

VAW in the press

Which discourses are disseminated by the Dutch and the Spanish press in relation to violence against women?



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Personal motivation

According to redfeminista.com¹ there have been 89 mortal victims of Violence Against Women (VAW²) in Spain in 2011. Year after year, dead women at the hands of their (ex) partner become the object of statistics and media stories within the frame of -what is up to now called- *violencia de género*. In Spain, I have been used to almost overwhelming news coverage of dead women at the hands of men; this phenomenon contrasts remarkably with the coverage of VAW by the Dutch media. I have always been surprised by this difference in portraying reality; to the point that I thought they were not talking of the same phenomenon in The Netherlands and in Spain.

The most visible actions of the former Spanish Ministry for Equality³ have involved gender equality and the fight against *violencia de género*. The socialist government, in order to combat VAW in intimate partner relationships, formulated in 2004 the *Ley Integral de medidas contra la violencia de género*⁴, in the words of the magistrate Sonia Chirinos: “one of the first and bravest laws to combat VAW” (2010, 11). However, in theory, the ministry had in fact the much broader task of accomplishing non discrimination due to sex, race, ethnicity, religion, ideology, sexual orientation, age and any other personal or social circumstance.

The law against *violencia de género*, as well as the term ‘*violencia de género*’ was not equally ‘joyously’ accepted by many sectors of Spanish society. At the end of 2011, after the elections of November 20th, where the conservative party (PP) won, the tendency to reject the expression *violencia de género* in the conservative media has become more noticeable. All these issues have stimulated my curiosity and motivated this thesis.

Introduction

Violence is a much too complex concept to even pretend an explanation in this short master thesis. Here, my intention is to analyze how VAW is constructed in the Spanish and Dutch Press and to find out why the newspapers, that are the object of the research, spread certain discourses. I depart from the consideration that the object “current affairs” is a construction of the press and not an “objective” entity that exists in itself in reality. There are millions of

¹ www.redfeminista.com (accessed January 05, 2012)

² In this thesis, the concept violence against women will be represented from now on with the acronym VAW.

³ The Ministry for Equality disappeared in 2010 and became a department within the Ministry of Sanidad and Social Affairs.

⁴ Law of measures against *violencia de género*.

occurrences that can equally be chosen to become “current affairs” but it is a matter of “power relations” that establishes that just some happenings get visibility and in which way that happens. This will become evident from the differences in each country regarding the conceptualization of VAW and the media coverage of occurrences related to VAW.

In this master thesis, I analyze the news items on VAW that I have found in four newspapers: de Volkskrant, De Telegraaf, EL PAIS and ABC. Previously to this analysis, I establish a definition of VAW by embracing the intersectional theory, which defends the inclusion of the victims at the intersections of gender/sex/ethnicity/race/class/age. I have also deconstructed the term in legal and political discourses in The Netherlands and in Spain.

2. Theory and Methodology

In this chapter, I will explain the theories on which I have based my analysis and the method that I have followed in order to uncover the discourses disseminated by the chosen newspapers.

2.1 Theoretical frame

This thesis has been shaped with the help of several different theories. The analysis of the newspapers is based on the one hand on media semiotics (Bignell 2002) and on the other hand on the theories of the discourse and representation (Foucault 1969; Hall 1997). The conceptualization of VAW is based on the feminist intersectional theory (Crenshaw 1994).

2.1.1 Theory for the analysis of the press.

Newspaper's semiotics

Jonathan Bignell defines news discourse as an ideological representation of the world since the media selects what is going to be reported (Bignell 2002, 80). A newspaper is made of elements that can be read as ‘signs’ and that can be interpreted following certain codes (Ibid, 79). The space that a news item occupies in the newspaper is also significant, newspapers organize the news items according to assumptions about what the reader will find more or less interesting (Ibid, 87).

Media studies have shown that the context of a news item influences its interpretation; in this sense, these studies assume that the more sensationalistic a newspaper is the more attention is given to crime issues. It is also the other way round; the more sober the newspaper is the fewer news items on crime it will have on its pages (Semetko & Valkenburg 2000, 103). This

preference for a certain thematic has also been taken as means of differentiation between the so called ‘quality’ newspapers –those focusing on politics and economics- and ‘popular’ or ‘sensationalist’ newspapers –those focusing on other kind of information that is emotionally salient and linked to entertainment (Bakker & Scholten, 2009).

Newsworthiness and “current affairs”

How do journalists decide which events are worthy of writing a news item about? And which roles do gender, class and ethnicity play in the making of those decisions? Media studies have shown that the concepts of ‘unusualness’, ‘news’ –or ‘current affairs’- and ‘newsworthiness’ are ambiguous (Meyers 1997, 85-101).

Meyers’ study of the news coverage of VAW in USA shows that the criterion ‘unusualness’ portrays the ideology and interests of a patriarchal society. She reaches this conclusion after showing that the news items created by reporters on VAW are susceptible of being considered gender/race/class biased; however, the vagueness of the concepts ‘unusualness’ and ‘news’ protect reporters from being accused of gender/race/class bigotry (1997, 100) .

The newspapers present a concept of the object ‘current affairs’ as existing independently in the world. Although, ‘current affairs’ do not exist outside the press and media discourses, the press constructs the object ‘current affairs’ within a discursive process that involves a complexity of socio, political and economic power relations⁵.

2.1.2 Theory of discourse and representation

I follow a constructionist approach to representation. According to this theoretical approach, the meaning of things is constructed with the use of ‘representational systems’. These systems are formed by concepts and signs (Hall 1997, 25). The deconstruction of the texts reveal that the production of ‘meanings’ is linked to a line of thought, a collection of ideas that connect with certain interests and values. All this is comprised within the concept of discourse, which transforms the production of meaning in production of knowledge (Hall 1997, 45).

⁵Many studies have analyzed the concept of ‘current affairs’ in connection with newsworthiness and agenda setting. Liesbet van Zoonen indicates that there is an established agreement among ‘news workers’ or the “conventions of news making”: “the newsworker has to cooperate with colleagues, has to take specific needs, routines and traditions of the organization into account, and is limited by the social, economic and legal embedding of the media institution” (van Zoonen 1994, 49).

Knowledge

According to Foucault, a set of “enunciations, concepts, objects and theoretical choices” that have been accepted to be true (Foucault 1969, 200). Knowledge is produced within discourse and as such, it is subjected to the rules of that discourse (Ibid).

Discourse

Discourse, as Foucault intends it, is a complex concept that involves not only language but also conceptual representations and practices. Discourse implies that at a specific point in history, a precise set of codes is at play giving meaning to the world and therefore producing knowledge (1969, 201-232).

Regime of Truth

Foucault speaks of the production of knowledge, which presents itself as “the truth” and this one is considered as a “discursive formation” that, once is believed and supported by everyone, constitutes itself as a “regime of truth” (1980, 131).

For example, the discursive formation on rape in the thirteenth century in Great Britain, distributed a concept of ‘rape’ as “violence against the private property of a man”; this became a regime of truth since most of society believed ‘rape’ to be an act of violence against other man’s property (Brownmiller 1975; Pistono 1988).

2.1.3 Intersectionality for a definition of VAW

This thesis supports a definition of VAW from the theoretical perspective of feminist intersectionality. The intention is to cover each and every point of discrimination and vulnerability. As Ann Denis describes it:

“Intersectional Analysis involves the concurrent analysis of multiple, intersectional sources of subordination/oppression, and is based on the premise that the impact of a particular source of subordination may vary, depending on its combination with other potential sources of subordination (or of relative privilege)” (2008, 677).

The intersectional approach to VAW is further explained in chapter 3.

2.2 Research questions

This thesis maintains that VAW is a phenomenon that manifests itself in a multiplicity of forms, whose origin is firmly rooted in the aim to control women. The questions investigate how VAW is represented in the Spanish (EL PAIS and ABC) and the Dutch (Volkskrant and De Telegraaf) press:

- ~ How is VAW represented in the selected newspapers?
- ~ Is every aspect of VAW being covered by those representations?
- ~ Which forms of VAW are rendered more visible?
- ~ Which stereotypes regarding gender and ethnicity are being spread?

I have read the newspapers taking into consideration the concept of “newsworthiness”:

- ~ Why is a particular event newsworthy?
- ~ Is the process of selection of a “newsworthy” event affected by certain stereotyped ideas about gender and ethnicity?
- ~ Which discourses on gender and ethnicity are underlined by the news items?

2.3 Methodology

I have combined different methods: Content analysis to facilitate the quantification of the occurrences; deconstruction of the news items in order to unveil the stereotypes of gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality that are present in the construction of VAW; discursive analysis in order to discover the hidden discourses that the press distributes. This deconstruction has served to categorize the news items according to the most salient discourses and unveil the politics that each newspaper follows in the construction of VAW. The distribution of these constructions in the press unchains a process by which the reader, who assumes that what he/she is reading is ‘true knowledge’, internalizes such constructions.

2.3.1 Method

During the months January and February 2011, I have been reading the national editions of these four newspapers; fifty issues in total for each newspaper. I looked for news items that mentioned gender based violence in any possible way and/or domestic violence and any other form of discrimination. I established different categories according to forms of violence, the types of perpetrators and victims, and the subject focus of the news item. I quantified the different categories and found the respective percentages. The quantitative analysis brings light to the grade of visibility and strength of certain stereotypes and discourses. The categories reveal the discourses that each newspaper supports and distributes and unveil the political positions regarding VAW and how this is constructed by each newspaper.

3- Definition of Violence Against Women (VAW)

This chapter focuses on theoretical approaches to VAW as it is performed in different contexts – domestic, sexual, in or outside intimate partner relations- during a situation of peace⁶. In order to situate the ‘conceptual maps’ about ‘violence’ in each country, I begin by reviewing the definitions of violence in the Dutch and Spanish dictionaries. Then, I briefly trace the feminist theories that I have considered relevant for a definition of VAW. Finally, I deconstruct the terms and definitions in legal and political texts in both countries.

3.1 Violence in the dictionary

People use “conceptual maps⁷” to understand the world and language dictionaries help to shape the way people construct their understanding of reality. It is important to see how the construction of reality works differently according to the different languages: ‘*geweld*’ and ‘*violencia*’⁸ are not totally the same thing, in the cognition of average Spanish and Dutch citizens. The concepts of *geweld* and *violencia* will be analyzed here, as they are defined in two standard, authoritative dictionaries, Dutch and Spanish respectively.

In the *Van Dale Praktijkwoordenboek Nederlands*, ‘*geweld*’ has two definitions⁹. The first definition constructs ‘violence’ as the exercise of power and presents several examples, one of them is a variation in grade: “brutal violence”; the other examples are variations in the form: “physical”, “sexual” and “verbal”. The second definition constructs ‘violence’ as a “force performed with intensity and impetus”.

The Spanish dictionary of the *Real Academia de la Lengua Española*¹⁰ (RAE) offers four definitions of violence, ‘*violencia*’¹¹, that partially relate to the meanings of the words ‘violence’ and ‘*geweld*’.

⁶ The analysis of VAW as a “gender specific war strategy” (Zarkov 2006, 214) is not included because this thesis concentrates on press discourses around VAW in two European countries – the Netherlands and Spain- that at the present moment are not in a war situation.

⁷ System of codes. Stuart Hall argues that people who belong to the same culture share the same conceptual maps to establish meaning (1998, 21).

⁸ ‘violence’ in Dutch and in Spanish.

⁹ Het geweld: 1) Uitoefening van macht. Bruut geweld; fysiek; seksueel; verbaal. 2) Kracht die met hevigheid, onstuimigheid wordt uitgeoefend (Van Dale 2005, 314).

¹⁰ Royal Spanish Academy of Language.

¹¹ 1- Violencia: 1) Cualidad de violento. (Que está fuera de su natural estado, situación o modo. Que obra con ímpetu y fuerza[...] Aplíquese al genio arrebatado e impetuoso que se deja llevar fácilmente de la ira. [...]) 2)

'*Violencia*' is constructed first and foremost as an intrinsic 'quality', related to the inner essence, and temperament of the individual and it is considered not normal. It is also defined as an emotion and as a physical act that is performed with intense strength. Another definition introduces the gender factor explicitly, "the act of raping a woman", and in this way rape is linked to a notion of 'violence' that has been constructed as a "not normal" but as an inner characteristic of an individual. The role played by unbalanced power relations is omitted.

Therefore, in the construction of '*geweld*', the dimensions of physical behaviour and also of power relations are taken into account; in the construction of '*violencia*', the dimension of physical behaviour is included but the dimension of power relations is concealed. The Dutch reader is a priori familiar with a conceptualization of violence that relates to unequal power relations. The Spanish reader understands violence as related to inner temperament. The conceptualization of VAW as the result of unequal power relations between men and women needs more elaboration in Spain because the concept of '*violencia*', a priori, does not carry implicit, unequal power relations. In *violencia de genero*¹², as it is defined in the 2004 Spanish Organic Law¹³, '*violencia*' is something different than '*violencia*' outside the context of gender.

3.2 Feminist approaches to VAW

From a feminist perspective, the phenomenon of VAW is analyzed as the sign of unbalanced power relations between men and women. Feminist theoreticians and activists since the second feminist wave have been regarding VAW as a problem that affects the whole society (Edwards 1987). They have shown that the social construction of sexuality and (compulsory) heterosexuality in patriarchal culture aim to control women. Violence has also been proved to be a mechanism for that control¹⁴ (Ibid). Furthermore, studies on masculinities have shown a link

Acción y efecto de violentar o violentarse. 3) Acción violenta o contra el natural modo de proceder. 4) Acción de violar a una mujer. (RAE 1992, 1485).

¹² Gender based violence.

¹³ "The manifestation of discrimination, of an unequal situation and the power relations of men over women. It is inflicted upon the women by those who are or have been their partners or by those who are or have been linked to them by similar relations of affection even in the case of no cohabitation. It includes every act of physical or psychological, aggression to their sexual freedom, including, threat, coercion and the arbitrary privation of liberty" (Organic Law 1/2004).

¹⁴Based on anthropological and sociological studies, Edwards cites: Young & Harris 1978; Rosaldo 1980; Collier & Rosaldo 1981; Smart 1984.

between violence and ‘hyper-masculinity’¹⁵ which has been defined as a construction of social and cultural interactions that seek social control and power (Kersten 1996).

Estella Freedman indicates that, during the late 60s and 70s, feminists joined forces to create the “anti-rape movement”, which intended to attenuate the trauma experienced by rape victims, and develop strategies to eradicate rape (Freedman 2002, 72). In 1973 the Women’s Antirape Coalition (WARC) was formed in New York with the purpose of raising public awareness and pushing for the elimination of the “restrictive corroboration requirement”¹⁶ of the state’s rape statute. The WARC was formed first by radical and liberal feminists but in 1974 the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) and the coalition of 100 Black women joined the coalition. Although rape can be considered specifically the most obvious form of VAW, there are other types of violence, such as battering, threatening and psychological violence, which are used as weapons to achieve the subjugation of a woman.

Edwards situates a shift in the conceptualization of VAW, around 1980, when theoreticians began to focus on the lines of connection among the victims, instead of focusing on particular, isolated crimes, VAW began to be seen as a “unitary phenomenon” (1987, 15). In this line the legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon¹⁷ presents sexual harassment on the work floor as another manifestation of the same phenomenon¹⁸ (1979), since it reveals common characteristics with sexual exploitation and abuse of women in the private domain (Edwards 1987, 24). The first Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women –CEDAW- in 1979 may be also taken as a symptom of Edwards’ theory. In this first CEDAW was decided to define VAW as a form of discrimination.

Intersectional approach

For the analysis of press discourses on VAW, this thesis will adopt a perspective of inclusion. This perspective can be achieved through the intersectional approach and here Kimberlé Crenshaw’s intersectional theory is fundamental. Crenshaw observes that the political construction of VAW in the USA, does not include many aspects that make women of colour

¹⁵ Kersten argues that *hypermasculinity* tends to be essentialized and linked to the pathological individual, especially in criminology (1996, 382).

¹⁶ This was a legal requirement that enforced victims to present evidence that would substantiate their allegations of having been raped.

¹⁷ Catherine A. MacKinnon “pioneered the legal claim for sexual harassment and with Andrea Dworkin, created ordinances recognizing pornography as a civil rights violation (Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988).

¹⁸ “Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A case of Sex Discrimination”.

most vulnerable¹⁹ (Crenshaw 1991, 93). In the same line of being inclusive, I take into consideration Patricia Hill Collins observations on the construction of violence and of violence against women of colour; namely, the evidences that any form of violence in itself carries implicit unequal power relations –also legitimized institutional violence- and her conceptualization of violence as a dynamic, multidimensional phenomenon. Another important consideration is that VAW, as it has been conceptualized in feminist theories, includes all settings where violence take place as a result of unequal power relations between men and women²⁰; that is, it can be intimate partner violence or incest or sexual harassment at work or school or a setting where there is no relation between victim and perpetrator.

We need a definition that considers VAW as a dynamic multilayered social phenomenon that refrains from essentializing and pathologizing the figure of the perpetrator²¹.

3.3 UN Definition

One important point of reference in my analysis of the conceptualization of VAW is the definition granted by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action where VAW is defined as:

“any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm; or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”. During the platform for action, it was established that violence against women is “one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men” (U.N. 1995)²² .

¹⁹ Crenshaw examines several settings in the USA, where intersections of race, ethnicity, language, class and sexuality render some women extra vulnerable. For example: the setting of not native speaking immigrant women; the setting of intra-group violence, where Crenshaw refers to Sharahzad Ali’s idea of Patriarchy as beneficial for some communities in their strategy of strengthening against the main stream white ideology; the setting of the stereotyping of the male Other, as pathologically violent –as the Black man is stereotyped-. Crenshaw’s analysis is also applicable to the Roma community in Spain and to some non Western *allochtonen* in the Netherlands, this becomes evident on the one hand through the stereotypes that circulate in society and in the press; on the other hand, through the silences and invisibility of certain forms of violence.

²⁰ Violence within same-gender partner relationships as result of unbalanced power, should be object of a different, specific study.

²¹ As in the figure of the pathological violent individual that is ‘hyper-masculine’ or ‘*machista*’.

²² www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/violence.htm (accessed August 7, 2011).

The political and media discourses on VAW in Spain and in The Netherlands construct VAW in ways that differ from the UN definition, and that render some forms of violence more obvious than others. This peculiarity complicates the implementation of the actions established during the Beijing platform²³.

3.4 Mapping the term in The Netherlands

The following paragraphs deal with the construction of VAW in political and legal discourses in The Netherlands. Dutch criminologist Renée Römken has detected two obvious shifts in the Dutch legal discourse of the past few years. On the one hand the tendency to neutralizing domestic violence in terms of gender and on the other hand the tendency to ethnicize VAW (2008,13- 18). By neutralizing Römken refers, in the first place to the semantic ambiguity that the term domestic violence denotes.

“Retorisch gezien worden ook alle personen in huiselijke kring gelijke kanshebbers om geweld te plegen of om slachtoffer te worden.”²⁴(13)

However, the neutralizing process has been observed beyond the term *huiselijk geweld*²⁵. As Römken indicates, statistical data are being brought forward to assign a gender neutral character to ‘sex specific violence’, signalling men as equally susceptible to become victims of “sex specific” violence as women are (Van Noije et al 2011, 207).

By ethnicizing, Römken refers to the tendency in framing VAW within the *allochtone*, immigrant context, finding explanations for that sort of violence in the “cultural” background of the immigrants:

“de neiging tot etnicisering van geweld: dat wil zeggen, het selectief op de voorgrond plaatsen van etniciteit (of wat daaronder wordt verstaan) als verklarende variabele, met uitsluiting of marginalisering van andere factoren.”²⁶ (2008, 18)

²³Another approach to VAW comes from the NGO AI (Amnesty International) which considers VAW a form of torture in its 2001 report “Broken Bodies, Shattered Minds”. AI holds States accountable for all acts of torture of women, whatever the context in which the violent act is committed and whoever the perpetrator might be (Youngs 2003, 1213).

²⁴ “Rhetorically it gives the impression that everyone inside the private circle of the home has the same chance of becoming a perpetrator or a victim.”

²⁵ Domestic violence.

²⁶ “The tendency to ethnicize violence: that means, ethnicity (or whatever therewith is understood) is selectively placed at the front, as explaining variable, with the exclusion or marginalization of other factors.”

The Dutch NGOs, in the CEDAW shadow report, examined the Fifth Governmental Report on implementation of the UN resolutions on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The NGOs discovered too much focus on honour related violence and female genital mutilation, especially in the context of black, migrant and refugee women, whilst other forms of violence such as rape, incest, battering and domestic violence escaped attention (Bijleveld and Mans 2009, 19).

In the CEDAW shadow report, the NGOs urged the necessity of the development of a consistent and tailored policy to combat gendered VAW from different backgrounds, not based on culturally embedded assumptions but on facts and figures (2009, 19).

These processes of neutralizing and ethnizing identified by Römken and confirmed by the NGOs in the CEDAW shadow report are still present in the *Emancipatiemonitor* 2010, since “male victims” of *seksespecifiek geweld*²⁷ are introduced as a disturbing issue, and the vulnerability of men within this context is presented as if it would be almost equal to that of women²⁸. At the same time, it is also established that “Sex specific violence is related to the still economic, social and cultural power differences between the sexes” and specified that women are ‘often in disempowered positions’. This shows a contradiction with the assumed nearly equal vulnerability of male and female victims.

The *Emancipatiemonitor* 2010 constructs VAW as ‘sex specific violence’, but there are differences between the diverse forms of VAW. While *huiselijk geweld* is constructed as a battle of the sexes, where men can be ‘equally’ vulnerable as women; other forms of VAW such as: *mishandeling*, *bedreiging*, *seksueel geweld*, *mensenhandel*, *eergerelateerd geweld en genitale verminking*, are considered to affect almost exclusively women. Moreover, the *Emancipatiemonitor* refers explicitly to three variations of sexual violence against women: trafficking, honour related violence and female genital mutilation that concern mostly non Western actors (208). This conceptualization of VAW

²⁷ Note that the *Emancipatiemonitor* speaks of sex specific violence and not of gender based violence. The word ‘sex’ relates to the biological –constructed- differences between men and women. The word ‘gender’ refers to the socially –constructed- differences between the sexes (Butler 1990). Thus, the governmental discourse constructs VAW as a kind of battle of the sexes, rooted in our biological differences and not in our social constructed ones. Then, the unbalanced power relations, which are acknowledged in the *Emancipatiemonitor*, are a consequence of our biological nature.

²⁸ “Mannen zijn als slachtoffer minder zichtbaar, natuurlijk vanwege de lagere aantallen, maar ook omdat er een groter taboe op seksespecifiek geweld tegen mannen rust” (Van Noije et al 2011, 207). – “Men are, as victims, less visible, of course because of the few quantities, but also because there is a big taboo about sex specific violence against men.”

shows that Renée Römken's hypothesis of the tendency to degender domestic violence and ethnicize VAW is evident in the *Emancipatiemonitor* 2010.

The *Emancipatiemonitor* specifies in which contexts *eergerelateerd geweld*²⁹ can be spoken of, constructing the problem as a phenomenon among non Western immigrants with a patriarchal cultural background (224). This delimitation, together with the definition³⁰ that is intended for professionals working with these issues, constructs an ethnicized concept of *eergerelateerd geweld*, through two assumptions: first, that the patriarchal communities are Non Western cultures; second, that *eergerelateerd geweld* only takes place in Non Western communities. However, important parallelisms between 'honour related violence' and 'domestic violence' have been found and there is no scientific evidence in support of the cultural link in performing one or other type of violence (Janssen 2010, 120).

Summarizing, the neutralization of domestic violence and ethnicizing of VAW are evident discourses in the *Emancipatiemonitor* 2010 ; with this production of knowledge, the *Emancipatiemonitor* is creating a "regime of truth"³¹ that is distributed to the professionals in contact with victims and aggressors.

3.5 Mapping the term in Spain

In Spain, during the years of dictatorship -1936-1975- gender-based violence –as synonym of domestic violence- was regarded as a private issue. The historical, political and social contexts legitimized gender inequalities and women's oppression. After the political transition to democracy, that took place from 1975 onwards, Spanish feminists could get organized and begin actions towards the revocation of articles in laws, that constructed women's character as submissive to men. The public condemnation of physical VAW enters the Spanish feminist discourse in the 80s, and became one of the most important issues of feminist activism up to today (Bernárdez et al 2008, 34).

²⁹ honour related violence

³⁰ "Honour related violence is every form of psychological or physical violence, committed from a collective point of view, in reaction to the potential violation (or threatening of violation) of the honour of a man or a woman and with that, the honour of his or her family, and with the result that the environment becomes aware that such violation has taken place." (Ferwerda en Van Leiden 2005, 49)

³¹ See chapter 2 (Foucault 1980, 131)

In Spanish legal and political discourses, VAW is being referred to as *violencia de género*³², but the Spanish press disseminate also the expression *violencia machista*³³.

3.5.1 Violencia de género

The 2004 *Ley de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género*³⁴ (LMPICVG) seems to have emerged as a means to amend a legal vacuum that made women defenceless against the aggressions by their partners or ex-partners (Chirinos 2010, 13). Inside and outside Europe, this law is considered an example of measures against VAW (11).

This law defines *violencia de género* as follows:

“como manifestación de la discriminación, la situación de desigualdad y las relaciones de poder de los hombres sobre las mujeres, se ejerce sobre éstas por parte de quienes sean o hayan sido sus cónyuges o de quienes estén o hayan estado ligados a ellas por relaciones similares de afectividad, aun sin convivencia”, y “comprende todo acto de violencia física y psicológica, incluidas las agresiones a la libertad sexual, las amenazas, las coacciones o la privación arbitraria de libertad.”³⁵ (Organic Law 1/2004).

The expression *violencia de género* wants to signify violence against women in intimate (ex) partner relationships. According to the Spanish magistrate Sonia Chirinos, the expression was borrowed from the feminist literature and translated from the English expression ‘gender violence’ (2010, 14). Chirinos indicates what types of violence against women are excluded by the law: all the cases where the victim (woman) and the aggressor (man) “did not have a relation that intended a project for the future”. Chirinos also underlines the fact that there is not a univocal consensus about how to interpret the law and apply it, each *Audiencia Provincial*³⁶ decides how to interpret it (2010, 26). Thus, strictly speaking, this law excludes all the cases of sexual aggressions,

³² Gender based violence.

³³ Sexist violence.

³⁴ Law of Measures of Integral Protection against Gender Based Violence 1/2004, also known as Organic Law 1/2004.

³⁵ “as the manifestation of discrimination, of an unequal situation and the power relations of men over women. It is inflicted upon women by those who are or have been their partners or by those who are or have been linked to them by similar relations of affection even in the case of no cohabitation. It includes every act of physical or psychological aggression to their sexual freedom including, threat, coercion and the arbitrary privation of liberty”.

³⁶ Court of Law in a province.

harassment, threat, rape and *violencia machista* in general that occur outside the realm of intimate (ex)partner relationships. It does not include female genital mutilation either: all these other crimes, together with trafficking are supposed to be handled by the regular penal procedure.

In the definition of *violencia de género*, race and/or ethnicity are not specifically mentioned³⁷. A priori the definition is made within the formulation of a law that has to be applied to everyone without distinctions. However, the race/ethnicity neutrality of the narrative implies a white conceptualization of violence, which carries implicitly the risk of ignoring the dimensions of violence that affect women belonging to minority groups.

3.5.2 Violencia Machista

The Spanish press refers usually to VAW with the term, *violencia machista* –sexist violence-. The word *machista* signifies an ideology that identifies men as superior over women and as such with the right to dominate them³⁸. Therefore with *violencia machista*, it is made clear what the intention is: to subjugate and dominate women (Sánchez Rodríguez 2008); however, the term ‘*machista*’ essentializes the perpetrator, constructing him as a pathologically violent *hyper masculine* male³⁹.

Therefore, the Spanish legal system identifies ‘violence in intimate (ex) partner relationships’ as *violencia de género* which is constructed as a gendered phenomenon that has women as victims and men as perpetrators and includes the aspect of the role that power relations play. This definition of *violencia de género* excludes many forms of VAW. Some of those exclusions are incorporated in the expression *violencia machista*, but this expression essentializes the perpetrator as a pathologically violent hyper-masculine man, which is a concept in consonance with the definition of ‘*violencia*’ in the Spanish dictionary.

The model of Renée Römken, as we have seen in the Dutch definitions of VAW, is not applicable in Spain. There is no degendering of domestic violence, which is embedded in *violencia de género*, and no ethnicizing of *violencia machista*, except that both terms are implicitly conceptualized as white.

³⁷ Neutral or ‘unraced’ positions are nonexistent, since the apparent racial neutrality signifies a rhetorical construction of whiteness (Frankenberg 1993, Nakayama & Krizek 1995).

³⁸ Machista: word that signifies a set of laws, norms, attitudes and socio cultural features of men with the explicit or implicit purpose of producing, maintaining and perpetuating women’s oppression and submission at all levels. (Diccionario ideológico Victoria Sau)

³⁹ ‘*Hyper-masculinity*’ constructions are product of social and cultural interactions that aim to social control and power. Nonetheless, hyper-masculinity in criminology tends to be essentialized and linked to the pathological individual. (Kersten 1996, 382)

Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed theoretical feminist approaches to a definition of VAW. The purpose of this thesis is to be inclusive in the definition of VAW and therefore, I have adopted the intersectional perspective. The definitions of VAW in legal/political texts follow patterns of inclusion and exclusion that make of VAW something different than the phenomenon described in feminist theory, namely in legal and political texts, the social elements and especially most of the power relations that trigger VAW, are being concealed. The Dutch legal/political discourse constructs an ethnicized definition of VAW and a degendered, white definition of domestic violence, through the consideration of domestic violence / violence in intimate (ex)partner relationships as ethnically and gender neutral and downplaying sexual violence, while constructing other forms of VAW as ethnically and gender marked.

The Spanish legal/political discourse constructs *violencia de género* as VAW, excluding from the definition many other forms of VAW. Outside the legal/political discourse the expression *violencia machista* aims to include all forms of women's oppression by men. Nevertheless, in the construction of *violencia machista* the social responsibility vanishes, since it focuses on the pathologically violent and hyper-masculine individual.

In the following chapters, I will show how the press produces news items that to a great extent mirror the legal/political discourses on VAW.

4. The Press and VAW in The Netherlands

In this chapter, the level of acknowledgment of VAW will be analysed in the *Volkskrant* and in *De Telegraaf*. How is VAW represented in these two newspapers? Is every aspect of VAW being covered? Which forms of VAW are rendered more visible? Are stereotypes –consciously or unconsciously- being reproduced in the news items?

4.1 De Volkskrant

Founded in 1919, de *Volkskrant* has a circulation of about 372.000 copies⁴⁰. It is considered an example of the change that occurred as a consequence of the end of the *verzuiling*, pillarized⁴¹

⁴⁰ Data from www.pressreference.com/Ma-No/Netherlands.html (accessed August 1, 2011).

⁴¹ The *verzuiling* is the term to denominate the segmentation of Dutch society in four generic political/religious pillars: Protestant, Catholic, Socialist and Neutral. Each of these pillars constituted a complete social system with press/media included. The people belonging to one of the pillars did not necessarily come in contact with

society. De Volkskrant had been the newspaper of the Catholic *zuil* and evolved into a secularized, “left-of-center newspaper with a particularly strong appeal to public sector employees” (van der Eijk 2000, 315). It is considered a semi-quality⁴² newspaper – which can be understood as the second highest rating on quality- the reasons for this consideration are: well developed background stories for national and international ‘current affairs’ and an alluring opinion/editorial page that has evolved into a platform for political debate (315).

In January and February 2011, ten articles were published in de Volkskrant that had a direct relation with an aspect of VAW and one article that connected indirectly with the subject. Only one of these articles, a one page long reportage, gave voice and subjectivity to the actual victims. The reportage was published under the label ‘*Huiselijk Geweld*’⁴³ and was given the relevance of social concern⁴⁴. The other articles appeared within the pages *binnenland*⁴⁵, four of them were one column, short news items, most of them covered as crime incidents.

Each news item shows aspects that allow a classification within at least one of the following three categories: degendering domestic violence; ethnicizing VAW; trivializing sexual violence. Some of the stories present elements pertaining also to other category; they have been classified according to the core discourse that the stories spread. I will explain each category with the help of the analysis of the most representative news items.⁴⁶

1. Degendering domestic violence (18%).

The stories pertaining to this category show aspects that contribute to the gender neutralization of domestic violence; this means that men and women within an intimate partner relationship are thought to have equally chances to become victims or perpetrators. The narratives construct domestic violence as white and also as less violent towards women than other forms of VAW. These stories are narrated by female reporters, which adds reliability to the discourse of

the people of the other pillars. Historians argue that the *ontzuiling* –end of the pillars- began partly because of the influence of the mass media pertaining to one *zuil* on the people belonging to the other *zuilen* and partly because of the individualization and secularization of society during the 60s (Mulder et al 1989, 255).

⁴² See 2.1.1 Newspaper’s semiotics (Bignell 2002, 89).

⁴³ Domestic Violence.

⁴⁴ See chapter 2, Newspaper’s semiotics.

⁴⁵ National.

⁴⁶ All the news items can be found in the attachment.

“domestic violence is gender neutral” because having female voices defending a “*patriarchal resistance*”⁴⁷ perspective, is an strategy supporting gender neutrality (Berns 2001, 269).

January 15, 2011: “Slachtoffer thuisgeweld is vaak man”⁴⁸. The highlighted unusual⁴⁹ element in this story is that, according to a recent study, 40% of victims of domestic violence are men⁵⁰. The journalist speaks of an empirical research validated with the authority of “three ministries” and developed by the institute – INTERVICT- together with the Centre of Science and Research (WODC) of the ministry of Security and Justice⁵¹. However, the article does not give some important details. It is not mentioned that the percentage (40% male victims) corresponds to a five year period study and that it is the result of the sum of three other percentages⁵². The silenced details indirectly support the basic characteristic of domestic violence: a social problem with predominantly women and children as victims. The article does not mention either that many cases are not reported to any institution. The story is written ethnically neutral, signifying ‘whiteness’ and supporting a construction of domestic violence as ‘white’⁵³.

⁴⁷ This concept has been used by Nancy Berns to describe the political discourse that obscures male violence while transferring responsibility to women for the violence (2001, 262).

⁴⁸ “Victim of Domestic Violence is often a man”

⁴⁹ In journalism, the concept of ‘unusualness’ does not have a concrete definition, neither does ‘news’ (Meyers 1997, 86).

⁵⁰ When talking of domestic violence, the victims are assumed to be women and children, while men are historically assumed to be the perpetrator.

⁵¹ This is the report “Huiselijk geweld in Nederland. Overkoepelend Syntheserapport van het vangst-hervangst-, slachtoffer- en daderonderzoek 2007-2010”. The authors: H.C.J. Van der Veen, from the Ministry of Justice, WODC and the Dutch forensic psychologist and criminologist S. Bogaerts from Tilburg University, INTERVICT.

⁵² The report explains the origin of the 40% of male victims of domestic violence. First, it is specified that this percentage refers to a period of five years - from 2005 to 2010-. Second, it is the result of the addition of three other percentages: percentage of victims of physical violence and harassment, percentage of victims of sexual violence and percentage of victims of other forms of violence.

“Wat geslacht betreft: gerapporteerd slachtofferschap komt ongeveer even vaak voor bij mannen als bij vrouwen. Slachtofferschap van lichamelijk geweld+stalking wordt ongeveer even vaak door mannen als vrouwen gerapporteerd; seksueel geweld komt viermaal vaker voor bij vrouwen dan bij mannen (20/80) en bijna 65% van de vrouwelijke slachtoffers rapporteert overig geweld (35% voor mannelijke slachtoffers). Op grond van samenvoeging van de drie vormen van geweld zien we dat 60% van de slachtoffers van het vrouwelijk geslacht is en 40% van het mannelijk geslacht.” (Van der Veen & Bogaerts 2010, 84)

⁵³ Whiteness has been defined as a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed (Frankenberg 1993). It has been also argued that whiteness is rhetorically constructed and rendered invisible and universal, which is “reflected in the ‘popular’ press discourse” (Nakayama & Krizek 1995, 300).

January 31, 2011: “Het is zwaar je ook nog eens altijd voor je ex te moeten verstoppen”⁵⁴. This is a long one page reportage, whose focus of attention is the first shelter with a public address⁵⁵. The reportage includes a picture of one of the residents, a white woman. The reporter, also a woman, Anneke Stoffelen, tells that the situation regarding women’s shelters is progressing in such a way that the location of the shelters is becoming increasingly public knowledge: “Vrouwen vinden zich veilig en kinderen hebben beter contact met hun vader”⁵⁶. This news item seems a priori in contradiction with the intention of degendering the problem but, it does support the myth that domestic violence is turning less dangerous for (white)women, since the shelters are becoming progressively more open to male perpetrators. The victims need to pass a *risicoscreening*⁵⁷, the ‘risk cases’ being those of honour related violence or harassment. As example, a Moroccan pregnant woman is mentioned, who says her husband wants to kill her. Therefore, the risk factor is ethnically marked.

In opinion of the experts, women are to blame for not being willing to break contact with the aggressors and the perpetrator is constructed as essentially violent, which is a concept closer to the ‘*machista*’ in Spain⁵⁸. Furthermore, while women are portrayed as victims of individuals, the male perpetrator is portrayed as victim of socio-economic factors⁵⁹. In this way, the responsibility falls exclusively on the individual, ignoring the diverse socio-economic factors responsible for the perpetuation of violent patterns of behaviour and the role of power relations there within.

2. Ethnicizing VAW (55%).

The stories within this category portray the not white man as perpetrator of VAW. The news items concern violence neither in an intimate partner relationship nor within the context of

⁵⁴ “It is hard to always have to hide from your ex”

⁵⁵ The Orange house.

⁵⁶ “Women find themselves safe and children have better contact with their father”

⁵⁷ Risk scan.

⁵⁸ As the director of the ‘Blijf Group’ Aleid van den Brink- indicates: “Veel vrouwen onderhielden stiekem contact. De helft van de cliënten keert na een tijdje toch weer terug naar hun man. Dan kun je maar beter zorgen dat je die gewelddadige partner ook bij de hulpverlening betreft” -“Many women kept secretly contact with their aggressors. Half of them came back to their husbands after a while. Then you’d better make sure that social assistance involves also the violent partner.”

⁵⁹ “Niemand gaat zomaar geweld gebruiken. Vaak zitten er andere problemen achter. Schulden, werkloosheid. Het helpt als je ook de partner zijn kant van het verhaal laat vertellen.”- “Nobody is going to use violence for no reason. Often, there are other problems like debts and unemployment. It helps if you allow also the partner to tell his side of the story”.

domestic violence. Within this category, I include as well the news items that focus in defending “innocent white Dutchness”. These stories reinforce the process of ethnicizing VAW by supporting the argument of the white Dutchman (Vincent T) who is ‘accidentally’ involved in a criminal scene. Moreover, these stories ignore the role of gender; they disassociate the murder from VAW.

The news items on January 21 and January 26 -“Nederlander verdacht in Britse moordzaak”⁶⁰ “Britse pers belegt familie Nederlandse verdachte”⁶¹- are stories whose narrative aims at the defence of the white Dutchman innocence while ignoring the role of gender in the violent crime. The reporter adopts the position of the assumed innocent suspect, who is portrayed as a reliable, intelligent white Dutchman.

De Volkskrant establishes a hierarchical categorization of newsworthiness, and distances itself from the kind of issues published by newspapers as the sensationalist British tabloids: “Voor kranten werpen zich in dit soort kwesties graag op als ‘wrekers van het volk’”⁶². “This kind of issues” literally refers to a category that is not specified but it is either “crimes” or “scandals”. Therefore, VAW is also taken under the general umbrella of ‘this kind of issues’, which implies that the events around the murder of Joana Yeats are being handled as a crime issue and not as a gender marked social problem.

January 27, 2011: “Man zonder benen misbruikt vrouw”⁶³. The article emphasizes the unusual characteristics of the perpetrator, a handicapped man: “Hoewel de Surinaamse Amsterdammer beide onderbenen mist, slaagt hij er keer op keer in vrouwen zijn wil op te leggen”.⁶⁴The ‘newsworthy’ element is the hyper-sexualized –although handicapped- man, who happens to be Surinamese; both elements - hyper-sexuality and ethnicity- connect with the stereotype of the hyper-sexual Black man. Kobena Mercer explains this stereotype by means of psychoanalysis: the Black man is reduced to a ‘penis’ by a fetishist process, transforming an object – in this case, a man- into a penis (Mercer 1994). This article offers the same fetishising process.

⁶⁰ “Dutchman suspect in British murder case”

⁶¹ “British press harasses Dutch suspect’s family”

⁶² “Mainly newspapers launch themselves into this kind of issues as ‘avengers of the people’”

⁶³“Man without legs abuses woman”

⁶⁴ “Surinamese from Amsterdam who, despite missing both legs succeeds, time after time, in imposing his will on women”

3. Trivializing VAW (27%).

The stories in this category portray cases of sexual violence, in the variations of either rape or prostitution. Most of the stories depict alleged perpetrators of a non Western origin; this is also a sign of the ethnicizing process behind the construction of “current affairs” and “newsworthiness” regarding sexual violence. However, in these stories is also shown that the alleged perpetrators have proved to be innocent and this fact provides evidence for two purposes: on the one hand to break the stereotype of the *allochtoon* as *loverboy* and on the other hand to construct sexual violence not as violence but as “sexuality”.

Regarding the question of prostitution as a form of VAW⁶⁵, the stories in this category show that prostitution is considered more sexuality than violence. Even in the case of “forced” prostitution, it is difficult to prove that the woman is really being forced. The stories do not make a clear portrait of the pimps nor of the clients; the figure that is always critically represented is the prostitute, and if a crime is underlined, this is the crime of tax evading by committing illegal prostitution. These stories show that legal prostitution in The Netherlands signifies sexual freedom, without questioning to what extent this is in fact freedom for the prostitute.

January 18, 2011: “Alle zeven verdachten in megaloverboyzaak vrijgesproken”⁶⁶. The reporter, a woman Anneke Stoffelen, begins the article by presenting the victim as a liar and doubting her victimization, while aligning herself with the statements of the Court. As a consequence of the victim’s unreliability, all seven suspects were set free of the charges of abuse and trafficking. The victim’s accusations of rape and her allegations of being forced to practice prostitution are described as ‘fantasy’. The support that the victim has from *Openbaar Ministerie* – public prosecution- and the *Stichting Stop Loverboy* – Association to stop ‘loverboys’⁶⁷ - appear not to be

⁶⁵ The European Women’s Lobby (EWL) has launched a campaign against prostitution under the consideration that this is a form of VAW in itself and that prostitutes should be considered victims that should be provided with alternatives and services to be able to quit the system of prostitution. One of the arguments of the EWL is that financial inequalities and lack of resources may force individuals to attempt survival, by commercializing with their bodies. www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?rubrique202&lang=eu (accessed July 31, 2011).

⁶⁶ “All seven suspects in *megaloverboy* case, free of charges”

⁶⁷ ‘*Loverboy*’ signifies in The Netherlands a specific sort of procurer or ‘pimp’, in Dutch ‘*souteneur*’ or ‘*pooier*’, which in the Van Dale dictionary is defined as a man who lives of the money a prostitute makes, while he functions as her protector (2005, 781). However, the term ‘*loverboy*’ is ethnically marked, being mostly represented by Non Western, dark skinned men, which is usually associated with young Moroccan men (www.lover-boy.nl, accessed October 19, 2011). *Loverboys* have aroused social alarm. Groups and associations supporting the victims have emerged, which give information about how to recognize a ‘*loverboy*’ (www.lover-boy.nl); in contrast to the ethnicized *loverboy*, white ‘pimps’ and their victims do not get the same attention.

reliable enough. The narrative defends the innocence of the alleged perpetrators, portraying them as victims in a story where rape and prostitution become female sexual fantasies. Due to the ethnically marked character of the concept 'loverboy', de Volkskrant provides in this article arguments that contradict the stereotype of the young *allochtoon* male criminal.

February 24, 2011: "In actie tegen hotelprostitutie", "Een meisje huurt voor langere tijd een hotelkamer. Het kan een prostituee zijn, die er haar klanten wil ontvangen. De politie gaat hotels leren hoe deze praktijken te voorkomen"⁶⁸. The prostitute is pictured as an ambivalent figure: on the one hand as a disempowered, naive victim, on the other hand as a punishable criminal. The hotel owners get a doubtful profile; on the one hand, they seem in general willing to help, on the other, they are pictured as unconsciously collaborating with the traffickers. The absent figures in this portrait are the clients and the trafficker⁶⁹ or pimp, who is the ultimate financial beneficiary of the prostitute's exploitation.

Summarizing discourses in De Volkskrant

The discourses found in De Volkskrant mirror the Dutch political discourses, identified by Römken as degendering and ethnicizing VAW and maintained in the *Emancipatiemonitor* 2010. De Volkskrant spreads a concept of domestic violence marked by its whiteness and genderlessness; the concept restricts itself to intimate (ex) partner relationships where male and female partners present unequal power relations but, this inequality is not gender marked since both male and female are found equally susceptible of using violence against each other. Regarding violence within ethnicized intimate partner relationships, the discourse supports the idea that *eergerelateerd geweld* has more severe consequences for women than 'white' domestic violence- January 31-.

De Volkskrant in the news items concerning sexual violence and prostitution - January 18; February 7- constructs stories that trivialize sexual crimes and avoids the stereotype of the figure

⁶⁸ "A girl rents a hotel room for a long time. It can be a prostitute who wants to receive her clients there. Police is going to teach hotels how to prevent these practices"

⁶⁹ 'Trafficker' signifies a very specific type of procurer or pimp, with the connotation of illegal commercial interchange associated to foreign women being forced into prostitution. This is a term that denotes a modality of twenty-first century procurer, moving across international borders. Just like we have seen in the case of the 'loverboy', the word 'trafficker' is usually also associated to non Western men. In fact, the 2009 UNODC study *Trafficking in Persons; Analysis on Europe* associates the 'loverboy' with the trafficker and specifies that many criminal justice systems tend not to consider national victims as victims of human trafficking but they are categorized as victims of other crimes such as sexual exploitation, kidnapping or forced labour; all these categories can be equally considered human trafficking (Sarrica 2009, 10).

of the *'loverboy'*, which is an ethnically loaded term. However, the newspaper does not present cases of white Dutch perpetrators of sexual exploitation. Prostitution is represented as an expression of sexual freedom and fair trade business, unless the woman is being forced into prostitution; in this case, it is challenging to prove that the woman is really being 'forced'. Rape and sexual abuse are also represented as difficult to verify⁷⁰. The alleged suspects that often prove their innocence, emerging free of charges, confirm also this theory. Nonetheless, sexual criminals are notoriously represented by non Dutch or/and non Western male perpetrators.

De Volkskrant locates itself explicitly at a high level in a hierarchy of newsworthiness, by limiting the coverage of those issues that are considered proper of the sensationalist press⁷¹; yet, in the selection of issues and construction of 'current affairs' the Volkskrant shows to be susceptible to cultural stereotypes that are ethnically, class and gender marked.

4.2 De Telegraaf

Founded in 1890, De Telegraaf did not ascribe itself to any pillar during the *verzuijing* (van der Eijk 2000, 310). Nowadays, it is considered the leading Dutch newspaper, with a distribution of approximately 777.000⁷². Politically, the newspaper situates itself in centre-right (Ibid). Regarding the thematic, De Telegraaf focuses on non-political issues like sports and 'human interest stories'⁷³. According to *telegraafmedia.nl*, one of every five readers works –or wishes to work- for the government or in the non-profit sector⁷⁴. The average De Telegraaf's reader is a middle-aged man with work experience in management and sales. The ethnically neutral narrative in the description of the 'average reader' connotes an assumed white male reader.

In all 50 issues of De Telegraaf, 25 news items were found related to VAW. There are several significant features in these articles that deserve detailed analysis. Firstly, it is necessary to indicate that they all are representations of individual occurrences, they do not evidence a social weakness; they portray "private problems" not a social one. Hence, De Telegraaf does not

⁷⁰ It supports the pornographic discourse where sexual violence remains more 'sex' than 'violence'.

⁷¹ That is explicitly stated in the articles where the British sensationalist press is criticized. See chapter 2, Newspaper's semiotics.

⁷² www.pressreference.com (accessed August 1, 2011)

⁷³ Human interest stories are understood as news items that trigger emotions (Semetko & Valkenburg 2000, 95).

⁷⁴ www.telegraafmedia.nl (accessed November 8, 2011)

acknowledge the problem VAW as such. The discourse of denial of VAW as social problem was also found in De Volkskrant.

Spanish studies on media coverage of *violencia de género*, indicate that representations of these crimes as individual news items, have a “narcotic effect”, that is: the reader becomes overwhelmed, and the impact of the news as awareness of a social problem vanishes. Therefore, the need has been established to represent those cases within the frame⁷⁵ of “society” and as a social problem and in a fixed section of the newspaper (López Díez 2002; Sánchez Rodríguez 2008). According to this theory, it can be assumed that the kind of coverage provided by De Telegraaf favours the “narcotic effect”.

The stories in De Telegraaf show aspects that make possible a classification in, at least one of the following categories: Ethnicizing VAW -where women lose their lives- (60%); Pathologizing the psychologically unfit violent white individual (24%) and a less representative category (8%) Pro-Life activism –in defence of the family and the unborn baby-. The first and most salient category “ethnicizing VAW” is formed by two sets of stories that complement and support each other: the “defence of innocent white Dutchness” and the “portrayal of the essentially perverse Other”. I will explain each category and illustrate them with the most significant stories.

1- Ethnicizing VAW (60%)

There are two sets of stories that support a discourse that ethnicizes VAW. The first set focuses on the “defence of the white Dutchman innocence” (32%). The second set emphasizes the race, ethnically and nationally Other – Germans, Polish living in The Netherlands, Turkish, Syrian, Kenyans- as essentially sexually aberrant or excessive (28%).

The narratives that are salient for the arguments in defence of the innocent white Dutchman - Vincent T’s case 24%- ignore the role of gender. There is also a story that trivializes white sexual violence by portraying cases of false accusations where sexual violence is shown to be difficult to prove. Both discourses, “the white Dutchman innocence” and “white sexual violence that is not violence”, support each other.

In the narratives concerning ethnically marked perpetrators, the victims are mostly also ethnically or nationally marked. None of these news items establish any link or suggestion about the possibly psychological unfitness of the perpetrators or their presumed innocence.

⁷⁵ Media studies have analyzed the effect of news framing and have revealed its importance for “the public interpretation of issues and events” (Semetko & Valkenburg 2000, 94)

January 22, 2011: “Waar rook is”⁷⁶. The story presents white Dutch actors in a Dutch setting in cases of sexual violence where the white Dutch perpetrator is presumed innocent. It focuses on the cases of male victims wrongly accused of sexual crimes. The story is supported by the arguments of experts who indicate the necessity for stronger ways to discern false accusations of sexual crimes. They indicate that between the 10% and 40% of all the accusations are false, which supports that sexual violence is more sexuality than violence. Both discourses, innocent white Dutchness and trivialising white sexual violence, support each other in this reportage.

February 21, 2011: “Turkse vete kost vrouw leven”⁷⁷. This is an ethnicized story of VAW with ethnically Other actors in a Dutch setting. The narrative in the article is ethnically marked, by means of linguistic structures, like ‘Turkish vendetta’, a tragedy with ethnic identity, along with the connotations that the word ‘vete’ signifies: a long lasting, deep animosity between two families, clans, groups or individuals that explodes in violent confrontations⁷⁸. The reporter speculates about the possibility that the motive for the shooting was to be sought in “*eerwraak*”⁷⁹ or a conflict between two Turkish families. De Telegraaf distributes a representation that supports the stereotype of the *allochtoon*’s culture as the one that perpetrates VAW. In contrast, de Volkskrant published the story “Vrouw gedood”, “Dader gevlucht na schietpartij in hotel”⁸⁰, where an unidentified reporter portrays a tragic incident at a hotel in an antiseptic way. The gender neutrality of the narrative prevents an association with VAW, while the ethnic neutrality constructs the event as white. Thus, it can be argued that the newsworthy element for de Volkskrant is silently gendered and ethnicized.

2- Pathologizing the psychologically unfit violent white individual (24%)

The dominant discourse is that white Dutch perpetrators are usually insane. The stories portray white Dutch perpetrators as mentally sick or unstable; they are individuals who are easily driven by their emotions, who react violently from an inner uncontrollable rage.

⁷⁶ “Where smoke is...”

⁷⁷ “Turkish vendetta costs a woman her life”.

⁷⁸ www.encyclo.nl/begrip/vete (accessed August 3, 2011)

⁷⁹ Honor related violence.

⁸⁰ “Woman Dead”, “Perpetrator escaped after shooting in hotel”

February 14, 2011: “Ina geeft Johan dodelijke klap met koekenpan”⁸¹. This is a story of domestic violence where the aggressor is a woman. The narrative implies white Dutchness. The actors are portrayed as psychologically unfit, underlining the aspect of alcoholism as explanatory element. There are other explanations that highlight the factor ‘self-defence’. However, both partners are portrayed as equally responsible for the bad relationship between them.

February 21, 2011: “Billen fotograaf op heterdaad betrapt”⁸². This is a story about a case of sexual violence, narrated in an ethnically neutral way, which signifies whiteness. The story constructs an ‘abnormal’ perpetrator. The sexual connotations of the photograph’s criminal behaviour are stated explicitly: “Hij beweerde al tien jaar zulke foto’s te maken en daar opgewonden van te raken”⁸³. The story highlights the uniqueness of the case, the individuality of the perpetrator, as if this were the behaviour of a bizarre individual –the ‘madman’-, isolated from social, cultural phenomena.

This story contrasts with the way in which de Volkskrant covered the same incident. Two stories: a short one column news item in the *binnenland* pages –“Man opgepakt”, “Billen fotograaf slat weer toe”⁸⁴ and a longer article on Rap music in the section of art and culture, “Rapper Sir-Mix-A-Lot Met Baby Got Back. Aanbidders van de vrouwenkont; Archetype de Groninger billenphotograph”⁸⁵. In the second news item, the reporter, Anna van den Breemer, establishes a link between some cultural products –Rap music- that commoditize women’s buttocks and the photographer of Groningen, “Het aanbidden van de vrouwenbil is inmiddels een geaccepteerd goed geworden. Niet iets om stiekem over te doen”⁸⁶. Furthermore, there is also an ethnicized twist in this article, since the reporter is talking of an African American musician and his successful ode to Black women’s bottoms. Black female femininity is represented through its stereotype of excessive sexuality, which is central in the construction of white racism (Hill Collins 2005, 129) but, at the same time it is taken as signifier of Black female empowerment (Ibid).

⁸¹ “Ina gives Johan a deadly blow with frying pan”.

⁸² “Bottom’s photograph caught in action”.

⁸³ “He declared to have been making such pictures for the last ten years and to become aroused by them”.

⁸⁴ “Man arrested”, “Buttocks photograph attacks again”.

⁸⁵ - “Rapper Sir-Mix-A-Lot with Baby got Back. Providers of the women’s bottom; Archetype the buttocks photograph from Groningen”.

⁸⁶ “The offer of women’s buttocks has become already an accepted commodity. Not even something to be done secretly”

Thus, while for De Telegraaf it is only the individual “mad” and/or “criminal” who has a “bizarre” behaviour, for de Volkskrant, the whole society shares the same bizarreness. This bizarreness has actually an origin in the racist gendered stereotype of the Black female body; however, this stereotype has got a different meaning when used by the Black woman herself.

3- Pro-Live activism, in defense of the family and the unborn baby (8%).

I have observed in two news items - “Verdachte van mishandeling zwangere vrij”; “Drama kost halfjaar oude baby het leven”- that children victims of VAW, including an ‘unborn’ baby, are the newsworthy elements. These are emotionally loaded stories that represent universal human values in defence of the rights of children. However, they can discursively be constructed in defence of family values and in support of a ‘prolife’ activism – as in the case of the attacked pregnant woman-, which are discourses usually found in centre-right conservative political positions. These stories focus on the violence, accidentally inflicted to a foetus and a baby.

January 15, 2011: “Verdachte van mishandeling zwangere vrij”⁸⁷. The story is ethnically neutral, which supports the assumption of white protagonists. The newsworthy element and focus of the story is the foetus being attacked.

February 28, 2011: “Drama kost halfjaar oude baby het leven”⁸⁸. A story of domestic violence, ethnically neutral narrated, which focus is the innocent victim of his parents’ rage.

Summarizing discourses in De Telegraaf

The representation of the Dutch *autochtoon* perpetrator is in 56% of the cases: in sexual crimes the man is presumed innocent or psychologically disturbed; domestic violence is degendered and the perpetrators are both -man and woman- equally mentally unfit. This discourse contrasts with the racial or ethnic Other, who is portrayed as essentially sexually aberrant or excessive.

De Telegraaf in the coverage of most of these news items indulges in “gory details”. All the narratives construct emotionally salient stories. Too much information is given of the actual character of the actions, often with reiterative expressions⁸⁹. Female victims are defined in terms

⁸⁷ “Suspect of battering a pregnant woman, free”.

⁸⁸ – “Drama costs 6 months old baby its life”.

⁸⁹ Heibel op Duits opleidingsschip: “Er verschijnen verhalen over excessen met alcohol en seks aan boord. Een vrouwelijke cadet noemt de Gorch Fock het grootste drijvende bordeel van Duitsland. Zeemannen over de hele wereld spreken smalend over de Georg Fuck”. “Stories are told about the excesses with alcohol and sex on board. A female cadet names the Gorch Fock the biggest floating brothel of Germany. Sailors all over the world speak mockingly of the “Georg Fuck”.

of: “Turkse schone”⁹⁰, “mooie Indonesische”⁹¹ which are expressions that are gender and ethnically marked. These expressions reduce the victims to their physiological features and their sexually appealing character. All these elements correspond to the “Pornographic discourse” defined by Natalia Fernández Díaz, as an assimilation of the sexualized rhetoric from other media products, and result of the idea that sexual aggression is more a sexual act than an act of violence (2003, 203). Furthermore, the tone and style of De Telegraaf, with abundant, almost “visual” descriptions, and plentiful pictures, match the “reality-show discourse”, which is product of a certain kind of intertextuality⁹² influenced by the reality shows on television (Ibid).

Regarding the non-Dutch perpetrators, most of these cases have as result a dead person (“Heibel op Duits opleidingschip”; “Op haar jagen, dag en nacht”; “Dubieuze rol bankier bij kidnap vrouw”; “Turkse vete kost vrouw leven; “Rozenmeisje herbegraven”; “Zendenlingengezin in Keniaanse hel”). None of these news items establish any link or suggestion about the possibly psychological unfitnes of the perpetrators or their presumed innocence. In all these stories, the Other is portrayed as essentially sexually aberrant or excessive, this discourse comes in contrast to the innocent or ‘sick’ white Dutchman. All the stories are narrated as crime issues and not within the frame of “society”.

4.3 Conclusions

Theoreticians have maintained that current affairs are not objects in themselves, but that they are the result of a process of selection and ordering (Van Dijk 1989; van Zoonen 1994; Fernández Díaz 2003). In the process of news selection, the Volkskrant follows stereotyped criteria but the newspaper takes care in not reproducing those stereotypes in writing. However, by silencing some elements of the incident, the Volkskrant does not help to develop consciousness of a social problem. It does not embrace the responsibility of the media in combating VAW as social injustice in The Netherlands; it reduces all elements, perpetrators, victims and violence against women to mere informative commoditized objects.

⁹⁰ Turkish beauty.

⁹¹ Beautiful Indonesian.

⁹² The concept of intertextuality was introduced in the sixties by the feminist psychoanalyst and literature critic Julia Kristeva, who gave a twist to Bakhtin’s literary theory on dialogism and heteroglossia. With dialogism, it is understood that a text is a subjective reaction to another text. With heteroglossia, it is understood that a text is formed by all sorts of texts that are linked again to other kind of texts from different contexts and genres. Kristeva understood dialogism as a kind of heteroglossia and brought forward the argument that every text is part of a net or even part of a multi textual –or multi media- net. (Korsten 2009, 129)

Neither De Volkskrant nor De Telegraaf, acknowledge VAW as a systemic phenomenon for which everyone in society carries responsibility. Neither newspaper takes into consideration the concept of *‘geweld’* as manifestation of a situation of unbalanced power relations, the most common representation is that of the individual who is essentially violent⁹³; it is mainly observed in De Telegraaf, that follows this discourse with representations of the violent man whose actions are explained through his “madness” or his “otherness”.

In the construction of domestic violence, it is observed that both newspapers construct domestic violence as white, by the use of ethnically neutral narratives. Neither of them presents white women as the main victims, but both men and women are portrayed as equally victims or aggressors, this leads us to conclude that both de Volkskrant and De Telegraaf degender white domestic violence. On the other hand, both newspapers consider the ethnicized variation of domestic violence, *‘eengerelateerd geweld’*, more dangerous for women than white domestic violence.

The stories in De Telegraaf are more explicitly ethnically marked by stereotyping criteria than those in de Volkskrant. However, both newspapers support a discourse that ethnicizes VAW through two sets of arguments: defending the white Dutchman’s innocence and maintaining the sexual perversity of the racial/ethnic Other. These arguments support also the construction of white domestic violence as less dangerous than *eengerelateerd geweld*.

In the construction of sexual violence, de Volkskrant tends to represent cases of alleged suspects that were declared free of charges, while the victims are portrayed as having a suspicious profile. There are no representations of sexual violence against women through actual cases where the perpetrator has been condemned. De Volkskrant minimises VAW to a nonexistent level and trivializes sexual violence. Discrimination issues due to race, ethnicity or sexuality aspects are not included, neither are topics that evidence violence against women from the state or institutions, and prostitution is not seen as a VAW phenomenon.

De Telegraaf constructs individual news items⁹⁴ with special attention to details, objectivising victims and prioritising the sexual character of the occurrences. The discourses on sexual violence distributed by De Telegraaf support the white, heterosexual Dutchman’s construction of reality. The most salient discourse excludes the ethnic/racial Other from the possibility of being innocent or mentally unfit, as the white Dutchman often appears to be.

⁹³ In this sense, it is closer to the definition of ‘violencia’ in the Spanish dictionary.

⁹⁴ Which have a narcotic effect (Sánchez Rodríguez 2008).

5. The Press and VAW in Spain

In this chapter, I briefly refer to the strategy followed by the government in 2002 when suggestions were given to the press about how to represent *violencia de género*. Then, I will focus on the representations of VAW in two Spanish newspapers: EL PAÍS and ABC.

In 2002, the government published a series of suggestions about how to cover issues related to *violencia de género*⁹⁵. The intention was to provide some advice about how to represent victims and perpetrators in the media and also how to elevate the status of news items related to this subject (IORTV 2002). Five suggestions are salient: first, to include all news items on this subject in the section of society and not to handle them as isolated crime occurrences of passion; second, to fully identify perpetrators and describe the punishment that they receive; third, not to criminalize victims; fourth, to avoid collateral elements such as ethnicity or references to physical appearance of the victim and personality elements of the aggressor; fifth, to avoid adjectives and unnecessary descriptions of scenarios (IORTV 2002, 13).

The magistrate Sonia Chirinos highlights that the Spanish constitution makes public authorities responsible for the implementation of measures that guarantee equality (2010, 11). Possibly, this role of the public authorities as guarantor of equality has prompted the government to elaborate this set of advices to the media.

5.1 EL PAÍS

EL PAÍS saw the light in 1976, at the starting point of the transition to democracy and social transformation, EL PAÍS defines itself as a quality, politically independent⁹⁶ newspaper; however, it is mostly identified with a social-democratic position (Gunther et al 2000, 48). According to the OJD⁹⁷, EL PAÍS is the Spanish newspaper with the largest daily circulation figures: 370.080 daily issues.

⁹⁵ In 1997, one victim, Ana Orantes, was murdered by her husband immediately after having been in one TV talk show. This case has passed to history as the catalytic converter of the social awakening regarding domestic violence and the governmental actions to combat it (IORTV 2002; Chirinos 2010).

⁹⁶ In contrast to a category of Spanish press that, since the nineteenth century, had been self defined as propagandistic of political or religious ideas (Timoteo Alvarez 1989, 15).

⁹⁷ Oficina de Justificación de la Difusión, institution that gathers data about the number of copies published and sold of newspapers and magazines.

During the research period - January-February 2011-, twenty articles related to VAW in Spain were found in EL PAÍS. Most of them (95%) are framed within *sociedad*⁹⁸, this framing follows the advice of the IORTV. Most of the news-items show characteristics that allow a classification in at least one of the following categories, which will be explained with the analysis of the most representative news items⁹⁹.

1- Questioning the efficiency of the Law of measures against *violencia de género* (35%).

These stories ask who or what is responsible for the shortcomings of the Organic Law of Integral Protection Measures against *violencia de género*. They highlight questions about accountability in the ways the law is being implemented. The stories represent VAW that manifests itself in the number of dead and severely injured victims of *violencia de género*.

January 5, 2011: “Las ordenes de papel no evitan los crímenes”¹⁰⁰. The article criticizes the way in which the law is being applied. It introduces statistics that underline the weakness of the restricting order. The victims are represented as disempowered women with no other choice but to return to their abusive partners. Emotional and economical dependencies are presented as explanations; there is no mention of the social responsibility for that disempowerment: the education system, environment and labour systems, and global economic conditions (Weissman 2007). The problem is understood as social, but the representation does not imply social responsibility but individual. The article follows the discourse of acknowledgment of *violencia de género* supported by the government.

January 13, 2011: “Sólo el 25% de las mujeres con orden de protección acepta la ayuda del ayuntamiento”¹⁰¹. This article presents statistics showing the number of women in Madrid who reject the help that they are entitled to by law. The narrative underlines the surprising small number of women receiving help and Madrid city hall is blamed for that, because there is evidence of a high number of women in need of assistance. Thus, if the measures established by the government are not working, the reasons should be sought within the (mal) functioning of Madrid local administration, and how those measures are locally being implemented. However, the story does not offer any comparative data from other regions or cities in Spain.

⁹⁸ Society.

⁹⁹ The rest of the news items pertaining to each category are available in the attachment.

¹⁰⁰ “Paper orders do not prevent murders”.

¹⁰¹ “Only 25% of the women with a protection order accept help from Madrid city council”

2- Criticizing institutional powers that have an inherent authoritarian character: Judicial power; Military forces; High executives of Public Institutions; Catholic Church (30%).

The stories in this category portray institutions that show evidence of some undemocratic traces, possibly inherited from the ideological leftovers of the dictatorship. Implicitly, these institutions are linked to gender biased patterns of behaviour.

January 10, 2011: “El gobierno insta a los jueces a no esgrimir una patología inexistente”¹⁰².

Judges are portrayed as potential supporters of the controversial PAS¹⁰³ (Parental Alienation Syndrome). The narrative does not make clear the role of this argument in cases of *violencia de género*, but underlines the efforts of the government in combating its (mis)use by ‘gender biased judges’¹⁰⁴, who are “pocos pero ruidosos”¹⁰⁵ according to Miguel Lorente, the *Delegado del gobierno contra violencia de género*¹⁰⁶. The article gives the idea of a struggle between two state powers – Executive against Judicial- with victims of *violencia de género* as “doubly victimized” by invalid arguments and gender biased judges. The government is depicted as the true guardian of the interests of the victims of *violencia de género*.

February 18, 2011: “Un escándalo de abusos sexuales sacude al ejército de EEUU”¹⁰⁷. The reportage portrays female soldiers, who are victims of sexual crimes within the USA Army, not only as victims of the sexual crime, but also as victims of discrimination within their profession, having been forced to abandon their careers in the military forces due to the pressure of high ranking officers. Although they are represented as disempowered by an abusive system, those women do not lack agency, since they have created networks to fight back the USA Army abusive officers and help other victims. Perpetrators are portrayed as untouchable military officers, who situate themselves above the civilian code of law.

This scandal serves as background to bring forward the situation in Spain and underlines the issue of the ‘leftovers’ of the dictatorial regime. Within the military forces, violence used by the

¹⁰² “The government encourages judges to avoid using an inexistent pathology as argument”

¹⁰³ Parental alienation refers to the detachment of a child from the parents. The term “parental alienation syndrome” (PAS) was introduced by the child psychiatrist Richard A. Gardner. PAS has been criticized for its lack of scientific basis (Coulborn Faller. K 1998, 100-115).

¹⁰⁴ “Jueces de sesgo machista”.

¹⁰⁵ “just a few but noisy ones”.

¹⁰⁶ Government delegate against *violencia de género*.

¹⁰⁷ “Sexual abuse scandal shakes USA army”

officials has been constructed as the use or the “abuse” of legitimate power in different grades, while the term ‘violence’ is restricted to the civilian individual with a ‘violent temperament’. A historical summary of sexual abuses within the Spanish forces is revealed, highlighting that the military penal code does not include the concept of ‘sexual abuse’. All sexual crimes committed within the Spanish Army have been constructed as ‘power abuse’. The story portrays an abusive military system that constructs sexual violence as power abuse against the gendered, sexually or ethnic, subordinate Other.

3- Constructing the individual “*machista*” with violent temperament (15%).

In this category, the stories blame the individual for the violent actions and tend to find arguments of justification in the realm of psychiatry. The representations concern mostly *violencia machista* with elements that essentialize the individual ‘*machista*’, as the male with a violent temperament. Some stories highlight the differences with *violencia de género*.

January 12, 2011: “Detenido un estudiante de ESO por dejar en coma a una compañera”¹⁰⁸. There was not an intimate relationship between the teenagers, therefore this is not a case of *violencia de género*, the article underlines this statement of Rafael González Tovar, delegate of the government in Murcia. The position of the government is represented as fixated on how the law marks the boundaries of *violencia de género*. The victim is an Ecuadorian girl, this fact frames her within a vulnerable group at the intersection of gender/ethnicity and class, susceptible of discrimination due to unequal power relations, yet the article and the government, ignore these facts and emphasize the inner violent temperament of the aggressor –following the general concept of *violencia* in the dictionary. The opinions of classmates at school reinforce the discourse that blames the individual: “the institution is a normal school with a good social status, where there is never a fight”. The school claims that the occurrence took place outside official school hours, which emphasizes the school’s denial of responsibility in the case.

January 14, 2011: “Más víctimas del odio de los padres”¹⁰⁹. The article focuses on children as victims of *violencia de género*. Expert psychologists offer explanations for their victimization: “fear, insecurity, revenge”. The discourse blames the individual and seeks explanations to the violence in inner emotion. Socio and economical factors that might be the origin of the problem are

¹⁰⁸ “A high school student is arrested leaving a classmate in a coma”.

¹⁰⁹ “More victims of the hate between parents”.

ignored. The problem is publicly addressed as social, but the arguments to combat it do not involve social structures.

4- Underlining the vulnerability of Latin-American women living in Spain (15%).

The stories in this category have as protagonists Latin-American women as victims of *violencia machista* in Spain. The extra vulnerability of immigrant women is highlighted and arguments are offered in support of the government's measures to protect these women. However, the measures of protection of immigrant women cover only some intersections of vulnerability of these women. This protection is intended for the victims of *violencia de género*, which means that the other forms of VAW to which immigrant women are extra vulnerable are not being considered, if the exact definition of *violencia de género* is applied.

January 27, 2011: "Dos muertas por violencia machista elevan a cinco las asesinadas este año"¹¹⁰. The reporter of this article, a woman called Ania Elorza, does not make a distinction between *violencia machista* and *violencia de género*. The newsworthy element in this article is that there are already five dead women at the hands of men. The story narrates two cases involving two Cuban victims and a Cuban perpetrator. The first case concerns an old married couple –ages 76 and 82-, both Cubans. The second case concerns a young Cuban woman –age 34- and her partner and alleged perpetrator, a 56 years old Spanish man¹¹¹.

February 7, 2011: "Borrador del reglamento que desarrolla la ley de extranjería. Las sin papeles que denuncien maltrato no serán expulsadas"¹¹². This reportage specifies in which ways the new law protects victims of *violencia de género* among the immigrant women. In support of these measures of protection, the reportage mentions last year's percentage of dead women victims of *violencia de género*, among non Western immigrants: 31% of the total 73 casualties.

¹¹⁰ "Two more dead women, victims of *violencia machista*, make for a total, so far, of five casualties".

¹¹¹ Regarding this second case, several studies have shown the connection between sex tourism to Caribbean countries, sexual fantasies about the ethnic/cultural Other and the global economic circumstances that confer Western men a status of power and control over the ethnic/cultural female Other (O'Connell Davidson & Sanchez Taylor 1999; Wonders & Michalowsky 2001; Janssen 2007). Many immigrant women in Europe, find themselves within this context in the ambiguous position of, on the one side being idealised by Western men who are longing for the ethnic/cultural female Other and on the other side being stereotyped as the disempowered woman whom those same men long to control and dominate (Janssen 2007, 167-175).

¹¹² "First draft of the regulation that develops the Law of foreigners. Women without papers that report abuse, won't be expelled from the country"

Summarizing discourses in El País

By having a fixed section in the newspaper, all the issues related to VAW get a higher category in the hierarchy of newsworthy issues –politics, economy, science, culture-. Most of the stories are framed within ‘society’: *violencia de género*, *violencia machista*, gender discrimination, glass ceiling effect, violence against the immigrant woman and gender based violence on internet. Just one item has been framed within “opinion”, that is the place reserved for the experts’ views, which contributes to elevate the rank of the subject.

EL PAÍS acknowledges VAW in Spain, either among Spanish actors or foreign actors. VAW is constructed as *violencia machista*, which is represented as the physical violence that a male individual exercises over a female and that has severe consequences for the female –mostly death. However, the reporters tend to use the expressions *violencia machista* and *violencia de género* indistinctively, which may be confusing since both expressions in a juridical context signify different things¹¹³. The ambiguous use of the expressions together with the tendency in the narratives to blame the individual with a violent temperament -which coincides with the definition of violence in the Spanish dictionary- reveal how problematic the definition of *violencia de género* is, that expose the victims of VAW to multiple victimization.

The problem with *violencia machista* is that, while it does not restrict the definition to VAW within partner relationships, the concept essentializes the sexist male with a violent temperament. In this case, unbalanced power relations are represented as the product of biological determinism and not of the social construction of gender.

In EL PAÍS, 65% of the news items focus on the efficiency of the Law of Measures against *violencia de género* or criticize institutions of power that have been historically characterized by their authoritative and conservative structures – ‘The *Consejo General del Poder Judicial*¹¹⁴ (CGPJ); Catholic Church; Military forces. The discourses in EL PAÍS about the efficiency of the Law of Measures against *violencia de género* provoke public debate on the ways the Law is being implemented. The representations that criticize authoritative institutions highlight the evidences of gendered biased structures or individuals within those institutions; however, there are no representations of other social –less conservative- structures that need to be analyzed in terms of

¹¹³ See chapter 3.

¹¹⁴ General Council of the Judicial Power.

their still gender biased elements, like for example: the *Seguridad Social*¹¹⁵, the Hospital and the figure of the *médico*¹¹⁶, public schools and the University, political and socio-economic organizations.

The governmental discourse¹¹⁷ on violence against the immigrant woman, which justifies the measures of protection of legal and illegal immigrant victims of *violencia de género*, is also supported by EL PAÍS, with representations of dignified female immigrant victims at the hands of either Spanish or immigrant male perpetrators. However, in general, EL PAÍS avoids mentioning ethnic groups concerning both victims and perpetrators, and constructs ethnically neutral representations –except for the articles supporting immigrant women victims of *violencia de género* or *machista*-. Hence, the type of violence that is represented is white, following the white Spanish conceptualization of violence. For example, there is absolutely no mention of *violencia de género* against the Romani woman, nor other forms of violence against her. Outside *violencia machista*, there are no stories about the multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination or violence on basis of ethnicity or/and religion, for example, the many aspects of the social exclusion of Romani and Muslim women¹¹⁸. Race/ethnicity blindness, as well as gender and sexual blindness, carry within the risk of blindness regarding many forms of discrimination and VAW, that is precisely what the intersectional approach intends to avoid.

¹¹⁵ The Social Security(SS) System, is an umbrella institution under which several citizen's rights are being coordinated: health insurance; pensions; unemployment benefits; benefits for handicapped etc. As any other State's institution, it is organised in a system of power relations where the citizen is at the lowest level of the hierarchical ladder. The SS discourse is supported by a rhetorically authoritarian system of communication with the citizen. There within, the figure of the doctor -and the figure of the public servant- acquires the same authoritative power of control as the officer in the Army, the judge at court, the Catholic priest at Church or an executive director of a Cultural Public Institution.

¹¹⁶ Doctor.

¹¹⁷ At the time of this research the government had a socialist (PSOE) majority, after 20-11-11 there is a new majority party, the conservative PP.

¹¹⁸ About the social exclusion of the Romani woman there are several organizations that denounce this situation: www.asgg.org; project "Callí Butipén"; www.unionromani.org. (accessed September 3, 2011)

About Spanish Islamophobia: There have been several articles and studies about the Spanish phobia to Muslims: "The Islam strikes against women's dignity. Muslim women accept that submission pleasantly" (Gómez García, 2011) ; National Islamophobia Decalogue (*EL País*, January 17)

5.2 ABC

The ABC was founded in 1903 as a weekly magazine. From its origins, the ABC is characterized by: a liberal-conservative ideology in support of the monarchy¹¹⁹; however, it defines itself as independent and with no attachment to any political party. It was an example of a new kind of journalism at the beginning of the twentieth century which special feature was a business blueprint and its support of the liberal market economy (Iglesias 1989, 45). Nowadays, ABC's readers position themselves in the right-of-centre and right wing (Gunther et al. 2000, 54). According to the OJD, ABC had in 2010 a daily average circulation of 249.539 issues.

In the researched period, thirty-five news items related to VAW were found in ABC. These items appear rather dispersed through the pages of the newspaper, mostly in *Nacional*¹²⁰ pages or in *Gente*¹²¹, which is the space reserved to gossip. Therefore, the news items related to different forms of VAW are not being framed within society but they are being handled as criminal issues within the national or local pages. All these stories present characteristics that allow a classification in six categories:

- 1- Highlighting a state of defencelessness, where the citizens do not have institutions that provide justice (48%).
- 2- Portraying an unsafe environment for every woman or girl (31%).
- 3- Portraying the construction of *violencia de género* by a patriarchal government (6%). In these stories, *violencia de género* do not have dead women as consequence but the expression is linked to gender discrimination. These two stories contradict each other: in the first one it is shown how the men of the socialist government are dictating what *violencia de género* is; January 20, 2011 “Se presenta el trabajo: ‘Cómo informar sobre violencia contra la mujer en las relaciones de pareja’”¹²². In the second one the same government is being accused of gender bigotry against men: February 10, “Múltiples

¹¹⁹ The first half of the twentieth century was marked by the state's structural instability and political turmoil with changes in the form of the state from monarchy to republic and from republic to monarchy and then again to republic till the civil war in 1936 and the military dictatorship from 1939 till 1976.

¹²⁰ National.

¹²¹ People.

¹²² “Presentation of the work: ‘How to inform about violence against women in intimate partner relations’”.

irregularidades en los contratos del Ministerio Aído. Demolador informe del Tribunal de Cuentas sobre la Delegación contra la Violencia de Género”¹²³.

- 4- Trivializing *violencia de género* in those cases not involving dead women (6%). This category shows examples of the Reality-show discourse, where the rich and famous are protagonists, the actors are a well known bullfighter and his wife.
- 5- Highlighting the overexposure to information on VAW on television and misuse of elements of VAW in the construction of media commodities (6%). The stories claim moral responsibility in the use of aspects related to violence in general and VAW in particular on television programs.
- 6- When prostitution becomes VAW (3%). There is only one item in this category however, it is important to mention it because it represents prostitution as a form of violence inflicted by the immigrant Other. January 20, 2011: “Una familia rumana prostituía a una menor”¹²⁴. Prostitution in itself is not considered VAW and there are not further representations of prostitution in Spain.

The first two categories are the most significant; therefore, I will explain and illustrate them with a couple of examples¹²⁵.

1- Highlighting a state of defencelessness (48%): where the individual does not count with trustworthy institutions that provide justice. In this category, the stories criticize the actions of the judicial system to fight *violencia de género* and *violencia machista*, highlighting the unsuccessful implementation of the Law and women’s disempowerment. The system of implementation of the measures of protection is being questioned. At the same time the judicial system is criticized for allowing criminals to walk free on the streets. All these issues underline the malfunctioning of the legal and judicial systems with a rhetoric that corresponds to the reality show discourse (Fernández Díaz 2003, 203).

February 3, 2011: “No hay pruebas, pero lo hice”¹²⁶. This is a story of *violencia machista*. The alleged perpetrator, after having been declared innocent by a popular jury, made the public

¹²³ “Multiple irregularities in the contracts of Aído’s Department. Shattering report from the Spanish Court of Audits on the Department against *Violencia de Género*”.

¹²⁴ “A Rumanian family forced a minor to practice prostitution”.

¹²⁵ The other news items can be found in the attachment.

confession in the media that in fact he had killed a prostitute. However, an expert – the public prosecutor at Lugo Provincial court of Law- explains that the confession does not affect the judicial process unless the trial is repeated and the interview can be used as evidence. The perpetrator is portrayed as a man that has imposed himself over, not only his victim, but also over the jury and by extension the reader. This story shows a failure in the judicial system that the reader can interpret as defencelessness and disempowerment.

February 16, 2011: “Mata a su ex-mujer, a la que se negó teleasistencia, con un hacha”¹²⁷. This is a story of *violencia de género* whose actors are a married couple in process of separation. The alleged perpetrator had been condemned to fourteen months in jail, but he had been temporarily released. Three elements are made salient in this story: first, the woman had been denied *teleasistencia*¹²⁸; second, the fourteen months imprisonment of the alleged perpetrator had been suspended so that he could attend the course on “gender equality”¹²⁹; third, the manifestations on this case made by the former Minister of Internal affairs –Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba- “algo no ha funcionado bien en este caso”¹³⁰. The three elements support and substantiate each other and signify that the State’s system to combat *violencia de género* is not working. The course on “gender equality” did not change the individual *machista*, who finally killed his ex-wife.

2- Portraying an unsafe environment for every woman and girl (31%). The stories support the discourse that the implementation of the Law of measures against *violencia de género* is not succeeding. These stories follow the model of the “one more case”, implying that the situation is almost epidemic. The narrative indulges in minor ‘gory’ details, which can be associated to the reality show discourse as well as the pornographic discourse and contribute to create a disempowering effect on the readers. It also shows an incipient tendency to portray the immigrant man as “the perpetrator”.

¹²⁶“There are no evidences but I did it”

¹²⁷ “Kills his ex wife, whom had been denied protection, with an axe”

¹²⁸ Long distance mobile help that individuals with a high risk profile get and allows them to ask for fast help whenever they feel danger.

¹²⁹ Several public and private institutions offer courses on gender equality. These courses inform over different issues on gender equality, such as reproductive and sexual rights in Spain, and a non sexist language use and vocabulary - some of these courses include also ethnicity-. www.formacionenigualdad.es (accessed 21 December, 2011).

¹³⁰ “something has gone wrong in this case”.

January 31, 2011: “Dos mujeres asesinadas en Jaén y en Ciudad Real. Enero se cierra con al menos seis víctimas mortales por violencia de género”¹³¹ This story narrates two cases of *violencia de género* and highlights the number of femicides so far in Spain. The article makes a detailed description of the crimes and also underlines the economic crisis as having played a role in the violent actions of one of the cases. The narrative emphasizes the horror of the events and the state of defencelessness of women, which provoke a disempowering effect in the reader, specially the female reader.

February 24, 2011: “La violencia de género se dispara con otras dos víctimas en Reus y Valencia”¹³². This is another story of *violencia de género* that narrates two cases of murdered women at the hands of their partners. The story highlights the number of dead women so far, thirteen, in contrast with the four dead women in February 2010. One of the victims is described as Spanish, the other victim and both perpetrators are said to be Latin-Americans. The story highlights the situation of helplessness of women despite the measures against *violencia de género*.

Summary of the discourses spread by ABC on VAW

The newspaper ABC spreads the concept of VAW as *violencia machista* or *de género*, through news items that portray cases of severe manifestations of violence, with the consequence of death or serious injury. The narratives do not make a salient ethnic differentiation either among the victims or the perpetrators, most of the stories portray Spanish whiteness as well as the white Spanish concept of violence. However, some of the narratives show an initial interest in the cases concerning Non Western victims and perpetrators (February 6 “He surrenders himself in Barcelona after having killed his partner and her son in Almeria. A Pakistani man arrested for the death of a compatriot, whose home he had assaulted”; February 12 “Stabs his ex girlfriend in the shop where she worked”). The preferred newsworthy element is the criminal act underlining the violent temperament of the individual. Most of the stories construct a state of collective defencelessness and disempowerment of women as a result of the unsuccessful implementation of the Law against *violencia de género* and the irregular functioning of the State’s institutions.

There is an overflow of stories describing violence with profusion of ‘gory’ details. The descriptions do not connote sexuality but they make the reader almost visualize morbid scenes,

¹³¹ “Two women murdered in Jaen and in Ciudad Real. January closes with at least six mortal victims of *violencia de género*”.

¹³² “*Violencia de género* increases with other two victims in Reus and Valencia”.

in such a way that it can be considered pornography. This allows us to establish a link with the “reality-show” and the “pornographic” discourses (Fernández Díaz 2003).

ABC understands *Violencia de género* with dead victims as *violencia machista*. These news items may produce a narcotic effect (López Díez 2002; Sánchez Rodríguez 2008)¹³³. Besides, some studies on the effects of frequent exposure to VAW media stories, have shown that mostly women suffer the process of internalizing the status of being a victim (Reid P.& G. Finchilescu 1995, 397-411). Taking this into consideration, ABC contributes to create this disempowering effect. The newspaper distributes an ambiguous discourse that trivializes *violencia de género*, whenever this form of violence does not produce dead or severely injured women.

5.3 Conclusions

It has been shown how EL PAÍS and ABC construct VAW similarly as *violencia machista* where the lives of women are at risk, and that the term is used as synonym of *violencia de género* in those cases of intimate partner relationship and domestic violence with (almost) dead female victims. This construction does not make distinctions based on race, ethnicity, class, sexuality or of any other order. Although *violencia de género* is considered a social problem, the responsibility does not transcend the individual. The violent individual ‘*machista*’ is the only one to blame, and the *machista* is essentialized. Both newspapers spread discourses on VAW, according to their respective political agendas.

EL PAÍS tends to agree with the governmental (PSOE) discourse: The newspaper follows the governmental suggestions about media coverage of *violencia de género*; it is acknowledged that there are problems implementing the Law of measures against *violencia de género* and the stories inquire about accountabilities for the failures, outside the frames of powers linked to socialist influence. Other powers that are not necessarily linked to the socialist party are the focus of attention, like for example the CGPJ¹³⁴, and there within, the provincial courts of law and the figure of the gender biased judge. The stories support the set of measures undertaken by the government to fight *violencia de género* against the immigrant woman. There is support for the existence of the State Secretary for gender equality and the methods applied by this secretary towards gender equality and the necessity for these measures is shown, for example, by highlighting cases of gender discrimination within some institutions.

¹³³ See p. 41.

¹³⁴ *Consejo General del Poder Judicial*, General Council of the Judicial Power.

EL PAÍS does grant visibility to a concept of VAW that is rather limited to white *violencia de género* and white *violencia machista*. Although EL PAÍS sustains gender and ethnic equality by showing support to immigrant women victims of *violencia de género*, the newspaper does not portray the complex situation of the female ethnic Other. The stories essentialize the individual *machista* and although it gives visibility to gender discrimination, many other forms of violence are not represented: violence from public institutions; discrimination against Roma girls and women; discrimination based on sexuality/class/health/ religion...

ABC follows a political agenda contrary to the discourse of the government (PSOE). For example, most of the stories portray a situation that is not under control, underlining the inadequacy of the measures of protection and the lack of success of the judicial system. ABC does not support the State Secretary for gender equality, gender discrimination is not acknowledged and *violencia machista* has to do with criminals not with gender discrimination. There is an overflow of stories that produce a type of pornography based on violence; paradoxically ABC criticizes the use of violence to construct media commodities for Television. Prostitution becomes VAW when it is forced to be practiced by some kind of aggression, the element of “violence” implicit in prostitution itself, is not being considered, and this form of violence is salient in the case of foreign pimps forcing a young woman into prostitution.

The discourses that both EL PAÍS and ABC distribute about VAW, construct a concept of VAW strictly limited to (almost) dead women and following a Spanish white concept of violence. ABC portrays a less safe environment than EL PAÍS and spreads a discourse based on the idea that women need to be protected from the violent individual. EL PAÍS, however, shows interest in searching in a different direction questioning social structures regarding their gender biased elements, although it still insists in essentializing the individual *machista*.

6. Conclusion

In this final chapter, I will first, summarize the definition of VAW that I have followed and the constructions of VAW in Dutch and Spanish legal and political texts. Paragraph 6.2 presents the conclusions on the media representations of VAW and finally I will state my own reflections.

6.1 A feminist definition of VAW and constructions of VAW in the Netherlands and in Spain.

In chapter 3, I have briefly traced the evolution of the conceptualization of VAW in feminist theory. The intention to find an appropriate definition is to approach solutions to the problem and not to commit a further act of violence by excluding the experiences of violence of individuals at the intersections of race/sex/gender/ethnicity/age/class, etc. Therefore, I have chosen the intersectional approach to VAW and embraced a concept of VAW as a dynamic multidimensional phenomenon that is rooted in the principle of the social control of women.

The constructions of VAW in The Netherlands and Spain vary notoriously from the feminist intersectional approach and the 1995 UN definition. In The Netherlands, the general definition of *geweld* includes the aspect of unbalanced power relations, the general definition of *violencia* in Spain, does not. Dutch politics construct a concept of VAW on the basis of two phenomena: the neutralizing or degendering of ‘domestic violence’ and the ethnicizing of other forms of VAW such as ‘honor related violence’, ‘trafficking’, ‘female genital mutilation’ (Römkens 2008). Spanish politics construct VAW as ‘*violencia de género*’ which is defined as violence within intimate partner relationships where there are unbalanced power relations. Therefore in Spain, a priori, the element of unbalanced power relations between men and women as generator of violence is excluded from the conceptualization of other forms of VAW.

Both, The Netherlands and Spain construct politically convenient definitions of VAW that grant visibility to certain forms of VAW, for example: murdered women at the hands of their (ex)partner are very visible; prostitution as VAW is not visible. In The Netherlands the intention is to make salient white gender equality, and a degendered domestic violence serves the purpose, bringing up the contrast with other forms of VAW that appear gender and ethnically marked. In Spain, ‘*violencia de género*’ – lately called ‘domestic violence’ by some conservative sectors- and *violencia machista*, are not constructed as white but specifically as VAW, at least up to now.

6.2 Media representations of VAW

The questions that this master thesis has answered were: How is VAW represented? Is every aspect of VAW being covered by those representations? Which forms of VAW are rendered more visible? Which stereotypes regarding gender and ethnicity are being spread?

In chapter 4, we have seen the most salient discourses in two important Dutch newspapers: de Volkskrant and De Telegraaf. De Volkskrant constructs ‘current affairs’ about VAW by means of three main categories: degendering domestic violence; ethnicizing VAW; trivializing sexual violence. These categories coincide basically with the Dutch political discourse. De Volkskrant presents ‘evidence’ in the form of news items that intend to show that the consequences of *‘eengerelateerd geweld’* are more severe for women than those of white ‘domestic violence’.

Regarding the trivialization of sexual violence, this involves the construction of prostitution as expression of sexual freedom and ‘sexual business’ and not as VAW. This conceptualization liberates a priori, all kinds of procurers –independently of sex, gender, race or ethnicity- from their responsibility as exploiters of women.

In De Telegraaf, the style presents some characteristics of the reality show and pornographic discourses as they have been described by Natalia Fernández Díaz, which are discourses that have been associated with the construction of entertainment, and not considered representations showing responsibility and engagement in combating social injustice. The construction of ‘current affairs’ about VAW is also made via three categories: Ethnicizing VAW; Pathologizing the psychologically unfit violent individual and Pro-life activism and in defence of the family.

The most salient categories are Ethnicizing VAW and Pathologizing the psychologically unfit violent individual. Both support the discourse in defence of the “innocent white Dutchman” with representations of *autochtone* perpetrators as presumably innocent or mentally unstable (56%). This discourse is also supported by a second one that is related to the racial/ethnic Other, who is portrayed as essentially sexually aberrant or excessive (28%) but who is never presumed innocent or psychologically unfit.

Neither de Volkskrant nor De Telegraaf helps to fight the phenomenon of VAW; on the contrary, they both construct current affairs on the basis of the dominant political discourses: white sex/gender equality even in violence; essentially violent racial/ethnic Other suppresses women; sexual violence is much more sexuality than violence.

In chapter 5, we have seen the press discourses in Spain through the analysis of the newspapers EL PAÍS and ABC. The form of violence that is granted the biggest visibility is *violencia machista*, with murdered women at the hands of men, who are essentialized as the “violent *machistas*”. The role of society and the unbalanced power relations between men and women are not being taken into consideration.

The main categories of current affairs about VAW found in EL PAÍS are: questioning the efficiency of the Law of measures against *violencia de género*; criticizing institutional powers that have an inherent authoritarian and conservative character, such as the Catholic Church and the General Council of the Judicial Power; constructing the individual *machista* with a violent temperament; underlining the vulnerability of immigrant women –mostly Latin American- living in Spain.

EL PAÍS constructs current affairs about *violencia de género*, highlighting the question of the limited success of the Law of measures against *violencia de género* in preventing new victims. The newspaper diverts the attention from possible blind spots within the law or within the whole approach given by the socialist government to the problem, and directs the attention to other public institutions that may be applying the law incorrectly. EL PAÍS supports a priori all the measures taken by the socialist government, including the special clause of the Immigrants Law, which offers protection to immigrant women that have been victims of *violencia de género*. EL PAÍS supports the socialist governmental discourse on *violencia de género*, which is only logical taking into account that the newspaper openly maintains a socialist ideology and is contrary to any advancement of the conservative party.

In the construction of current affairs on *violencia machista*, “the *machista*” as a hyper masculine individual is objectivised as pathologically violent. There is no mention of unbalanced power relations between victim and aggressor as driving force of that violence, neither to the role of society in the production of violence.

The newspaper ABC constructs current affairs on VAW through two main discourses that support and complement each other: highlighting a state of defencelessness, where the citizens do not have institutions that provide justice; and portraying an unsafe environment for every woman and girl. Consequently, the conclusion is that ABC’s dominant discourse is that Spain under the socialist government is an unsafe country; the socialist government implies death. This discourse agrees with the right/conservative ideology of ABC, which opposes every measure

undertaken by the socialist government, especially in the social area, such as: extension of the law of abortion; same sex marriage, etc.

EL PAÍS and ABC have thus different discourses on *violencia de género*, depending on their own political agendas. EL PAÍS supports the socialist party and also the governmental discourse on *violencia de género*. ABC opposes the socialist party and also opposes the governmental discourse on *violencia de género*. Regarding *violencia machista*, both newspapers construct it as (almost) murdered women at the hands of any “*machista*”. Since there is no intimate (ex) relationship between victim (woman) and perpetrator (man), the discourse is that this violence is not product of “unbalanced power relations” but follows then the general definition in the dictionary and violence is product of the innate violent temperament of the “*machista*”.

6.3 Final reflection

The media representations follow the political discourses of each country, either in support or in opposition –as it is the case of ABC in Spain-. The fundamental press agreement in The Netherlands with the official/political discourses surprises me. The leftist newspaper *de Volkskrant* is only slightly less radical in blaming the racial/ethnic Other for VAW than the right wing sensationalistic *De Telegraaf*. The feminist intersectional conceptualization of VAW does not appear in any discourse, either in politics or in the media, either in The Netherlands or in Spain. This means that many forms of VAW are being ignored, as well as many victims at the intersections of sex/gender/race/ethnicity/class.

I have observed in The Netherlands the general belief that white female emancipation has been achieved and that the ethnic Other is the one who needs to be (re)educated in gender equality. Against this general belief there are many voices that disagree, like for example the voices of many non white/non heterosexual women, as they manifest openly in some digital forums such as the *Aletta.nu* facebook and blog pages.

In Spain, during the socialist government, there has been a lot of attention to gender equality but in my opinion scarce attention to ethnic minorities and the multiple intersections of vulnerability of women within these groups. I am afraid that with the economic crisis and the conservative government, social affairs and there within many aspects of VAW will receive much less attention.

The research done in this master thesis could be further developed, and extended to other European countries and also amplified to a one year period of research and analysis. This research would be useful to obtain a clear idea of the discourses about VAW that are being disseminated in the EU.

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 SAGE.

APPENDIX

Newspaper's headlines

De Volkskrant

January 15, 2011: "Slachtoffer thuisgeweld is vaak man"¹³⁵.

January 18, 2011: "Alle zeven verdachten in megaloverboyzaak vrijgesproken"¹³⁶.

January 21, 2011: "Nederlander verdacht in Britse moordzaak"¹³⁷.

January 26, 2011: "Britse pers belegert familie Nederlandse verdachte"¹³⁸.

January 27, 2011: "Man zonder benen misbruikt vrouw"¹³⁹.

January 31, 2011: "Het is zwaar je ook nog eens altijd voor je ex te moeten verstoppen"¹⁴⁰.

February 7, 2011: "Zedenverdachte Rotterdam vrij"¹⁴¹.

February 21, 2011: "Vrouw gedood", "Dader gevlucht na schietpartij in hotel"¹⁴².

February 21, 2011: "Man opgepakt", "Billen fotograaf slaat weer toe"¹⁴³.

February 24, 2011: "In actie tegen hotelprostitutie", "Een meisje huurt voor langere tijd een hotelkamer. Het kan een prostituee zijn, die er haar klanten wil ontvangen. De politie gaat hotels leren hoe deze praktijken te voorkomen"¹⁴⁴.

February 25, 2011: "Rapper Sir-Mix-A-Lot Met Baby Got Back. Aanbidders van de vrouwenkont; Archetype de Groninger billenphotograph"¹⁴⁵.

De Telegraaf

January 8, 2011: "Britse krant looft tipgeld uit"¹⁴⁶. Article discrediting British tabloids in relation with Vincent T's case.

¹³⁵ "Victim of Domestic Violence is often a man"

¹³⁶ "All seven suspects in *megaloverboy* case, free of charges"

¹³⁷ "Dutchman suspect in British murder case"

¹³⁸ "British press harasses Dutch suspect's family"

¹³⁹ "Man without legs abuses woman"

¹⁴⁰ "It is hard to always have to hide from your ex"

¹⁴¹ "Suspect of sexual crime in Rotterdam free".

¹⁴² "Woman Dead", "Perpetrator escaped after shooting in hotel"

¹⁴³ "Man arrested", "Buttocks photograph attacks again"

¹⁴⁴ "A girl hires a hotel room for a long time. It can be a prostitute who wants to receive her clients there. Police is going to teach hotels how to prevent these practices"

¹⁴⁵ - "Rapper Sir-Mix-A-Lot with Baby got Back. Providers of the women's bottom; Archetype the buttocks photograph from Groningen".

January 15, 2011: “Verdachte van mishandeling zwangere vrij”¹⁴⁷.

January 21, 2011: “Buurvrouw gewurgd en gedumpt”¹⁴⁸.

January 21, 2011: “Werkstraf voor seksdate met 13-jarige meisje”¹⁴⁹.

January 22, 2011: “Moord past total niet bij Vincent T”¹⁵⁰.

January 22, 2011: “Waar rook is”¹⁵¹.

January 23, 2011: “Huisbaas op borgtocht vrij”¹⁵².

January 25, 2011: “Heibel op Duits opleidingsschip”¹⁵³.

January 26, 2011: “Verkrachting in 1994 dankzij DNA opgelost”¹⁵⁴.

January 27, 2011: “Vincent T. naar andere gevangenis”¹⁵⁵.

January 28, 2011: “Jaloerse ex ingerekend”¹⁵⁶.

February 01, 2011: “Verdediging Vincent T. doet autopsie Joanna”¹⁵⁷.

February 04, 2011: “Jongen (15) vast voor zedenzaak”¹⁵⁸.

February 05, 2011: “Op haar jagen, dag en nacht”¹⁵⁹.

February 14, 2011: “Ina geeft Johan dodelijke klap met koekenpan”¹⁶⁰.

February 18, 2011: “Dubieuze rol bankier bij kidnap vrouw”¹⁶¹.

February 21, 2011: “Billen fotograaf op heterdaad betrapt”¹⁶².

February 21, 2011: “Turkse vete kost vrouw leven”¹⁶³.

February 23, 2011: “Bruidskleermaker betastte vrouwen”¹⁶⁴.

February 24, 2011: “Rozenmeisje herbegraven”¹⁶⁵.

February 25, 2011: “Vrouwenmepper is pantyfetisjist”¹⁶⁶.

February 26, 2011: “Zendenlingengezin in Keniaanse hel”¹⁶⁷.

¹⁴⁶ “British newspaper rewards tip”.

¹⁴⁷ “Suspect of battering a pregnant woman, free”.

¹⁴⁸ “Neighbour woman strangled and dumped”.

¹⁴⁹ “Sentenced to community service for sexual date with 13 year old girl”.

¹⁵⁰ “Murder does not match Vincent T at all”.

¹⁵¹ “Where smoke is...”

¹⁵² “Landlord free on bail”.

¹⁵³ – “Row on German Marine training ship”.

¹⁵⁴ “A 1994 rape case, solved thanks to DNA”.

¹⁵⁵ “Vincent T. to another prison”.

¹⁵⁶ “Jealous “ex” is captured”.

¹⁵⁷ “Vincent T’s defence does Joanna’s autopsy”.

¹⁵⁸ – “Boy (15) detained for sexual crime”.

¹⁵⁹ – “Hunting her, day and night”.

¹⁶⁰ “Ina gives Johan a deadly blow with frying pan”.

¹⁶¹ “Doubtful role of bank director in his wife’s kidnapping”.

¹⁶² “Bottom’s photograph caught in action”.

¹⁶³ “Turkish vendetta costs a woman her life”.

¹⁶⁴ “Wedding dress tailor touched women”.

¹⁶⁵ “The girl of the roses is reburied”.

¹⁶⁶ “Women’s attacker is panty fetishist”.

February 28, 2011: “Joran hangt dertig jaar cel boven het hoofd”¹⁶⁸. A sexual violence story involving a white Dutch perpetrator.

February 28, 2011: “Drama kost halfjaar oude baby het leven”¹⁶⁹.

February 28, 2011: “Man bijt ex vinger top af”¹⁷⁰.

EL PAÍS

January 5, 2011: “Las ordenes de papel no evitan los crímenes”¹⁷¹.

January 6, 2011: “Detenido por retener a su mujer un año en su casa”¹⁷².

January 6, 2011: “Maltrato en los matrimonios católicos”¹⁷³.

January 10, 2011: “El gobierno insta a los jueces a no esgrimir una patología inexistente”¹⁷⁴.

January 12, 2011: “Detenido un estudiante de ESO por dejar en coma a una compañera”¹⁷⁵.

January 13, 2011: “Sólo el 25% de las mujeres con orden de protección acepta la ayuda del ayuntamiento”¹⁷⁶.

January 14, 2011: “Más víctimas del odio de los padres”¹⁷⁷.

January 27, 2011: “Dos muertas por violencia machista elevan a cinco las asesinadas este año”¹⁷⁸.

January 29, 2011: “El CGPJ¹⁷⁹ plantea obligar a declarar a las maltratadas”¹⁸⁰.

February 1, 2011: “Ninguna de las siete muertas por violencia machista había denunciado”¹⁸¹.

February 5, 2011: “El silencio: otra cárcel del maltrato”¹⁸².

February 7, 2011: “Borrador del reglamento que desarrolla la ley de extranjería. Las sin papeles

¹⁶⁷ “Missioners in Kenyan hell”.

¹⁶⁸ “Thirty year prison sentence over Joran’s head”.

¹⁶⁹ – “Drama costs 6 months old baby its life”.

¹⁷⁰ “Man bites ex’s finger top off”.

¹⁷¹ “Paper orders do not prevent murders”

¹⁷² “Arrested for having his wife retained at home for a year”

¹⁷³ “Battering in Catholic marriages”

¹⁷⁴ “The government encourages judges to avoid using an inexistent pathology as argument”

¹⁷⁵ “A high school student is arrested leaving a classmate in a coma”.

¹⁷⁶ “Only 25% of the women with a protection order accept help from Madrid city council”

¹⁷⁷ “More victims of the hate between parents”.

¹⁷⁸ “Two more dead women, victims of *violencia machista*, make for a total, so far, of five casualties”.

¹⁷⁹ CGPJ is the acronym for *Consejo General del Poder Judicial* – General Council of the Judicial Power.

¹⁸⁰ “The CGPJ proposes to force battered women to declare”.

¹⁸¹ “None of the seven dead women as result of *violencia machista* had pressed charges against their aggressors”.

¹⁸² “Silence: The Other Jail of the abuse”.

que denuncien maltrato no serán expulsadas”¹⁸³.

February 16, 2011: “La policia vió riesgo bajo para la victim del último crimen machista”¹⁸⁴.

February 17, 2011, also February 18, 24 and 26: The case of Mari Luz, “Del Valle dice que no vio a Mari Luz el día del crimen”¹⁸⁵. This article makes part of a series that follows the process against the alleged suspects in the murder case of a five year old Romani girl.

February 18, 2011: “Un escándalo de abusos sexuales sacude al ejército de EEUU”¹⁸⁶.

February 21, 2011: “Ellos llevan la batuta”¹⁸⁷.

February 22, 2011: “Se ahorca tras creer que había matado a su pareja”¹⁸⁸.

February 25, 2011: “La absuelta en Navarra tras matar a su marido irá de Nuevo a juicio”¹⁸⁹.

February 25, 2011: “Un proxeneta organiza desde la cárcel el crimen de la mujer que le denunció”¹⁹⁰.

February 28, 2011: “Detenido el esposo de una mujer que cayó al vacío”¹⁹¹.

February 18, 2011: “Tecnología: La orden de alejamiento rige en internet”¹⁹². This story is significant because it portrays the transmission of male dominant patterns of behaviour from real life to virtual reality and also how the law of measures against *violencia de género* is being applied in the internet.

ABC

January 13, 2011: “Dos años de cárcel por dejarla ciega porque roncaba”¹⁹³.

January 19, 2011: “Estrangula a su mujer y avisa al 091 al día siguiente”¹⁹⁴.

¹⁸³“First draft of the regulation that develops the Law of foreigners. Women without papers that report abuse, won’t be expelled of the country”

¹⁸⁴“Police saw ‘low risk’ for the victim of the last *machista* murder”.

¹⁸⁵“Del Valle says that he did not see Mari Luz the day of the crime”

¹⁸⁶“Sexual abuse scandal shakes USA army”

¹⁸⁷“They(men) take the lead”.

¹⁸⁸“He hangs himself after having attempted to kill his partner”.

¹⁸⁹“The woman, absolved in Navarra after having killed her husband, will go to court again”.

¹⁹⁰“A procurer organized the murder of the woman “who deleted him”.

¹⁹¹“The husband of the woman who fell through a balcony was arrested”.

¹⁹²“Technology: The restraining order applies also to internet”.

¹⁹³“Two year in prison for leaving her blind because she snored”.

¹⁹⁴“Strangles his wife and calls 091 the next day”.

January 20, 2011: “Reconoce que estranguló a su mujer porque estaba borracho”¹⁹⁵.

January 20, 2011: “Una familia rumana prostituía a una menor”¹⁹⁶.

January 20, 2011: “Se presenta el trabajo: ‘Cómo informar sobre violencia contra la mujer en las relaciones de pareja’”¹⁹⁷.

January 20, 2011: “El gobierno arremete contra Tele5 por frivolar el maltrato”¹⁹⁸.

January 25, 2011: “Buscan coincidencias de ADN en Arriate. La guardia civil coteja muestras de más de cincuenta vecinos y conocidos de María Esther.”¹⁹⁹

January 27, 2011: “Mata a su novia a puñaladas en su vivienda de Cartagena”²⁰⁰.

January 31, 2011: “Dos mujeres asesinadas en Jaén y en Ciudad Real. Enero se cierra con al menos seis víctimas mortales por violencia de género”²⁰¹.

January 31, 2011: “Paliza a su ex novia utilizando un pitbull”²⁰².

February 3, 2011: “No hay pruebas, pero lo hice”²⁰³.

February 3, 2011: “La Guerra de los Camino”²⁰⁴.

February 4, 2011: “Un menor de 17 años acusado de matar a la niña de Málaga”²⁰⁵.

February 5, 2011: “¿Qué hace que un ser humano imite a otro repitiendo patrones de comportamiento extremo?”²⁰⁶.

February 6, 2011: “Se entrega en Barcelona tras matar a su pareja y al hijo de ésta en Almería.

¹⁹⁵ “He acknowledges to have strangled his wife because he was drunk”

¹⁹⁶ “A Rumanian family forced a minor to practice prostitution”.

¹⁹⁷ “Presentation of the work: ‘How to inform about violence against women in intimate partner relations’”.

¹⁹⁸ “The government attacks Tele5 for trivializing abuse”

¹⁹⁹ “DNA matches are sought in Arriate. The guardia civil compares samples from more than fifty neighbours and acquaintances of María Esther”

²⁰⁰ “He stabs his girlfriend to death, at their Cartagena’s home”.

²⁰¹ “Two women murdered in Jaen and in Ciudad Real. January closes with at least six mortal victims of *violencia de género*”.

²⁰² “Gives his ex girlfriend a beating using a Pit-bull”.

²⁰³ “There are no evidences but I did it”

²⁰⁴ “The war of the Camino”.

²⁰⁵ “A 17 year old minor is accused of having murdered the girl of Malaga”.

²⁰⁶ “What makes that a human being imitates another one by repeating extreme patterns of behavior?”

Detenido un Paquistaní por la muerte de una compatriota cuya vivienda asaltó²⁰⁷.

February 10, 2011: “Múltiples irregularidades en los contratos del Ministerio Aído. Demoledor informe del Tribunal de Cuentas sobre la Delegación contra la Violencia de Género”²⁰⁸.

February 12, 2011: “Acuchilla a su ex novia en la tienda donde trabajaba”²⁰⁹.

February 16, 2011: “Mata a su exmujer, a la que se negó teleasistencia, con un hacha”²¹⁰.

February 17, 2011: “La asesinada en Málaga no tenía protección ni teleasistencia”²¹¹.

February 22, 2011: “Seis meses sin Sonia Iglesias y Pintadas de un lunático en Lugo”²¹².

February 24, 2011: “La violencia de género se dispara con otras dos víctimas en Reus y Valencia”²¹³.

February 24, 2011: “Rafa Camino y Natalia, divorciados”²¹⁴.

Case Marta del Castillo

January 20, 2011: “El fiscal quiere que un jurado popular enjuicie el crimen”²¹⁵. The start of the process against the alleged suspects of the murder of the 16 year old girl Marta del Castillo. Abundant details are given about how the procedure is taking place.

January 25, 2011: “Una contradictoria declaración de inocencia”²¹⁶.

January 25, 2011: “Marta y el frío”²¹⁷.

January 25, 2011: “El Cuco se autoexculpa y niega saber dónde está el cuerpo de Marta”²¹⁸.

²⁰⁷ “He surrenders himself in Barcelona after having killed his partner and her son in Almeria. Arrested a Pakistani man for the death of a compatriot, which home he had assaulted”.

²⁰⁸ “Multiple irregularities in the contracts of Aído’s Department. Shattering report from the Spanish Court of Audits on the Department against *Violencia de Género*”.

²⁰⁹ “Stabs his ex girlfriend in the shop where she worked”.

²¹⁰ “ Kills his ex wife, whom had been denied protection, with an axe”

²¹¹ “The woman murdered in Málaga did not have protection or *teleasistencia*”.

²¹² “Six months without Sonia Iglesias and a lunatic paints graffiti in Lugo”.

²¹³ “ *Violencia de género* increases with other two victims in Reus and Valencia”.

²¹⁴ “Rafa Camino and Natalia, divorced”

²¹⁵ “The Public Prosecutor wants a jury to judge the crime”

²¹⁶ “ *Violencia de género* increases with other two victims in Reus and Valencia”.

²¹⁷ “Marta and the cold”.

²¹⁸ “Cuco exonerates himself and denies knowing the whereabouts of Marta’s body”.

January 27, 2011: “Carcaño desoye a su defensa, no dice donde está Marta y se niega a declarar”²¹⁹

January 28, 2011: “La exnovia de Carcaño lo deja sin coartada la noche del crimen”²²⁰

January 29, 2011: “El Cuco confesó a la policia que vio a Marta llena de sangre.”²²¹

January 28, 2011: “La ex-novia de Carcaño lo deja sin coartada la noche del crimen”²²²

January 29, 2011: “El Cuco confesó a la policia que vio a Marta llena de sangre.”²²³

February 2, 2011: “El juez no cree a Carcaño, que dice no saber dónde está el cuerpo de Marta.”²²⁴

February 4, 2011: “El cuerpo de Marta fue sacado en silla de ruedas”²²⁵

February 10, 2011: “La mezcla de ADN sitúa al Cuco en la escena del crimen”²²⁶

February 11, 2011: “El Cuco solo se preocupaba por sus navajas y su perro”²²⁷

February 16, 2011: “Termina el juicio al Cuco. Soy inocente, no sé dónde está el cuerpo de Marta.”²²⁸

Case Mari Luz

February 22, 2011: “La policia siempre sospechó de Santiago del Valle”²²⁹

February 24, 2011: “Mari Luz fue arrojada viva a la ría”²³⁰

All the news-items constructed around the story of the murder of Marta del Castillo focus on the development of the judicial procedure and portray the alleged suspects as criminal without scruples who know how to manipulate the

²¹⁹ “Carcaño does not listen to his lawyer, does not say where Marta’s body is and refuses to declare”.

²²⁰ “Carcaño’s ex girlfriend leaves him without alibi the night of the crime”.

²²¹ “Cuco confessed that he saw Marta full of blood”.

²²² “Carcaño’s ex girlfriend leaves him without alibi the night of the crime”.

²²³ “Cuco confessed that he saw Marta full of blood”.

²²⁴ “The judge does not believe Carcaño, who says not to know where the body is”.

²²⁵ “Marta’s body was taken outside in a wheelchair”.

²²⁶ “The DNA mix situates Cuco in the crime scene”.

²²⁷ “Cuco only cared for his knives and his dog”.

²²⁸ “Cuco’s trial ends. I am innocent; I don’t know where Marta’s body is.”

²²⁹ “Police always suspected Santiago del Valle”.

²³⁰ “Mari Luz was thrown alive to the river”.

Spanish legal system. The stories portray the criminals as the ‘winners’ and the family of Marta del Castillo –and by extension the reader- as disempowered individuals. In the Case of the little Romani girl Mari Luz, the story follows the same pattern, only in this case the alleged perpetrators are mentally unfit and seem not to be able to escape their punishment.