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

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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 Memorie* 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 Strafregt (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 onregt*) 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

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"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 Strafregt (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 Strafregt (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 Strafregt (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.

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
Leeuwarder Courant	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
Algemeen Handelsblad	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
Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad	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
Nieuws van de Dag	1880	7	80	0.0	3	30	0.0
De Telegraaf	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
Child abuse	130	31%	2.2	31.6
Assault of woman aged 16 or older	150	35%	1.8	26.7
Abuse by a person in authority (Article 249 in the Dutch Criminal Code)	17	4%	2.7	23.1
Homosexual acts with a minor (Article 248bis in the Dutch Criminal Code)	15	4%	3.8	62.8
Sexual murder	26	6%	16.8	723.7
Assault, victim details unknown	75	18%	1.5	7.7
*Other**	13	3%	2.1	50.0
Total	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 policie*, 52-53.
[37] "Raadselachtige 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 "indecency 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 Graaffloriswег, 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 Graaffloriswег, 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 dier 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

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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 menschen 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 10, 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. Strengholt, 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] "[…] *deerlijk 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.


DE MOORD TE BENNEKOM.

Gisteren werd te Arnhem ter aarde besteld het stoffelijk overschot van mej. T. Koperberg, het slachtoffer van den gruwelijken moord te Bennekom. Een groote menigte volgde den stoet.

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 Krminalitätsgeschichte,* 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 ongure 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

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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 Pfiester, "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]

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[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 Garotting 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 gewenscht?" *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 biografe 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.

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[155] The case is discussed in: Van der Meer, *Schorer*, 226-239; Van der Meer and Snijders, "Ernstige moraliteits-toestanded".
[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 "Zedenmisdrijven 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.