

# WOMEN IN CRIME

An analysis of the portrayal of female leads  
in American and Dutch crime dramas.



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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

“I don't trust people, they tend to lie. Evidence never lies.” (“Quotes for Gil Grissom”)

Series revolving around crimes, with a detective or crime related main character, have fascinated audiences for a long time. These series are called crime dramas. In the United States as well as in the Netherlands, crime dramas can be watched on television every night at prime time (D. Stubbs). Because these series enjoy much attention, theme nights have been configured which only air crime series. In the Netherlands, for example, television station RTL5 broadcasts only crimes series on Tuesday and calls this Crime Night. In the past, Dutch television channels mostly aired popular crime series from the United States, which is still the source of most crime series on Dutch television (“15 Spannende Misdaad Thriller TV Series”). Nowadays, however, Dutch channels also air crime series produced by Dutch production companies, as well as British and German crime series. The Dutch crime series came into existence to appeal to a Dutch audience, possibly making the series more relatable and are now also broadcast in neighboring countries.

In many of the American and Dutch crime series, men used to play the lead. However, recent trends show a shift towards female leads. Consequently, the traditional male detective or police officer no longer plays the lead in the crime shows. Smart women are “taking over” (Gillette) and abandoning their former supporting roles (Turnbull 153). As a result, the demographics of females on Western prime time television have shifted from mostly men towards 40 percent women in leading roles (Glascok 657). Multiple series from both the United States and the Netherlands in which females play the lead can now be found on Dutch television.

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<sup>1</sup> Front cover illustration: American painting by Gil Elvgren from 1949 of a female police officer in sexy clothing and heels leading to a stereotypical portrayal.

The representation of female lead characters, however, varies. This portrayal of women can range from a stereotypical representation of the female to, for example, less stereotypical traits, making the female more masculine and less dependent on her male counterparts.

The representation of gender in television has been researched and discussed extensively, as have stereotypes and portrayal of culture in the field of imagology. However, the majority of research on gender in media has focused on females in a minority position and on outdated stereotypes based on older social roles (Bartsch et al 737). Furthermore, the research is dated as it stems from 2000 to 2005 and thus the present paper could add new insights by examining if traditional images still apply in modern television series. In addition, there is little published data on direct differences between crime series from different countries. Imagological research by Brassé has indicated a difference in cultural representation between American and British series. However, no research has looked into the difference between Dutch and American series. This thesis could thus showcase whether portrayal of females builds on cultural images from these countries.

Looking at images in series from different countries is relevant for intercultural communication. As the crime dramas are made in a certain country and with a certain national audience in mind, the series images can reflect this culture and ideas that are held in society, as media is known to represent the societies' views of people. By looking into the images that are used, this could further understanding of the Dutch and American culture. Stereotypes, which can be generated by the producers, either explicitly or implicitly, and perceived by the audience, could also be uncovered. This can additionally aid in understanding how people see one another in different and foreign cultures.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how exactly the leading female is portrayed within American and Dutch crime dramas. This paper thus attempts to show what images are used in both the United States and the Netherlands. Furthermore, it will compare the images of the different countries' series. Therefore, the following research question that has been formulated:

*How are women that play the lead in modern crime dramas from the United States of America and the Netherlands portrayed and how do they compare?*

To analyze the portrayal of women, a comparative method was employed with a corpus consisting of episodes from 6 different crime series: three from the United States and three from the Netherlands. The series from the United States are: *Bones*, *Rizolli & Isles*, and *Law and Order: SUV*. The Dutch series are: *Moordvrouw*, *Flikken Maastricht*, and *Jacht*. These have been selected as they showcase a female lead. The portrayal of women will be compared to stereotypes in literature by Segijn et al, Bartsch et al, Eagly and Steffen, Lauzen and Dozier, and Best et al. Additionally, literature by Beller and Leerssen will be used to possibly find stereotypes of national cultures within the series portrayal of women.

This thesis consists of six chapters in total. The second chapter will be a literature review, in which earlier theory is discussed and reviewed critically. This chapter additionally introduces the main research question and sub questions. Chapter three will detail the method that has been used. Chapters four and five will consist of the analysis of the television series by looking at the two different countries in a separate chapter. The thesis ends with a conclusion, chapter six, in which the research question is answered directly, the results are discussed, and limitations and suggestions will be discussed.

## 2. Literature Review

Television series gain much of their popularity by using a format that is recognized and enjoyed by the audience. A format is defined as “a set of invariable elements in a serial program” (Moran and Malbon 20). Turnbull claims crime dramas rely on the police procedural format. This format originated in America and has spread to many different countries, including the Netherlands. A police procedural is a television format evolving around the police taskforce and forensic scientists (Michael 4). These series contain several fixed elements that are always present. Such elements, according to Turnbull, are crime, murder, and punishment (1). Michael confirms it is these elements that make the crimes series popular amongst a worldwide audience (4).

A cast with a fixed set of characters, sometimes including a female lead, can be identified in most crime dramas. The main characters often occupy the roles of detectives and specialists. The central character is usually a detective; he or she is a person that takes the job seriously and is dedicated to solving crimes (Turnbull 98). Additional to the detective as main character, the specialist can also take up this role. The specialist is a person “who may bring to the case in question a particular gift or knowledge set that equips him or her with the necessary powers to solve the crime” (Turnbull 125). Even though the central character has certain distinct and recurring traits, according to Turnbull, the detective or specialist is portrayed differently in various shows (100). Nowadays, many crime dramas focus on a combination of the two types of characters.

According to Turnbull, it is not simply the format with fixed characters people find attractive. Crime series offer a glimpse into a world that not many people are familiar with and thus give them the chance to escape their own world (Turnbull 2). However, even though police series contain elements of the unknown, they also build on a world the audience can identify

with. An important aspect within American crime dramas other than the focus on the police work, is the attention paid to the private lives of the main characters and the focus on societal issues (Turnbull 3). However, a problem of this theory is that it is based primarily on American crime drama and is thus not relevant for the Dutch series which this thesis covers as well. Therefore, additional theory by Hikspoors was used. Hikspoors suggests Dutch crime dramas contain less focus on the private lives of the main characters as they are based on a more traditional police procedural format (7). Yet, both formats, with or without personal scenes, contain main characters the audience can identify with to attract the audience to the series (Cohen 247). This can be done by using images that the audience is accustomed to. Representation is a notion that builds on the use of familiar images.

## **2.1 Representation**

Hall defines representation as the use of images and symbols for the portrayal of certain groups of people to create social identities (1). According to Hall, it builds on the construction of a social group or person, females in this present research, by portraying a group in a particular way: “we give things meaning by how we represent them - [...] the images of them we produce” (3). Coupland further specifies representation as “the totality of semiotic means by which [...] individuals and social groups [...] are identified, thematized, focused, shaped and made intelligible” (3). However, Coupland’s theory does not fully explain the reason for the use of representation. Leerssen expanded this concept, claiming people have the tendency to attribute specific characteristics to different groups (17). This tendency stems from wanting to understand another culture or person when in contact with them (Leerssen 17). By representing a person by means of certain characteristics, it becomes easier to make sense of the world. Social groups are

thus given shape by multiple different images. As Dervin posits, the images work as an identifier as people are familiar with the images, and thus will recognize the represented group (160).

Furthermore, perception is an important concept in addition to representation that needs to be distinguished. Perception is defined as a way in which a person sees or knows a person by observing from a certain point of view (Beller and Leerssen 5). To attribute characteristics and images to a certain group, perception of the self and perception of the other is important. By perceiving, a person or group becomes aware of the self, by noticing differences with the other. When these differences are apparent, perceptions are transformed into images of the self and images of the other (Beller and Leerssen 4). These images of the other are characterized as hetero-images, while self-images are images of “one's own, domestic identity” (Leerssen 27). Therefore, when a group or person is depicted, self- and other-images are used as people will recognize these established images. These self- and other-images are culture specific as every culture will create distinctive self-images. Hence, these self- and other-images are found in representations and the representation of female gender, which is the focus of this thesis, is based on culture specific images.

As representations are based on culture specific images, the underlying reason for these particular images can be explained via anthropology. Anthropological research looks at societal values in culture. Studies have shown that representations are known to reflect cultural values and thus can display how a certain society values a certain group. Bartsch et al conclude this, stating “studies need to be done in order to examine trends in representation because these trends are one measure of how [a] society views woman and men” (736).



## 2.2 Imagology and Media

The field of imagology studies representation of cultures and people in the media and other cultural artefacts. Leerssen defines this area of study as the “critical study of national characterization” (Leerssen 21). National characterization, according to Beller, is done by using images that act as “mental silhouette of the other” (4). Ten Thije concludes that within this field of study, national culture is defined by characteristics that describe people and countries around the world (4). This means that each different country or person can be recognized by particular characteristics which belong to that country.

A television series, which is the focus of this thesis, can thus be identified as medium or cultural artefact in which culture specific images can be found. Media operate as vessels for representation, being able to create images of people visually (Brooks et al 300). As Brooks et al explain, characters are represented in a particular way by the producers, by assigning multiple characteristics to them to create an image the audience identifies with. The images are created by using particular actions, relationships, settings, and a certain appearance to define the character (Brooks et al 301). According to Ten Thije, a character in the media can be portrayed by multiple different types of images, including cultural images such as *archetypes* and *national clichés* as well as lesser known characteristics (Ten Thije 4). Both archetypes and national clichés are composed of overgeneralized characteristics that can be identified as stereotypes.

## 2.3 Stereotypes

Stereotypes are a crucial concept in both representation and imagology. Jackson defines a stereotype as an overgeneralized idea assigned to a certain group or individual (116).

Stereotyping occurs when assigning a particular set of characteristics to all members of a group, without taking into account their individual differences (Jackson 161). Stereotyping can, for

example, be done on the basis of gender, religious groups, cultures and professional groups.

However, this definition by Jackson overlooks the negative connotation of stereotypes<sup>2</sup>. Ormrod proposes three additional characteristics of stereotypes: “They are rigid, simplistic, and erroneous” (qtd. in Bowd 3). This means that the use of stereotypes can lead to false images of groups and people. Researchers agree that stereotyping is not an action that exists without a purpose. Dervin posits stereotyping as a way in which a person can relate to his or her own identity and world by distinguishing certain groups and people via the use of common self- and other-images (160). Within television series, the use of stereotypes is a common practice and theory has demonstrated that commonly held images are used.

#### **2.4 Stereotypes in Media**

The use of stereotypes in media has advantages. One of these main advantages is the audiences’ identification with the main characters through the use of stereotypes as people will recognize these common images. On the other hand, the use of stereotypes can lead to false images in the mind of the audience. By portraying a person stereotypically, the audience picks up this image and uses it as a reference in real life. Van Dijk argues that modern media are possibly the most common and “only source of peoples knowledge” (36), and the media should therefore be careful with the use of stereotypes.

Stereotypes can be used to portray characters in series. Therefore they can also be used for the representation of the leading role. Researchers have established that in the media females have started to play more leading roles in series. Atkin addresses this trend and states that a clear shift can be distinguished in which females are no longer minority figures on the television but have gained a position equal to men in the media (3). This theory is backed by Brooks et al who

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<sup>2</sup> Jackson’s further theory does note the negative side of stereotypes.

agree it is clear that the period of female under representation is ending slowly (229). Television prime time demographics in the US, as reported by Glascock, support this trend by showing a shift from 32 percent females on television towards 40 percent (657). This research by Glascock does not cover Dutch television, but additional literature by Segijn et al confirms that this shift can also be seen in the Netherlands (306). The genre in which females have mostly been playing leading roles, according to Glascock, is comedy (657). However, the shift towards female leads can also be identified within the genre of television crime dramas.

There is consensus about the fact that in the past females in television series have been portrayed according to stereotypes. Both Dutch and American research recognizes that the stereotypes are based on former social roles that are seemingly outdated. Segijn et al state that the stereotypes used in television series are based on common conceptions about females (307). According to Eagly and Steffen, such stereotypes surfaced by believing a certain attribute or activity was typical for women (735). Numerous female stereotypes can be distinguished on Western television (Segijn et al 307). These stereotypes are developed by the use of certain actions, relationships, settings, and a certain appearance within the series (Brooks et al 301). One of the most common stereotypes of women is that women are oriented towards communal goals (Segijn et al 307). As Segijn et al do not define this stereotype in their research, theory by Eagly and Steffen is consulted in which they state that in this stereotype women are often thought of as working towards marriage and children (376). With this goal, the qualities of selflessness, concern for others, and the desire to form a family can be identified. This stereotype can be recognized by relationships and setting in series. Another stereotype often found on television is that of the traditional homemaker (Segijn et al 207; Bartsch et al 737). This portrays the female as a housewife and comes with qualities such as being caring, gentle, and protective (Eagly &

Steffen 736). According to Bartsch et al, this common conception stems from the idea that women are more likely to be in “inside-the-home settings” (737). Furthermore, Elasmars et al state that females are portrayed in stereotypical positive, less aggressive roles and activities than men which is a result of displaying typical feminine qualities (22). These typical female qualities entail being passive, non-aggressive, dominated, and peppy (Best et al 736). Appearance is additionally linked to stereotypes. As a result, Lauzen and Dozier pose that females in Western series are mostly portrayed as physically attractive, young, well-kept, and feminine (437).

Stereotypes of national cultures can also be found in the portrayal of the female leads. Series are produced for a specific audience and this audience usually consists of a particular country. The females in the series thus display the country's self-image as this sparks recognition amongst the audience. However, when series gain popularity, they spread to different countries (Moran & Malbon 22). As a result, the process in which self-images are exported and adopted abroad as a hetero-image can unfold (Beller & Leerssen 343). Therefore, the images used for women in series could reflect stereotypes of national culture from the country they are produced in. In their book on imagology, Beller and Leerssen identify an American stereotype in which females have a specific role and this image could thus be present in the American female lead. It is additionally the most well-known American stereotype: that of the American dream. In this stereotype, the female can be recognized as loving wife and mother, in a happy family and idyllic household (Beller & Leerssen 91). This stereotype can thus be recognized on the basis of relationships and setting. Moreover, according to Beller and Leerssen, Americans are perceived by other cultures as not treating people equally, such as females (92). If the female is portrayed in different jobs as men, that could support this stereotypical idea. For the Netherlands, stereotypes are identified as well that the female lead could display through actions as both males and

females are said to display these features. For example, the Dutch females are attributed with the qualities and of being humble, hardworking, direct and realistic (Beller & Leerssen 142).

However, the chapter on the Dutch stereotypes by Beller & Leerssen is rather short and discusses few stereotypes. Therefore, theory by Mellaard proves useful. Mellaard identifies directness as stereotype in which the Dutch are straightforward in conversations (7). This straightforwardness is accompanied by acting crude and harsh (Mellaard 8). The females in the series could thus display this directness in certain actions.

It seems that within series, there are several characteristics that make up stereotypes. Stereotypes do not always consist of one characteristic: they can be defined by multiple. The most common characteristics to identify stereotypes by are appearance, setting, actions, and relationships. All of these concepts, combined or separate, may contribute to stereotypical images in a television show.

## **2.5 Research Question**

The theory shows a shift towards females playing lead roles in series around the world. However, it could well be that these lead females are still represented stereotypically and differently according to culture as it is clear that representations can be based on culture specific images. Therefore, the following research question has been formulated:

*How are women that play the lead in modern crime dramas from the United States of America and the Netherlands portrayed and how do they compare?*

This research question will be analyzed through answering the following sub questions:

1. Do the representations of females in the series reflect commonly held female stereotypes?
2. Do the representations of females in the series reflect cultural stereotypes?

### 3. Method

The aim of the present paper is to determine whether females in television crimes dramas from two different countries, American and the Netherlands, are portrayed according to stereotypes, gender based as well as culture based, or to identify new images used for their portrayal. To do so, a qualitative contrastive method was adopted. A qualitative method is based on text and images rather than on numbers and figures (Dornyei 30). This type of method offers an effective way of analyzing multiple different sources of data, such as, interviews, various types of text, and video or other media sources (Dornyei 37). The qualitative method of corpus analysis was adopted to allow for the comparison of multiple series. This approach was chosen as it allows focus on patterns of images within a selection, or corpus, of texts as well as allowing comparison between the different sources (M. Stubbs 2). For the corpus analysis in this paper, a corpus was created containing six different series.

#### 3.1 Materials

Three American and three Dutch series were selected to make up the corpus of this analysis. To find series, the TV guides of different Dutch channels that air both American and Dutch crime series were read. These TV guides can be found on the internet and in print. The American and Dutch series were chosen on the basis of three different important criteria. Firstly, the series had to fit the genre of the crime drama. Secondly, and most importantly, the show had to include at least one female lead character. As the focus of this research is a female lead, many series did not qualify as they had a male lead. Lastly, the series had to be recent popular series that had been broadcast in the recent past, within 2 years, or are still on television currently to arrive at results describing a recent phenomenon. Subsequently, a selection of crime dramas from the two different countries was made. The following three American shows were selected: *Bones*, *Rizzoli*

& *Isles*, and *Law and Order: SUV*. The selected Dutch shows are: *Flikken Maastricht*, *De Jacht*, and *Moordvrouw*. For each of these shows, a short description of the show can be found in the appendix (see Appendix 1). The original posters or DVD cover for each series are displayed below in figure 1 and 2.



*Law and Order: SUV*

*Bones*

*Rizzoli & Isles*

Figure 1. American Series



*Flikken Maastricht*

*Moordvrouw*

*De Jacht*

Figure 2. Dutch Series.

To analyze the series, two random episodes of each series were selected. The random episodes were taken from seasons of the series that aired between 2015 and 2017 to analyze recurring phenomenon from the most recent seasons. The choice for this time period was made to ensure relevant comparison of the series as the show's seasons aired around different time periods. For

example, the most recent season of *Rizolli & Isles* stopped in June of 2016 while the most recent season of *Law and Order: SUV* was still running at the time of writing. For 5 of these series, this was not a problem as the series have been on television for multiple years and consisted of multiple seasons. However, for one of the series, this meant that only episodes from 2016 could be selected as this series appeared on television only in the spring of 2016. This applied to the Dutch crime drama *De Jacht*.

Tables 1 and 2 show the specifics of the randomly selected episodes for each crime drama.

**Table 1** Selected American shows and episodes

Shows	Network	Season	Selected episodes	Runtime	Air date
<i>Rizolli &amp; Isles</i>	TNT	7	Episode 3: Cops vs zombies	42 min.	June 13, 2016
			Episode 7: Dead Weight	42 min.	July 18, 2016
<i>Law and Order: SUV</i>	NBC	18	Episode 3: Imposter	41 min.	October 5, 2016
			Episode 8: Chasing Theo	41 min.	January 11, 2017
<i>Bones</i>	FOX	12	Episode 2: The Brain in the Bot	43 min.	January 10, 2017
			Episode 6: The Flaw in the Saw	42 min.	February 7, 2017



**Table 2** Selected Dutch shows and episodes

Shows	Network	Season	Selected episodes	Runtime	Air date
<i>Moordvrouw</i>	RTL 4	6	Episode 4: De Stilte Voorbij	42 min.	January 29, 2017
			Episode 7: Dromenvanger	41 min.	February 19, 2017
<i>Flikken Maastricht</i>	TROS	11	Episode 5: Undercover	50 min.	January 13, 2017
			Episode 7: The Last Vlog	44 min.	January 27, 2017
<i>De Jacht</i>	SBS6	1	Episode 2 (Nameless)	43 min.	May 23, 2016
			Episode 5 (Nameless)	40 min.	June 6, 2016

### 3.2 Procedure

The first step was to create a new framework for the analysis of the six series, as little previous comparative research has been done on female and cultural stereotypes in Dutch and American crime dramas. The framework consisted of four different categories derived from the literature. These four categories are key concepts that are part of the makeup of the stereotypes. The categories are: actions, physical appearance, setting, and relationships. Within the category of actions and emotions, attention was paid to the female lead's activities and emotions. The category of physical appearance pays attention to attire, hair and makeup. For setting, the surrounding sets of the female lead were taken into account. Finally, the category of relationships looks at the female lead's relationships in the series. These categories can be applied to both gender stereotypes as well as the cultural stereotypes identified by Beller & Leerssen.

Once the framework was created, the two American and two Dutch episodes of each series were watched and during this process the four categories were kept in mind and notes were made. In these notes, images were described according to the categories based on the theory. The notes were put into a table with the categories to compare the images from the different series. If an image in the series was recognized that belonged to a certain category, this was noted into the

table. Additionally, differences or new images were noted down. An example of the coding system can be found in table 3.

**Table 3** Example of table with categories.

<b>Appearance</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Relationships</b>	<b>Corresponding Stereotype</b>
High heels	Flirting	Bedroom with	Sexual	Woman as Sex
Tight Dress	Having men	candles	relationships with	Object (Daniels
Heavy Makeup	over for the	Lingerie on the	lots of men	& Wartena 567)
	night	ground		

Within these categories, descriptive characteristics in the series were identified that coincide with the category and thus a certain stereotype. It must be noted that some characteristics can be part of multiple different stereotypes. For example, a characteristic of physical appearance can coincide with both the stereotype of home maker (gender) or with a cultural stereotype (national identity). This will be taken into account and a stereotype will only be identified if multiple characteristics are found to make sure the stereotype is present. The found results were then analyzed further by linking them to the relevant theory and the different countries were compared.

## 4. American Series

This chapter will discuss the results from the American series in combination with theory from the literature review. The results will be presented by looking at the categories of relationships, actions, appearance, and setting.

### 4.1 Relationships

The relationships in the American series illustrate two different portrayals of the female lead. The first is a more modern perspective, depicting women as independent and successful in their own right, rather than according to stereotypes in which females are married and oriented towards communal goals. When it comes to romantic relationships, in two of the series a powerful message is delivered that emphasizes the independence of the female lead. In both *Rizzoli & Isles* and *Law and Order: SUV*, the lead females have no romantic relationship or end their relationship, displaying them as single and independent women. This sense of independence is further developed by the main characters as they, in multiple situations, exclaim they are not ready or interested in a romantic relationship. In episode 7, Detective Olivia Benson from *Law and Order: SUV* features in a scene that is the most striking example of this independence. In this scene, detective Benson breaks up with her former boyfriend, stating she feels that she can achieve more in her life by focusing only on herself (38:55-40:20). She chooses to raise her adoptive child alone, showing that a female is capable of doing so without needing any extra help. In *Rizzoli & Isles* the female lead similarly asserts she is not in need of a male companion other than her brother. Detective Jane Rizzoli finds herself being asked out by a colleague in episode 7, and answers “I’m sorry but my flight leaves in an hour, ” accompanied by a look that displays her disinterest (36:27-36:39). That same day she tells her best female friend she is quite

alright with being alone as she has her best friend. Overall, these female leads show that no significant other is needed to live a happy and successful life as they have each other as friends.

In *Bones* on the other hand, it seems that the communal aspect, recognized by Segijn et al as part of a common stereotype (307), is important for the portrayal of women as, the aspect of marriage plays a significant part in the life of the female lead. Here, the female lead, Temperance Brennan, is involved in a romantic relationship as she is married to her male co-worker. Within this relationship it is clear that the two depend on each other, at home as well as on the job. In the workplace, special agent Seeley Booth and Dr. Brennan are direct partners, working together on each case. Multiple scenes can be identified in which the two characters work together, such as a scene from episode 6, in which Dr. Brennan and special agent Booth investigate a murder and Dr. Brennan finishes each other's sentences (11:57-12:58). This shows a mutual dependence of the two characters. Additionally, Dr. Brennan displays a great sense of orientation towards the family, discussing private information about her daughter during work hours. This family oriented aspect coincides with the stereotypical idea of the homemaker that suggests female life is oriented towards marriage and that a female depends on her significant other (Eagly & Steffen 736).

#### **4.2 Actions**

When it comes to the actions that are displayed by the female lead characters, multiple interesting activities can be distinguished. The results show that the female main characters mostly focus on police work and are dedicated to this particular work. These activities consist of work at a crime scene, laboratory work, and other related police work. As the series revolve around police work, these types of activities are to be expected in the series (Michael 4). Additionally, in each series, the serious, hardworking and independent nature of the main characters is emphasized. This is

stressed by activities such as characters taking the police work home, taking part in work related events, and showing great knowledge in their specific fields. In *Bones* episode 2, for example, the main character Dr. Brennan is seen multiple times expressing her knowledge on forensic science, by trying to explain a certain scientific phenomenon to her husband, who is less knowledgeable in the field (11:20-11:33). In addition, in episode 8 of *Law and Order: SUV*, the main character works over time, resulting in the image of her being invested in her police work. These types of work related activities highlight the female main characters as smart and dedicated to their cause. As Turnbull poses, these are standard qualities of the main character within the format of the police procedural (98).

Another striking result concerning work related actions can be noted in which a more stereotypical image of the female leads is evoked. In all three of the series it seems that the female main characters are used for the more delicate and less aggressive jobs within the police force. An example of this can be found in episode 3 of *Law and Order: SUV* during an interview with a victim of a crime. During this interview a clear distinction is present between the male detective asking questions and the female detective, detective Amanda Rollins, asking questions. The male detective is seen asking direct and unfriendly questions whilst the female detective stays at the background and steps in to be sensitive towards the victim (04:43-04:30). This happens in multiple interview scenes in *Law and Order: SUV* as well as *Bones*. This type of interview technique is known as the good cop-bad cop technique (Turnbull 74). However, it is striking that in every interview the female acts as the good cop, portraying her as incapable of being tough. This coincides with Elasmr et al's claim that females are portrayed stereotypically positive, and less aggressive as opposed to men (22). This interview method of good cop-bad cop thus portrays the female leads in a more sensitive, and positive role within the police force.

Numerous activities can additionally be identified that emphasize private life rather than the serious and hardworking portrayal of the female main character. Turnbull identifies this focus on private life as an important factor within crime series, as it acts as a reference point for the audience (3). The following activities were observed multiple times: cooking, cleaning, and taking care of a child. The men in the series on the other hand, are not portrayed in these type of activities but are seen in sports related activities or portrayed watching television. Eagly and Steffen pose that it is these female activities that evoke a stereotype as they are believed to be typical for women, and are thus recognized by the audience (735). It is these images that portray the females in a more stereotypical motherly, family based manner, identified by Segijn as the stereotype of homemaker (307). In this stereotype, there is a focus on communal goals, which entail family and home oriented tasks, each of which present within the series' events. In episode 8 of *Law and Order: SUV*, multiple scenes show Detective Olivia Benson on the phone with her young son and other scenes focus on Olivia Benson taking care of this child (00:28-01:13). Focus on cooking can similarly be found in the other two series. In *Bones*, a scene is present in which Dr. Brennan is cooking breakfast for her child while her husband is merely eating his own breakfast (see Appendix 2 fig. 1). As a result, a dichotomy is created in which the female cooks and the husband can relax, differentiating the two characters.

Additionally, the female leads take part in other private activities such as shopping, gossiping, and planning a party. In a scene of episode 7 in *Rizzoli & Isles*, Maura Isles and Jane Rizzoli are discussing the bedazzled fencing guard<sup>3</sup> they purchased online (01:13-01:32). This scene portrays the two characters in an activity, shopping, that is generally seen as typical for women (Eagly and Steffen 735). In contrast with the females, the male characters are depicted

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<sup>3</sup> Item used for fencing as part of a sabre.

with activities such as aggressive sports and lumberjacking. This distinction can be connected to Elasmar et al's theory that poses females take part in less vigorous activities, compared to male activities (22). These types of events highlight the difference between the male and female characters in the series.

### **4.3 Appearance**

In the series, much attention is paid to the female lead characters' appearance. The females work in environments in which they are active and work in laboratories (Turnbull 125). In these environments, work attire of some sort is expected. This does not seem to be the case, however. The female leading characters are consistently portrayed as very feminine by means of their appearance. Lauzen and Dozier define feminine as dressing and looking attractive and ladylike (437). Three main features of appearance can be distinguished that highlight this femininity. These three features are hair, makeup, and clothing or apparel.

One feature that stands out is the females' hair. Throughout the 6 episodes, the ladies in question display an array of well-kept and stylish hair styles, such as neat braids, curls, or straightened. These hairstyles never seem to untangle or become messy. This is interesting as there are numerous scenes in which the female is physically active, but their hair stays in place. For example, in *Law and Order: SUV*, Detective Amanda Rollins is in a chase as the suspect is fleeing the scene, and throughout this scene, her hair stays in style without becoming messy (18:22-18:25). In this case, the well-kept hair depicts the females according to Lauzen and Dozier's stereotypical image in which females are always beautiful and well-maintained (438). For the male characters on the other hand, hair seems to be less important and throughout scenes with combat, their hair becomes messy and tangled thus resulting in a distinction between men and women.

Makeup is additionally an important feature in the portrayal of women in these series. Careful attention is paid to depicting the females with flawless skin and rosy cheeks as in various close-ups foundation, blush and bronzer can be identified. A light pink lipstick can also be detected on the female characters' lips. In episode 3, Detective Rollins from *Law and Order: SUV* displays the perfect example of this look (see appendix 2 fig. 2). This results in highlighting a feminine side of the detectives. Furthermore, the characters also wear a smoky eye and heavy eyeliner. The presence of this bold makeup look suggests that makeup is a staple feature for any woman and that even in a more masculine and active environment makeup is an important defining aspect, highlighting the difference between men and women.

A crucial feature in each episode is the outfit each female character wears during her work. These outfits are stylish and seem to be unpractical for work on the police force. In *Rizzoli & Isles* the clothing stands out the most as both Mauro Isles and Jane Rizzoli wear high heels to their work. Additionally, in episode 7, Maura Isles is depicted in floral dresses and leather skirts at a crime scene (see Appendix 2 fig. 3). During her work at the morgue, her attire changes to more sensible clothing. However, she continues to wear high heels. In both *Bones* and *Law and Order: SUV* the work attire is less fashionable and more work appropriate. In both of these series the lead detectives and specialists are seen in what appears to be a uniform. Yet, underneath floral print blouses, high heeled shoes, and bold jewelry can be seen, as for example in *Bones* episode 2 (30:20-30:23). This choice of attire marks the stereotypical quality of females being feminine (Lauzen and Dozier 438), by using colorful clothing and feminine prints. Moreover, in *Bones*, one of the female lead characters changes to a pencil skirt and blouse while in her office, whereas her male counterpart is portrayed in uniform throughout the series (08:32-08:35). This highlights



the difference between the female and male characters clearly. The females in the series are thus portrayed in feminine, gender related, clothing styles, even during their work hours.

#### 4.4 Setting

Setting has an effect on the portrayal of women as these settings give shape to the life of the main characters by visually displaying their environment. The most often featured sets are: the police office, murder scenes, morgues, and laboratories. These function as prime locations within *Bones*, *Law and Order: SUV*, and *Rizolli & Isles*. Multiple details stand out in these locations. For example, in *Law and Order: SUV* the main backdrop of the show is the police office. This office has been fitted with little details such as the insignia of the police taskforce on the walls, desks with paperwork, and whiteboards with photographs of murder scenes. These sorts of details within the settings of the series create a realistic work environment. These main sets are the result of the format of a crime drama as the narrative is set around a murder or other crime related events, which are identified by Michael as the elements of a police procedural (4).

However, within the settings that mimic the environment of detectives or specialists, small details can be identified that add to the character of the female lead and evoke a certain image. These types of details in the setting consist of photographs, artwork, furniture, and media props. For example, in *Rizolli & Isles* episode 3, Maura Isles' office is featured multiple times and in this office objects such as a pink laptop, flowers, personal vacation photographs, and women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* can be distinguished (see Appendix 2 fig. 4). It is these details that highlight the female gender of the main characters. Similar details are found in *Law and Order: SUV*, in which the fact is highlighted that Olivia Benson is not only a detective but also a mother and girlfriend, by putting a photograph of her child on her desk, which is not the case for the other detectives (24:43-24:46). These details, suggest the idea of the female as a

homemaker. Small details of the main characters' private life thus build and shape them as a person.

In addition to the work settings, several private settings are used to influence the female characters' portrayal. These sets highlight the characters' personal life. The different types of backdrops that were recognized in the series from the US are the kitchen, the living room, and overall private home settings. In episode 6 of *Bones*, for example, other than scenes in the workplace, scenes featuring the main character in the living room and kitchen are present. The kitchen displays children's food and artwork, as well as beer that belongs to the husband, portraying Brennan as a mother and wife. These settings focus on the family aspect and communal orientation (Segijn et al 207) of the character of Temperance Brennan. Moreover, the kitchen backdrop is the most featured private setting in *Rizzoli & Isles* as well as in *Law and Order: SUV*. In these series, the kitchen is the only part of the female characters' house that is shown to the audience. This can be compared to the male lead characters' house in the series, which often only displays a bedroom or room with television. In *Rizzoli & Isles*, the kitchen is configured of bright colored, expensive appliances and flower patterns, creating a sense of femininity and success. These familial settings are thus a crucial feature in the depiction of the female lead.

These different settings portray the female according to the stereotype of the homemaker but also connect them with characteristics of the American Dream (Beller and Leerssen 92). This stereotype, according to Beller and Leerssen, entails "owning a sub-urban house with a picket fence in car in the garage" (92). The American dream stereotype can thus be identified in the portrayal of the females by the same settings that focus on the house and family, such as the kitchen, creating the idea of a nuclear family with a white picket fence (Beller and Leerssen 92).

## 4.5 Conclusion

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the portrayal of lead females in American crime series is based on three different ideas. On the one hand, within the categories of relationships, actions, appearance, and setting, the females are depicted as hard working, dedicated, successful, and competent at their job, which is defined by Turnbull as a characteristic of the main characters in crime dramas (98). Moreover, in two series they are portrayed as independent women, not in need of a relationship.

On the other hand, these results suggest that stereotypes are present within the American series. The stereotypes are incorporated in images of the private lives of the female leads which can be found in each of the four categories. As a result, the female is portrayed as gentle, delicate, and caring as well as a homemaker, on the basis of her actions, which contrasts with the image of independence. Images of the family and settings based on the private lives of the detectives and specialist create these stereotypes.

Additionally, the cultural stereotype of the American Dream can be identified as a characteristic in the portrayal of the women. This stereotype is developed on the basis of the recurring images that highlight the female as part of a successful family, a successful job and in a homely situation. This stereotype could be the effect of the series being exported to countries besides the country of production, leading to the self-image, which the American audience will recognize, being adopted as hetero-image, by the foreign audience (Leerssen 27).

## 5. Dutch Series

This chapter will discuss the results from the Dutch series in combination with the theory from the literature review. The results will be presented by looking at the categories of relationships, actions, appearance, and setting.

### 5.1 Relationships

The first thing that comes to the attention within the Dutch series is the aspect of relationships, or the lack thereof. The female lead characters in these series seem to have no particular interest in men. This is the result of three different phenomenon in the episodes. The first recurring aspect has to do with the fact that within the series, it is not clear whether the females are in any relationships. This is the result of the lack of attention for the private lives of the female leads. This focus on the crimes themselves is a result of the series being based on the traditional format of crime dramas. Hikspoors argues that traditional Dutch crime dramas focus on the plot around the crime within the series only without focusing on other storylines (7). Other than small hints, the series focus only on the crime aspect of the story, not paying any attention to the private lives of the female leads, and thus the relationships they might be in. From the beginning until the ending of the episodes, the storylines focus on murder or crime that has been committed and no other storylines surface. This is interesting as Turnbull poses that in American series the attention for characters' private lives is one of the factors that attracts an audience (3). Because of this absence of focus on private lives, it appears as if the females are single and no stereotypes such as the homemaker can be recognized on the basis of a relationship.

The lack of relationships is further emphasized as the women act very uninterested in any male persona in the series. This lack of interest is exhibited towards colleagues, their boss, or even suspects and victims within the series. For example in *Moordvrouw*, it is very clear that

police woman Fenna Kremer only develops a bond with female characters, such as the female victim of a rape, and is portrayed as distant and indifferent towards the male victims in the series. In episode 2 of *De Jacht*, the female lead, detective Lea Smid, even displays this disinterest by making fun of her male counterpart by pretending to ask him out, and then making fun of him when he seems interested (22:22-22:34). This indifference towards all male characters suggests the female leads in the series are independent and not in need of a relationship. This opposes the stereotypical idea that women have communal goals in which a female is oriented towards marriage (Eagly and Steffen 374; Segijn et al 207).

The third recurring aspect within the category of relationships further highlights the above mentioned disinterest in men. Unlike the females, who are displayed as disinterested, the male characters do display hints that suggest a female companion. This is done by adding small hints within the storyline of the committed crime. For example in episode 7 of *Flikken Maastricht*, the male character, also a detective, is filmed while calling his wife and daughter to see if they are unharmed after a serial rapist has been caught (32:50-33:00). This small detail displays the man as more oriented towards his family than his female counterpart. By using this stereotypical female image for the men in the series, as a means to even further highlight the females' unfemininity, the female is portrayed in a more masculine manner.

## **5.2 Actions**

When it comes to actions within the Dutch series, it soon becomes clear these series mostly reflect work that is crime and police force related. Again, as seen in the category of relationships, the focus is kept away from any events that are not crime related. This leads to emphasis on police department related actions. As a result, multiple types of activities can be recognized, that Turnbull identifies as key elements of a crime series (1). These activities in the series entail:

arrests, interviews with suspects and victims, information gathering missions, chases, and several undercover missions. For example, in *Flikken Maastricht* episode 5, an undercover mission is the theme of the episode and thus the main female lead takes part in this mission and every related event. As crime series revolve around police work, these types of activities are to be expected in the series (Michael 4).

On top of these crime related events, several actions can be distinguished that highlight even further that private life is not present or important within the series and that the females are devoted to their work. Throughout the series, characters are portrayed as living on the job, working late, sleeping in the office, and solving crimes in their spare time. One such example is found in episode 2 of *De Jacht*, in which detective Lea Smid tries to solve a rape case during what could be identified as spare time and she is called out about this by her co-worker: “You really take your work home don’t you?” (22:03-22:07). This focus, which depicts the females as keen on their work rather than family, creates the idea that the women are dedicated to a job that Signorielli and Bacue identify as non-stereotypical as it does not reflect a “traditional female occupation” (532). Beller and Leerssen additionally recognize the quality of hardworking as a stereotypical trait of the Dutch.

Within the police work an interesting aspect can be noted. No distinction is made between men and women on police force in the Dutch series. In the series, it becomes clear that the female leads take part in the same activities as the men and that the main female characters are not used for more delicate jobs within the police force. The types of activities both male and female have the same role in are, for example, aggressive arrests, active chases, and dangerous undercover missions. One of these events can be identified in episode 5 of *Flikken Maastricht*, in which detective Eva van Dongen is part of an undercover operation, which she herself thought

out (15:23-15:42). Within this operation, detective Eva van Dongen assumes the role of contact person, putting herself in a dangerous position. It is these types of actions that portray the females as tough, aggressive, and bold which can be identified as the opposite of the stereotypical softer portrayal Elasmr et al define (22). Instead of opting for different roles for the females, they are portrayed in the same light as the male characters, creating an image that does not coincide with a stereotypical female trait but rather with male traits (Best et al 737).

In addition, the leading females also display an array of non-typical emotions through actions in the series. The first emotions are: calm, rational, and sympathetic. In episode 7 of *Flikken Maastricht*, Detective Eva van Dongen clearly illustrates these emotions whilst being present during the identification of a victim. She stays composed and calm after seeing the victim and seeing the victim's parents having an emotional breakdown (33:39-33:43). The second type of emotions, however, portray the females as much less composed, showing the female leads bursting into, aggressive fits, accompanied by screaming, swear words and aggressive movement. For example, in episode 2 of *De Jacht*, detective Lea Smid storms into a room whilst shouting foul words at fellow police officers after a suspect has fled the scene. In these scene detective Lea Smid utters: "what the fuck do you think you are doing?"<sup>4</sup> accompanied by aggressive arm gestures (See appendix 3 fig. 1). These types of emotions highlight the exact opposite of the stereotypical traits, docility and non-aggressiveness, Best et al describes (736). However, these traits could be seen as the female lack of emotional restraint, yet Kelly and Hutson-Comeaux state aggressiveness is widely recognized as a stereotypical male emotion (108). This leaves the viewer with an ambiguous portrayal.

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<sup>4</sup> Original quote episode 2 in Dutch: "Wat de fuck denk jij dat je aan het doen bent?" (06:10-06:15)

Finally, the females in the series display actions that could be identified as part of the Dutch stereotype of directness. Mellaard argues this directness entails the Dutch as straightforward in conversations (8). This directness can be found in every conversation, as the female leads state very directly what they want and need without using any type of politeness, which is a strategy that leads to the avoidance of conflicts in conversations (Mellaard 9). The above example of detective Lea Smid from *De Jacht*: “what the fuck do you think you are doing?” displays this directness as during police research a direct question is asked to a male colleague, accompanied by crude and harsh swear words (06:07-06:10). The image thus coincides with a stereotype belonging to a national culture.

### **5.3 Appearance**

In the series, the appearance of the female lead influences her portrayal. Turnbull states that in multiple American crime series, a glamorous portrayal of the female is illustrated (157). However, within the Dutch series, appearance is kept very plain and no stereotypical portrayal is evoked. The females work in environments in which they are physically active and work in laboratories and in these environments, an appropriate type of attire is expected, such as a uniform (Turnbull 125). This appropriate attire and appearance can be distinguished in the series, displaying the females as serious workers. The females’ appearance can be divided into the features of hair, makeup, and clothing or apparel.

When it comes to the hair of the female lead characters, it is clear that this feature has been kept very simple. Two hairstyles can be recognized in the series. The first hairstyle is a simple ponytail. In episode 4 of *De Jacht*, detective Lea Smid wears her hair in a ponytail throughout the episode. This hairstyle keeps the females’ hair out of their faces, thus being an appropriate hairstyle during their work. The second type of hairstyle that can be identified is that



of simple, unattended, and loose hair. This contradicts Lauzen and Dozier's recognized stereotypical idea of women being well-kept and attractive (438). Detective Fenna Kremer in *Moordvrouw* episode 4 wears her hair in this loose style (03:06-03:08). These simple hairstyles suggest the females wear their hair in a manner that suits their job description and their hairstyles are more realistic in the field that they work in as this field does not require the women to wear fancy hairstyles.

In addition to the hairstyles, the feature of makeup is similarly kept very simple in the series. The female leads barely wear any makeup, and sometimes they wear no makeup at all. A good example of this can be found in *De Jacht* episode 4. Detective Lea Smid sports a bare face throughout the series and in this scene this bare face can be easily recognized (see Appendix 3 fig. 2). Throughout the series, the only type of makeup that is present is mascara. However, this look could be explained as a cinematic strategy to enhance eyes on film and not as a manner to highlight femininity. Makeup can be considered as a strategy in film that is used to enhance certain features on the medium of film (Simonton 117). This idea about makeup is supported by the continuous lack of other types of makeup, such as lipstick or eyeshadow, which could highlight the femininity of the female leads.

The clothing the females wear has an added effect on their portrayal, displaying them solely in work attire. The episodes suggest that the females are dressed suitably for their job with the police. Within the series clothing style and attire is kept simple. This is done by only dressing the females in nude or dark colors such as black, brown, dark green, and navy. No prints or bold colors are worn by the detectives and no jewelry other than very small earrings and a bracelet are present (see Appendix 3 fig. 3). In addition to the muted colors that are worn, the attire consists of pants and t-shirts. Throughout the series, no dresses or skirts are worn by the female leads.

When it comes to footwear, heavy and practical boots can be identified. Moreover, the females visibly carry a gun and police badges. As a result of the simple clothing and police related objects, no stereotypical feminine image is created of for example a more glamorous women that Turnbull recognizes in other crime series (157). The female lead is portrayed in gender neutral clothing that is work appropriate, highlighting the crime aspect of the series and not creating a feminine or sexy image.

#### **5.4 Setting**

Setting in the Dutch series is the area in which the focus on the crime aspect of the series rather than private life or side stories becomes most clear. Because of this, the setting has limited impact on the portrayal of the female lead. As Hikspoors explains, the series are based on a traditional detective series, in which the focus is kept on the plot of the crime (7). Therefore, the series *Flikken Maastricht* and *Moordvrouw* only incorporate settings associated with the storyline of that particular episode. This means the only types of settings that are used are crime scenes, police offices, laboratories, houses of victims, areas of interest such as school the victims went to, and other story related backgrounds. These backdrops display many details. For example in episode 5 of *Flikken Maastricht*, the police office displays the Dutch sign that stands for the police, as well as police officers in a Dutch uniform resembling the official uniform (see appendix 3 fig. 4). These recognizable details illustrate the more serious emphasis on crime within the series, yet they aid less in the portrayal of the female lead as they add less personal information.

The only setting that adds personal information to the portrayal of the female lead character can be found in episode 2 of *De Jacht*. This is a noteworthy setting as it adds to the hard working image that has been established in the category of actions. Within this episode, detective

Lea Smid's house acts as a backdrop. The interior of this house displays a wall that contains photographs and newspaper clippings of unsolved crimes, and a messy table is filled with files on cases that detective Lea Smid is working on outside of her work (19:48-20:00). This setting portrays the female lead as dedicated to the job as she brings her work home. Even though this setting aids in the portrayal of the female lead, it is only present in episode 2 and not in the other episode, as the plot of the episode describes a kidnapper taking women from their home, as happens to detective Lea Smid when she is kidnapped after work, thus briefly giving the audience a glimpse of her house.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

The conclusion that can be drawn about the Dutch crime series is that few stereotypes are used for the portrayal of the female leads. Within the categories of relationships, actions, appearance, and setting, the female leads are portrayed as independent and gender neutral women. This is done on the basis of traits that oppose the traditional stereotypes, such as aggression and practical and plain clothing. They are thus portrayed as little feminine.

In addition, the more traditional focus on the narrative of crime leaves little room for emphasis on the characters (Hikspoors 7-8). This contrasts with modern crime series, in which Turnbull identifies private life is important (3). Because of this traditional aim, more attention is paid to a realistic crime plot, with the main elements of a crime series, than to the main characters themselves (Turnbull 98). As a result, little extra information is present about the main characters which leads to a more limited portrayal.

Two possible stereotypes of national culture could additionally be identified within the female leads actions, namely that of the Dutch being hardworking, established by Beller and Leerssen, and that of the Dutch being direct in conversation, established by Mellaard. Both of

these stereotypes are evoked by activities the female leads take part in. As these qualities might be recognized by the Dutch audience, the incorporation of these qualities would aid in the attraction of the Dutch audience.

## 6. Conclusion

This study set out to discover what type of images are used for the portrayal of female lead characters in the popular genre of television crime dramas from the United States and the Netherlands. This research was based on a qualitative corpus analysis, with the corpus consisting of six series within the genre of the television crime drama. The American series were *Rizzoli & Isles*, *Bones*, and *Law and Order: SUV*. The three Dutch series were: *Flikken Maastricht*, *Moordvrouw*, and *De Jacht*. Two episodes from each series were watched. This corpus was used to answer the following research question:

*RQ: How are women that play the lead in modern crime dramas from the United States of America and the Netherlands portrayed and how do they compare?*

This study has found that within the American crime dramas, multiple female stereotypes and stereotypical traits are present in the images used for portrayal of the female lead. These images are additional to images Turnbull recognized as consistent factors in a crime drama. The series displayed qualities that led to the following stereotypes: the female as a homemaker, a feminine person, and the female as being gentle and non-aggressive. The American series additionally displayed females according to images that could be recognized as characteristics of the stereotype of the American dream. This stereotype was evoked by the recurring images that highlight the female as part of a successful family, a successful job and in a homely situation, which are key elements of the American Dream.

In the Dutch crime shows on the other hand, few stereotypical female images and qualities were found. The females in these series display a much less traditionally feminine image, and more masculine traits and emphasizing the independence of the female lead. This image is evoked by using traits that oppose the traditional stereotypes, such as aggression and

practical clothes. The Dutch series additionally display the female lead characters according to images that can be recognized as characteristics of Dutch cultural stereotypes. The two stereotypes that could be recognized are the stereotypical trait of the Dutch being hardworking, established by Beller and Leerssen, and that of the Dutch being direct in conversation, established by Mellaard.

The results of this study identified a clear difference between the images used for portrayal of the female leads in the Dutch and American series. The American series seem to use a different format from the Dutch series, which could account for the different manners of portrayal. In the American series, there is a clear focus on the private lives of the female leads. Turnbull argues this focus is an important element within modern day American crime series (3). This focus adds to the character of the female lead, providing the viewer with additional information about the female lead character. The Dutch series are based on what Hikspoors calls a traditional crime format in which the focus is on the crime plot (7). The lack of focus on private life then leads to a more limited image on the female leads.

However, format is merely a partial reason for the presence of the different images in the series. Media are known to use certain images to represent people and groups of people. As the series are produced with a particular audience and country in mind, traits of these cultures will be incorporated as self-images in the series by the producers (Beller and Leerssen 6). The female images that are found in the American and Dutch series can thus be identified as self-images (Beller and Leerssen 27). To account for the reason these self-images are present, anthropology is needed as the images can reflect the thoughts of society on men and women. Imagology and anthropology build on each other as imagology looks at what images are present and anthropology looks at the societal values that explain this presence. As Bartsch et al concludes:

“trends in representation [...] are one measure of how [a] society views woman and men” (736). Consequently, the use of images and stereotypes reflects societal thoughts and sparks recognition within the audience, or as Dervin argues, they work as an identifier. As Cohen states, people can only connect with the characters, if these characters are portrayed according to images the audience is familiar with (247).

For the American series, the stereotype based portrayal of women suggests a traditional view on women within American television companies. This traditional view can be explained by the presence of conservative tendencies in parts of the American society (King et al 5). Conservatism, according to Kerber, appoints females to more traditional and feminine roles (12). Within a conservative society, women are a pivotal part of society. However, they continue to be unequal to men (Kerber 12). From an anthropological perspective, the idea of inequality is supported by the Global Gender Gap Index of 2016. This index ranks countries according to male-female equality. The United States is ranked as 45th<sup>5</sup>, meaning the gap between men and women is large. By incorporating stereotypical images of females, which emphasize the American ideal of women in traditional roles, femininity, and contrasting work, the makers of the series offer the audience a point of identification. Stereotypes can thus indeed act as an identifier within a narrative.

For the Dutch series, the more masculine, independent, and though image that is evoked by the female leads suggests a less conservative, more feministic stance in the Netherlands as females are seen in a less traditional light. Keuzenkamp and Oudhof support this idea in the field of anthropology as the *Emancipatiemonitor* shows that Dutch females from the year 2000 onwards were no longer defined by traditional work and family (3). This is the result, according

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<sup>5</sup> Out of 140 countries.

to Portegijs and van Brakel, of the Netherlands being a country in which women are free to shape their own lives (11). Additionally, the Emancipatiemonitor posits females in the Netherlands largely have the same chances as men and that mostly practice the same jobs (4). This is supported by Global Gender Gap Index, which reveals females are more equal to men in this country as the Netherlands takes up place 16. The image of the female working at the police office and doing the same jobs as men is, therefore, an image that reflects a Dutch trend in society and thus acts as an identifier.

Furthermore, exportation of the series to other countries might be the reason for the cultural stereotypes present. The self-images that are inexplicitly incorporated by the producers can be adopted as hetero-images, or other-images, by the foreign audiences (Leerssen 27). As the American series have been exported to many countries around the globe, the images of the American Dream and even female stereotypes could be a result of this exportation, presenting images the Dutch and other audiences might perceive as stereotypical other-images. The Dutch series have also been exported to neighboring countries, such as Germany and Belgium, and this could thus lead to foreign audiences picking up on Dutch self-images which can translate into the stereotypes of being direct and hardworking.

To conclude, the findings suggest that within the crime dramas from the US and the Netherlands a clear difference is present between the images that are used for the portrayal of the female lead which is the result of incorporating culture specific self-images. In the series from the US multiple stereotypes are present that could reflect a possible conservative nature that is present in society, creating identification with the characters as well as a cultural stereotypes that could be the result of exportation to many different countries around the world. In the series from the Netherlands, the female is portrayed according to a less traditional and less feminine image



and this may reflect views on females in which they are more equal to men. In addition, a cultural stereotype can be distinguished that could be the outcome of incorporation of self-images. To account for the images, theory on imagology did not suffice and anthropology was necessary.

### **6.1 Limitations**

Two limitations were established during the present research. Firstly, as this present paper is a master's thesis, the time available for the research was a limitation. The given time was a period of ten weeks and within these ten weeks the data needed to be collected and analyzed. As a result, the corpus could only consist of six series and a total of 12 episodes. This corpus thus only makes up a small part of the available data. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized as the images found only partially account for the series.

Secondly, accounting for the results raised a problem. The results found in the series may reflect societal ideas and in this present paper literature was used to account for the results. However, recent literature on views of women in both the Netherlands and the USA is scarce and thus only a limited explanation for the presence of the images can be given. For a realistic picture of societal views on women, it is important to speak with people from the particular countries to gain insight into these views. The section on recommendations will present further options for additional research on these matters.

### **6.2 Recommendations**

The first suggestion for further research is to expand this current research and investigate other episodes of these series, or expand the corpus with other series, to see if the images found are indeed representative. This would mean that additional corpus analysis needs to be carried out to gain further insight into other episodes. Another suggestion would be a qualitative analysis on the basis of interviews with respondents from both American and the Netherlands to see if the

stereotypes and images present in the series are indeed based on current views and trends in society. The participants would watch excerpts of the series and respond to the images present. By using interviews within the countries the series are aimed at, results could show if people from that country support the images present in the series and if they are indeed representative of the culture instead of only basing representation on literature.

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## **Appendix 1. Description of Series.**

### ***Rizolli and Isles***

This series ran from 2010 to 2016 and follows the female characters of Detective Jane Rizolli and medical examiner Maura Isles as they solve and fight crimes in Boston (“Rizolli & Isles”). There are seven seasons in total. Each of these seasons consists of around 10 to 18 episodes (“Rizolli and Isles”). Jane Rizolli, one of the main characters, is a detective in the police force, working with mostly men in the police force of Boston. Maura Isles, Jane Rizolli’s best friend and medical examiner, works for the same police force. However, at a different department, making her a specialist.

### ***Law and Order: SUV***

*Law and Order: SUV* had been running from 1999 until present and follows the detectives from the elite squad Special Victims Unit in New York (“Law and Order”). This squad investigates horrendous sex crimes. The series main characters have changed over the years except for Detective Olivia Benson, who has been the lead female from the start of the series. In season 18, additional main characters are Detective Amanda Rollins, Detective Odafin Tutuola, and Detective Nick Amaro. The series has 18 seasons total, with each season consisting of around 22 episodes (“Law and Order”).

### ***Bones***

This series is a show about female main character Dr. Temperance Brennan, “Bones”, who works as forensic anthropologist for the police force in Washington DC. Agent Seeley Booth is the additional main character. In the series, the focus lies on mysteries behind human remains and does not necessarily focus on the police force itself. The series ran from 2005 until March of 2017 and consists of a total of 12 seasons. Each season has approximately 22 episodes (“Bones”).

Dr. Temperance Brennan is a passionate forensic scientist working in a large team of other scientists.

### ***Moordvrouw***

*Moordvrouw* is a crime show about unorthodox Detective Fenna Kremer who works for a fictitious police force in the Netherlands. She has a troublesome relationship with her colleagues which is the result of solving crimes in a way the colleagues do not see fit. The series has been running from 2012 until present and consists of six seasons and each season has ten episodes total (“*Moordvrouw*”). Other supporting characters in the show are Detective Evert Numan and Head Chief Commissioner Carla Vreeswijk.

### ***Flikken Maastricht***

This series has been running from 2007 until present and is a spin-off for the Belgian show *Flikken* that was created by broadcasting company VRT (“*Flikken Maastricht*”). The series follow undercover police officer Eva van Dongen and police officer Floris Wolfs during their dangerous investigations in the city of Maastricht. Additional roles in the series are that of police officers Marion Dreesen and Romeo Sanders. The series consists of 11 seasons, with each season consisting of ten episodes. An exception is season one, which has 13 episodes (“*Flikken Maastricht*”).

### ***De Jacht***

*De Jacht* is a reasonably new series in the Netherlands with only one season. The first season aired in 2016. The series is a Dutch remake of the Danish series *Den som Draeber* (“*De Jacht*”). The show focusses on the young Detective Lea Smid who works in a team that investigates serial murders. Her male counterpart is ex-forensic psychologist Thomas de Wolf. The teamwork is

strong but they solve murders in a rather unorthodox manner. The present season consists of 6 episodes (“De Jacht”).

## Appendix 2. Stills of the American Series.



Figure 1. *Bones* kitchen scene: Temperence Brennen making breakfast for family. Yael Zinkow, *Bones* (20<sup>th</sup> Television, 7 Feb. 2017).



Figure 2. *Law and Order: SUV* crime scene: Detective Amanda Rollins makeup look. Rick Eid & Gavin Harris, *Law and Order: SUV* (Sony Pictures Television, 5 Oct. 2016).



Figure 3. Rizolli & Isles crime scene: Maura Isles in floral dress at crime scene. Jeremy Svenson & Sam Lembeck, *Rizolli and Isles* (Warner Horizon Television, 18 July 2016).



Figure 4. Rizolli & Isles office scene: Maura Isles' office. Janet Tamaro & Tess Gerritsen, *Rizolli and Isles* (Warner Horizon Television, 13 June 2016)

### Appendix 3. Stills of the Dutch Series.



Figure 1. Office scene *De Jacht*: Lea Smid aggressive arm gestures. Will Koopman, *De Jacht* (Talpa Fictie, 23 May 2016).



Figure 2. Lea Smid interview scene: Lea Smid's natural face. Will Koopman, *De Jacht* (Talpa Fictie, 30 May 2016).



Figure 3. Eva van Dongen in Office scene: example of simple clothing. Robbert Jan Overheen & Jan Harm Dekker, *Flikken Maastricht* (Eyeworks, 27 Jan. 2017).



Figure 4. *Flikken Maastricht* Office scene: official police clothing. Bert Bouma & Jan Harm Dekker, *Flikken Maastricht* (Eyeworks, 13 Jan. 2017).