chap. 6; Ward, "The Sad Subject," 163-165.

¹⁰⁵ All but three of the sentences reported in the newspapers were for three years or less.

¹⁰⁶ See for example: *Leeuwarder Courant*, 2 April 1910, 2; "Verduistering van een kinderlijkje," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 16 May 1910, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Leboutte, "Offense against Family Order," 184.

¹⁰⁸ *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 21 November 1895, 1; "Een ontaarde vader," *De Telegraaf*, 8 November 1895, 2; "Een ontaarde vader," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 11 November 1895, 2; "Vader zonder vaderhart," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 11 November 1895, 6.

¹⁰⁹ Ania Wilczynski, "Mad or Bad? Child-Killers, Gender and the Courts," *British Journal of Criminology* 37, no. 3 (1997): 423-424.

Motherhood, he argues, is seen as a natural bond whereas fatherhood is learned.¹¹⁰ Historians of Victorian Britain have also argued for a mad/bad dichotomy in the treatment of parents who killed. Shepherd, however, questions such an analysis. She concludes that men *were* expected to love their children and men who had been affectionate fathers before the filicide were found insane because their act seemed beyond reason; it *was* surprising behaviour.¹¹¹

The stories in the Dutch newspaper stories accord with Shepherd's conclusion. Fathers were expected to love and care for their children – have a father's heart – just as much as mothers were. Journalists made gendered assumptions about parents' roles but not about parental bonds with their offspring. In the filicide stories, madness (which scholars see as an 'explanation' for aberrant behaviour) was therefore commonly given by journalists as a reason for men's behaviour as well as for women's violence.

Scholars have also debated whether stepparents are more likely to attack their children than biological parents because of the lack of such an innate bond. One argument for this is based on evolutionary psychology, as set out in an influential article on homicides in the family by Daly and Wilson. They contend that parents care for their genetic offspring in order to increase the likelihood that the children will reproduce and pass on their genes. The authors predict that stepparents are therefore more likely to assault their stepchildren than genetic parents their genetic offspring, and they produce data that confirms this.¹¹² Evolutionary psychology has had a mixed response among historians, although some, notably John Carter Wood and Randolph Roth, see it as a promising avenue for understanding violence.¹¹³ However, there are problems with evolutionary psychology as an explanation for family violence. Firstly, there are alternative and equally valid explanations for the patterns that are predicted by evolutionary psychology. For example, Daly and Wilson argue that parents will invest more in children close to the reproductive age so are more likely to kill younger children.¹¹⁴ Yet it may equally be the case that older children are better able to defend themselves or escape. Secondly, it is not actually clear that the data do support the arguments from evolutionary psychology. Regarding the greater risk of violence from stepparents, Stanton and Simpson in their review of the filicide literature find the stepparent relationship to be a risk factor only in specific categories of

¹¹⁰ Cavaglione, "Fathers who Kill," 139-140; Gabriel Cavaglione, "Bad, mad or sad? Mothers who kill and press coverage in Israel," *Crime, Media, Culture* 4, no. 2 (2008): 273-274.

¹¹¹ Shepherd, "One of the Best"; Ainsley, "Some Mysterious Agency," 45-46.

¹¹² Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, "Evolutionary Social Psychology and Family Homicide," *Science* 242, (1988): 519-520.

¹¹³ J. Carter Wood, "The limits of culture? Society, evolutionary psychology and the history of violence," *Cultural and Social History* 4, no. 1 (2007): 95-114; John Carter Wood, "A change of perspective. Integrating Evolutionary psychology into the historiography of violence," *British Journal of Criminology* 51, (2011): 479-498; Randolph Roth, "Biology and the deep history of homicide," *British Journal of Criminology* 51, (2011): 535-555; Manuel Eisner, "Human evolution, history and violence. An introduction," *British Journal of Criminology* 51, (2011): 473-478.

¹¹⁴ Daly and Wilson, "Evolutionary Social Psychology," 522.

parental violence, such as fatal abuse by men; killings followed by suicide, on the other hand, are particularly likely to involve biological children.¹¹⁵ Gordon found no overrepresentation of stepparents in her study of abuse in late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century America.¹¹⁶

Stepparents appear in the Dutch newspaper reports on the maltreatment of children, but predominantly in certain kinds of cases. Stepparents were involved in about five per cent of abandonment and filicides cases but a quarter of abuse and neglect stories. This does not fit with the evolutionary model of parental violence, which would surely predict equally high proportions of stepparents for all categories of maltreatment. It may reflect the actual involvement of stepparents in child maltreatment cases.¹¹⁷ It certainly accords with a worldview in which biological parents were expected to have a natural loving bond with their children that precluded deliberate cruelty. Journalists may have explicitly mentioned stepparents in abuse and neglect stories because the absence of a biological relationship made the behaviour more comprehensible.

As mentioned above, another way for journalists to make parental violence more comprehensible was to ascribe it to madness. While mental instability was cited as a factor in Dutch maltreatment stories, there are differences with respect to the discourse in Britain, which has been the subject of much of the work on insanity and child maltreatment. Moreover, the newspaper reports reveal a lay understanding of madness that differed from the expert understanding of Dutch psychiatrists. In the Dutch press coverage, insanity was only used as an explanation in filicide stories. Infanticide was never portrayed as an act of madness, in contrast with Britain, where the mother's actions were regularly attributed to puerperal insanity.¹¹⁸ That must largely reflect the different legal discourses: while mental illness defences were common in British infanticide trials, that was not the case in the Netherlands and this seems to have been reflected in the newspaper reporting (see also the discussion in Section 2.5).¹¹⁹ When madness was used as an explanation by Dutch journalists, the reports reveal a distinction between a common-sense understanding of 'madness' and the expert label of psychological disorder.¹²⁰ Journalists portray madness as a sudden attack that is out of character, incomprehensible and unpredictable. Such incidents are typically described as "a fit of madness" (*een vlaag van waanzin*). The perpetrator is

¹¹⁵ Stanton and Simpson, "Filicide: a Review," 2, 7-8. Studies published since this review also show that step-parents are prevalent only in certain categories of killings: Liem, Hengeveld, and Koenraadt, "Kinderdoding," 269; Brown, Tyson and Arias, "Filicide and Parental Separation," 82-84.

¹¹⁶ Gordon, *Heroes*, 199-202, 352.

¹¹⁷ This possibility cannot be discounted although the percentage seems high: Gordon found stepparents were responsible for 13 per cent of child abuse in her study. See: Gordon, *Heroes*, 200.

¹¹⁸ Grey, "Discourses of Infanticide," 201-261; Marland, "Getting Away with Murder?" The same apparently applied in Australia, see: Kaladelfos, "The Dark Side," 336.

¹¹⁹ Ruberg, "Travelling Knowledge".

¹²⁰ This distinction and the analysis that follows are also based on and apply to cases of intimate partner violence and sexual violence.

treated with sympathy as someone who is seen as not responsible for their actions.¹²¹ In other Dutch cases, psychiatrists determined that the perpetrator had psychological problems, but this conclusion might only be drawn at the end of the trial and therefore did not colour the journalists' reporting. As described in Chapter 2, psychiatrists became increasingly involved in the administration of justice in the Netherlands from the turn of the century, and by 1930 a new measure had been introduced that allowed detention in a penal psychiatric institution in the event of diminished responsibility. A number of stories of family and sexual violence mention psychiatric reports or sentencing to a psychiatric institution. The case mentioned earlier of P. Stap, who murdered his two children in Rotterdam, can serve as an illustration. Psychiatrists reported on their findings at the end of the trial and the man was sentenced to one year in prison followed by detention in a psychiatric institution. However, journalists had already been reporting on the case for several months by then. They had portrayed the father not as mad but as a man with financial worries who killed his children because he felt he could not provide for them.¹²²

Journalists could also have excused parents in child maltreatment cases by pointing to environmental factors such as poverty, but they did not do this. Modern criminological studies identify environmental stress, for example from financial problems, poor housing and isolation, as a contributory factor in abuse, neglect and child-killings.¹²³ Many items in the Dutch reports bear this out. Parents killed their children because they were unable to provide for them, children were abandoned by vagrant parents and neglected by the unemployed. Gender was at work here too and single mothers appear to have been a particularly vulnerable group. They formed the majority of infanticide perpetrators and were also reported as abandoning their children, abusing them and neglecting them. In a society that promoted the breadwinner model, it was difficult for single mothers to both satisfy the requirements of a proper home and earn the income needed to finance this.¹²⁴ The journalists' reports, however, rarely explicitly acknowledge these environmental factors. It was noted in Section 3.5 that 'individualism' is an important news value. Journalists personalize stories and highlight individual contributions to crime while avoiding more impersonal socioeconomic explanations, as this simplifies stories.¹²⁵ In the Dutch press, maltreatment was presented as a result of the moral failings or delusional altruism of specific parents. For the newspapers, ascribing the abuse and neglect of children to individual pathology rather than societal causes absolved the wider community from responsibility. The affair of the widow Mrs De Rijk, which was discussed in the first section,

¹²¹ Wilkinson, "Psychische stoornissen," 391-392. The distinction between lay and medical definitions of insanity is discussed in: Ward, "The Sad Subject," 166-169.

¹²² "De dubbele kindermoord in de Rubroekstraat," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 15 July 1930, 13; "Het drama van de Rubroekstraat voor de rechtbank," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 17 October 1930, 10; "De kindermoord in de Rubroekstraat," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 30 October 1930, 29.

¹²³ Wilczynski, "Child-killing by Parents"; Stanton and Simpson, "Filicide: a Review," 5-10.

¹²⁴ Gordon, "Single Mothers," 174-175.

¹²⁵ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 53.

had an important message in that respect as it allowed the newspapers to distinguish between poverty and neglect, and argue that poverty did not necessarily lead to neglect. And while Mrs De Rijk had influential advocates who obtained favourable media publicity for her case, there were no claimsmakers publicizing parents' physical maltreatment of children and the role played by socioeconomic factors: their behaviour never became a social problem.

Conclusion

This chapter started from the premise that the focus on protecting children from the 1890s onwards in state policies and philanthropic activities would lead to stories of child maltreatment becoming more prominent in the Dutch newspapers. This did not happen. Certainly, journalists were highly critical of parents who abused, neglected or abandoned their children, but items were brief and sympathy for victims was formulaic and impersonal. Except in 1880, far less space was devoted to child maltreatment than to intimate partner violence. The newspapers' coverage of the Children's Acts reinforced the idea that the real problem was moral neglect, and there were no claimsmakers challenging that viewpoint. It is not clear why newspapers were not covering stories of physical maltreatment. Were there simply too few such incidents, were newspapers not hearing of such incidents or did the journalists not see them as appealing for readers? However, we can certainly conclude based on agenda-setting theory, that parents' maltreatment of their children in the Netherlands would not have been seen as a salient issue by readers after 1880.¹²⁶

A second key question in this chapter was the influence of gender in the newspapers' portrayal of the perpetrators. Gender operated at two levels: mothers and fathers committed different kinds of crimes because of differences in their socioeconomic circumstances and the gendered justice system, and the newspapers interpreted their actions based on gendered assumptions about parental roles – but there is no evidence that mothers' violence was seen as more unnatural than fathers' violence. Women, especially single women, committed infanticide and abandoned their children for reasons of poverty. Men were charged with abandonment because of their duty to provide. Men were more violent: they were more likely than women to kill children other than neonates and to commit filicide. Journalists often linked men's filicides to their failure to fulfil their financial responsibilities. There is some evidence that mothers were held more responsible for the physical care of their offspring. But gender was not a primary determinant of journalists' evaluation of parental behaviour. Both mothers and fathers were expected to have a strong natural bond with their biological children; parents who abandoned, abused or neglected their children were strongly criticized while affectionate parents who committed filicides from delusional love or a fit of madness were treated as unfortunates.

¹²⁶ McCombs and Shaw, "The agenda-setting function," 184.

Chapter 5

This chapter and Chapter 4 have considered newspapers' reporting of physical violence within the family. The next chapter looks at sexual violence. This too could take place within the family, for example in incest cases. But sexual violence could also occur outside the home, perpetrated by acquaintances or by strangers. This gave journalists more possibilities for portraying the perpetrator as an outsider.

Chapter 6: Sexual violence in the news

This chapter considers Dutch newspapers' coverage of sexual violence between 1880 and 1930. It looks at sexual assaults on women and children, including sexual murders (murders as a source of sexual pleasure and murders following a rape), and homosexual acts with minors (under the age of 21). As was discussed in Chapter 2, convictions for these crimes in the Netherlands increased substantially from the turn of the century. That was at least in part due to the increasing influence of the social purity movement, which made moral issues a priority for law enforcement. It was also concluded in Chapter 3 that journalists started to target women readers in the 1890s. Given these two developments, it might be expected that newspapers would express increasing concern about sexual violence, a form of violence that affected women far more directly than it did men. That is the main theme of this chapter.

The literature on sexual violence against women and children in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has focused on the prosecution of these offences, and the difficulties victims had in obtaining justice. A key conundrum for historians is why, in an age that placed so much value on female chastity and the innocence of children, sexual assaults were not prosecuted more harshly.¹ Historians have found that cases were often decided on reputation and character rather than the facts and circumstances. Convictions were most likely if the attack was by a stranger in a public place and leaving physical injuries. Juries, medical experts and child rescue workers routinely disbelieved female victims, and myths about the lying child and malicious false accusations had common purchase. Such mechanisms and beliefs are seen in studies of both continental European countries and Anglo-Saxon countries.² Yet we have seen that convictions for sexual assaults increased in the Netherlands in the first half of the twentieth century. The sexual violence literature does not offer clues for how to interpret this.

¹ Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 3.

² Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 71-77; Geoffroy Le Clercq, "Les perceptions des violences sexuelles commises sur enfants en Belgique (1830-1867) : construction juridique, pratique répressive et réactions sociales," *Revue d'histoire de l'enfance* 2, (1999): 71-95; Roger Davidson, "'This Pernicious Delusion': Law, Medicine and Child Sexual Abuse in Early-Twentieth-Century Scotland," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 1 (2001): 62-77; Kim Stevenson, "Unequivocal Victims: The Historical Roots of the Mystification of the Female Complainant in Rape Cases," *Feminist Legal Studies* 8, (2000): 343-366; Giuliani, *Les liaisons interdites*, 211-216; Kim Stevenson, "'Ingenuities of the female mind': legal and public perceptions of sexual violence in Victorian England, 1850-1890," in *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950*, ed. Shani D'Cruze (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 89-103; Carolyn A. Conley, "Rape and Justice in Victorian England," *Victorian Studies* 29, no. 4 (1986): 519-536; Laurent Ferron, "Le témoignage des femmes victimes de viols au xixe siècle," in *Femmes et justice pénale, XIXe-XXe siècle*, ed. Christine Bard et al. (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2002), 129-138; Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, 157-161. However, Wiener stresses the improvements in favour of the female victim in the course of the nineteenth century in Britain: Wiener, *Men of Blood*, chap. 3.

Some historians have looked specifically at press coverage, but they come to divergent conclusions. In nineteenth-century Britain, where the press had full access to trials of rape and sexual assault, Kim Stevenson and Joanne Jones see the press discourse as a continuation of the court discourse of the unreliable female witness.³ This has not been the conclusion for countries where, similarly to the Netherlands, press access to sex crime trials was limited.⁴ In France, Anne-Claude Ambroise-Rendu has found little reporting of child sexual abuse except in the case of sexual murders.⁵ In 1920s Ireland, reports used oblique language and painted perpetrators as not ‘true Irish’; the coverage gave the impression that sexual violence was rare in Ireland.⁶ Media coverage of homosexual offences with adolescent boys has also been the subject of study, including in the Netherlands.⁷ These studies have been embedded in the history of homosexuality and have looked at these offences alongside other homosexual crimes rather than in comparison with sexual violence involving women and girls. The approach of studying homosexual offences in isolation, however, has dangers. Both Yorick Smaal and Stephen Robertson have argued that such studies overlook similarities in the treatment of homosexual and heterosexual offences, and do not allow a proper understanding of the differences.⁸

The present chapter looks at media coverage of all acts that were treated as sexual assault under Dutch law, regardless of the age and sex of the victim. Two key questions are addressed. Firstly, how did journalists portray the victims and perpetrators in these cases and what factors determined this portrayal? This builds on the literature that sees a rape discourse centring on the unreliable female witness. What evidence is there for this in the Dutch newspapers and how did the growing female readership affect this. How were the victim and perpetrator positioned in the imagined community? The second key question

³ Jones, “She Resisted”; Stevenson, “Ingenuities”; Kim Stevenson, “‘Crimes of Moral Outrage’: Victorian Encryption of Sexual Violence,” in *Criminal Conversations. Victorian Crimes, Social Panic, and Moral Outrage*, ed. Judith Rowbotham and Kim Stevenson (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), 232-246.

⁴ Little work has been done on British press reporting in the first decades of the twentieth century but it is possible that access became more restricted there too: Davidson finds that in Scotland, child sexual abuse trials were always held behind closed doors with only summary information in the press, see Davidson, “‘This Pernicious Delusion,’” 67.

⁵ Anne-Claude Ambroise-Rendu, “La dangerosité du criminel sexuel sur enfant, une construction médiatique?,” *Le Temps des médias* 15, no. 2 (2010): 72-77; Ambroise-Rendu, “Un siècle de pédophilie,” 32-35.

⁶ Anthony Keating, “Sexual crime in the Irish Free State 1922–33: its nature, extent and reporting,” *Irish Studies Review* 20, no. 2 (2012): 135-155.

⁷ H.G. Cocks, *Nameless Offences* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 135-154; Sean Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861-1913* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 50-84; Katie Hindmarch-Watson, “Male Prostitution and the London GPO: Telegraph Boys’ ‘Immorality’ from Nationalization to the Cleveland Street Scandal,” *Journal of British Studies* 51, (2012): 594, 612; Theo van der Meer, Paul Snijders, “‘Ernstige moraliteits-toestanden in de Residentie’. Een “whodunnit” over het Haagse zedenschandaal van 1920,” *Pro Memoria* 4, no. 2 (2002): 373-407.

⁸ Smaal, “The ‘Leniency Problem,’” 794-795; Stephen Robertson, “Shifting the Scene of the Crime: Sodomy and the American History of Violence,” *Journal of the History of Violence* 19, no. 2 (2010): 223-230. Ross criticizes the separate treatment of homosexual offences because it projects modern divisions of sexuality on the past. See: Andrew Israel Ross, “Sex in the Archives. Homosexuality, Prostitution, and the Archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris,” *French Historical Studies* 40, no. 2 (2017): 267-270.

concerns the extent to which sexual violence was construed as a problem in the Dutch press. Given the increasing criminalization of sexual acts in legislation and enforcement, it might be expected that the media would start paying greater attention to these crimes. On the other hand, it is also possible that the stricter moral precepts would cause journalists to gloss over sexual violence, as was seen in Ireland.⁹

The chapter starts by examining understandings of sexual violence in 1880 as expressed in the Parliamentary debates for the proposed new Criminal Code. Sexual assault was understood as 'seduction', often by an acquaintance. The second section investigates changes in coverage. Newspaper reporting of sexual assaults was minimal in 1880; it rose after that but was dominated by high-profile sexual murders. Section 6.3 looks at the portrayal of non-fatal assaults on women and children. These assaults were constructed as attacks by strangers – outside the imagined community – on ideal victims in lonely locations. The media coverage of sexual murders is the subject of Section 6.4. Press reporting of these cases brought the community together but was marked by an uneasy relationship with both the police and the general public. Section 6.5 considers the extent to which the media presented sexual violence as a problem. It concludes that the press reports had some hallmarks of a moral panic but never sparked off a reaction among moral entrepreneurs. Finally, Section 6 considers homosexual offences. The press intervened in both the Parliamentary debate on this subject in 1911 and a high-profile case in 1920. It is argued the newspapers did this because homosexual offences were considered a public matter rather than private violence.

6.1 Debating the law on sexual violence in the 1880s

This first section starts by considering how sexual violence was understood at the start of the period, in 1880. At that point, sexual assault was seen in terms of seduction and dishonour, and the danger was therefore seen as coming from those close to the victim. This is clear from an examination of the debates in the Dutch Parliament in 1880 on the new Criminal Code, which came into effect in 1886, and press coverage of those debates. Broadly speaking, the new legislation on sexual assaults in the 1886 Criminal Code reconstrued the notion of consent and extended protection to a broader age range and to others in a position of dependency (see also Section 2.6 and Appendix A).¹⁰

Sexual assaults were seen as an offence against honour. They caused harm because they ruined the victim's reputation and that of their family. Physical injury played a subordinate role while emotional trauma was not mentioned at all in the debates.¹¹ The

⁹ Keating, "Sexual Crime".

¹⁰ *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1880-1881*, 16th session, "10. Vaststelling van een Wetboek van Strafrecht (Beraadslaging over de art. 242-254)," 3 November 1880, 224-225.

¹¹ This does not mean the emotional aspects were ignored entirely in this period. Ruberg contends that both medical experts and laypeople spoke of the psychological trauma of assaults in trials. Willemijn Ruberg,

primacy of honour is evident in the discussion in Parliament about Article 245 criminalizing intercourse with girls aged 12 to 15. The legislation stipulated that prosecution could only take place if a complaint was lodged. The reasoning given in Parliament was that it would allow “rectification of the wrong committed” (*herstel van het begane onrecht*) by letting the person who seduced the girl marry her. This would restore the victim’s reputation and undo the wrong.¹² Louise Jackson draws a similar conclusion in her study of child sexual abuse in Victorian and Edwardian England. Girls who had been abused were ‘fallen’ and corrupted, but this corrupted state was reversible.¹³

Lawmakers saw sexual assault through the prism of seduction. When the bill was debated in Parliament, the Liberal MP Van Houten proposed a new seduction article to protect adult women. In the ensuing debate, both he and the Minister of Justice Modderman used ‘seduction’ (*verleiding*) to describe assaults on girls under 16 as well.¹⁴ Some historians have seen the language of seduction as a pernicious discourse. Kim Stevenson argues that it was a denial of the “realities of the actual violence perpetrated”. Anna Clark sees it as masking the differences between the courtship gone wrong and violent rape.¹⁵ However, Stephen Robertson contends that the discourse of seduction also had benefits as it created a space between coercion and consent by reducing the emphasis on physical violence and resistance. Moreover, it extended the scope of sexual offences to couples in relationships and recognized the impact of unequal positions of power.¹⁶

The Dutch debates support Robertson’s argument that the language of seduction allowed recognition of the role of power imbalances. Along with describing sexual assaults as ‘seduction’, politicians also saw the threat coming from those close to the victim who were able to exert undue influence over a period, in particular men in a position of authority. Much of the debate was taken up with a discussion of Article 249(2), which made it a criminal offence for masters and supervisors to commit acts of indecency with their subordinates below the age of majority. MPs were particularly worried about the ‘seduction’ of girls (and boys) by supervisors in factories. This reflects wider concerns at the time about the moral risks to young girls working in factories as industrialization took off (as

“Trauma, Body, and Mind: Forensic Medicine in Nineteenth-Century Dutch Rape Cases,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22, no. 1 (2013): 91.

¹² *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1880-1881*, 16th session, “10. Vaststelling van een Wetboek van Strafrecht (Beraadslaging over de art. 242-254),” 3 November 1880, 219-221. The minimum age for marriage was 16 but special dispensation could be obtained from the king for the marriage of girls under the age of 16.

¹³ Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 4-5, 33.

¹⁴ See for example Minister Modderman’s statement that “Girls under 16 are protected unconditionally and under all circumstances against seduction” (*Meisjes beneden de 16 jaren worden onvoorwaardelijk en onder alle omstandigheden tegen verleiding beschermd*): *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1880-1881*, 16th session, “10. Vaststelling van een Wetboek van Strafrecht (Beraadslaging over de art. 186-241),” 2 November 1880, 211.

¹⁵ Stevenson, “Unequivocal Victims,” 355; Anna Clark, *Women's silence, men's violence: sexual assault in England, 1770-1845* (London: Pandora Press, 1987), 14;

¹⁶ Stephen Robertson, “Seduction, Sexual Violence, and Marriage in New York City, 1886-1955,” *Law and History Review* 24, no. 2 (2006): 342-343; Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, 33-51.

discussed in Chapter 2). But MPs' comments also reveal an acknowledgement of the girls' restricted position: they could not simply leave their job as they needed to earn money and their parents would not always let them resign.¹⁷

The debates in 1880 were covered by the national and local newspapers in reports that conveyed the discourse of sexual assault as seduction to readers. At this time, the papers were passive recorders of events, producing summaries only of the Parliamentary debates as there was relatively little space available (the newspapers had few pages). These summaries adopted the language of seduction used in the debates. Readers were informed of the debate about criminalizing indecent acts by factory supervisors and others in authority so the view that sexual danger came from men known to the victim was therefore being presented by the journalists. The newspapers also printed more reflective pieces on the Parliamentary debates, but journalists were reluctant to express clear opinions and had a cautious view of their role. The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* even suggested it was inappropriate to discuss the arguments for and against a criminal code article after Parliament had taken its decision.¹⁸ Overall, the debate on sexual violence was allocated a minor place in the newspapers' coverage of the Criminal Code debates. The abolitionist campaign to abolish prostitution had only recently taken off in 1880 and the newspapers devoted far more space to the discussions in Parliament of the articles on prostitution.¹⁹

At the time of these debates, there were few convictions for sexual assault. Moreover, newspapers were firmly aimed at male readers. That begs the question of whether the press was actually covering sexual violence incidents in this period. How did that change in the decades that followed as convictions increased and journalists started to target female readers? The next section considers these questions as it maps out newspapers' coverage of sexual assaults in 1880 and the decades that followed.

6.2 Coverage of sexual assaults

As is clear from Table 17, coverage of sexual offences in Dutch newspapers was minimal in 1880 but increased after 1895. However, the space devoted to sexual violence was dominated by sexual murders, which garnered huge media attention. This section looks at these changes in more detail and discusses why coverage increased. First, though, some explanation is needed on how newspaper items were identified as sexual offence stories for the purpose of the present study.

¹⁷ *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1880-1881*, 16th session, "10. Vaststelling van een Wetboek van Strafrecht (Beraadslaging over de art. 242-254)," 3 November 1880, 222-223. For a British study of sexual harassment in factories and women's limited options, see: Jan Lambertz, "Sexual Harassment in the Nineteenth Century English Cotton Industry," *History Workshop* 19, (1985): 29-61.

¹⁸ *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 4 November 1880, 1.

¹⁹ See for example: "Tweede Kamer," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 5 November 1880, 1.

It is sometimes difficult to determine whether a newspaper item was about a sexual assault because of the opaque language used. As discussed in Chapter 3, journalists used simplification to present stories in ways that were easy to understand. When reporting sexual offences, however, they also needed to take account of readers' sensibilities. That became more important in the twentieth century, both because the readership was expanding to include women and children, and because censorship of expressions of sexuality was becoming increasingly common in wider society.²⁰ Two situations regularly occurred in Dutch newspaper items: reports of trials of "moral crimes" (*zedenmisdrijven*) with a lack of information so that it is not possible to determine the nature of the crime, and reports of attacks on women and children that used euphemistic language possibly suggesting the attack was of a sexual nature.

The indeterminate 'moral crimes' were only included as sexual offences in the present study if the perpetrator was sentenced to prison for one year or more. The category of moral crimes was wider than just sexual assault. In particular, public indecency and (after the 1911 Morality Act) abortion were common moral crimes of a delicate nature that were tried behind closed doors.²¹ However, these two categories had lighter sentences.²² By only including unspecified 'moral crimes' if the perpetrator received a sentence of more than one year, it is likely that these other categories will be largely excluded. Of the 225 unspecified 'moral crimes' recorded in the newspapers, 33 satisfied this criterion. The assumption here is that readers would also have interpreted such cases as serious sexual assaults.

In reports of attacks using euphemistic language, the assessment on whether to include the item is based on all the information (and silences) in the article. The coded language was not necessarily ambiguous. For example, journalists often referred to 'unmentionable acts' (*niet nader te benoemen handelingen*), which pointed indubitably to indecent acts even if the phrase is euphemistic. Other expressions were more ambiguous. A case in point is the Dutch word '*aanranding*'. Nowadays it means an indecent or sexual assault.²³ However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was still being used for physical assaults as well, such as street robberies where the victim was a man. It is the additional information, or lack of information, in many articles describing an *aanranding* that suggest the term is being used to designate a sexual assault.²⁴ For the purpose of the current chapter, a relatively conservative selection process has been adopted for cases with

²⁰ Koenders, *Christelijk Réveil*, 191-195; Van der Velden, De Jong, and Van Oort, "De bewogen beginjaren," 24-25.

²¹ In 1920, for example, there were 257 convictions for public indecency (Article 239), 77 for abortion (Article 251) and 368 for sexual violence (Articles 242 to 249): Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. *Crimineele Statistiek over het jaar 1920*. The Hague, 1922.

²² Based on judicial statistics in 20 sample years between 1890 and 1939, sexual assaults accounted for between 80 per cent and 95 per cent of convictions with a prison sentence of one year or more.

²³ A. van den End, *The Legal and Economic Lexicon* (Driebergen: Gateway, 2008), 27.

²⁴ This process of divining the true meaning has also been described by Ambroise-Rendu in her study of French newspaper reports of child sex abuse. See Ambroise-Rendu, "Un siècle de pédophilie," 33.

Sexual violence

ambiguous language, in which only those cases have been included where no alternative motive such as theft was given and where additional information such as torn clothes points to a sexual aspect. Again, the assumption is that readers would also have interpreted these cases as sexual assaults, although it is unknowable whether they did so in practice.

Table 17 Coverage of sexual violence, 1880-1930.

Newspaper	Year	All categories			Excluding sexual murders		
		No. of cases	No. of lines	Avg. no. of lines per page	No. of cases	No. of lines	Avg. no. of lines per page
<i>Leeuwarder Courant</i>	1880	3	29	0.0	3	29	0.0
	1895	22	2,266	1.4	20	612	0.4
	1910	58	1,934	0.9	53	830	0.4
	1920	44	618	0.4	42	496	0.3
	1930	74	2,842	0.9	69	1,168	0.4
<i>Algemeen Handelsblad</i>	1880	2	16	0.0	2	16	0.0
	1895	5	303	0.2	3	48	0.0
	1910	15	566	0.2	11	293	0.1
	1920	12	339	0.1	10	281	0.1
	1930	36	2,365	0.5	32	697	0.1
<i>Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad</i>	1880	10	142	0.1	8	96	0.1
	1895	37	4,149	1.9	35	840	0.4
	1910	55	2,397	0.9	48	1,184	0.5
	1920	25	480	0.2	24	291	0.1
	1930	89	5,368	1.2	82	2,164	0.5
<i>Nieuws van de Dag</i>	1880	7	80	0.0	3	30	0.0
<i>De Telegraaf</i>	1895	24	1,584	0.8	23	325	0.2
	1910	22	1,046	0.4	18	268	0.1
	1920	28	618	0.3	26	479	0.2
	1930	25	2,352	0.6	19	530	0.1
All newspapers	1880	16	267	0.0	11	171	0.0
	1895	62	8,302	1.1	59	1,825	0.2
	1910	110	5,943	0.6	103	2,575	0.2
	1920	83	2,055	0.2	81	1,547	0.2
	1930	155	12,927	0.8	146	4,559	0.3

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

Table 17 shows the coverage over time based on the above considerations. When all categories of sexual assault are considered, the number of lines dedicated to sexual assaults was substantially greater from 1895 onwards compared with 1880. As was seen for intimate partner violence and child maltreatment, the number of stories and column inches fell in 1920, when newspapers were concentrating on the political and economic aftermath of the First World War. But coverage reached a new peak in 1930. Taking the combined space in

the four newspapers, coverage dedicated to sexual violence exceeded that of child maltreatment from 1895 onwards and equalled that of intimate partner violence in 1930.

However, these results are strongly influenced by a few high-profile cases. Compared with intimate partner violence and cruelty to children, there was a much greater discrepancy in the coverage between non-fatal sexual abuse cases and those that ended in murder. While an average of 31 lines were devoted to child sexual abuse cases and 27 lines to sexual assaults on women, sexual murders received an average of 699 lines. The top story in 1895, the murder of the 10-year-old schoolboy Louis Hoogsteden, accounted for around 80 per cent of the coverage of sexual violence in that year while the rape and murder of the 21-year-old nurse Tine Koperberg in 1930 accounted for about 40 per cent of the column inches on sexual assaults in that year. Most sexual murder stories involved incidents in the Netherlands but a notable exception was the story of the ‘Dusseldorf mass murderer’ Peter Kuerten in 1930. He committed a series of rapes and sexually motivated murders, mostly of women and children, before finally being caught in May 1930. He was eventually convicted of nine murders and various other violent and sexual crimes.²⁵ The greater attention paid by the Dutch press to this story compared with other foreign sex crimes undoubtedly reflects the sensational nature of the violence but the story also benefited from the sophisticated media infrastructure in place by 1930 and from the proximity of Dusseldorf (on the River Rhine, a major transport route to the Netherlands that ended at the seaport of Rotterdam). As soon as Kuerten was arrested, the police and judicial authorities set up daily press conferences and official briefings to satisfy the media’s thirst for news. This news was then relayed to the Netherlands by the Wolff press agency.²⁶

The final three columns in Table 17 show the number of non-fatal cases and the amount of space dedicated to these stories. After 1880, that space is on a par with the coverage of child maltreatment stories as discussed in the previous chapter. There it was argued that child maltreatment received little attention in the newspapers. The stories of non-fatal sexual violence arguably had more impact on readers, however, particularly in the interwar period. Firstly, most stories concerned incidents in the Netherlands (91 per cent of all non-fatal cases); these were situations readers could relate to. Also, reports can often be interpreted as a direct warning to readers of the dangers of sexual assault in the area. The local papers in particular covered stories of assaults that the journalists explicitly linked to particular streets or routes. Finally, as will be discussed in Section 6.5, journalists presented items in such a way as to suggest a widespread problem.

Two main reasons can be advanced for the increase in coverage of sexual offences from 1895 onwards: the feminization of the readership and policing priorities. From 1895,

²⁵ Maria Tatar, *Lustmord. Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 42-43.

²⁶ Evans, *Rituals of Retribution*, 591-593.

journalists were starting to appeal to female readers. Stories of sexual violence might be expected to interest women readers because they would be able to identify with the victim and the situation – a sense that ‘it could have been me’.²⁷ Many stories concerned children or teenage girls, and therefore spoke to women readers in their capacity as mothers. Moreover, the stories of sexual violence tied in with wider concerns about the white slave trade and sexual dangers to the young that were being voiced by social purity campaigners, a movement in which women played a key role.²⁸

The police also gave increasing priority to sexual offences in the twentieth century and this affected press coverage. In contrast to intimate partner violence and child maltreatment, trial reports were not a significant part of newspaper coverage of sex crimes because these trials were almost invariably held behind closed doors. Newspapers could rarely report much more than the name and age of the perpetrator, the charge and the sentence. Therefore, coverage mainly consisted of accounts of incidents. The police were the probable source of these stories: most items mention the police in positive terms and tell the story from the police perspective. In the 1910s, the police started to give priority to sexual offences, setting up special vice squads (*zedenpolitie*. See also Section 2.6). That led to a rise in prosecutions and investigations. This in turn meant more cases in which the police used the press to call for information from the general public. The police could also benefit from newspaper coverage as it publicized and helped legitimize the officers’ work. This was necessary as not everyone was convinced of the benefit of the new moral police squads; in 1923, the Rotterdam chief police commissioner faced criticism that the city’s moral police squad of forty-two officers was too expensive and did not have enough to do.²⁹ The increased press coverage of sexual assaults must consequently be seen in part as a result of the police providing more information on incidents and investigations.

Cases of sexual violence as reported in the Dutch newspapers can be divided into different categories, depending on the victim and nature of the offence. That breakdown is shown in Table 18. Two categories stand out as distinctive in the approach taken by the newspapers and are accordingly discussed in separate sections. One is the aforementioned sexual murder cases. Not only did they attract an enormous amount of media attention, the press also regularly played an active role in the investigation, leading to a complex relationship between the press, the public and the police. The second category is homosexual acts with minors, which were criminalized in the Morality Act of 1911. Whereas other forms of sexual violence were treated as private violence and an attack on the weak,

²⁷ This criterion is used by modern-day journalists use in deciding which crime stories to cover. See David Pritchard and Karen D. Hughes, “Patterns of Deviance in Crime News,” *Journal of Communication* 47, no. 3 (1997): 63.

²⁸ Petra De Vries, “‘White Slaves’ in a Colonial Nation: the Dutch Campaign against the Traffic in Women in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Social & Legal Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 50-51; Van Drenth and De Haan, *Caring Power*, 152-156.

²⁹ Blaauw, *Twee eeuwen*, 67. See also Section 3.6 on police-press relations.

the press viewed these homosexual offences as an assault on public order. Accordingly, the press intervened to take a political stance both during the Parliamentary debates and in a high-profile case in 1920. These two special categories are discussed in Sections 6.4 and 6.6. First, however, the newspapers' representation of 'ordinary' non-fatal assaults is discussed.

Table 18 Coverage of different categories of sexual violence.

Category	No. of cases	% of all cases	Items per case	Lines per case
<i>Child abuse</i>	130	31%	2.2	31.6
<i>Assault of woman aged 16 or older</i>	150	35%	1.8	26.7
<i>Abuse by a person in authority (Article 249 in the Dutch Criminal Code)</i>	17	4%	2.7	23.1
<i>Homosexual acts with a minor (Article 248bis in the Dutch Criminal Code)</i>	15	4%	3.8	62.8
<i>Sexual murder</i>	26	6%	16.8	723.7
<i>Assault, victim details unknown</i>	75	18%	1.5	7.7
<i>Other*</i>	13	3%	2.1	50.0
<i>Total</i>	426	100%	2.9	69.2

Source: www.delpher.nl, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, all issues in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930; *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, all issues in 1880; *De Telegraaf*, all issues in 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930. *Exhibitionism, blackmail.

6.3 Construction of sexual violence against women and children

In Section 6.1 it was argued that sexual violence was understood in 1880 as the seduction of children and young people by someone known to the victim. This is not the impression given by the newspaper articles. While they too focused on the young, they overwhelmingly portrayed sexual violence as a sudden attack by a stranger in a public place. This section looks at why that was and what implications it had for readers' understanding of sexual violence. The first part deals with the circumstances of the cases: the age and gender of the victim, the relationship between the perpetrator and victim, and the location. The second part of this section considers journalists' attitudes to the victims and perpetrators.

Circumstances: who attacked whom and where

The 372 stories involving non-fatal assaults of women or children focused mainly on young victims attacked by a lone assailant. Where details of the victims were known, 6 per cent of the cases involved abuse by a person in authority (usually explicitly of minors), 44 per cent other assaults on children under 16 and 50 per cent other assaults on women aged 16 or older. A comparison with the judicial statistics for the same period shows a higher proportion of adult victims in the newspaper reports than in the courts: 68 per cent of convictions were for offences with child victims and only 24 per cent for offences with adult

victims.³⁰ Journalists may have underrepresented offences against children but they still concentrated on the young as newspaper stories with adult victims often involved young women or teenage girls. Of the 49 cases where a specific age was given, 40 concerned women aged 25 or younger.³¹

Articles portrayed children as the victims of predatory older men. Boys were in a minority among the child victims: 14 per cent of the children were boys. This small but far from negligible percentage is in line with modern-day figures for sex crimes in the Netherlands: Daalder and Essers found 19 per cent of all victims were male in their analysis (although this includes adult victims).³² It also shows journalists did not assume only girl children could be victims of sexual violence, in contrast to England where Louise Jackson found that boys had no place in the discourse on child sexual abuse.³³ Older perpetrators were common in child abuse cases but not in assaults on women. This fits with the judicial figures for the period.³⁴ In the newspaper reports, the offenders lured children with promises of sweets, toys or money.³⁵ Working-class children were particularly vulnerable to such tactics. Not only did they spend a great deal of time on the streets due to the crowded housing conditions, it was also common practice for them to earn extra money for the family by running errands or showing someone the way to a place.³⁶ The predatory stranger who tricked children in this way was clearly a familiar concept in Dutch society at this time. When the Rotterdam schoolboy Louis Hoogsteden went missing and was later found murdered in 1895, it was immediately assumed this was a sexual murder and that the stranger who had been seen offering him five cents to show him the way was responsible.³⁷

While abuse by men in authority had been at the centre of the debates in Parliament in 1880, these stories barely featured in the newspaper coverage. Moreover, nearly all such cases reported in the newspapers involved schools and institutions rather than factories.³⁸ As there is no statistical breakdown by setting available in the judicial statistics, it is not

³⁰ Based on the judicial statistics for 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930, see: *Gerechtelijke Statistiek* 1895; *Crimineele Statistiek* 1910, 1920, 1930.

³¹ In the US too, young women dominated in press reports. See: Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, 87.

³² Annelies Daalder and Ad Essers, "Seksuele delicten in Nederland," *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 45, no. 4 (2003): 359-360.

³³ Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 4-5.

³⁴ For example, in the years 1897 to 1905 men aged over 49 accounted for 28 per cent of indecent assaults on children (Article 247 in the Criminal Code) but only 2 per cent of assaults on adults (Article 246). See: *Gerechtelijke Statistiek* 1897-1899; *Crimineele Statistiek* 1900-1905. Daalder and Essers' analysis of modern-day data on sexual delinquents also show a significant proportion of older men in child sexual abuse cases: Daalder and Essers, "Seksuele delicten in Nederland," 356.

³⁵ Similar practices were noted in France and Germany. See: Chauvaud, *Les criminels du Poitou*, 308; Kerstin Brückweh, *Mordlust. Serienmorde, Gewalt und Emotionen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2006), 58-59.

³⁶ Manneke, *Uit oogpunt van politie*, 52-53.

³⁷ "Raadslachtige verdwijning van een knaap," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 25 November 1895, 2.

³⁸ One case was found involving the manager of a laundry who had assaulted a girl of 17 who worked there. "Zedenmisdrijf," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 22 November 1910, 11.

possible to say whether this reflects judicial practice or the journalists' selection criteria.³⁹ The items themselves are short, dry and unemotional, yet there are signs journalists did see these stories as newsworthy: they reported cases that were not local and were only in the early investigative stages, and printed follow-up items. It may have been difficult for the journalists to obtain more information; the police did not have an incentive to provide much detail as they did not need the help of the general public in catching or convicting the perpetrator, while the institutions themselves would have wanted to avoid a scandal.

A few of the Article 249 cases (abuse by a person in authority) involved incest by the parent. The newspaper items never used the word 'incest' and almost never explicitly referred to the perpetrator as the parent.⁴⁰ However, incest can sometimes be inferred because the newspaper report mentions Article 249 in combination with an occupation for the perpetrator, such as labourer, that did not involve a position of authority. These offenders received some of the toughest sentences for non-fatal assaults. Thus a municipal labourer in Friesland was given a six-year prison sentence in 1930.⁴¹ This particular incest case was reported in both the local *Leeuwarder Courant* and the national *Algemeen Handelsblad*.⁴² The harsh sentences coupled with the interest demonstrated by the media suggests public condemnation of such acts but here too the tone of the newspaper reports was neutral and dispassionate. It is possible that the Dutch papers were reluctant to introduce public scandal into the privacy of the home. As D'Cruze says about British local newspapers, the abuse of patriarchal power was not a story the papers wanted to tell.⁴³ It is telling that the one Dutch incest case that was described in emotionally charged language ("a moral crime more serious than the criminal investigators have had to deal with in years") involved a couple producing and selling child pornography with their own 11-year-old daughter as one of the models.⁴⁴ In this case, the crime had entered the public domain through the trade of the pictures.

Another distinctive category of sexual violence in the newspaper reports was assaults of young women by groups of men. When information on age was given, they were almost invariably young men in their teens or early twenties. That the young were a significant segment of offenders is borne out by the judicial statistics. Over half of the indecent assaults (*feitelijke aanrandingen*) and more than one third of rapes

³⁹ Interestingly, the statistics for 1896 and 1897 include a breakdown by occupation that shows six of the eight offenders were teachers. See: *Gerechtelijke Statistiek 1896-1897*.

⁴⁰ The only exception was a report in the *Leeuwarder Courant* that stated a man had been tried for "indecent with his daughter" (*ontucht met zijn dochter*): *Leeuwarder Courant*, 10 September 1930, 6.

⁴¹ *Leeuwarder Courant*, 18 June 1930, 5.

⁴² "Zedenmisdrijf," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 18 June 1930, 2; "Aangehouden," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 28 February 1930, 2.

⁴³ D'Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage*, 164-169. Louise Jackson also comments that melodramatic language was shunned in incest cases: Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 48.

⁴⁴ "een zedendelict van zoo ernstigen aard als de recherche in jaren niet in behandeling heeft gehad." In "Zedenmisdrijf en pornografie," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 6 October 1930, 9; "Fotograaf tot vijf jaar veroordeeld," *De Telegraaf*, 30 October 1930, 6.

(*verkrachtingen*) of women over 15 were committed by men aged 20 or younger.⁴⁵ Some historians have seen gang rapes as relatively accepted rowdy group behaviour that was embedded in male leisure culture. This is an argument made by Shani D'Cruze in her study of working-class communities in England.⁴⁶ In France too, rapes by gangs of young men were seen as a 'normal' result of sociable group behaviour.⁴⁷ There is no sign of this in the Dutch newspaper reports, however. Such attacks were never excused as mere high spirits, and perpetrators were roundly condemned. Gang rapes were among the few sexual assault cases where the names of the assailants were printed as a shaming measure.

Gang rapes and abuse by a person in authority constituted only a minority of cases; newspaper reports overwhelmingly concentrated on sexual assaults by lone strangers. At least, the reports give the impression that the assailant was a stranger. There were only one or two cases where the reports explicitly note a prior relationship between the perpetrator and victim.⁴⁸ Many items, on the other hand, expressly state that the perpetrator and victim did not know one another ("a man unknown to her", "*een haar onbekende man*"). Yet there are also numerous stories that say nothing about the relationship. In at least some of these cases, for example involving a victim and perpetrator from the same village, some kind of prior acquaintance seems likely. The journalists' silence can be seen as an example of simplification – avoiding any messy details about previous interactions.⁴⁹ However, it also bolstered the victim status of the person being attacked. Studies have shown that women who claimed to have been raped were most likely to be believed if they were morally beyond reproach and did not know their attacker.⁵⁰

The impression of external danger was enhanced by the fact that the vast majority of assaults took place in public places: 85 per cent of all non-fatal assaults reported in the newspapers were committed outdoors, or in vehicles (usually after the victim had been lured or dragged into the vehicle). Location plays an important role in the rape studies of both Dubinsky and D'Cruze. D'Cruze contends that sexual danger lay in liminal places, for instance wasteland. Spaces such as fields that were places of work during the day could become criminal and dangerous at night.⁵¹ Dubinsky sees a disjunction between the imaginary geography of sexual danger in the public discourse in Canada and the actual sites of attacks; while urban streets were popularly associated with sexual threats, assaults in the

⁴⁵ Based on data for 1897-1905. See: *Gerechtelijke Statistiek 1897-1899*; *Crimineele Statistiek 1900-1905*.

⁴⁶ D'Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage*, 111-136, 158.

⁴⁷ Georges Vigarello, *Histoire du Viol XVIe - Xxe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), 174-192.

⁴⁸ For example, in 1910 the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* reported that a maid had been sexually assaulted by a former sweetheart: *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 25 May 1910, 11.

⁴⁹ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 51. See too Section 3.5.

⁵⁰ Stevenson, "Unequivocal Victims," 345; Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances. Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880-1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 163-164; Conley, "Rape and Justice," 524-525.

⁵¹ D'Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage*, 31-36.

home and in rural environments were largely overlooked.⁵² In the Dutch newspaper reports, a general shift can be seen over time from the city as the locus of sexual danger to rural areas and the seaside. In the decades leading up to the First World War, the cities were expanding rapidly as migrants from the rest of the country poured in. This raised all kinds of concerns about the use of urban streets, including worries about the harassment of women.⁵³ But the busy daytime streets were not the spaces where sexual danger was lurking according to the newspapers. Rather it was the marginal areas in the night-time city. The construction work to house the growing population left liminal building sites that were deserted after dark. This was where predators could be lying in wait. For example, in 1910, the Amsterdam street of 2e Helmersstraat was still unbuilt on one side. According to the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, it had become so dangerous after nightfall that young women no longer dared walk along it unaccompanied.⁵⁴

Stories of sexual violence in the cities continued to appear in the interwar newspapers but were now overshadowed by reports of attacks in rural areas. The articles reflected and played on fears about the increasing mobility that had become possible with the bicycle and the car. Moreover, the countryside had become a place of recreation due to increasing leisure time and a more extensive transport network. Yet as Dutch society became increasingly urbanized, attitudes to the rural Netherlands were ambiguous. The countryside was idealized as a place to recuperate from the hectic city life, but its inhabitants were viewed as backward and uncouth.⁵⁵ The newspaper items on sexual violence played on that ambiguity. In story after story, women were attacked cycling along dykes or rural roads, or taking a walk in the woods. The articles frequently stress the lonely, deserted setting. A 19-year-old girl was assaulted while cycling home along a “lonely polder road” (*op den eenzamen polderweg*).⁵⁶ A woman was assaulted while walking in the countryside near Apeldoorn “where there is nothing but woods and heathland” (*waar niets dan bosschen en heide zijn*).⁵⁷ The beach was another place where predatory strangers lay in wait for women and children. Resort towns such as Scheveningen and Zandvoort, close to the major cities in the west, became popular in the twentieth century. Seaside resorts by their very nature encouraged sexual overtones; they have been described by the British historian John Walton as “a liminal environment ... where the usual constraints of respectability and decorum in public behaviour might be pushed aside”.⁵⁸ Bodies were on

⁵² Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 39-40, 145.

⁵³ Furnee, “Winkelen als bevrijding?” 109-111. See also Section 5.1.

⁵⁴ “Onveiligheid in de Helmersbuurt,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 14 March 1910, 1.

⁵⁵ Oosterhuis, “Cycling, Modernity,” 236-245; Marleen Brock, “‘Onder den rook van de hoofdstad’. De verbeelding van stad, platteland en natuur in de reeks Van vlinders, vogels en bloemen van E. Heimans en Jac. P. Thijsse,” *De negentiende eeuw* 32, no. 4 (2008): 294-310.

⁵⁶ “Meisje aangerand,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 28 October 1930, 1.

⁵⁷ “Aanranding,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 23 December 1930, 6.

⁵⁸ John K. Walton, *The British Seaside. Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 96.

show to a greater extent than in everyday life while the dunes offered a secluded spot for illicit activities. Beaches presented a particular risk for children, as both a place of recreation for them and a site where they were on view to strange men. In August 1930, a man accosted a seven-year-old girl in her bathing costume on Zandvoort beach until another holidaymaker came to her rescue.⁵⁹

If the setting of these reports (the cities in the nineteenth century and the countryside in the twentieth century) reflect contemporary concerns, it is striking that there were no articles about assaults in dance halls and cinemas. These were seen by social purists as sites of danger for young women. In the interwar period, municipalities introduced age limits for dance halls and censored cinema films that contained too much immorality.⁶⁰ It is possible that there simply were no incidents of sexual violence in these settings. However, it could also be that journalists avoided such settings for the same reason that they presented the perpetrators as strangers: this created clear-cut stories with unambiguous victims. Young women who frequented dance halls and cinemas were both endangered and themselves suspect.⁶¹

Journalists may also have focused on attacks by strangers as these were fears shared by all women. The stories may have appealed to female readers precisely because they showed that journalists were taking women's fears seriously. Accounts such as the following about the difficulty of shaking off a strange man when travelling alone may have been a familiar experience that struck a chord with many female readers:

"Among some other people, – said the girl – I saw a person in tattered clothes coming up Graafflorisweg, the road that continues the main road. I thought: I'll speed up a bit so that I stay ahead of that person. At the toll, I looked round and I saw he was coming up quickly behind me. Just before the Van der Starre houses along that road, he caught up with me and asked me if he was on the right road to Reeuwijk, next asking the way to Waddingsveen. I showed him the way and he stayed with me. Somewhat later he said: 'I'm so tired, let's sit on the grass for a bit, it'll be just for a bit.' I didn't want to do that and carried on walking. He stayed behind then, but caught me up again, grabbed me occasionally to throw me on the ground until suddenly people appeared in front of us."⁶²

⁵⁹ "Aanranding op het strand te Zandvoort," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 18 August 1930, 18.

⁶⁰ "Toezicht op films te Rotterdam," *De Telegraaf*, 4 April 1920, 5; "Dansen beneden achttien jaar verboden!" *De Telegraaf*, 6 February 1930, 5; Wouters, *Jeugd van tegenwoordig*, 59. See also Section 2.2.

⁶¹ De Koster, "Los van God"; Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 46-49.

⁶² "Tusschen andere menschen in zag ik — aldus het meisje — een gehavend gekleed persoon aankomen op den Graafflorisweg, het verlengde van genoemden straatweg. Ik dacht: ik zal wat aanstappen, dat ik dien persoon voor blijf. Bij den tol keek ik eens om en zag ik, dat hij met vluggen pas mij achterop kwam. Even voor de woningen van Van der Starre langs dien weg, haalde hij me aan en vroeg me of hij den goeden weg had naar Reeuwijk, vervolgens den weg vragende naar Waddingsveen. Ik wees hem dien en hij bleef bij me. Even later zei hij: 'ik ben zoo moe, willen we eventjes in het gras gaan zitten, 't is maar eventjes.' Ik wilde dat niet

Another factor pointing journalists towards attacks by strangers was their reliance on the police for information. The police would have been most likely to inform the press of cases involving strangers as these were the cases where they needed the aid of the general public in catching the perpetrator or providing evidence. This bias in the sources was not offset by a more representative picture from trials as Dutch journalists were barred from attending sexual assault trials. The information they could obtain from the public announcement of the sentence would not normally have told them anything about the relationship between the perpetrator and victim.

Historians have pointed to the distorting effect of a discourse that sees sexual danger coming from strangers. Both modern research and studies of this period show that while attacks by men unacquainted with the victim form a not insignificant minority of cases, a majority of assaults are actually committed by men known to the victim.⁶³ Feminist historians contend that depicting sexual violence as an act by strangers paints it as deviant behaviour rather than embedded in social relations and downplays the real dangers in the home.⁶⁴ Anna Clark argues that rape stories were used in nineteenth-century England as a warning by the middle classes: by painting the streets as a place of danger, they aimed to persuade women not to stray from their designated feminine spaces.⁶⁵ Such an analysis is problematic in the Dutch context as it raises questions about the journalists' intent in selecting these particular stories. A discourse imposed on women by middle-class men does not fit with the chronology of the Dutch coverage, which coincided with the democratization and feminization of the Dutch readership. As argued above, these stories are more likely to have been printed because they were thought to interest women readers. This is not to deny the impact of the skewed coverage in ensuring that sexual violence closer to home did not become a salient issue.

Victims and perpetrators

This subsection looks at the newspapers' depiction of victims and perpetrators and the attitudes implicit in that depiction. The literature on sexual violence against women and children has stressed how complainants were often treated with suspicion during this

doen en liep door. Hij bleef toen achter, doch achterhaalde me weer greep me toen af en toe beet om me op den grond te werpen, tot opeens vóór ons uit mensen aankwamen." In "Een 13-jarig meisje aangerand!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 4 November 1910, 5.

⁶³ Daalder and Essers, "Seksuele delicten in Nederland," 361; Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 37-43, 172; D'Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage*, 148-151; Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 43-46; Brückweh, *Mordlust*, 46-48.

⁶⁴ Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 103, 165; Stevenson, "Unequivocal Victims," 349; Shani D'Cruze, "Approaching the history of rape and sexual violence: notes towards research," *Women's History Review* 1, no. 3 (1992): 381.

⁶⁵ Clark, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence*, 1-20; Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 245. Barrow similarly argues that newspaper reports of attacks on women in trains were effectively cautioning women about the need for male chaperones and consequently limiting their freedom of movement: Robin J. Barrow, "Rape on the Railway: Women, Safety, and Moral Panic in Victorian Newspapers," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 20, no. 3 (2015): 343, 355-356.

period. The female victim risked her reputation in bringing the case to court. Once in court, much depended on the victim's character and that of the perpetrator. A history of sexual impropriety for the victim made it difficult to obtain a conviction, while respectable male citizens and upstanding fathers were widely thought incapable of committing sexual violence. Child victims were believed by medical experts to make false accusations and be inherently unreliable. Convictions were most likely if the attacker was a stranger, the attack happened in a public place and there was physical evidence of a struggle. These issues have been observed in a wide variety of countries, including England, Scotland, France, Belgium, Canada and India.⁶⁶

However, different rape discourses were not necessarily aligned. The above findings relate to the medico-legal discourse. Even there, judges and magistrates did not necessarily agree with the medical experts in their suspicions of the untrustworthy complainant.⁶⁷ Regarding the press discourse, Kim Stevenson argues that in Victorian Britain, press reporting "colluded" in the legal discourse and "reinforced the patriarchal notion of the law that female complainants were less reliable".⁶⁸ In Joanne Jones's study of nineteenth-century Manchester newspapers and their coverage of rape trials, she finds that Journalists constantly assessed the woman's behaviour and degree of culpability in their reports.⁶⁹ Yet Garthine Walker warns against any expectation that newspapers mirrored the medico-legal discourse; it cannot be assumed that if the legal system was weighted against the victim, the press showed the same bias. In her study of newspaper coverage of eighteenth-century acquittals for rape, she found no tendency for journalists to disbelieve or blame victims; acquittals were presented as the unfortunate consequence of legal definitions and what counted as admissible evidence.⁷⁰

The Dutch newspaper reporting bears out Walker's warning, as the Dutch press presented a picture of innocent victims and deviant perpetrators that is far removed from the trope of the unreliable witness found in the literature. The Dutch representation of sexual assault protagonists was in part driven by journalists' preference for simplification with clear-cut victims and aggressors. That implied a favourable and sympathetic portrayal of the women and children who were attacked: they were believed unconditionally, and no blame was attached to them. Moreover, the newspaper stories of sexual assault were important in creating a picture of the imagined community as they showed the community in action against external threats. In these accounts, the young victims were valued and

⁶⁶ Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 90-106, 125-127; Ferron, "Le témoignage des femmes"; Le Clercq, "Les perceptions," 81-85; Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 90-98; Stevenson, "Unequivocal Victims," 353-363; Conley, "Rape and Justice"; Elizabeth Kolsky, "The body evidencing the crime: rape on trial in colonial India, 1860-1947," *Gender & History* 22, no. 1 (2010): 115-123; Davidson, "This Pernicious Delusion," 68-75; Joanna Bourke, *Rape. Sex, violence, history* (London: Virago, 2007), 21-49.

⁶⁷ Ruberg, "Trauma, Body, and Mind," 85-104; Le Clercq, "Les perceptions," 78-80.

⁶⁸ Stevenson, "Ingenuities," 92-94.

⁶⁹ Jones, "She Resisted".

⁷⁰ Walker, "Rape, Acquittal and Culpability" 115-142.

vulnerable community members attacked by individuals from outside the community, often with other, chivalrous community members coming to their rescue.

The Dutch newspaper discourse seems in marked contrast to the representation of victims in the British Victorian press as described by Stevenson and Jones. A key reason for this lies in the different functions of sexual violence stories. The British newspapers of the nineteenth century were reporting trials – including trials for sexual assault – as an authoritative record of the administration of justice for an audience that was assumed to be male and middle class, or at least share those values.⁷¹ To select only those stories that presented the female victim in a good light ran counter to the underlying journalistic principle of trial reporting. Nor would such selection seem necessary in appealing to the presumed readership. The Dutch journalists, however, were not reporting sexual assault trials. They started selecting stories of sexual violence incidents from the end of the nineteenth century as part of the feminization of the newspaper content. Since their basic approach was selective and their aim was to provide articles that appealed to women rather than a comprehensive record, restricting items to stories of clear victims was a logical approach.

Most victims in the Dutch newspaper items fit the concept of the ‘ideal victim’, proposed by the criminologist Nils Christie. By this he means the category of individuals who “most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim”. This is not necessarily the category in most danger of being victimized in practice. Some characteristics of the ideal victim according to Christie are being weak, engaged in a respectable task when attacked and in a place they cannot be blamed for being, and attacked by an offender unknown to the victim.⁷² Most Dutch articles about sexual violence against women or children present the victim as an ‘ideal victim’.⁷³

Not all victims were ‘ideal victims’ in the early years. This reflects the changing boundaries of the Dutch imagined community. In 1895, women on the margins of society were still firmly outside those boundaries and therefore untrustworthy. In one 1895 case, a 22-year-old girl alone in the streets of The Hague late at night was raped by three coachmen in a stable. The initial newspaper reports of the case expressed shock; the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*’s headline was “Scandalous assault”.⁷⁴ In these accounts, the woman was described as a maid in a professor’s household who had become separated from her companions on a day out in the city. But in later reports it turned out she was rather less respectable: her place of abode was a merry-go-round and she had previously served a

⁷¹ Jones, “She Resisted,” 106-107.

⁷² N. Christie, “The Ideal Victim,” in *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy*, ed. E.A. Fattah (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), 18-19.

⁷³ A similar simplified template with ideal victims was found in modern-day Dutch media coverage of date rape stories. See Peter Burger and Gabry Vanderveen, “Drugs in je drankje. Schuldattributie en genderstereotypen in nieuwsberichtgeving en onlinediscussies,” *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 52, no. 4 (2010): 413, 417-419.

⁷⁴ “Schandelijke aanranding,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 15 August 1895, 2.

prison sentence for theft. The papers changed their tune accordingly: rather than a scandalous assault, readers were now told the men might have handled her a little roughly, but it was not entirely against her will.⁷⁵

In the later years, the victims invariably had the status of ideal victims. They were attacked outdoors while going about their legitimate business. Ten-year-old Cornelis Canjels was carrying a bag of fruit as a treat for his grandmother when he was accosted.⁷⁶ A 15-year-old girl was visiting her sick mother and a woman of about 20 was on her way home from church.⁷⁷ The stories stressed their resistance to the attack: they put up a valiant fight, called loudly for help or fainted at the shock. But they were almost always too weak to hold off the attacker on their own. They could only be rescued by the chance intervention of passers-by. The reports generate sympathy for the victim by describing the emotional effect of the attack. The girl attacked while walking back from church was so shocked it took two days before she could give a proper description of what had happened.⁷⁸ In stories involving young children, it is the impact on the parents that is stressed.⁷⁹

The journalists also remove any doubt about the victimhood by presenting the events as facts rather than merely the victim's version of the incident. This is most striking in the one or two stories that later turned out to be fictitious. For example, in 1910 both the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* and *Leeuwarder Courant* reported the story of an 11-year-old girl who had been approached by a man as she came out of school. He seemed friendly so she accompanied him on his way, but then "he showed what a scoundrel he was" ("*toonde hij welk een ellendeling hij was*") by sexually assaulting her. The story is presented as a narrative of actual events rather than a report of what the girl told the police. The headlines ("A girl lured", "An 11-year-old girl lured and assaulted") also invite the reader to assume there is no doubt about the incident and to sympathize with the girl. Yet the next day the newspapers reported that the girl had made the story up. She confessed this after repeated questioning by the police. This suggests the police were not convinced of her story from the start and raises questions about the police's role in the original story. Had the press been too eager to run with the story despite police reservations?⁸⁰

⁷⁵ "Nog eens het mishandelde meisje," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 21 August 1895, 2; "De aanranding in Den Haag!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 21 August 1895, 2. There is a similarity here with the treatment of the indigent mothers in the abandonment stories discussed in Section 5.3.

⁷⁶ "Poging tot moord?" *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 6 September 1910, 7.

⁷⁷ *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 12 September 1910, 7; "Meisje aangerand," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 1 November 1910, 2.

⁷⁸ "Meisje aangerand," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 1 November 1910, 2.

⁷⁹ See for example: "Vijfjarig meisje ontvoerd," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 20 August 1930, 13.

⁸⁰ "Een 11-jarig meisje medegelokt en aangerand," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 24 February 1910, 2; "De aanranding was verzonnen!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 25 February 1910, 2; "Een meisje medegelokt," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 25 February 1910, 2; "Een veelbelovend meisje," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 26 February 1910, 7.

If victims were treated with sympathy in the Dutch newspaper articles, they were also rather anonymous. Readers were given little information about the victims other than their age. Most items did not mention the victim's name, or at most only the initials. This was also seen in the child maltreatment stories discussed in the previous chapter. However, in contrast to those stories, the sexual assault items contained no information that might reveal the victim's class, such as their occupation or that of the father, or the street they lived in. This is a crucial difference as it made sexual violence appear a classless risk whereas cruelty to children was portrayed as a problem confined to the lower classes. In practice, working-class women and children were probably at greater risk of sexual assaults in public places as they were more likely to have to travel unaccompanied and on foot or by bicycle. The 15 non-fatal assaults where the victim's occupation *is* given seem to bear this out: ten were maids, one woman worked in a laundry and one delivered newspapers. Interestingly given the pillarization of Dutch society, the journalists also gave no information that could identify the victim as a Catholic or Protestant.⁸¹

The French historian Ambroise-Rendu criticizes the anonymity of victims in press reports from the victims' perspective, but it is argued here that this approach helped readers identify with the victim. Ambroise-Rendu observes the phenomenon of the anonymous victim in French newspaper reports on child sexual abuse in this period. She concludes that the victims were therefore voiceless and merely "ideas of victims". Only with the condemnation of paedophilia at the end of the twentieth century did the victims finally get a voice in the media.⁸² However, the lack of individualizing details can also be seen as a technique that made the cases more relevant to readers. Because the victims were depicted as 'everywoman' or 'everychild', it became easier for the reader to imagine themselves or their family members in the place of the victims. That in turn created an impression that any woman or child was at risk of these attacks.

The perpetrators too remained rather shadowy figures in the newspaper reports, but unlike the victims they were positioned firmly outside the community, as emasculated outsiders. To some extent, the lack of information about the assailant reflects the limitations of the sources. Many stories were of incidents in which the perpetrator was not caught (22 per cent of all non-fatal attacks on women and children). However, the journalists also used strategies to prevent the reader from empathizing with the attacker. The terms used to denote the perpetrator are often gender-neutral words, such as "person" or "individual". The articles of non-fatal assault never include reported speech by the perpetrators or speculate on their motives, so that readers are never invited to see the incident from their perspective. Stories of sexual murders do include reported speech by the

⁸¹ Even in sexual murder stories, which dwelt at length on the victim, the victim's religion was not stated explicitly but was at most implicit, for example from the title of the presiding clergyman in the account of the funeral.

⁸² "Les enfants demeurent des victimes muettes, absentes en somme, ou pour mieux dire des « idées de victimes »", Anne-Claude Ambroise-Rendu, "Un siècle de pédophilie," 34.

perpetrator but in these cases the murderer was an undisputed monster and the background information only confirmed his cold-heartedness. Throughout the period, there is an almost complete absence of psychiatric explanations, which might have excused the perpetrator's actions. That is particularly striking in the interwar years as psychiatric interpretations of sexual deviancy were becoming more common, including in the Dutch criminal justice system; after the TBR measure for diminished responsibility was introduced in 1928, sex crimes accounted for between a quarter and half of all TBR convictions.⁸³ In France too, Ambroise-Rendu finds that theories about the need to protect society from sexual psychopaths failed to pervade the media discourse. She argues that this was because sexual violence was seen as a private matter rather than an affair of the state.⁸⁴

In newspaper stories with background information about the attacker, most perpetrators were working class. Background details such as the age and profession were sometimes provided in stories of incidents where the perpetrators had been caught. When offenders were brought to trial, journalists could in principle obtain such details as a matter of course as they were included in the public announcement of the sentence. The *Leeuwarder Courant* routinely reported this information. The perpetrator's class can be determined in just over half the reported cases in the five sample years. While cases involving the abuse of authority (Article 249) often (inevitably) concerned middle-class perpetrators such as teachers, 71 per cent of the perpetrators were working class and a further 15 per cent lower-middle class.⁸⁵ This is consistent with what is known from trial records about the class background of offenders in rape cases.⁸⁶ Jackson found most perpetrators in England were working class or lower middle class in her study of nineteenth-century child abuse cases.⁸⁷ Giuliani found the same for incest in nineteenth-century France but she warns against drawing conclusions from this about actual incidence: the poor were more accustomed to resorting to the criminal courts to resolve family problems whereas the middle classes used other means and tried to avoid public scandal.⁸⁸

The newspaper items also connect sexual violence to mobility and men from outside the local community. Men with a vehicle could easily convey their victim to a secluded spot and make a getaway afterwards.⁸⁹ In 1930, a travelling salesman from Rotterdam who was driving near Epe, a town 150 kilometres away, assaulted a 14-year-old girl.⁹⁰ That same year,

⁸³ Wilkinson, "Psychische stoornissen," 389; Joanna Bourke, *Rape*, 180-206; Stephen Robertson, "Separating the Men from the Boys: Masculinity, Psychosexual Development, and Sex Crime in the United States, 1930s-1960s," *Journal of the History of Medicine* 56, (2001): 12-30; Estelle B. Freedman, "Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920-1960," *The Journal of American History* 74, no. 1 (1987): 83-106.

⁸⁴ Ambroise-Rendu, "La dangerosité," 77.

⁸⁵ This is excluding cases involving homosexual acts with minors but including sexual murders.

⁸⁶ Ruberg, "Onzekere kennis," 93.

⁸⁷ Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 116.

⁸⁸ Giuliani, *Les liaisons interdites*, 333-336.

⁸⁹ Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 42-43.

⁹⁰ "Meisje meegetroond in een auto," *De Telegraaf*, 18 March 1930, 5.

another sales rep persuaded an 11-year-old boy in The Hague to go for a ride with him on his motorbike. The two were later found in the dunes near Wassenaar where the boy had been assaulted. This story prompted *De Telegraaf* to stress how important it was for parents to warn their children against going off with vehiculate strangers: "In the last while, cyclists and automobile drivers and motorbike drivers have all been guilty of this in these parts, so children cannot be warned strongly enough to beware of strangers who lure them, usually with far from noble intentions."⁹¹

Outsiders were also the first to be suspected when an incident had taken place.⁹² This is evident in the stories of sexual murders (which are discussed in detail in the next section). The discovery of the murdered body was usually followed by a feverish search for the perpetrator, with rumours circulating about possible culprits. When 13-year-old Adriana Pulle's body was found in woods near the village of Renkum, police arrested a tramp and investigated a tip from a local lady who ran a guesthouse that one of her guests had left suspiciously suddenly.⁹³ The murderer later turned out to be a local factory worker who knew the family. Suspicions fell on a mobile outsider too in the case of Marietje van Os, a young girl who was raped and murdered in Rotterdam in 1929. In this case, the police arrested V., a gardener of no fixed abode. When he was released in February 1930 after several months in detention due to a lack of evidence, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* remained unconvinced of his innocence: "Many people — including those in a position to judge — have become strongly convinced that V. must be the perpetrator of the horrific offence". Yet here too the actual murderer turned out to be a local factory worker.⁹⁴

Presenting perpetrators as outsiders placed them outside both the local community and the imagined community constructed through the newspaper content, and maintained a comforting belief in the purity of the community. At the funeral of a boy who had been assaulted and murdered by a tramp, the mayor was "very happy to note that the rogue was not an inhabitant of the region".⁹⁵ The notion of the sex fiend as inherently alien to the society in question has been observed by other historians. In the southern US, rape was racialized in the late nineteenth century as a crime committed by a black man on a white

⁹¹ "Hier te lande hebben in den laatsten tijd zowel wielrijders als automobilisten en motorrijders zich hieraan schuldig gemaakt, zodat de kinderen niet genoeg gewaarschuwd kunnen worden tegen vreemden, die hen meestal met minder edele bedoelingen trachten te lokken." "Jongen ontvoerd op een motorfiets," *De Telegraaf*, 20 March 1930, 5; "Ontvoering te Den Haag," *De Telegraaf*, 20 March 1930, 6.

⁹² In twentieth-century Germany too, the stereotypical sex offender — and obvious suspect in sexual murder cases — was the lone, mobile outsider, see: Brückweh, *Mordlust*, 110-115.

⁹³ "De moord te Renkum," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 27 August 1910, 2; "De kindermoord te Renkum," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 29 August 1910, 3.

⁹⁴ "[...] bij velen — ook bij tot oordeelen bevoegden — sterk de overtuiging had post gevat, dat V. de bedrijver van het gruwelijke feit moest zijn." "De moord in Blijdorp," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 21 February 1930, 12; J.A. Blaauw, *De moord op Marietje van Os en andere geruchtmakende moordzaken* (Baarn: De Fontein, 1997), 38.

⁹⁵ "Hij constateerde tot zijn vreugde, dat de onverlaat geen bewoner der streek is." "De kindermoord te Valburg," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 21 July 1930, 18.

woman, which then served to justify segregation and the reversal of political rights for black men.⁹⁶ In Anthony Keating's study of press coverage of sex crimes in the Irish Free State in the interwar period, he concludes that newspapers portrayed the perpetrators as not truly Irish by focusing on attacks by people from outside the community and emphasizing their otherness. This was part of a general project to present the nascent state as an exceptionally moral nation and a bastion of Catholic purity.⁹⁷ The Dutch reporting lacks this nationalist element but has the same tendency to portray the sex offender as the 'other'.

The Dutch newspaper reports, however, are not just about the two protagonists; accounts of incidents are very much stories about the community in action, and consequently play an important role in creating a picture of the imagined Dutch community. In these stories, relatives, neighbours and other local citizens respond to calls for help and intervene in attacks, protecting women and children, and hunting down the assailant. The latter is repeatedly described as a rogue (*onverlaat*) or coward (*lafaard*), who picks on the weak and runs off as soon as anyone else arrives. The trope of chivalrous local people protecting the weak was also seen in the stories of domestic violence (see Chapter 4). As in those cases, the police have a starring role as protectors in many of the sexual violence articles – undoubtedly reflecting the fact that they were an important source for journalists. None of the items mention women police officers although women were working in the juvenile and vice squads in the interwar years.⁹⁸ The impression given by the newspaper accounts is therefore of gallant male officers defending women and children. Items routinely stress the speed with which the police respond and their perseverance in tracking down the assailant. In the abovementioned case of the Hague boy abducted on a motorbike, the police sprang into action as soon as the boy was reported missing, according to *De Telegraaf*. Despite the fact that his friends could only give a vague description of the motorbike and the driver, officers immediately phoned all the local police stations. One station sent out two officers to drive around on their own motorbike and sidecar. Hearing the sound of a motorbike engine in the distance, they followed it and discovered the boy and his attacker in the dunes.⁹⁹ Thus both the general public and the police play an important role in stories of sexual violence. That role was even more prominent in sexual murder cases, the subject of the next section.

6.4 Sexual murders

As noted in Section 6.2, coverage of sexual violence was dominated by a small number of fatal sexual assaults, which attracted an inordinate amount of media attention. For this reason alone, these cases stand out. But they also differ from other stories of sexual

⁹⁶ Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, 89-103.

⁹⁷ Keating, "Sexual Crime," 147; Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 8.

⁹⁸ Lien van Nie, *Recherche zedenpolitie* (Amsterdam: A.J.G. Strenghtolt, 1964), 21-22.

⁹⁹ "Jongen ontvoerd op een motorfiets," *De Telegraaf*, 20 March 1930, 5; "Ontvoering te Den Haag," *De Telegraaf*, 20 March 1930, 6.

violence – and of family violence in general – in the relatively active role played by the press as an intermediary between the police and the general public. It was concluded in Chapter 3 that the Dutch press kept aloof from the administration of justice, never commenting on sentencing. Moreover, journalists often adopted institutional language and used sensationalism with discretion. The sexual murders reveal the tensions inherent in this stance when a crime generated intense emotions. Fatal sexual assaults were extreme events that united Dutch society in shock and grief.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, because it was usually not immediately clear who the perpetrator was, newspapers became invested in the case by covering the hunt for the killer. That resulted in extensive and relatively sensational coverage in which the press showed the imagined community coming together and reaffirmed its values.¹⁰¹ Yet the journalists were also uncomfortable with the more emotional reactions of the public. What is more, these were cases where the press monitored the investigation particularly closely. That in turn could lead to problems with the police and judiciary, while the journalists also had to decide how to treat the general public's involvement in the investigation – these were precisely the kinds of cases where the police needed clues or information on possible suspects from the public.

The stories of sexual murders followed a standard scenario.¹⁰² There would be a report that the victim was missing, followed by a frantic search and the discovery of the body. The journalists described this using sensational language that contrasted the everyday, domestic life of the victim up to the attack with the brutality of the murder. In October 1920, 10-year-old Gezine Schans was found raped and murdered. According to the *Leeuwarder Courant's* account, she had made an appointment to play with some friends the Sunday afternoon. After lunch, she set off “in good spirits” (*welgemoed*). Her body was later found in a dry ditch “horribly mutilated and assaulted, part of her underclothes loose. The skull was smashed”.¹⁰³ The impact of the incident is underlined with accounts of the distraught parents and the emotional reaction of local residents. In these stories, the community came together one last time for the funeral, demonstrating solidarity with the victim and their family. The large numbers attending some of these funerals in turn testify to the power of the media in publicizing the case (see Figure 9).¹⁰⁴ The second strand in such stories was the investigation: the hunt for the murderer, his arrest and interrogation, and the gathering of evidence. The trial itself was the least important element in these Dutch stories because of the journalists' lack of access to the courts. It was a mere afterword in which the accused's guilt and conviction were never in doubt.

¹⁰⁰ On the emotions of the general public in response to sexual murders, see: Brückweh, *Mordlust*, 303-337.

¹⁰¹ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 265.

¹⁰² Georges Vigarello observes the same standard narrative in French sexual murder stories. See Vigarello, *Histoire du Viol*, 195-205.

¹⁰³ “[...] heerlijk verminkt en mishandeld, een deel der onderkleeren los. De hersenpan was ingeslagen.” “Een 10-jarig meisje vermoord,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 12 October 1920, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 99-100.



Crowds following the funeral procession in Arnhem of Tine Koperberg, raped and murdered in February 1930. "De moord te Bennekom," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 5 March 1930, 13.

Figure 9 Photograph of the funeral of a sexual murder victim.

The police were under enormous pressure to find the killer in these cases and that affected their relationship with the press.¹⁰⁵ In the late nineteenth century, before the police had developed structural information and communication procedures for the press, this could lead to friction. Press relations with the investigating officials deteriorated badly in one case in 1895. Louis Hoogsteden, a 10-year-old schoolboy, was found murdered in Rotterdam over a week after he had been reported missing. There was criticism of the police for failing to launch a full investigation as soon as the boy had gone missing, and one police commissioner lost his job as a result.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps because of this criticism coupled with the fact that they were not making any headway (the perpetrator was never caught), the police and the judicial authority in charge of the investigation were reluctant to give journalists any information about progress in the investigation.¹⁰⁷ The reporters responded by conducting their own research, interviewing family members and following up clues independently.¹⁰⁸ When a sister of the boy's father was arrested, much of the press referred to the wrong sister in their reports. The *Algemeen Handelsblad* firmly placed the blame on the judicial authority: "One thing is a shame, namely that the judicial authority has not

¹⁰⁵ For a good overview of the factors affecting press-police relations, see Shpayer-Makov, "Journalists and Police Detectives".

¹⁰⁶ "De misdaad te Rotterdam," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 4 December 1895, 2; "De moord te Rotterdam," *De Telegraaf*, 30 November 1895, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Blaauw, *Twee eeuwen*, 187.

¹⁰⁸ "De moord te Rotterdam," *De Telegraaf*, 6 December 1895, 1; "De moord te Rotterdam," *De Telegraaf*, 16 December 1895, 3; "De moord te Rotterdam," *De Telegraaf*, 19 December 1895, 1.

deemed it acceptable to provide information about its findings on the reason for the horrific deed, because now it has left considerable room for speculation.”¹⁰⁹

By 1930, relations with the press were on a more stable footing. The police were now actively using the media to communicate with the general public and obtain information. In the Marietje van Os case, the police arranged for a picture of a suspect to be published in various newspapers in October 1929 in an attempt to track him down. In November of that year, a call was put out via the newspapers and the radio for the driver who the suspect claimed had given him a lift.¹¹⁰ This more amicable relationship also meant the police were prepared to give the press an insight into their activities; this publicity could in turn enhance their reputation. In the case of the rape and murder of the nurse Tine Koperberg in 1930, the *Algemeen Handelsblad* held a congratulatory interview with the police inspector responsible after the perpetrator had been caught. The inspector was given the opportunity to explain how the police had benefited from their local knowledge and the detailed records they kept on everyone who had ever come into contact with the police.¹¹¹

The newspapers were a key source of information for readers about these investigations but at the local level, the general public were a channel for spreading the latest news. The newspaper articles paint vivid pictures of crowds gathering around police bulletins posted in shops or milling outside the police station, and asking one another the latest news in the tram.¹¹² The events were also a happening for local residents: people went to have a look at the crime scene in the weekend, visit the victim's grave or watch the police dogs in action.¹¹³ Newspaper reports of these activities by local citizens validated their reaction and also let newspaper readers share in it. The press painted a picture of an imagined community engrossed by this horrific crime.

The general public were also a source of tips in the hunt for the perpetrator. In the Hoogsteden case in 1895, when the police were not forthcoming with information, the papers eagerly printed all rumours of possible sightings, however unlikely. A woman in Amsterdam reported a lodger who had left without paying, wore new, ill-fitting clothes and had written a letter full of spelling mistakes.¹¹⁴ But in later years, as police-press relations improved, the press accounts reflect the police perspective and cast doubt on the value of

¹⁰⁹ “Een ding is jammer, nl. dat de justitie niet heeft kunnen goedvinden ook mededeeling te doen over haar ontdekkingen in verband met de aanleiding tot de gruweldaad, omdat nu nog een ruim veld voor gissingen overblijft.” “De moord te Rotterdam,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 16 December 1895, 1.

¹¹⁰ Blaauw, *Marietje van Os*, 51, 69.

¹¹¹ “De moord te Bennekom,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 4 March 1930, 2.

¹¹² “De vermoorde knaap,” *De Telegraaf*, 29 November 1895, 2; “De moord te Renkum,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 27 August 1910, 2; “Het drama bij Bennekom,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 3 March 1930, 3.

¹¹³ “Het drama bij Bennekom,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 3 March 1930, 1; “De moord te Rotterdam,” *De Telegraaf*, 30 November 1895, 1; “De moord te Renkum,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 30 August 1910, 2.

¹¹⁴ “De moord te Rotterdam,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 3 December 1895, 2.

many of the clues.¹¹⁵ This uneasy relationship between the police, the press and the general public is also explored by Müller in a Berlin case involving a spate of stabbings in 1908. The police wanted the assistance of the public in finding the perpetrator and used the press for this purpose but found the public difficult to control in practice, with many worthless tips.¹¹⁶

The response of the general public to a sexual murder could be very emotional and aggressive towards the accused. The press reported this but was careful to distance itself from the more extreme reactions. When Jan Hoek was brought to the police station from his home for questioning about the rape and murder of Tine Koperberg, a policeman had to take out his revolver to clear a path through the angry crowd. The account in the *De Telegraaf* paints a picture of a menacing mob, barely under control: "The most awful curses were screamed at him. The general public roared, as it were. [...] They called: 'Let him go, we'll interview him'".¹¹⁷ Tatar goes further in her analysis of German newspapers' coverage of sexual murders (including the Dusseldorf mass-murderer Peter Kuerten): she contends that the press portrayed the public as "demented", as if the killer's psychosis had been transferred to them.¹¹⁸ This would not be an accurate description of the Dutch press coverage, but journalists were clearly uncomfortable with the public's anger.

The gap between the press and the public was clear in discussions about capital punishment. The reinstatement of the death penalty was the touchstone issue that let readers - and politicians - demonstrate how seriously they took the murders. Capital punishment had been abolished in 1870, but the issue resurfaced from time to time in the decades that followed, often after a gruesome murder. An exchange of letters among readers of the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* after the rape and murder of Tine Koperberg shows some support among the general public for the death penalty.¹¹⁹ Protestant and Catholic newspaper editors were also among those advocating the return of capital punishment; for example the Catholic *Maasbode* did so after the Hoogsteden murder and the Protestant *Stichtsche Courant* after the murder of Adriana Pulle in Renkum.¹²⁰ The unaffiliated newspapers, on the other hand, did not support the reinstatement of the death penalty. In 1930, a member of the Upper House of Parliament asked the Minister of Justice

¹¹⁵ "De moord te Bennekom," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 4 March 1930, 2; "Nog geen spoor van den dader," *De Telegraaf*, 28 February 1930, 5.

¹¹⁶ Philipp Müller, "Der Berliner 'Jack the Ripper'? Zu Polizei, Presse und den Viele im Berlin des Kaiserreichs," in *Verbrechen im Blick. Perspektiven der neuzeitlichen Kriminalitätsgeschichte*, ed. Rebekka Habermas and Gerd Schwerhoff (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2009), 249-276.

¹¹⁷ "De vreeselijkste verwenschingen werden hem nageschreeuwd. Het publiek brulde als het ware. [...] Er werd geroepen: 'Laat hem maar los, wij zullen hem wel verhooren'." "Verdachte Hoek blijft hardnekkig ontkennen," *De Telegraaf*, 3 March 1930, 5.

¹¹⁸ Tatar, *Lustmord*, 44-48.

¹¹⁹ "Wederinvoering doodstraf," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 4 March 1930, 9; "Wederinvoering van de doodstraf," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 6 March 1930, 17; "Wederinvoering van de doodstraf," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 6 March 1930, 21; "Wederinvoering de doodstraf," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 7 March 1930, 6.

¹²⁰ "Eerst hebben en dan...", *De Telegraaf*, 2 December 1895, 2; "Doodstraf," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 5 September 1910, 6.

about reintroducing capital punishment following the “appalling murder in Bennekom” (*afschuwelijke moord te Bennekom*).¹²¹ The ensuing discussion in Parliament led the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Leeuwarder Courant* and *De Telegraaf* to make their positions clear. For these papers, the call for the death penalty was an understandable emotional response but capital punishment was ultimately an irrational and ineffective method for dealing with crime.¹²²

Thus sexual murders were not only perceived as appalling crimes, they were also crimes that some felt warranted a change of policy. But what about non-fatal cases of sexual violence? Were they presented by journalists as a problem requiring action? This question is considered in the next section.

6.5 Sexual violence as a problem

Chapter 2 discussed how the social purity movement challenged the double standard and redefined men’s sexuality as a problem. While sexual violence as such never became a major campaign issue in the Netherlands, prosecutions for sexual offences rose sharply in the early twentieth century. The present chapter has also already shown that sexual assaults were regularly reported in the newspapers, while sexual murders received immense coverage as the worst of crimes. Given this context, it might be expected that sexual violence would be presented in the press as a general problem rather than a series of isolated incidents. This question is considered using the framework of moral panic theory.¹²³ It is argued that journalists increasingly construed sexual violence as a widespread problem, and used stylistic elements and other strategies to give that impression. However, there is no evidence that the media coverage generated a moral panic.

The articles about sexual assaults increasingly gave a sense of danger everywhere. The journalists used various techniques to do this. Many items start by mentioning a general problem with assaults in a certain area. The particular incident that was the subject of the item was thus positioned as just one instance of a wider phenomenon. An item in the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* can serve as an illustration:

“Women and girls have already complained to the police many times of being pestered in Molenlaan [a street] in the evening by unsavoury individuals. The police have already detained two such characters. But yesterday evening yet another one turned up”.¹²⁴

¹²¹ “De doodstraf,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 21 March 1930, 1.

¹²² “Wederinvoering van de doodstraf?” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 7 March 1930, 17; “Doodstraf,” *De Telegraaf*, 4 March 1930, 5; “De doodstraf,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 5 March 1930, 5.

¹²³ Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics. The creation of the Mods and Rockers* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1972 (3rd edn 2002)).

¹²⁴ “Vrouwen en meisjes hebben reeds meermalen bij de politie erover geklaagd dat zij in de Molenlaan des avonds lastig beide gevallen door onguere individuen. De politie heeft twee van zulke elementen al

Being vague about the number of perpetrators (“unsavoury individuals”) and the number of victims (“women and girls”) helped create the impression of numerous incidents. Another way of magnifying the problem was by printing reports of situations where nothing had actually happened but which are presented as assaults that had been narrowly averted.¹²⁵ Other items use headings to turn specific incidents into a general warning (“Parents, watch over your children!”) or to underline that the incident is just one of many (“Another assault”).¹²⁶

Another factor increasing the impression of an extensive issue was the large number of reports in which the assailant was not caught despite the best efforts of the police. On the one hand, this is logical in that these are the cases where the police would want to use the press to call on the public for information. On the other hand, the preponderance of such cases combined with the lack of follow-up trial reports with their comforting message of offenders receiving their just desserts gave a sense of a problem that was barely being kept under control.

The frequent use of euphemisms also created ambiguity about the nature of the assault that invited readers to assume the worst. For linguists, euphemism is a “lexical substitution strategy” replacing a term that has a negative impact with a less emotionally charged term.¹²⁷ The practice of using euphemisms in media coverage of sex crimes has been discussed by other historians but they have drawn divergent conclusions about the effect. Kim Stevenson contends that the use of sanitized language in Victorian newspaper reports of rape “avoided the realities of the actual violence perpetrated” and blurred the distinction between seduction and violence.¹²⁸ For Keating, the use of coded language in Irish Free State newspapers helped create an impression of a pure imagined Ireland in which sexual violence was rare.¹²⁹ Louise Jackson, on the other hand, finds the euphemisms used by the child protection society to describe child sexual abuse to be highly interpretive and value-laden, saying little but suggesting much.¹³⁰ The Dutch stories bear this out as journalists used suggestive language in combination with euphemisms. The vagueness of the euphemisms gave room for different interpretations of the severity of the assault but

aangehouden. Maar gisteravond kwam weer een ander op de proppen.” “Ongure personen in het Molenlaan kwartier,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 20 February 1930, 23.

¹²⁵ For example: “Gevaarlijk heerschap,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 4 April 1930, 2.

¹²⁶ “Ouders, past op uw kinderen,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 19 November 1920, 2; “Weer een aanranding,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 13 August 1930, 3.

¹²⁷ Matthew S. McGlone, Gary Beck, and Abigail Pfister, “Contamination and Camouflage in Euphemisms,” *Communication Monographs* 73, no. 3 (2006): 261-262.

¹²⁸ Stevenson, “Unequivocal Victims,” 355; Stevenson, “Crimes of Moral Outrage,” 237.

¹²⁹ Keating, “Sexual Crime,” 149.

¹³⁰ Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 54-56.

when coupled with sensational language, they could make a crime seem *more* severe than was actually the case.¹³¹

If press coverage operated to magnify the threat posed by sexual assaults by strangers, can this be classified as a moral panic? The concept of the moral panic was introduced by Stanley Cohen in his 1972 study of Mods and Rockers and has frequently been used to analyse intensified media coverage of a particular category of crimes. A moral panic occurs when a condition or group is defined as a threat to societal values. The media present this threat in a stylized fashion in which the group members become 'folk devils'. The issue is then picked up by moral entrepreneurs (politicians, religious figures, newspaper editors and so forth) while experts give their solutions. Eventually, a way of coping is found that may or may not involve new legislation or policies.¹³² The concept of the moral panic has been used fruitfully by historians studying the impact of press crime reporting, including of sexual abuse.¹³³

There have however been criticisms of the moral panic model from sociologists and criminologists. Two specific criticisms are that the model is media-centric and that it involves a value judgement about what constitutes a disproportionate response to the underlying problem. The model is alleged to be media-centric because it assumes that the media are able to generate fear about a perceived problem through their sensationalized coverage. Yet research on audience response suggests that audiences are often indifferent to moral crusades.¹³⁴ Regarding the second criticism, the word 'panic' implies an exaggerated response in which the 'folk devils' are unfairly maligned. Yet the model fails to articulate what would be an appropriate level of response. Moreover, many problems that are at the root of moral panics are real enough and silence would then be tantamount to denial.¹³⁵ Cohen has now posited the notion of the 'good' moral panic in which the panic is fuelled by non-hegemonic groups such as feminists to bring attention to threats that they face.¹³⁶

¹³¹ For example, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* described an incident involving a fourteen-year-old girl in a car as a "scandalous" (*schandalijke*) assault in an emotive and relatively lengthy article. The perpetrator was eventually sentenced to four months, suggesting a minor offence. "Aanranding door een Rotterdams automobilist," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 18 March 1930, 17; "Zedenmisdrijf," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 28 April 1930, 9.

¹³² Cohen, *Folk Devils*; Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 82-106; David Garland, "On the concept of moral panic," *Crime, Media, Culture* 4, no. 1 (2008): 10-18.

¹³³ Richard Ward, *Print Culture, Crime*, 13-14; R. Sindall, "The London Garrotting Panics of 1856 and 1862," *Social History* 12, no. 3 (1987): 351-359; King, "Colchester Crime Wave"; Shoemaker, "Worrying about Crime"; Freedman, "Uncontrolled Desires".

¹³⁴ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 100-101; Cohen, *Folk Devils*, xxviii-xxx; Matthew David et al., "The idea of moral panic – ten dimensions of dispute," *Crime, Media, Culture* 7, no. 3 (2011): 223-225.

¹³⁵ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 93; Garland, "On the Concept," 21-22; Philip Jenkins, "Failure to launch. Why do some social issues fail to detonate moral panics?," *British Journal of Criminology* 49, (2009): 36; Cohen, *Folk Devils*, xxxiv-xxxvi; David et al., "The Idea," 221-222.

¹³⁶ Cohen, *Folk Devils*, xxxix-xliv; David et al., "The Idea," 219-220.

The Dutch media coverage, at least in the interwar period, seems to fit some aspects of the moral panic model. It is stylized, presenting ideal victims attacked in lonely spots by villainous outsiders. It also arguably exaggerates the danger by reporting non-incidents and presenting individual incidents as part of a larger pattern with undefined limits. Yet the entire question of proportionality is problematic for sexual assaults given that this crime is notoriously underreported –it is difficult to see sex offenders as maligned ‘folk devils’.¹³⁷ Perhaps the coverage could be said to fit the description of a ‘good’ moral panic.

Even if the Dutch media coverage fits the moral panic description, a more fundamental issue is the apparent lack of societal response to the media coverage. There is no evidence of moral entrepreneurs taking up the issue of ‘stranger danger’ and debating solutions.¹³⁸ Nor does the general public seem to have displayed excessive concern. An example of the relatively muted response is seen in a series of letters in 1930. A story in the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* about a little girl abducted by a man on a bike prompted “A Mother” (*Een Moeder*) to send a letter to the newspaper calling for a blanket ban on adults letting their child ride on their bicycle with them. Several letters were printed on the pros and cons of such a ban but worries about abduction were only one argument among many. The fear of predatory strangers does not seem to have been of overriding concern for parents.¹³⁹

This lack of a response by the general public, moral entrepreneurs and experts needs explaining given the heightened moral climate and rising sex crime figures. Jenkins’ study of why moral panics fail to launch has identified a number of factors inhibiting moral panic. One such factor is the domination of a problem by a single agency. Such a situation prevents any debate starting between different social actors about the nature of the problem and possible solutions.¹⁴⁰ In the interwar Netherlands, the issue of sexual violence was monopolized by the police, which had set up special juvenile and vice squads to deal with the problem. It was in their interests to present sexual assaults by strangers as a broad problem as this justified the existence of specialist squads. But equally, it was not to their advantage to launch a debate about the problem of sexual violence as that might lead to rival solutions. Women’s organizations were another group within society with an interest in

¹³⁷ Emsley, *Twentieth-Century England*, 29.

¹³⁸ This conclusion is based on the Dutch historiography and the survey in the present study of the newspapers in 1880, 1895, 1910, 1920 and 1930. The possibility of such a response in years that were not sampled cannot be discounted.

¹³⁹ “Ontvoering van kinderen,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 9 September 1930, 5; “Ontvoering van kinderen,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 10 September 1930, 23; “Ontvoering van kinderen,” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 11 September 1930, 9; “Kinderen op de fiets vervoeren!” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 12 September 1930, 5. This is in contrast with the US in the 1930s, for example, when local citizens were calling for suspicious individuals to be locked up before they could commit any crimes. See: Freedman, “Uncontrolled Desires,” 92.

¹⁴⁰ Jenkins, “Failure to Launch,” 41. Samantha Pegg has considered why one specific Victorian sexual murder failed to start a moral panic, in contrast with modern cases of this nature. She concludes that this was because the Victorians were concerned with public rather than private abuses of children, so there was no pre-existing rhetoric that the story could utilize. See: Pegg, “Sweet Fanny Adams,” 93-96.

dealing with sexual violence, but they too were invested in the solution of the juvenile and vice squads, in part because these squads employed female officers and were seen as a way of giving women direct influence. There is evidence in the newspapers that when women's groups did call for more action on sexual violence, this took the form of a call to strengthen the vice squads.¹⁴¹

To conclude, newspapers' coverage of sexual assaults in the interwar period had some of the ingredients of a moral panic. But this failed to ignite a response among the general public, experts and morality campaigners, nor did it lead to any change in policy. This is because from the point of view of the main social actors the solution – specialized police squads – was already in place.

6.6 Homosexual acts with adolescent boys

For Dutch journalists, homosexual acts with adolescent boys had public implications in ways that other forms of private violence did not. This is reflected in the press coverage of the Parliamentary debates in 1911 about the criminalization of these acts and subsequent cases, which is discussed in this section. Harry Cocks's analysis of attitudes to homosexual offences in nineteenth-century Britain offers a good starting point for understanding the Dutch media reporting. Cocks argues that homosexual offences were seen as fundamentally different to other crimes because they were committed by men from all classes, often across class boundaries. Moreover, networks of sodomites mimicked and cast suspicions on men-only social associations, which were one of the main sites of masculinity. The authorities therefore wanted to maintain secrecy as publicity would strike at the heart of middle-class masculinity.¹⁴² According to Cocks, the press faced two conflicting impulses. On the one hand, open mention of sodomy was to be avoided as this would corrupt public morals and undermine male privilege. On the other hand, the press increasingly saw itself as the guarantor of the transparency of public institutions. This meant holding the criminal justice system to account and ensuring that wealthy and public men did not escape justice.¹⁴³ These conflicting impulses are seen in the Dutch newspapers. In the 1911 debates, the press took the position that publicity for homosexual acts was harmful and should be avoided. In a big 1920 case, on the other hand, journalists objected to secrecy in the trial and made accusations of class justice.

Parliamentary debate on article criminalizing homosexual acts with minors

The article criminalizing homosexual acts with minors (Article 248bis) was part of the legislation introduced by the Christian coalition government that became the 1911 Morality

¹⁴¹ "Uitbreiding zedenpolitie!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 5 August 1920, 10; "Meer vrouwelijke politie gewenst?" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 10 December 1930, 13.

¹⁴² Cocks, *Nameless Offences*, 1-11; Tosh, "What Should Historians Do," 187.

¹⁴³ Cocks, *Nameless Offences*, 78-79, 117-121; Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality*, 1-3.

Act. The article was fiercely debated by Socialists and Liberals, who were strongly opposed to the introduction of a law specifically targeting homosexual practices. But their opposition should not be interpreted as support for equal rights for homosexuals. In fact, one of the key arguments used against the Minister of Justice's 'homosexual' article is that it would fuel the propaganda by homosexuals and open up a debate about their rights.¹⁴⁴

The newspapers were also opposed to the homosexual article. Their coverage was more proactive than it had been for the sexual violence debates in 1880 (see Section 6.1). Journalists not only reported on the debate but also commented on the political process. Moreover, the papers served as a source of information and a forum for expert views, which in turn were cited by Parliamentarians in the debate.¹⁴⁵ In editorials, journalists criticized the proposed article. To some extent this was an aversion to what they saw as Christian moralizing.¹⁴⁶ But their primary reason for opposing the article was the fear that it would only encourage homosexual propaganda. As *De Telegraaf* wrote: "...the defenders of this [...] will be forced into a fighting position and will make a stir and continue to make a stir."¹⁴⁷ The role of the press as a forum was evident in the question of blackmail, which was already in the news at that time. It was perceived to be rife in The Hague in particular following a number of articles on the subject in 1910.¹⁴⁸ In the Parliamentary debate on Friday 24 February 1911, the Liberal politician Van Hamel argued that an article specifically targeting homosexual practices would increase the risk of blackmail, citing in support of his argument a paper by the lawyer R. van der Mey.¹⁴⁹ On Monday 27 February the *Algemeen Handelsblad* published a letter from the lawyer refuting Van Hamel's interpretation of his position.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, the *De Telegraaf* had approached the chief police commissioner for Amsterdam and asked him about his experiences with blackmail, resulting in a publication

¹⁴⁴ *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1910-1911*, 53rd meeting, "28. Bestrijding van zedeloosheid," 28 February 1911, 1536; *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1910-1911*, 54th meeting, "28. Bestrijding van zedeloosheid," 1 March 1911, 1562. The background to this legislation and the debate are also covered in: Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit*, 183-213; Koenders, *Christelijk Réveil*, 150-165; Theo van der Meer, *Jonkheer mr. Jacob Anton Schorer (1866-1957). Een biografie van homoseksualiteit* (Amsterdam: Schorer Boeken, 2007), 135-170.

¹⁴⁵ The exception was the *Leeuwarder Courant*, which printed opinion pieces from other papers in its Press Summaries (*Persoverzicht*) section rather than giving its own opinion in editorials. However, the extracts it chose to select often betrayed its own views.

¹⁴⁶ "Parlementaire Kroniek," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 6 March 1911, 5; "Overzicht," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, morning edition, 2 March 1911, 2.

¹⁴⁷ "...de verdedigers ervan [...] worden in een gevechts-positie gedrongen en zullen zich roeren en blijven roeren." "Tweede Kamer.- Overzicht," *De Telegraaf*, morning edition, 1 March 1911, 5.

¹⁴⁸ "Chantage!" *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 2 April 1910, 13; "Chantage," *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 17 August 1910, 7; *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1910-1911*, 54th meeting, "28. Bestrijding van zedeloosheid," 1 March 1911, 1560. On blackmail and homosexuality, see too: Cocks, *Nameless Offences*, 121-135.

¹⁴⁹ *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1910-1911*, 52nd meeting, "28. Bestrijding van zedeloosheid," 24 February 1911, 1529.

¹⁵⁰ "Ontwerp-artikel 248 bis Strafwetboek," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 27 February 1911, 1.

on this subject on Sunday 26 February.¹⁵¹ When Parliament reconvened the following Tuesday, both these newspaper items were referred to in the debate.¹⁵²

Coverage of homosexual acts with minors in the interwar period

Newspaper stories of homosexual offences with minors portrayed them as fundamentally different to sexual assaults on women and children. The previous sections have shown that sexual violence involving women and children was constructed in the press as attacks by solitary strangers on the weak in deserted places. This was private violence committed by outsiders. Homosexual offences with adolescent boys, on the other hand, were constructed as organized networks at the heart of society that included high-status individuals.¹⁵³ They were seen primarily as attacks on public morality. This justified principled criticism of the criminal justice system in 1920 when journalists suspected that perpetrators were being treated excessively leniently.

Stories of homosexual offences with minors in the Netherlands, as logged for the present study, only appeared in the interwar sample years, after criminalization in 1911, but the template for those accounts was already evident in foreign stories printed before then. In 1910, *De Telegraaf* printed items on cases in Bremen and Munich. The Bremen story had many of the standard ingredients, albeit in a more sensational form suited to the foreign setting. Large numbers of boys, some as young as 13 or 14, were being lured to rooms where “wild orgies” (*woeste orgieën*) took place. The men were allegedly from the highest circles. The language of these reports was that of organized crime: the perpetrators were referred to as a gang (*bende*) that had leaders and had connections with other similar groups. But it was also the language of scandal and secrecy. The police had uncovered a secret gang operating at the heart of society. The incident was described as a “moral scandal” (*zedenschandaal*), a term that was almost exclusively used for homosexual cases.¹⁵⁴

In 1920, the media reported on a high-profile case in The Hague in which 33 men were eventually convicted. The case came to light through the military police as conscripts were involved. Dozens of adolescent boys were interviewed as witnesses. Homosexuality was already in the news as only a few weeks before this story broke, there had been a furore about the film *Anders als die Andern* (‘Other than others’, 1919), which had been banned in The Hague for advocating homosexual rights after being shown in Rotterdam. The newspapers were therefore quick to pick up on the story from The Hague and it became one

¹⁵¹ “Chantage,” *De Telegraaf*, 26 February 1911, 1.

¹⁵² *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1910-1911*, 53rd meeting, “28. Bestrijding van zedeloosheid,” 28 February 1911, 1533, 1535.

¹⁵³ The same tropes are seen in homosexual scandals in nineteenth-century Britain, see: H.G. Cocks, “Safeguarding Civility: Sodomy, Class and Moral Reform in Early Nineteenth-Century England,” *Past & Present*, no. 190 (2006): 121-146; Cocks, *Nameless Offences*, 135-154; Hindmarch-Watson, “Male Prostitution”.

¹⁵⁴ *De Telegraaf*, 10 April 1910, 5; *De Telegraaf*, 11 April 1910, 5.

of the top five stories of family and sexual violence in the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *De Telegraaf* and *Leeuwarder Courant* in 1920.¹⁵⁵ Using sensational headlines such as “The Hague moral scandal” (*Het Haagsche zedenschandaal*), the articles gave an impression of a ubiquitous network of homosexual men, one moreover that included high-ranking men.¹⁵⁶

One reason why the scandal in The Hague attracted so much attention in the media was because it led to a clash between the courts and the press about court secrecy. When the case came to trial, contrary to standard procedure in sex trials, the public and press were required to leave the court *before* the case and the details of the accused were announced. The liberal press, including the *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *De Telegraaf*, was outraged, sensing a cover-up. This prompted a spate of press articles debating the arguments for and against transparency (see Section 3.3). The indignation of the press must in part be connected to the nature of the offence. After all, the same procedure was applied in 1930 in the trial of Jan Hoek for rape and murder, but rather than turn this into a matter of principle, the press simply used other sources instead, interviewing witnesses in the waiting room and talking to the defence counsel.¹⁵⁷ In the Hague case, however, the court’s action was interpreted by the press as a move to protect elite offenders and give homosexual defendants preferential treatment, making it a violation of the principle of equality before the law. In the words of the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, this was “a concession to the doctrine spread by organized homosexuality [...] that they really are ‘other than others’”.¹⁵⁸

The publicity given to the Hague story made journalists more alert to other stories of homosexual crimes. The story also gave them a framework in which these other cases could be fitted, which made it easier and more attractive for the journalists to cover them.¹⁵⁹ In the course of 1920, similar ‘moral scandals’ were reported in Arnhem, Leiden, Groningen, Utrecht, Amsterdam and Tilburg. In contrast to the assaults on women and children considered in the previous section, these crimes were committed in the city in urban homes or cafes. Even if only one or two people had been arrested, the items always implied that this was the tip of the iceberg.¹⁶⁰ In 1930, however, this frame no longer applied. Journalists’ interest in homosexual offences had ebbed and stories were reported in more measured tones, if at all.

¹⁵⁵ The case is discussed in: Van der Meer, *Schorer*, 226-239; Van der Meer and Snijders, “Ernstige moraliteits-toestanden”.

¹⁵⁶ “Zedenschandaal,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 12 March 1920, 3; “Het Haagsche Zedenschandaal,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 13 March 1920, 1.

¹⁵⁷ “Jan Hoek voor ‘t Hof te Arnhem,” *De Telegraaf*, 30 October 1930, 6.

¹⁵⁸ “een concessie aan de door de georganiseerde homosexualiteit [...] verspreide leer, dat zij in werkelijkheid ‘anders dan anderen’ zouden zijn”, “Het Haagsche zedenschandaal,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 23 May 1920, 11.

¹⁵⁹ Jewkes, *Media & Crime*, 50-51.

¹⁶⁰ See for example “Zedenmisdriven te Groningen,” *De Telegraaf*, 28 May 1920, 5.

The attitude to the adolescent boys in stories of homosexual abuse is ambiguous: they are victims, but they are far from the 'ideal victims' of the sexual assaults on women and younger children. They are completely anonymous: the only real information given about them is that they are numerous. Their complicity or otherwise is also left uncertain. On the one hand, the papers describe the boys as being 'lured' (*lokken*, the same word that journalists use for little children), for example with cinema visits.¹⁶¹ None of the reports mention money, which would have associated the boys with prostitution and cast doubt on their victim status. That is despite the fact that at least one of the cases is known from other sources to involve male prostitution.¹⁶² But other information presented by the newspapers serves to undermine their position as innocent victims. In another story, a 17-year-old boy who was taken to a house in Arnhem "understood what the intention was and did not want to allow this to happen to him".¹⁶³ The implication is that other boys could have resisted too if they had wanted to.

To summarize, journalists constructed homosexual offences as an organized threat to public morals that involved high-status men who could not conveniently be portrayed as outside the community. Adolescent boys too occupied a different position as victims compared to women and children. They could not so easily be portrayed as weak as that would undermine their masculinity. Moreover, they had a public role as present or future conscripts and defenders of the nation that women and children did not; that too made the protection of their morals an urgent matter. This public dimension justified interventions by the press in the Parliamentary debate and criticisms of the administration of justice, in notable contrast to the reticence that the press observed in cases involving female and child victims.

Conclusion

The first question posed at the start of this chapter concerned the journalists' portrayal of victims and perpetrators. In answering this question, a distinction needs to be made between offences against women and children on the one hand and homosexual offences involving minors on the other. In the stories of assaults on women and children, they were depicted as ideal victims who were believed unconditionally and in no way to be blamed for what had happened. The perpetrators were outsiders – outside the imagined community – and nearly all stories involved attacks by (apparent) strangers in lonely places. A key factor driving this representation is the changing readership. These stories started to appear in

¹⁶¹ "Zedenmisdrijf," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 4 August 1920, 2.

¹⁶² "De strijd tegen de ontuchtholen," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 4 October 1920, 1; Theo van der Meer, "Adrianus Kakebeen, bordeelhouder. Jongensprostitutie in de dagen van Regout," in *'Bewaar me voor de waanzin van het recht'. Homoseksualiteit en strafrecht in Nederland*, ed. Gert Hekma and Theo van der Meer (Diemen: Uitgeverij AMB, 2011), 35-46.

¹⁶³ "begreep welke bedoelingen hier voorzaten en zich daartoe niet wilde leenen"; "Zedenschandaal," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 21 September 1920, 1.

1895 as newspapers were beginning to target female readers. They are accounts that are designed to interest women and take their fears seriously. The perpetrators were contrasted with chivalrous members of the community who come to the rescue of victims and help the police in sexual murder investigations. The sources had a mediating effect on this construction of sexual violence. Dutch journalists were unable to cover trials of sex offences and therefore relied on the police, who were more likely to provide information on attacks by strangers. The resulting discourse was a distortion of actual sexual violence that marginalized assaults by acquaintances, but this cannot be seen as a deliberate attempt by a patriarchal society to impose a rape myth. Construction of the victims and perpetrators in stories of homosexual offences with adolescent boys is quite different. The stories typically involved organized and secretive networks in the heart of cities. The victim status of the boys is ambiguous. The perpetrators are numerous, and accounts suggest the involvement of high-status individuals.

The second question addressed in this chapter concerned the extent to which sexual violence was presented as a problem (given the rise in prosecutions during this period). Here too, journalists took a different approach to sexual assaults on women and children compared with the homosexual offences with minors. Sexual violence against women and children was presented as a salient issue after 1880 and, by the interwar period, a widespread problem, yet the press never attached policy implications. The coverage was dominated by sexual murders, which ignited an emotive response in both local communities and readers. In stories of non-fatal violence, journalists used formulations that suggested sexual danger everywhere. The media coverage had some of the hallmarks of a moral panic with the perpetrators as folk devils, yet the press did not actively advocate new policies and its reporting did not spark a public debate about sexual violence. Sexual murder cases prompted discussions about reinstating the death penalty but here too the press defended the status quo. In contrast to sexual assaults on women and children, the press treated homosexual acts with adolescent boys as a public matter that justified media intervention on questions of policy; this can be understood as a response to the perceived threat to masculine institutions. In debates about making these acts a criminal offence in 1911, journalists argued against criminalization as it would lead to publicity for homosexuality. In 1920, coverage of prosecutions used sensational language and implied incidents were merely the tip of the iceberg. Moreover, in one case the press accused the courts of preferential treatment of homosexual offenders. It is telling that this is the only example of explicit press criticism of the administration of justice in all the cases of family and sexual violence considered in the present study.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Oscar Pistorius, Michael Jackson; in the Netherlands, the stories of Ruben and Julian, Anne Faber, the former banker Schmittmann in Laren – family violence and sexual violence were continually in the news during the period in which this study was conducted.¹ That was also the case in the years 1880 to 1930. Not because of some ‘natural’ and unchanging interest of the media in violent crimes involving women and children – different kinds of crimes were given prominence at different times and served different functions. But neither do the changes fit a straightforward linear development of increasing attention to private violence and condemnation of male violence, as has been postulated in the historiography. The main factor driving these changes was the change in the newspaper readership, while journalists’ sources for crime news acted as a filter on the content. These factors led to a constantly shifting mix of crime stories in a discourse that reflected the specific and gendered socioeconomic and legal conditions of the Netherlands.

Effect of a changing readership

With the emergence of a mass media at the end of the nineteenth century, newspapers started targeting women and a wider social stratum, including in some cases working-class readers. These changes went hand-in-hand with the emancipation of the working class and women. The latter found a public voice through organized feminism and through their philanthropic activities. These changes were reflected in the newspapers’ content. On the one hand, under the influence of New Journalism, the form and choice of stories were altered to appeal to the new demographic segments; on the other hand, journalists started to pay serious attention to their interests, which in turn bolstered their presence in the public sphere.

¹ Oscar Pistorius shot and killed his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp in South Africa in 2013; Michael Jackson, who died in 2009, has been accused of sexually abusing boys, most recently in a documentary in 2019; Ruben and Julian were two boys killed in 2013 by their father Jeroen Denis, who then committed suicide; the former banker Jan Peter Schmittmann killed his wife and daughter and committed suicide in 2014; Anne Faber was raped and murdered by Michael P. in 2017; “Oscar Pistorius begins murder term after trial that held mirror to South Africa,” Guardian online, last modified 6 July 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/06/oscar-pistorius-begins-murder-term-after-trial-held-mirror-south-africa>; “10 Undeniable Facts About the Michael Jackson Sexual-Abuse Allegations,” Vanity Fair online, 1 March 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2019/03/10-undeniable-facts-about-the-michael-jackson-sexual-abuse-allegations>; “Vader bereidde moord op zijn zoons tot in detail voor,” Algemeen Dagblad online, last modified 4 March 2016, <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/vader-bereidde-moord-op-zijn-zoons-tot-in-detail-voor~a78fe132/>; “Laren in shock na gruwelijke vondst in villa oud-bankier,” Algemeen Dagblad online, last modified 5 February 2016, <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/laren-in-shock-na-gruwelijke-vondst-in-villa-oud-bankier~a36c350c/>; “Michael P. doodde Anne Faber met messteken in hals en nek,” Algemeen Dagblad online, last modified 26 March 2018, <https://www.ad.nl/nieuws/michael-p-doodde-anne-faber-met-messteken-in-hals-en-nek~afb5aa3a/>.

Conclusion

One area in which journalists adapted the content to suit the new readers was crime news. It has been argued in this thesis that these changes can fruitfully be viewed through the lens of Benedict Anderson's concept of the imagined community of a nation.² The newspapers' crime stories constructed an imagined Dutch community. Stories of private violence were never just about the perpetrator and victim. They showed the impact on the community and included family, neighbours, bystanders and the general public as social actors along with the police and judicial authorities. Foreign stories functioned as a foil by highlighting un-Dutch passions and bizarre or ineffective legal systems, thereby implicitly confirming the values of Dutch society. Stories set in the Netherlands served to show who belonged in the imagined community and who did not. That boundary changed over time. In 1880, the masses were portrayed as outsiders in crime stories and violent working-class women in particular were reviled. In subsequent years, the working class was gradually incorporated into the imagined community and no longer treated as inherently different. This was not simply a reflection of the expanding readership: the same process was seen in the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, which had a negligible working-class readership. At the same time, newspaper stories demonstrated increasing empathy for female protagonists and interest in the female perspective.

These changes affected the mix of stories in the five sample years. In 1880, newspapers still had small circulations and were aimed at middle-class men, with a focus on politics and business news. This was a time of large-scale migration to the cities and concerns about public drunkenness and social unrest among the urban working classes. Stories of private violence chimed with these concerns, as tales of spousal violence and the abuse and neglect of children among the lower orders dominated. In 1895 and 1910, journalists tailored crime stories to appeal to the new target group of women readers. Intimate partner violence stories reached a peak in this period, particularly romanticized tales of violence between partners in a foreign setting. Poignant accounts of sweetheart violence keyed into fears about the unsupervised mobility of young women. Items on sexual assault started to appear, another sign that newspapers were starting to take the concerns of women seriously. Stories of working-class family violence, on the other hand, became less important and were now portrayed as aberrant behaviour rather than typical of the class as a whole. Condemnation shifted to families on the margins of society, for example in child abandonment stories. In 1920, media attention turned away from private violence. The Netherlands was still recovering from the economic damage caused by the First World War, the country was plagued by strikes and worried about international developments. The newspapers had fewer pages and less room for news compared with before the war due to a shortage of paper. Stories of family and sexual violence were felt to be trivial news and were sacrificed to make way for items on the 'masculine' subjects of politics and economics. By 1930 the Dutch had enjoyed a decade of growth. The breadwinner model was firmly

² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

ensconced, and the newspapers had become family papers, with separate sections for women and children. Sexual assaults by strangers on women and children, in particular sexual murders, were now an important component of crime news. These stories appealed to women, both as potential victims and as mothers, while the perpetrators were safely positioned outside the family and the community. Stories of family violence were largely confined to marginal groups, such as prostitutes and pimps, or were set abroad, such as news-agency reports of sensational familicides.

The mediating effect of sources

While journalists chose stories that would appeal to readers, the sources they used acted as a filter, determining what stories were available and influencing the angles adopted by the press. The main sources were institutional (the police and the courts) and other media (other newspapers and, latterly, news agencies). One effect of the sources was to bias content away from violence in the privacy of the home and towards violence that took place or spilled out into the public domain. For example, some forms of private violence remained relatively hidden because of institutional restrictions. Reporters could not attend child protection sessions in which parents lost custody of their children, nor trials of sexual assaults. The police did provide information on incidents of sexual violence but were most likely to do so when they required input from the general public, for example when a stranger had sexually assaulted a woman and not been caught. The same applied to other forms of family and sexual violence: the police were more likely to give the press information about incidents in public spaces because that was when they needed help from the public (for example, when a baby's corpse had been found in infanticide cases) or because a public disturbance had been caused that needed explaining (for example, in cases of partner violence in the street or in cafes). Another consequence of the reliance on institutional sources was that reports reflected law enforcement perspectives. Even the language was that of the criminal justice system, with more emotive, sensational language used sparingly and strategically. The Dutch police were almost invariably shown in a positive light and were the heroes of many accounts. The influence of institutional priorities is more difficult to determine but it seems likely that this was one reason for the lack of attention paid in the media to chronic domestic violence, for instance.

One effect of the sources was to encourage convergence in the coverage of private violence in the various newspapers. The four newspapers were chosen to span the range in the 'neutral' newspaper market (unaffiliated to any of the Dutch pillars): local and national; popular and upmarket. Despite this range in the class and geographical spread of the readerships, the differences in the content were minor. There was considerable overlap in the stories the papers selected, the amount of space they dedicated to those stories and the attitudes they expressed. The wording of accounts in different papers was often almost identical because they were reprinting news agency copy or had lifted the item from

another newspaper. Moreover, such differences as there were do not fit neatly with any straightforward division between a sensationalist, parochial popular press and a reticent, internationalist upmarket press. Sexual assaults received more coverage in the local papers, where they were framed as relevant local information, while the two populist newspapers included the most foreign crime stories, usually items that were intended primarily as entertainment.

The availability of sources also influenced the geography of private violence as reported in the Dutch press. Stories from abroad came from countries where Dutch newspapers had correspondents or deals with foreign newspapers or news agencies. With the advances in communication technology, it became possible to follow investigations abroad as they unfolded, which made such stories more exciting and increased coverage. Within the Netherlands, the sources for stories of minor family violence and reports of discoveries of dead babies were the local police and they therefore became associated with the urban environments in which the newspapers' offices were located, whereas in infanticide cases the women who were caught often lived in towns and rural areas. The availability of the sources combined with cultural preconceptions – which saw France as the country of passion, for example - to create an imaginative geography of family and sexual violence.

The influence of gender

Gender is used in the present study as a key organizing principle. After all, private violence involves men and women in their gendered roles as partners, parents and sexual beings. In the Dutch newspapers' reports, gender operated at two levels. Firstly, men and women committed and were prosecuted for different kinds of crimes, reflecting their different situations in society. Secondly, their actions were interpreted and evaluated differently by journalists, reflecting cultural ideas of masculinity and femininity.

The press reports showed a different pattern of criminality among men than among women. Only men committed sexual assaults and men were far more likely than women to be the perpetrators in intimate partner violence. Women's violence largely took the form of physical maltreatment of their own children, whether killing, abusing, neglecting or abandoning them. Men's violence was more dangerous: they were more likely to kill or injure bystanders, and they were more likely to kill both partner and children and to commit suicide.

These gendered differences in violent behaviour in the media coverage reflect gendered socioeconomic conditions rather than the selection policies of the journalists. To be sure, newspaper reports formed a prism rather than a mirror of actual crimes (extreme violence was consistently overrepresented) and there is some evidence that cases involving women as perpetrators were seen as inherently more newsworthy and were over-reported,

for example in stories of foreign intimate partner violence. However, the patterns in the Dutch press largely fit with what is known about male and female violence from historical and criminological studies. Even where there were prevalent stereotypes, such as the female poisoner and the infanticidal maid, the actual cases reported were a more diverse and realistic mix. The kind of crimes men and women committed reflected their very different positions in a society in which the breadwinner model was the norm, while great value was placed on domesticity and the home as a haven satisfying affective needs. The husband was expected to protect and provide for his family while the wife was supposed to devote herself full-time to her children and to making the home an orderly and welcoming place. In this context, men's violence can often be seen as an attempt to regain control when they became unable to satisfy society's expectations.³ Many attacks on partners were prompted by the breakdown of the relationship, while in other cases of family violence financial problems seem to have precipitated the attack. Women's violence, on the other hand, often reflected the vulnerable position of women with children who were not supported by a male breadwinner. Single mothers committed infanticide and abandoned or neglected their children. Women in a relationship with an abusive partner could seem complicit in his violence because they felt dependent on him. Dutch law too was gendered as it reflected these socioeconomic differences: a man who deserted his wife and children was guilty of abandonment because of his duty to provide while the criminal code articles giving lower maximum sentences for infanticide only applied to women.

Gender played a role in journalists' interpretation and evaluation of male and female violence too, but that role was more complex than has been described in the literature. The starting point for the analysis of gender in the present study was the debate in the historiography about leniency. Historians have argued about whether gendered notions of the weak, irrational female caused violent women to be treated more leniently and their violence to be medicalized. Similarly, scholars have debated whether changing ideas about masculinity led to the criminalization of male violence and whether there was a domestic discount for men who committed intimate partner violence. It has been said that assessments in cases of partner violence often took the form of "a weighing up of behaviours [...] in relation to gendered ideals of respectability".⁴ However, the present study has shown that this is too narrow a framework for the Dutch media stories of family and sexual violence, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, stories in which moral judgment was passed on the perpetrator and victim formed only one of a range of possible strategies for journalists. Many stories involved different strategies that did not invite the reader to weigh up behaviours and assign blame. Stories of intimate partner violence often drew on the genre of romantic fiction, or were

³ Adler, "Race, Patriarchy," 15-16; Kaladelfos, "The Dark Side," 340-342.

⁴ D'Cruze and Jackson, *Women, Crime and Justice*, 22-25; Carolyn Strange, "Masculinities, Intimate Femicide"; Wiener, *Men of Blood*; Ballinger, "'Reasonable' Women".

Conclusion

inspired by detective novels where the focus was on discovering who had 'done it'. A humorous approach might be used in accounts of minor violence, trivializing the violence and inviting readers to laugh at both perpetrator and victim. Another strategy was the neutral, matter-of-fact article that conveyed neither outrage nor compassion. Finally, some stories were treated as family tragedies in which the killer was also a kind of victim.

Secondly, journalists used these different strategies in a targeted way for different kinds of violence. Including a moral assessment of the protagonists was thus a deliberate choice used in specific circumstances. It has been argued in this thesis that this choice can best be understood by considering the position of the protagonists with respect to the imagined community. Foreign crimes, set clearly outside the Dutch imagined community, were often recounted using stylistic elements of the romantic novel or whodunnit, which made them seem less real and immediate. Incidents in the Netherlands in which the perpetrator was at the heart of the imagined community were presented as tragedies for all concerned. The use of explicit condemnation was reserved largely for Dutch incidents involving protagonists at the margins of the imagined community (margins that in 1880 covered the entire working class). In later years, criticism was directed at the very poor (for example, in abandonment stories), mobile outsiders (for example, in sexual assault cases) and those who caused disruption to the community (for example, unruly neighbours in domestic violence cases).

Thirdly, while journalists' evaluations reflected gender norms, this was from the perspective of the imagined community and the increasing feminization of the readership. As a result, moral judgements were never simply the result of a weighing-up of behaviours with respect to gendered expectations. Drunkenness and idleness in men and unfaithfulness in women were decried but the salience of these violations of gender norms changed over time. In particular, journalists showed increasing sympathy for female protagonists of all classes in the decades following 1880. Accordingly, the woman's infidelity took on less importance. And while the working mother ran counter to feminine norms, in domestic violence stories this was presented as a sign of the mother's devotion to her family and indicative of her partner's failure to provide. Even when journalists were influenced by gendered notions, this did not necessarily lead to a difference in the evaluation of male and female violence. In cases of child maltreatment, reporters interpreted parents' actions and motives in terms of their distinctive roles – the father as provider and the mother as carer – but expected both parents to love their children. Both were condemned in abandonment, abuse and neglect cases, where their actions were deemed cruel, but treated as unfortunates in filicides, where their actions could be interpreted as due to delusional love or insanity.

Finally, the newspapers' accounts of the community's response to private violence was also gendered and provided a chivalrous masculinity that contrasted with the deviant

masculinity of the perpetrators. Many stories of domestic and sexual violence involved relatives and local citizens, usually men, coming to the rescue of women and children and even using violence in their defence. The police, who were invariably male in the Dutch media reports, featured as gallant heroes protecting the weak in numerous accounts. Their actions are an echo of the chivalrous masculinity espoused by the social purity and temperance movements in the Netherlands. The overall effect was to paint a positive picture of masculinity in the imagined community.

The Netherlands as a case study

This study looked at the Netherlands as a potentially interesting comparative case study for the existing literature on gender, violence and the media. The main point of reference was England, as this has been the focus of much of the scholarship in this field. It is clear from the present study that there were many differences between England and the Netherlands in the media discourse on private violence. Examples include the absence of the insanity trope in Dutch infanticide stories, and the contrast between the ideal victim of Dutch sexual violence stories and the unreliable witness in English sexual violence reports. Many of these differences can be traced to three sources: the specific social movements, the specific legal systems and the specific newspaper practices.

Social movements only constructed forms of private violence as a social problem in England; in the Netherlands, private violence never became a public matter in this way, despite superficial similarities in philanthropic movements. For example, both countries had a child protection movement agitating for new legislation, but while in England this was about the physical abuse and neglect of children, in the Netherlands the focus was on moral neglect. This affected the newspaper discourse. In England, claimsmakers publicized cases of private violence and the wider debate lent such stories greater saliency. In the Netherlands, there were no such claimsmakers.⁵ The difference this could make is evident in the coverage of child neglect in the Netherlands. Such cases received little media attention whereas the case of the widow De Rijk, who was allegedly wrongly accused of neglect, became a *cause célèbre* in the newspapers after a lawyer championed her cause. In the Netherlands, family and sexual violence were seen as news about the private sphere. The consequences of this attitude were evident in 1920, when coverage dropped because such crimes were deemed of less importance than the economic and political developments. It is no coincidence that one of the top stories of family and sexual violence in 1920 concerned a scandal about homosexual acts with minors, including conscripts. This was seen as a public matter; it threatened public morals and cast suspicion on all-male associations.

The Dutch and English legal systems also differed in crucial ways. In contrast to the English, the Dutch had no juries and no capital punishment, and the public were excluded

⁵ Behlmer, *Child Abuse*, 83-85; Van Montfoort, *Het topje*, 81-85.

Conclusion

from sex crime trials. Moreover, the debate on legal responsibility in the Netherlands centred on the protection of society whereas in England the insanity plea was often a means of avoiding the death penalty. These differences affected the media discourse. Arguments about provocation and mitigating circumstances took on less importance in the Netherlands while some tropes, such as the nagging wife, were absent altogether. The lack of juries meant there was no conduit in trials – and consequently in trial reports – for lay understandings of gendered behaviour and ‘acceptable’ violence. Mental instability, particularly in women, played less of a role in the Dutch press reports, reflecting the situation in Dutch trials. Murder trials did not attract the same intense media coverage in the Netherlands as in England because there was less at stake.

There were big differences too between Dutch and English newspaper practices regarding crime news. To some extent, this was related to the different legal systems. In England, the press could become involved in campaigns for a reprieve following a death sentence, but this was not at issue in the Netherlands where there was no death penalty.⁶ Even so, the Dutch press remained noticeably more aloof from the administration of justice than the English press. Dutch journalists did not comment on sentences or editorialize on cases, and only rarely gave the full names of the accused in Dutch trials. Nor did journalists see themselves as campaigners. Dutch newspapers fitted the entertainment and educational models of journalism, rather than the activist representational model epitomized by W.T. Stead and the *Pall Mall Gazette* in which journalists campaigned on behalf of their readers.⁷

A number of caveats should however be made regarding this comparison between England and the Netherlands. Firstly, the methodology for the present study differs from that used in other studies. It is unusual in covering all crime news items, whereby it is able to identify silences. It is also atypical in the range of crimes covered, including such forms of maltreatment as filicide and child abandonment that are rarely studied. Moreover, the fact that the study period continues into the interwar years distinguishes it from other studies, that generally do not go beyond the First World War. Secondly, this study has shown that the press reporting of private violence was a distinct discourse with its own logic, and not necessarily aligned with the medico-legal discourse or that of philanthropists. For example, the press constructed sexual violence as attacks by strangers on ideal victims in lonely spots, in items designed to interest female readers, whereas social purity campaigners saw the danger for young women coming from social encounters at train stations or in dance halls. In the literature on England, the distinction between the media discourse and other discourses is not always clearly made, or it is assumed that press reports operated in tandem with the court processes, reinforcing the dynamics at play there.⁸ Finally, England

⁶ Wiener, “Convicted Murderers”.

⁷ Hampton, *Visions of the Press*.

⁸ For examples of the latter assumption, see: Wiener, *Men of Blood*; Stevenson, “Ingenuities”.

was not necessarily representative of other countries. Studies of certain categories of private violence already suggest that. For example, in the late nineteenth century, intimate partner violence was constructed as working-class wife-beating in the media in England and a crime of passion in France.⁹

This last point suggests there is a need for more comparative studies between countries, covering a wider range of countries. This would allow more insight into the factors driving media representations. For example, the Netherlands was chosen as a case study in part because of its distinctive legal system and it has been argued here that such features as the lack of capital punishment and juries affected media reporting. That could be tested by looking at the Scandinavian countries, which had similar criminal justice systems for at least part of the period 1880 to 1930.¹⁰

Closing comments

In conclusion, the feminization of Dutch newspaper readerships brought private violence into the public sphere of the media. But that did not necessarily benefit the victims. Not all forms of private violence were thought appropriate for readers: a veil of silence fell over Dutch parents' violence against their children. Moreover, perpetrators were positioned safely outside the community or their actions were romanticized or trivialized. Private violence never became a social problem requiring policies and action.

⁹ Aitken, "Horrors of Matrimony"; Eliza Earle Ferguson, "Domestic Violence".

¹⁰ The Scandinavian countries were relatively early in abolishing the death sentence, whether formally or in practice, and relatively late in introducing juries. In Sweden, executions were very rare after 1865 and the last was in 1910. The last civil execution in Denmark was in 1892 and the last in Norway was in 1876. See: Hanns Von Hofer, "Punishment and Crime in Scandinavia, 1750-2008," *Crime and Justice* 40, no. 1 (2011): 45, 49. On juries, see: John D. Jackson and Nikolai P. Kovalev, "Lay Adjudication in Europe: the Rise and Fall of the Traditional Jury," *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* 6, no. 2 (2016): 371. Juries were introduced in Denmark in 1919: Peter Garde, "The Danish Jury," *Revue internationale de droit pénal* 72, no. 1 (2001): 113. In Norway, a jury system came into effect in 1887: Anna Offit, "The Jury is Out: An Ethnographic Study of Lay Participation in the Norwegian Legal System," *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 41, no. 2 (2018): 232.

Appendix. Articles in Dutch law on family and sexual violence

This appendix contains the main articles (translated into English by the author) in the Penal Code (applicable up to 1886) and Criminal Code (applicable from 1886) covering violence against a spouse or child and sexual violence. The articles are grouped by category of crime.

Assaults on a spouse or child

Penal Code

The Penal Code provided for harsher sentences for assaults if committed against a parent, but no such distinction was made for assaults committed against a spouse or child. However, under Article 324, a more lenient sentence was possible in certain circumstances in the specific case of manslaughter of an adulterous wife.

Article 324. *Manslaughter by the husband of his wife, or by her committed against her husband, is not excusable if the life of the husband or wife who committed the manslaughter was not in danger at the actual moment of the manslaughter. However in the event of adultery, as referred to in Article 336, manslaughter committed by the husband of his wife, and also of her accessory, is excusable if occurring at the moment when he catches him together with his wife in the act (in flagrante) in their joint house.¹*

Criminal Code

In the Criminal Code, the harsher maximum sentence for assaults within the family now applied to assaults of the spouse or the child too, as provided by Article 304.

Article 304. *The punishments specified in Articles 300-303 [common and aggravated assaults] may be increased by one third:*
1) for the guilty party who commits the crime against his mother, his lawful father, his spouse or his child;
*...*²

Abandonment of children

Penal code

Articles 348 and 349 of the Penal Code provided for the punishment of individuals (not necessarily the parents) who abandoned young children in various situations.

¹ Schooneveld, Van Hamel, and Noyon, *Wetboek van Strafrecht*, 307-314.

² J.J. Noyon, *Het Wetboek van Strafrecht verklaard door mr. T.J. Noyon. 5e druk. Bewerkt door Prof. Mr. G.E. Langemeijer, 3e deel, Boek II – Artikelen 255-423 – Boek III* (Arnhem: S. Gouda Quint, 1949), 122-123.

Article 348. *Persons who have brought a child below the age of seven who was entrusted to them to care for or for any other reason to a religious institution will be punished by imprisonment of between six weeks and six months and a fine of between sixteen and fifty francs. However, no punishment will be imposed if they were not obliged or had not undertaken to provide for the child's board and maintenance without payment, and no one had arranged for this.*

Article 349. *Persons who placed and abandoned a child below the age of seven as a foundling in a lonely location; persons who arranged for it to be placed as a foundling in this way, if this arrangement was carried out, will only be sentenced for this to a prison sentence of between six months and two years and a fine of between sixteen and two hundred francs.³*

Criminal Code

Article 256 increased the maximum punishment for the abandonment of young children while Article 255 made it a criminal offence to abandon any dependent, regardless of age.

Article 255. *He who deliberately brings or leaves someone in a helpless state whom he is obliged to maintain, nurse or care for pursuant to the law or a contract, will be punished by a prison sentence of at most two years or a fine of at most three hundred guilders.*

Article 256. *He who leaves a child aged less than seven years as a foundling or leaves it with the intention of abandoning it will be punished by a prison sentence of at most four years and six months.⁴*

Infanticide

Penal Code

The Penal Code originally mandated the death sentence for infanticide. However, an Act of 1854 replaced the death sentence with a prison sentence for the specific case of infanticide by the unmarried mother. Incidentally, capital punishment was abolished for all crimes in 1870.

Act of 29 June 1854, Article 13. *The death sentence is amended to a prison sentence of five to twenty years for crimes of ... 4) infanticide committed for the first time by the unmarried mother.⁵*

³ Schooneveld, Van Hamel, and Noyon, *Wetboek van Strafrecht*, , 339-340.

⁴ M.S. Pols, H. van der Hoeven, G.A. van Hamel, and J. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Het Wetboek van Strafrecht. Rechtspraak en de Nederlandsche Literatuur (tot 15 Mei 1892)* (Leiden: Brill, 1893), 155-160.

⁵ Schooneveld, Van Hamel, and Noyon, *Wetboek van Strafrecht*, , 288.

Criminal Code

In the Criminal Code, the lesser sentence for infanticide now applied to married mothers as well. A distinction was made between (unplanned) infanticidal manslaughter and (planned) infanticidal murder.

Article 290. *A mother who, affected by fear of the discovery of the birth, deliberately takes the life of her child during or shortly after its birth will be deemed guilty of infanticidal manslaughter and be punished by a prison sentence of at most six years.*

Article 291. *A mother who, executing a decision affected by fear of the discovery of the impending birth, deliberately takes the life of her child during or shortly after its birth will be deemed guilty of infanticidal murder and be punished by a prison sentence of at most nine years.⁶*

Sexual offences

Penal Code

Article 331 of the Penal Code criminalized indecent acts (including homosexual acts) that involved violence. The requirement of violence applied to sex with children as well. However, Articles 332 and 333 provided for tougher sentences in the case of assaults on children and by someone in a position of authority respectively.

Article 331. *Anyone who commits the crime of rape, or is guilty of any other act of indecency, against someone of either sex, executed or undertaken with violence, will be punished by imprisonment.*

Article 332. *If the crime is committed against a child below the age of fifteen years, the guilty party will be punished with forced labour for a period (prison sentence of between five and fifteen years).*

Article 333. *The punishment will consist of indefinite forced labour (prison sentence of between five and twenty years) if the guilty parties belong to the category of individuals who are in a position of authority with respect to the person against whom they committed the crime; if they are teachers or waged servants of that person, or if they are public officials, or religious teachers or clergy, or if the guilty party, whoever or whatever he may be, is assisted in his crime by one or more persons.⁷*

⁶ Pols, Van der Hoeven, Van Hamel, and Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Het Wetboek van Strafrecht*, 189-190.

⁷ Schooneveld, Van Hamel, and Noyon, *Wetboek van Strafrecht*, , 314-319.

Criminal Code

Articles 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247 and 249 criminalized a variety of sexual acts with various categories of victim. Force was no longer a requirement for offences committed against children or by a person in a position of authority. Moreover, the concept of force was now broader, encompassing not only violence but also the threat of violence and assaults on an unconscious or powerless victim.

Article 242. *He who forces a woman through violence or the threat of violence to have carnal intercourse with him outside of marriage shall be punished, as guilty of rape, with imprisonment of at most twelve years.*

Article 243. *He who has carnal intercourse outside of marriage with a woman whom he knows is in a state of unconsciousness or powerlessness shall be punished with imprisonment of at most eight years.*

Article 244. *He who has carnal intercourse with a girl below the age of twelve shall be punished with imprisonment of at most twelve years.*

Article 245. *He who has carnal intercourse outside of marriage with a woman who has reached the age of twelve but not yet the age of sixteen shall be punished with imprisonment of at most eight years. With the exception of the cases in Article 248, prosecution will only take place following a complaint.*

Article 246. *He who forces a woman through violence or the threat of violence to commit or endure indecent acts shall be punished, as guilty of indecent assault, with imprisonment of at most eight years.*

Article 247. *He who commits indecent acts with someone whom he knows to be in a state of unconsciousness or powerlessness or with someone aged less than sixteen, or who seduces the latter into committing or enduring such acts or, outside of marriage, into carnal intercourse with a third person, shall be punished with imprisonment of at most six years.*

Article 249. *A punishment of imprisonment of at most six years will be imposed for indecency committed:*

- 1) by parents, guardians, co-guardians, religious instructors or teachers with minors entrusted to their care or education;*
- 2) by managers or supervisors in work establishments, workshops or factories with their servants or subordinates who are minors;*
- 3) by government officials with persons who are subject to their authority or who have been entrusted or recommended to their care;*
- 4) by managers, doctors, teachers, officials, supervisors or servants in prisons, state labour institutions, reform homes, juvenile institutions, orphanages,*

*hospitals, mental asylums or charity institutions, with persons admitted therein.*⁸

The Morality Acts of 1911 added two more articles on sexual offences. Article 248bis criminalized all homosexual acts between an adult and a minor. Article 248ter criminalized (heterosexual) intercourse with a minor under very specific circumstances. It was a dead-letter article from the start that was almost never applied.

Article 248bis. *An adult who commits indecency with a minor of the same sex whose minority he is aware of or should reasonably suspect shall be punished with imprisonment of at most four years.*

Article 248ter. *He who, through gifts or promises of money or goods or the abuse of authority, violence, threats or misrepresentation, deliberately persuades a minor of irreproachable character, whose minority he knows or should reasonably suspect, to have carnal intercourse with him shall be punished with imprisonment of at most two years. Prosecution will only take place following a complaint by the person against whom the crime was committed. The periods referred to in Article 66 are six and twelve months respectively for this complaint.*⁹

⁸ B.J. Polenaar, T. Heemskerk, *Het Wetboek van Strafrecht in Doorlopende Aanteekeningen Verklaard, Tweede Deel* (Amsterdam: A. Akkeringa, 1890), 316-321.

⁹ P.A.J. Losecaat Vermeer, *Wetboek van Strafrecht : met verwijzing naar betrekkelijke wetsbepalingen, bijlagen en alphabetische registers*, 12th ed. (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1936), 105.

List of tables and figures

Figures

Figure 1 Model of the production of newspaper stories of private violence.....	27
Figure 2 Development in newspaper circulations and the Dutch population.....	88
Figure 3 Shift to a more appealing visual style.	92
Figure 4 Women's section in De Telegraaf.	94
Figure 5 Headlines and photographs were a hallmark of New Journalism.	117
Figure 6 Word clouds showing word frequencies in newspaper stories.....	120
Figure 7 Locations of intimate partner violence incidents in Amsterdam.	138
Figure 8 Item about a filicide in Rotterdam.	183
Figure 9 Photograph of the funeral of a sexual murder victim.	219

Tables

Table 1 Key features of the study newspapers.....	37
Table 2 Convictions for assault on a family member.....	75
Table 3 Convictions for abandonment of dependants.	77
Table 4 Convictions for infanticide by women.	79
Table 5 Convictions for sexual assault by men.	80
Table 6 Changing coverage of family and sexual violence in newspapers.	96
Table 7 Reporting the suspect's name in stories set in the Netherlands.	101
Table 8 News values embodied in top stories.	107
Table 9 Location of stories.	111
Table 10 Coverage of intimate partner violence, 1880-1930.....	126
Table 11 Perpetrator's relationship with the victim in Dutch intimate partner violence.	136
Table 12 Weapons used in Dutch intimate partner violence.	140
Table 13 Reason for attack in Dutch intimate partner violence.....	142
Table 14 Coverage of parental maltreatment of their children, 1880-1930.....	167
Table 15 Typology of parental maltreatment stories.	170
Table 16 Filicide victims by perpetrator sex.	184
Table 17 Coverage of sexual violence, 1880-1930.....	201
Table 18 Coverage of different categories of sexual violence.....	204

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Summaries

Summary in English

This thesis looks at how and why Dutch newspaper coverage of family and sexual violence changed between 1880 and 1930. It aims to contribute to the debate about changing attitudes to private violence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some historians claim that changing gender norms led to a criminalization of male violence, with tougher prosecution in the courts and greater condemnation in the media, and at the same time increasingly lenient treatment of women's violence. However, the evidence for this is mixed. The claims are largely based on studies of England, but the developments in that country were not necessarily replicated elsewhere. Also, studies of media coverage of violent crime have often focused exclusively on trial reports and have failed to examine the impact of the rise of a mass media targeting working-class and female readers.

The present study sheds new light on the media discourse on male and female violence because of its wider scope and different perspective. Firstly, it takes the Netherlands as a case study. While experiencing similar socio-economic developments to the countries that have featured in the historiography, the Netherlands had a distinctive criminal justice system, in particular because it had neither capital punishment nor juries. Secondly, this study is based on a comprehensive dataset of all reports of family and sexual violence, including minor violence and foreign cases. This dataset (encompassing four newspapers in five sample years) was analysed to determine the changes in the amount of coverage, the construction of private violence, and the attitudes to violent men and women and their victims. Thirdly, this study looks at the factors that determined the crime news content, in particular the target readership and the sources. Journalists selected crime stories that they thought would appeal to readers but were dependent on sources such as the police and news agencies for the availability of information.

The period 1880 to 1930 was chosen as it was a time of major changes in the socio-economic position of women, children and the working class. Rapid economic growth and urbanization led initially to social problems and fears of disorder among the masses. This prompted a civilizing offensive. The problem of 'neglected' street children was tackled with child protection legislation and children were removed from the labour market. The temperance movement aimed to combat male drinking and the movement to abolish prostitution problematized male sexuality. These movements gave philanthropic women a voice in the public sphere and offered an alternative, chivalrous form of masculinity. At the same time, the breadwinner model became the norm for all classes and the home a domestic haven meeting affective rather than economic needs.

While social problems affecting families were at the fore in philanthropic efforts and political debates, private violence itself never became the subject of campaigns in the Netherlands. This is in contrast to Britain, where wife-beating, cruelty to children, infanticide and child sexual abuse were all identified by philanthropists and experts as 'troubling conditions' at various points in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the prosecution of private violence in the Netherlands, there was an increasing focus between 1880 and 1930 on sexual violence. More acts were criminalized, dedicated juvenile and vice police squads were set up and convictions for sexual offences increased dramatically.

The decades from 1880 to 1930 also saw the emergence of a mass media that targeted the working class and women. Female readers in particular were sought after by advertisers as they were assumed to be in charge of household purchases. To appeal to these new readers, journalists adopted a more accessible style known as New Journalism. Crime news with a strong human interest was part of this strategy and many such stories were clearly designed to appeal to the new women readers. Taken together, the crime stories presented an imagined Dutch community (based on Benedict Anderson's concept of the imagined community). Incidents were reported from the perspective of the community, the perpetrators were often portrayed as outsiders and foreign stories were used to contrast with and highlight Dutch values. The boundaries of this imagined community expanded over time as the working class and women became incorporated in the Dutch national identity. In the early years the lower classes, and working-class women in particular, were presented as the dangerous 'other' and derided; crimes reports in later years, however, show increasing respect and sympathy for the poor and for women, both as victims and as perpetrators.

Journalists' sources affected the content of stories of private violence in a number of ways. Firstly, while reporters gave preference to stories featuring extreme violence and mystery, it would be wrong to label the coverage sensational. Close examination of the language used and angle adopted shows that most articles had an institutional tone, reflecting the fact that the police or courts were the ultimate source of most stories. Secondly, journalists' sources affected the geographical distribution of reported stories. Even the national papers printed a disproportionate number of reports on incidents close to their offices as this information was more readily available. At the same time, both local and national papers printed many foreign stories from the main European countries, where the Dutch media had foreign correspondents or that were covered by international news agencies. Finally, because different newspapers used the same sources, this led to a convergence between newspapers in their crime content, despite their different target markets.

Well over half the column inches devoted to private violence consisted of stories about intimate partner violence. Coverage increased substantially in the decades up to the First World War, with an emphasis on sweetheart violence and foreign crimes of passion among the middle and upper classes. Stories of intimate partner violence set in the Netherlands

showed it as an overwhelmingly male crime in which women were at risk even when they were not or no longer in a relationship with the assailant. However, men's attacks were presented as sudden acts motivated by love and jealousy, with almost no mention of chronic violence. Moreover, this male violence was contrasted with the chivalry of policemen and male neighbours and relatives who intervened to protect the female victims.

The historiography on media representations of intimate partner violence has largely seen this in terms of sympathy or criticism of the perpetrator and victim, but this is too narrow a framework for the Dutch press reports. Many stories avoided moral judgement, for example by presenting the case as a humorous incident, a whodunnit or a tragedy for both perpetrator and victim. When journalists did take a moral stance, arguments of provocation had less purchase than in other countries, where they could save the accused from the death sentence.

In contrast to intimate partner violence, stories about parents maltreating their children were only a minor element in newspapers' crime coverage. This is despite journalists' positive reporting on the campaign for child protection legislation. It is not clear whether the limited coverage of child maltreatment was due to an assumed lack of interest on the part of readers or a lack of available stories. Journalists used different standard narratives for different kinds of child maltreatment. Abandonment, abuse and neglect were portrayed as typical behaviour of the poor and were sharply criticized, particularly in the late nineteenth century when newspapers were still aimed at middle-class readers. Infanticide was portrayed in more neutral terms as a regrettable fact of life. Filicide stories were sensationalized accounts in which entire families were often wiped out; the perpetrators were depicted as tragic figures driven by madness or a deluded altruism. While both mothers and fathers maltreated their children, men differed from women in the nature of that maltreatment, reflecting the differences in their socio-economic situation. In particular, these stories reveal the vulnerable position of single mothers. Journalists showed little appreciation of these underlying factors but there is also little sign that mothers were being held to a higher standard than fathers, as has been posited by some historians.

Coverage of sexual violence in the press was almost non-existent in 1880 but increased substantially in the decades that followed. This probably reflects both the feminization of the readership and the increasing importance attached to sexual assault cases by the police. Most newspaper stories involved attacks on young women and children by strangers in deserted public spaces. The women and children were portrayed as ideal victims and the attackers as scoundrels from outside the community. The articles contrasted their behaviour with the chivalrous citizens and police officers who rushed to protect the victims. Newspaper coverage was dominated by high-profile sex-murders, which aroused intense emotions in the community. By the interwar period, 'ordinary' sexual assaults were also being presented as a wide-scale problem. Yet this cannot be termed a moral panic as it did

not lead to journalists or moral entrepreneurs advocating a change in policy. In contrast, homosexual offences involving adolescent boys *were* seen as a matter of public interest. Accordingly, the press took an active stance in both the debate on the legislation criminalizing these acts and a subsequent case involving dozens of offenders and victims in The Hague.

In conclusion, the media paid increasing attention to private violence from the end of the nineteenth century in a desire to appeal to female readers. However, that did not necessarily benefit the victims. Some forms of private violence, such as sexual violence within the family, remained hidden from view. Moreover, male perpetrators were routinely either positioned as outsiders or romanticized and treated as unfortunates. The media did not turn private violence into a social problem.

Samenvatting in het Nederlands

In dit proefschrift wordt gekeken naar de berichtgeving in de Nederlandse kranten over huiselijk en seksueel geweld. Er wordt nagegaan hoe en waarom deze berichtgeving verandert tussen 1880 en 1930. Beoogd wordt een bijdrage te leveren aan het debat over veranderende opvattingen over het privégeweld in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw. Sommige historici stellen dat veranderende gendernormen tot een criminalisering van geweld door mannen leidden, dat zich uitte in stringentere vervolgingspraktijken en toenemende kritiek op de daders in de kranten. Tegelijkertijd werd geweld door vrouwen steeds milder beoordeeld. Het bewijs hiervoor is echter niet eenduidig. Zo hebben de meeste studies betrekking op Engeland maar is het allesbehalve zeker dat de ontwikkelingen die daar plaatsvonden ook te zien waren in andere landen. In het onderzoek naar de berichtgeving in de media hebben historici bijna uitsluitend gekeken naar krantenverslagen van rechtszaken. Ook hebben zij weinig aandacht besteed aan het effect van de opkomende massamedia, die de arbeidersklasse en de vrouw als belangrijke doelgroepen hadden.

Het onderhavige promotieonderzoek geeft nieuwe inzichten in de mediadiscours over geweld door mannen en vrouwen door het gebruik van een andere invalshoek. Ten eerste wordt Nederland gebruikt als voorbeeld. Hoewel in Nederland vergelijkbare socio-economische ontwikkelingen plaatsvonden als in de andere landen die in de literatuur worden behandeld, week het strafrechtstelsel in Nederland af. In het bijzonder had Nederland geen doodstraf en geen jury's, in tegenstelling tot andere landen. Ten tweede is dit promotieonderzoek gebaseerd op een dataset met alle berichten over huiselijk en seksueel geweld, niet alleen rechtzaken. De dataset geeft een volledig beeld van de berichtgeving in vier kranten in vijf steekproefjaren. Een analyse werd uitgevoerd op deze dataset met als doel het verloop te bepalen in de hoeveelheid berichten als ook de

wijzigingen in de weergave van privégeweld en opvattingen over gewelddadige mannen en vrouwen en hun slachtoffers. Ten derde werd ook gekeken naar de invloed op de berichtgeving van de lezers en de bronnen. Journalisten kozen misdaadverhalen die lezers volgens hen zouden aanspreken maar tegelijkertijd waren de journalisten afhankelijk van de politie, nieuwsagentschappen en andere bronnen voor het 'aanbod' aan verhalen.

De periode 1880 tot en met 1930 werd gekozen omdat er toen grote veranderingen plaatsvonden in de socio-economische positie van zowel de vrouw als de arbeider. Snelle economische groei en verstedelijking leidden in eerste instantie tot sociale problemen. De elite was bang voor onrust en volksoptstanden en begon een beschavingsoffensief om dit te voorkomen. De Kinderwetten werden geïntroduceerd ter bescherming van 'verwaarloosde' kinderen. De drankbestrijdingsorganisaties probeerden de alcoholconsumptie van mannen aan banden te leggen. Door de acties van de abolitionisten tegen de prostitutie werd ook de ongelijkheid tussen mannen en vrouwen op het gebied van seksualiteit niet meer vanzelfsprekend. Deze bewegingen gaven vrouwen een stem in de publieke sfeer en boden een alternatieve, ridderlijke mannelijkheid. Tegelijkertijd veranderden de verhoudingen binnen het gezin. Het kostwinnersmodel werd de norm voor alle lagen van de maatschappij: het gezinsleven was niet meer een economisch productie-eenheid maar een beschutte plek die in emotionele behoeftes voorzag.

Sociale problemen die het gezin raakten speelden dus een belangrijke rol in het beschavingsoffensief. Maar het debat in Nederland ging nooit specifiek over huiselijk en seksueel geweld. Dit is in tegenstelling tot Engeland, waar huiselijk geweld tegen vrouwen, kindermishandeling, kindermoord en seksueel misbruik van kinderen op verschillende momenten in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw door filantropen en experts uitgeroepen werden tot zorgwekkende problemen. In het Nederlandse strafrechtstelsel was er een toenemende focus op seksueel geweld. Meer vormen van seksueel gedrag werden strafbaar gemaakt, gemeenten kregen zeden- en kinderpolitie en het aantal veroordeelden nam sterk toe.

De media veranderde ook sterk tussen 1880 en 1930. Een massamedia ontstond die gericht was aan de arbeidersklasse en vrouwen. Vooral adverteerders wilden de vrouwelijke lezer bereiken omdat aangenomen werd dat vrouwen het huishoudbudget beheerden. Om de inhoud van de kranten aantrekkelijker te maken voor deze nieuwe categorieën van lezers, gingen journalisten een laagdrempeliger stijl hanteren: het 'Nieuwe Journalistiek'. Misdaad met een sterk menselijk element paste in deze strategie en veel van deze verhalen waren duidelijk gericht aan de vrouwelijke lezer. Beschouwd als een geheel, stelden de misdaadverhalen een verbeelde Nederlandse gemeenschap voor (naar het begrip 'verbeelde gemeenschap' van Benedict Anderson) waarbij de daders vaak buiten de gemeenschap werden gepositioneerd en waarbij verhalen uit het buitenland als bevestiging dienden van Nederlandse normen en waarden. De grenzen van deze verbeelde

gemeenschap verschoven naarmate de arbeidersklasse en vrouwen een stem kregen in de publieke sfeer. In het begin werd het volk, en met name de volkswrouw, als de gevaarlijke 'ander' neergezet. In de loop van de tijd werd echter in de krantenberichten in toenemende mate empathie en respect getoond voor de armen en voor de vrouw, zowel als dader en als slachtoffer.

De bronnen die de journalisten gebruikten beïnvloedden de berichtgeving over het privégeweld op verschillende manieren. De uiteindelijke bron was doorgaans de politie of de rechter. Dit had invloed op de inhoud. Hoewel journalisten de voorkeur gaven aan gevallen met extreem geweld of met een element van mysterie waren de verhalen lang niet altijd sensationeel. Een nauwkeurige analyse van de taal en het perspectief van de artikelen laat zien dat zij eerder institutioneel waren qua toon. De gebruikte bronnen hadden ook invloed op de geografische verdeling van de verhalen. Ook de nationale kranten bevatten relatief veel verhalen over incidenten uit de stad waar hun kantoor stond omdat deze informatie makkelijk verkrijgbaar was. Tevens berichtten zowel lokale als nationale kranten over buitenlandse incidenten uit Europese landen waar de Nederlandse media correspondenten of afspraken met persagentschappen hadden. Tenslotte zorgde het gebruik door journalisten van gemeenschappelijke bronnen voor veel overeenkomsten in de inhoud, ook tussen de kranten met zeer verschillende doelgroepen.

Het grootste gedeelte van de berichtgeving van privé geweld (gemeten aan het aantal regels) betrof huiselijk geweld. De aandacht die hieraan werd besteed nam sterk toe in de decennia voorafgaand aan de eerste wereldoorlog. Hierbij lag de nadruk op liefdesdrama's van jongeren die verkering hadden en buitenlandse crimes passionnels in de hogere kringen. Berichten over huiselijk geweld in Nederland gaven een beeld van een misdrijf dat vooral door mannen werd gepleegd, waarbij vrouwen ook gevaar liepen wanneer zij niet (meer) in een relatie waren met de dader. Maar de aanvallen door mannen werden gepresenteerd als een plotselinge actie gedreven door liefde en jaloezie; chronisch geweld werd nauwelijks genoemd. Ook werd het geweld van de dader gecontrasteerd met het ridderlijke gedrag van de politiemannen en mannelijke familieleden en burens die bij sprongen om het vrouwelijke slachtoffer te beschermen.

Historici die de krantenberichtgeving over huiselijk geweld hebben bestudeerd zijn vooral geïnteresseerd in de mate van medelijden met of afkeuring van de dader of het slachtoffer. Maar een dergelijk raamwerk doet geen recht aan de diversiteit van de berichtgeving in de Nederlandse kranten. Veel artikelen bevatten geen moreel oordeel over de betrokkenen. De verhalen waren bijvoorbeeld een humoristische schets, of bevatten elementen van een detective of een romantische tragedie. Waar een journalist wel een moraal oordeel gaf, had provocatie als mitigerende factor minder invloed dan in andere landen, waar het aanreiken van provocatie als argument door de verdediging de beklaagde kon redden van de doodstraf.

In tegenstelling tot huiselijk geweld waren berichten over geweld tegen kinderen door hun ouders slechts een klein onderdeel van het misdaadnieuws in de kranten. Dit terwijl de journalisten juist positief waren over de campagne voor nieuwe wetgeving op het gebied van kindbescherming (de Kinderwetten van 1905). Het is niet duidelijk of het gebrek aan aandacht voor geweld tegen kinderen te wijten is aan het beperkte 'aanbod' van dergelijke verhalen of aan een vermeend gebrek aan belangstelling onder de lezers. Journalisten gebruikten verschillende standaardverhalen in hun berichtgeving voor verschillende typen mishandeling. Verlating, verwaarlozing en mishandeling werden geassocieerd met arme mensen; de journalisten uitten felle kritieken op de daders, vooral aan het eind van de negentiende eeuw toen de kranten nog gericht waren aan de middenklasse. De berichtgeving over kindermoord was relatief neutraal: het werd gepresenteerd als weliswaar betreurenswaardig maar een onvermijdelijk deel van het leven. Verder waren er sensationele verhalen over de moord van meerdere kinderen en zelfs hele gezinnen, waarbij de dader als een tragisch figuur werd afgebeeld die gedreven werd door waanzin of misplaatst altruïsme. Vaders en moeders pleegden verschillende typen misdrijven als gevolg van de verschillen in hun socio-economische omstandigheden. Hieruit blijkt de bijzonder kwetsbare positie van de alleenstaande moeder. Maar de journalisten zelf hadden weinig oog voor de onderliggende socio-economische factoren. Toch is er weinig bewijs voor de stelling van sommige historici dat de lat hoger lag voor moeders dan voor vaders.

De kranten van 1880 bevatten bijna geen berichten over seksueel geweld maar de berichtgeving hierover nam sterk toe in de daaropvolgende decennia. Deze toename is waarschijnlijk te danken aan zowel de toenemende aandacht voor de vrouwelijke lezer als de grotere prioriteit voor aanrandingszaken bij de politie. De meeste verhalen in de kranten betroffen aanrandingen van jonge vrouwen en kinderen door vreemden in verlaten plekken. De vrouwen en kinderen werden stevast als het 'ideale slachtoffer' gepresenteerd en de daders als ontaarde mensen van buiten de gemeenschap. Hun gedrag werd gecontrasteerd met de ridderlijke burgers en politiemannen die pogingen deden het slachtoffer te beschermen en de dader te vangen. De berichtgeving werd gedomineerd door lustmoorden, die sterke emoties opriepen in de gemeenschap. Tijdens het interbellum werden 'gewone' aanrandingen ook gepresenteerd als een enorm probleem. Toch kan dit niet beschouwd worden als een morele paniek aangezien noch de journalisten noch andere opiniemakers een pleidooi deden voor nieuw beleid. Dat lag anders bij homoseksuele misdrijven met tienerjongens: de journalisten beschouwden deze incidenten als een publieke zaak. Daarom bemoeide de pers zich met het debat over nieuwe wetgeving op dit gebied en namen de kranten een actief standpunt in een grote 'zedenschandaal' in den Haag.

Samengevat besteedde de media in toenemende mate aandacht aan privégeweld vanaf het eind van de negentiende eeuw mede vanuit een wens om vrouwelijke lezers aan de krant te binden. Maar de slachtoffers hadden er niet per definitie baat bij. Sommige vormen van

privégeweld (zoals seksueel geweld binnen het gezin) bleven buiten beeld. Verder werden mannelijke daders doorgaans of afgebeeld als buitenstanders of geromantiseerd en afgebeeld als ongelukkige slachtoffers van hun eigen driften. De media hebben privégeweld niet tot een sociaal probleem gemaakt.

Curriculum vitae

Elizabeth Clare Wilkinson (Ilfracombe, UK, 1964) won a scholarship to study History at the University of Cambridge in 1982. However, she switched to Economics in the first term. Degrees in Economics (University of Cambridge, 1985) and Statistics (University of Kent, 1986) were followed by a career as a quantitative researcher and project manager, first in the UK and from 1990 in the Netherlands. In 2008, she started work as a translator, running her own company Tessera Translations with her husband. This gave her the flexibility to return to her first love, history, alongside her job. In 2011 she started an MA in History part-time through the Open University (UK), graduating with distinction in 2013.

In that same year, Clare started a part-time PhD in crime and gender in Dutch newspapers as an external PhD candidate at Leiden University. This research was supervised by Professor Manon van der Heijden and Professor Ariadne Schmidt at the Department of Economic and Social History in the university's Institute for History. While the PhD topic was a personal choice, the research fell within the project 'Crime and Gender 1600-1900: a Comparative Perspective'. As part of the PhD process, Clare completed the N.W. Posthumus Institute Graduate Training Programme.