

Through Dominant Eyes

An Outline of the Representation of Transgender People in Dutch Written Media of 2018

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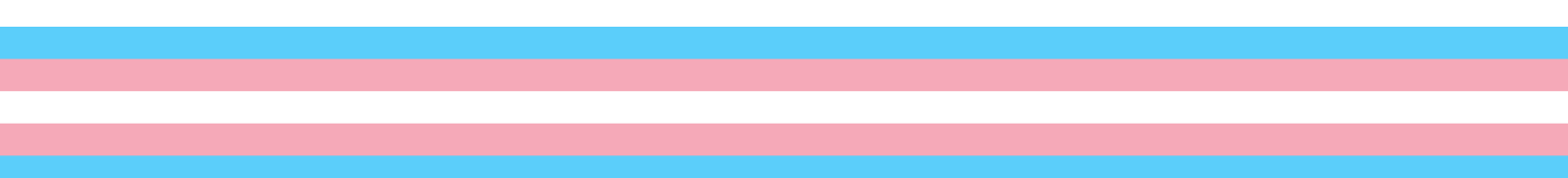


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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore and outline the representation of transgender people in Dutch written media of 2018. This thesis has looked at the roles and intersecting identities of trans people. I have labelled all articles about trans people and the transgender community via the software 'Meltwater', and labelled the articles with tags, in order to collect data. I then analysed the data and looked for irregularities and patterns. In the analysis, I present the articles in four themes: discrimination, emancipation, transition and work. Within these four themes, the most prevalent outcome was that Dutch written media show quite a one-sided story of a trans person, namely the story of a young, white trans woman who is either successful or a victim who has gone through a medial and physical transition. The older, trans man of colour is more absent. This thesis also includes four in depth analyses of articles that have appeared in Dutch media in 2018 and are either very typical for other articles, or different than what normally appears in the media. It is important to look at the representation of transgender people, since the Dutch written media play a role in the emancipation of transgender people, and a truthful representation will benefit the transgender community. This is also something that will be presented in the theoretical framework, where I explain three key concepts of my argument, namely representation, stereotyping and intersectionality.

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore how Dutch written media write about transgender people and issues, and how this affects the emancipation of the transgender community. Since the nineteen seventies and eighties, transgender people have become more present in Western media. Films like *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) and *Transamerica* (2005) all include transgender characters. However, it has taken a little more time for Dutch media to represent more transgender people. Fortunately in the past few years, transgender people have been more present in Dutch media than ever before (Van den Berg, 2017, p. 1). Since 2014, there has been a Dutch series which focuses directly on trans people, called 'Hij is een Zij' (He is a She) and Dutch trans people are more visible in other shows too, like Holland's Next Top Model (Loiza Lamers in season 7, and Rikkie Kolle in season 11) and Big Brother (Kelly van der Veer in season 3). Knowledge institute Atria did research on what the representation of transgender people looked like in the Netherlands from 1991 to 2016. They found that Dutch media focuses more on transgender people and issues than 28 years ago. For the last two years, it seems that this increase in articles has not disappeared. Trans issues appear to be more present in Dutch media, with recent examples being that NS (the Dutch national railway company) has started to address their customers with 'dear travellers' instead of 'ladies and gentlemen', and the 'joke' Rene van der Gijp made about pretending to be trans. In February 2018, Dutch football presenter Rene van der Gijp appeared in women's clothes and a blonde wig, and jokingly told his co-presenters in the show 'Football Inside' that he wants to be called 'Renate', in a reaction to the Belgian presenter Bo van Spilbeeck, who came out as transgender a day before this incident in Football Inside. (Telegraaf, 02-02-2018). The visibility of transgender people has, thus, increased over the past few years, yet transgender people in the Netherlands disproportionally encounter harassment, discrimination and victimisation (Keuzekamp, 2012, p. 57-59). We can see that transgender people face excessive forms of discrimination, despite their growing visibility in media. This thesis would like to state that by having more accurate, truthful and authentic representation, that this will contribute to the emancipation of transgender people ref.. argument. This thesis will therefore explore what media representation can mean for the emancipation of transgender people. The research question is:

What did the representation of trans people with intersecting identities in Dutch written media look like in 2018, and what are the consequences for their emancipation?

In order to answer this question, this thesis will use sub-questions. The sub-questions are:

1. What do the narratives of transgender people look like?
2. What intersecting identities do the trans people who appear in the articles of Dutch media have?
3. What is the importance of media representation of and for transgender people?

These sub-questions are answered in chapters two and four of this chapter. Chapter two offers a theoretical approach, and thus answers question 3, since these questions need literature to answer this, rather than a in depth analysis of the written Dutch media of 2018. I will answer questions 1 and 2 in chapter four, where I quantitatively and qualitatively analyse the Dutch written media of 2018. Dutch media are very broad of course. I have decided to focus on Dutch written articles from various sorts of media outlets, from big national newspapers to smaller, local weekly newspapers. This is a total of 6039 articles, and I have gone through them in software called 'Meltwater'. I have chosen to only focus on 2018, since there has been done research on trans people in Dutch media from 1991 until 2016, and because 2018 is the most recent year. I have chosen not to include 2017, because of the time limits of this thesis.

This thesis is of significance, because it is important to look at the representation of transgender people in the Netherlands. It has been done before by Atria, yet they focussed on three newspapers, and this thesis will look at all written media. Furthermore, when it comes to research about transgender representation, a lot of the research has been done in the US. Cael Keegan, an American professor, carried out research on traditional American media (television, newspapers, but also films). According to Keegan, representation, is limited and does not do justice to the multiplicity of transgender lives (Keegan, 2013, p. 1-2). Keegan thinks it is problematic that many media outlets focus solely on the medical transition of a trans person (Keegan, 2013, p. 1-2). Also, According to Van der Berg, this one-sided view leads to two negative effects. Firstly, the transgender identity gets reduced to a matter of personal experience of the body. When this is corrected, there is nothing else to worry about, and there are no questions left about fundamental issues like gender, that cisgender people also have to ask for themselves. The second effect is the social, economic and legislative exclusion of trans gender people is not being focussed on (Van den Berg, 2017, p. 5). It is thus important that this thesis will further explore the use of transgender narratives in Dutch media and how this affects the trans community.

Chapter 1: Background

This chapter will cover the background information about the transgender community from the numbers around transgender people and issues to their history. This chapter serves as a guideline for the reader, thus making it more accessible to read.

1.1. Terms and Numbers

Let us first start with the term. Transgender is an umbrella term used for people whose sex assigned to them at birth, gender identity (how someone identifies psychologically) and gender expression (the way someone expresses themselves via their appearance) do not align (Bockting, Robinson, & Rosser, 1998, p.505). In the twentieth century, there was still a distinction between people who want to have a gender affirmative surgery, and those who do not. People who wanted this surgery were called ‘transsexuals’, but today, these people fall under the term ‘transgender’ and the term ‘transsexual’ is outdated (Kuyper, 2012, p. 129). Transgender people challenge one of the most fundamental identity categories an individual has, that of gender. I have chosen to call this group ‘transgender people’ or ‘trans people’ instead of ‘transgenders’ or ‘transsexual’, since this is what Transgender Network Netherlands (TNN) uses. ‘Transsexual’ is a term used by medical people in the twentieth century, who believed that transgender people would always want to medically change their sex, but there are many trans people who choose not to. The other criticism trans people have is that the word ‘sexual’ is confusing, because it is not a sexual orientation. In cases of individuals, I will either use trans(gender) man, trans(gender) woman, or trans(gender) person (TNN, woordenlijst, 2018). The numbers around transgender people vary per study, per country and per decade. In the nineties of the twentieth century, the Dutch gender dysphoria centre of the Vrije Universiteit Medisch Centrum (VUmc) calculated that around 1 in 11.900 men and 1 in 30.400 women are transgender (Bakker, van Kesteren, Gooren & Bezemer, 1993). Dysphoria is the severe discomfort or distress connected with one's own gender incongruence which can be social, physical or both (Winter et al, 2016, p. 391). In the case of the VUmc, they focus on physical dysphoria. More recently, the Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) calculated that around 1 in 18.300 people in the Netherlands are transgender (Geerdinck, Muller, Verkleij & van Weert, 2011). The most recent research is by Rutgers, institute for sexual and reproductive health and rights. According to this research, 5,7% of men and 4,0% of women in the Netherlands say that they do not feel solely male or female. A smaller group state that they are unsatisfied with the

sex they were assigned at birth, and/or wishes to take hormones and/or have a gender affirmative surgery (Kuyper, 2012, p. 133).

1.2. History

This paragraph will discuss the Dutch history of transgender people and the attitude of Dutch cisgender people towards transgender people. Alex Bakker is a Dutch historian and wrote the book “Transgender in Nederland” (Transgender in the Netherlands). This book is the first and only book about the history of transgender people in the Netherlands. This book tells the ‘extraordinary history’ of trans people in the Netherlands. In Bakker’s introduction, he mentions that there have always been transgender people. The word and the concept appeared later, but the people have always been around (Bakker, 2018, p. 9). However, it is difficult to tell whether these people were transvestites, breaking gender roles, or genderbending. From the twentieth century onwards, there is more historical evidence of transgender people. There are documents about the first gender affirmative surgeries in Germany in the early twenties, and in 1950’s, the first surgery in the Netherlands took place (Bakker, 2018, p. 11). The history that Bakker describes starts, thus, in 1950. In the 1950’s, there was a big focus on surgeries. Coen van Emde Boas was a psychiatrist and sexologist from Amsterdam with a large international network (Bakker, 2018, p. 25). He therefore knew about new surgeries and treatments happening around the world at the time. He helped a lot of trans people, and was liberal, taboo-breaking, but also cautious. He only helped those who were definitely trans, and did not want to risk any missteps (Bakker, 2018, p. 27). A downside of this, is the longterm and complicated screening before surgery. The representation of transgender people in the fifties and sixties were dominated by trans women, Aaïcha Bergamin was the most famous. Yet, we know little about the lives of trans women, let alone trans men. We know that trans women lived in the shadow of society in the fifties (Bakker, 2018, p. 39). This was not a solution for trans men. In the Dutch fifties, there was a strict idea about gender roles where women had to obey to their husbands. Before 1956, women were not allowed to own a house or car, without the permission of their husbands. Therefore, for a person who was registered as a woman, but who felt like a man, it was extremely hard to break away from these gender roles, although there were trans men who went into transition (Bakker, 2018, p. 39). Some trans women in this era worked as sex workers in Amsterdam, because they could be themselves in these sub-cultures, and with their earned money, they could invest in wigs, make-up and women’s clothing (Bakker, 2018, p. 43). Yet, they were seen as scams; homosexual men who pretended to be women. The seventies are characterised by more attention for gender affirmative surgeries and a call for normalisation. Otto de Vaal, a doctor and researcher wrote a book in 1971. In this book, he pled against

characterising trans people as people with a mental condition, like a disorder or psychosis (Bakker, 2018, p. 73). What is interesting to mention, is that De Vaal was ahead of his time, since the DSM-5, the handbook for psychiatric disorders, only changed 'gender identity disorder' to 'gender dysphoria' in 2013. Some activists plead for a complete removal of gender dysphoria in the DSM-5, yet others state that it might be useful to keep it in the DSM-5, so that transgender people can easily access health care (Drescher et al., 2013, p. 906). The situation for trans people in the Netherlands improved in the seventies, because there were the first signs of emancipation and a more positive image in the media, with the reality still being tough. The Gender Foundation was founded in 1972, who were (unlike Van Emde Boas) less strict in who could receive surgeries and help, and in the mid-seventies, there were long waiting lists (Bakker, 2018, p. 97).

A very important moment in Dutch transgender care was when the Gender Foundation and the Vrije Universiteit hospital in Amsterdam decided to work together. They started to do more research, and help more trans people with their hormone treatments and surgeries (Bakker, 2018, p. 154). Slowly, the VU hospital gained a bigger role in transgender care in the 1980s. The Gender Foundation, on the other hand, focused more on the lives of transgender people by helping them with the problems they encountered with their job, pension or partner (Bakker, 2018, p. 159). Another important moment in Dutch transgender history was the new law that would recognise sex change in 1985. By accepting this law, the Netherlands was the fourth country to recognise sex change, after Sweden, Germany and Italy (Bakker, 2018, p. 177). The image of trans people in the eighties varied. On the one hand, they were portrayed as victims, people without a bright future and a bigger chance of being unhappy (Bakker, 2018, p. 172). As a consequence, there were less people who chose to transition.

1.3. Social situation of transgender people

As stated in the introduction, transgender people in the Netherlands disproportionally encounter harassment, discrimination and victimisation. According to the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), 42% of Dutch transgender respondents had to deal with negatives responses in 2012, especially in public places (38%). 27% stated that they saw people looking disapprovingly at them, 19% said that they had been ridiculed or experienced insulting jokes. 12% has been called names, and 11% has been excluded in 2012. Moreover, 5% of the respondents said that they had been threatened, and 2% had been attacked. Transgender people also face negative reactions at schools (25%) and at their jobs (20%) (Keuzekamp, 2012, p. 57-59). Dutch transgender people are more often lonely, and they struggle relatively more with

their mental health. Furthermore, transgender people think more often about suicide than cisgender people (Kuyper and Vanden Berghe, 2017, p. 50-51). Despite the fact that 40% of transgender individuals are highly educated, 75% of them have a lower income, while 40% of the general labor force have a lower income, and 25% are higher educated (ibid, p. 10). 10% of the Dutch people state that they view transgender people negatively (Kuyper, 2018, p. 33). This number has been the same since 2012, but the percentage for people who view transgender people positively rose. In 2012, 45% of the people viewed them positively and this was 57% in 2017. Also, less people in 2017 think there is ‘something wrong’ with transgender people than in 2012 (respectively 29% and 20%).

1.4. Media and transgender people

The Dutch feminist archive Atria conducted a research on transgender representation in the Netherlands from 1991 to 2016. They have looked at three large Dutch newspapers, namely de Volkskrant, Trouw and Telegraaf. According to this research, the amount of articles grew tremendously, from a few articles in 1991 to more than 5000 in 2016 (Van den Berg, 2017, p. 1). Also, the term ‘transgender’ became more popular than ‘transsexual’. The author, Mariecke Van den Berg, detected six dominant ‘scripts’. Scripts are story lines used by journalists when they talk about transgender issues. First of all, the script of the *successful trans person* was used. Under this category are trans people who, after they came out and transitioned, truly are themselves and who have a supportive people around them like family or friends. Second, trans people who are not actually trans people and who fool their surroundings were categorised as a *fraud*. A *pioneer* is someone who fights for the emancipation of transgender people and who lead the way to a less gender normative society. In the fourth place is the category *criminal*. Under this category are people who were involved with criminality. A *victim* is a trans person who is a victim of discrimination or violence, and lastly, a *pawn*. In this category, trans people are used to demonstrate how liberal the Netherlands is, and how backwards ‘other’ countries in for example Eastern Europe or in the MENA region are.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter will cover the topics of representation, stereotyping and intersectionality, which are the three key concepts of my argument.

2.1. Representation

According to the cultural theorist Stuart Hall, representation connects meaning and language to culture (Hall, 1997, p. 19). To put it simply, culture is established through a shared meaning, and language is needed to make meaning. To help us understand language and meaning, it is necessary to look at semiotics. Semiotics rests on an understanding that the words, language and other signs which we use in our everyday and social contexts help to shape our reality (Hall, 1997, p. 20). According to Jonathan Bignell, a media researcher, semiotics is the most powerful way in which we can think about media. He states: “language and the other communication systems which we collectively use, provide the conceptual framework in and through which reality is available to us”. (Bignell 2002, p. 6). Thus, language creates our reality, rather than reality existed before language gave words to it. This is also called ‘discourse’, a term mostly associated with French philosopher Michel Foucault. Discourse is more than simply language for Foucault. It is a way of framing a set of knowledges and arguments about a certain topic, in a certain place and time, which become the dominant frames within which that topic is then understood. Discourse is thus infused with power. Foucault states: ”In a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse” (Foucault, 1980, p.93).

Representation thus goes hand in hand with language, meaning, culture and discourse. These terms are broad, and omnipresent in our societies, and that is why representation has a lot to do with identity politics. This is also what Jenny Kidd, a scholar at the university of Cardiff, believes. She argues that the representation of race, sexuality, class, gender, disability and age has been infamously and historically problematic. She states: “It is not controversial to assert that in Western contexts at least, there has been a privileging of white, middle-class, hetero-normative, and often male, perspectives within the media and broader cultural output”. (Kidd, 2016, p. 36). Representation is, according to Kidd, monolithic and narrow. There is no room for people who do not look like the perspectives she stated in her quote, they are silenced. There is a difference between being silent, and being silenced (by media for example). The

trans community have had limited voice or voices in public discourse. The experiences portrayed in media have had very little to do with the reality and experiences of the lives of trans people. Kidd states: “Those experiences and voices have been marginalized and effectively silenced which of course has real world political and social ramifications” (Kidd, 2016, p. 53). The silencing of trans people, thus has consequences for their lives. That is why it is important to have a correct and diverse representation of trans people. Yet, the representation of trans people is not always correct and diverse, as stated in the background. You could state that this (mis)representation is harming the community and that this is stereotyping them. Professor of Gender Studies Jack Halberstam sees this too, but also notices a change in the way that current media portray trans people. He recognises that trans people have been stereotyped as a problem or a criminal, but that the media are now *humanising* the trans people. This change unfortunately happens “achingly slow” (Kidd, 2016, p. 52). It is important to have truthful representation. Ghazali and Nor state: “representations of transgender people and transgender themed storylines have particularly crucial implications for transgender youth who are often actively negotiating their transgender identities when consuming such content” (Ghazali & Nor, 2012, p. 185).

There has been a debate whether media representation needs to reflect reality. There are three ideas on this. The first one is the reflectionist approach. The idea of the reflectionist approach is the notion that media functions like a mirror that reflects true meaning as it already exists in the world (Hall, 1997, p. 24). The reflectionist approach believes that reality is accessible through representation, thus the task of representation is to reflect reality. The other idea about representation is the constructionist approach. It critiques the reflectionist’s notion of representation is reality. The constructionist approach assumes that representation is inherently a construction and depiction of some elements of reality, which always generates some specific meanings and excludes others (Orgad, 2014, p. 46). Lastly, there is post-structuralism, which argues that representation is the production and construction of understandings of the world and identities. This is different from other constructionist arguments, because it counters the idea of a ‘truth’ or ‘reality’. Representations are a series of signs and symbols that pretend to reflect ‘reality’ (Orgad, 2014, p. 50). These three approaches all state that there is a link between representation and reality, although they cannot agree on what role reality plays.

2.2. Stereotyping

When discussing the concept of stereotyping, it is important to understand the difference between *typing* and *stereotyping*, because one is harmful, and the other is not. In his essay, Richard Dyer states: “without the use of types, it would be very difficult to make sense of the world” (Dyer, 1977, p. 27). He argues that we always make sense of things in terms of wider categories. For example, we understand a person by thinking about their role. Are they a parent, happy, old or young, a politician, an athlete, etc.? In other words, a *type* is any ‘simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognised characterisation in which a few traits are foreground and change or “development” is kept to a minimum’ (Dyer, 1977, p. 28). But what happens when typing becomes problematic? What is the difference between *typing* and *stereotyping*? According to Stuart Hall, there are three definitions of stereotyping. First of all, stereotyping takes the traits of a certain group, and amplifies and reduces them. Furthermore, stereotyping ‘divides the normal and the acceptable from the abnormal and the unacceptable’ (Hall, 1997, p. 247). According to Hall, the third definition of stereotyping is that ‘stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power’ (Hall, 1997, p. 247). Power is mostly conducted against minorities and marginalised groups. A more straightforward definition of stereotyping comes from Suzanne Oboler. Oboler (1998) states that: “stereotyping puts people in boxes and creates images that result in false presumptions accepted as inconvertible truths” (Oboler, 1998, p. 27). Although stereotypes are based on false presumptions, as Oboler stated, stereotypes can be both positive and negative. A negative stereotype could be ‘women are less ambitious than men’, and a positive stereotype could be ‘Asians are good at math’. However, this does not make them more or less problematic.

Now that it is clear what stereotyping is, we can focus on the consequences of stereotyping. According to Vohs and Baumeister, there are two consequences of stereotypes. The first consequence is for the person that sees a group or person that are often stereotyped. According to Vohs and Baumeister (2007), when a person encounters a person or group, they automatically have stereotypes. Those assumptions about people are automatically activated. This activation of stereotypes can also happen in cases in which a person does not personally think or accept the stereotype as correct. Vohs and Baumeister state: “If this happens, the stereotype can exert a host of effects on the way this person is perceived and treated. Most of these effects occur rapidly, involuntarily, and often without any awareness that they are taking place” (Vohs and Baumeister, 2007, p. 941). The second consequence is on the stereotyped group or person. Vohs and Baumeister call this ‘self-stereotyping’ (Vohs and Baumeister, 2007, p. 848). Self-stereotyping occurs when the stereotyped person believes the assumptions and

stereotypes about their group. This can lead to lower self-esteem, and it may lead to behaviour that supports existing inequalities between groups in society (Vohs and Baumeister, 2007, p. 848).

For trans people specifically, there are many stereotypes. In this paragraph, we will discuss some of the most common stereotypes around transgender people and the community. Cael M. Keegan analysed trans people in media, and found that trans people only get a limited amount of roles, especially in film (Keegan, 2013, p. 1-2). Trans people are often portrayed as the confused psychopath in thrillers or the tragic victim that will never *fit* in society in drama films like *Transamerica*. Other roles of trans people in films are the criminal or sexworker (Davis, 2009). Maria Ramnehill argues that trans people are often mocked by comedy series. They are sometimes not even present, yet these series make fun of them (Ramnehill, 2016, p. 31-33). Jamie Capuzza (2015) found that the media, and more specifically news articles and coverage, often put stereotypes on transgender people. First of all, news articles limit transgender identities as “deceptive”, because (according to news articles) their gender identity relates to crime (Capuzza, 2015, p. 103). Second, news coverage of trans people medicalise the transgender body by focussing on sex affirmative surgery. Also, the “wrong body discourse” reduces gender identity and expression to reproductive systems (Capuzza, 2015, p. 103). Third, news articles often conflated sex and gender. This could lead to potentially undermining the news consumers’ understanding of the difference between the two. Capuzza also states that: “journalists typically over-emphasized transgender people’s sexuality thus sensationalising the news-narrative (Capuzza, 2015, p. 103). Fourth, Capuzza sees how journalists sometimes use problematic language, including the failure to use chosen names and pronouns. A common mistake is to use the old pronoun and name when talking about a trans person’s past. According to Capuzza, “this phrasing undermines a transgender person’s ability to self-identify” (Capuzza, 2015, p. 103).

The stereotypes are inappropriate and unreasonable, and are harming the community. It is therefore important to reverse or escape the stereotype, because this might be a possibility to stop the harmful ideas about the trans community. Stuart Hall describes how reversing the stereotype does not necessarily mean that you overturn or subvert it (Hall, 1997, p. 261). Hall offers three strategies to reverse the stereotype. The first one, is to put the stereotyped person or group at the centre of popular culture. The second strategy of contesting stereotypes is to substitute a range of positive images of trans people for the negative images (Hall, 1997, p 262). The third strategy locates itself within the complexity and ambivalence of representation and tries to contest from within. This means that it is more concerned with the transphobic forms

from within than with introducing new content (Hall, 1997, p. 264). Another way of dealing with stereotypes and discrimination is to be resilient. To be resilient means the ability of a person to “bounce back” from challenging experiences (McCall, 2005, p. 1774). In a qualitative study conducted by Anneliese Singh, 13 trans people of colour between the age of 16 and 24 were interviewed about their resilience, and the research concluded that there were several strategies that they use in order to deal with discrimination and stereotypes. Advocacy was a major theme for the study’s participants. More specifically, self-advocacy in several forms reflected the youths’ resilience, in educational systems and also in other social interactions (Singh, 2012, p. 700). Other strategies were: “evolving, simultaneous self-definition of gender and racial/ ethnic identities, being aware of adultism experiences, self-advocacy in educational systems, finding one’s place in the LGBTQ youth community, and use of social media to affirm one’s identities as a transgender youth of color” (Singh, 2012, p. 695). Some participants also shared that they became more resilient when their family and close friends accepted their identity (Sing, 2012, p. 796).

2.3. Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the sociological theory coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 about how different forms of oppression relate to one another and therefore make the experiences of black women invisible. It is the view that structures of oppression are not separate discrete entities, but instead mutually determine and define one another. It goes against the idea that all women face the same oppression. Crenshaw argues that black women face different forms of oppression than white women, and that black transgender Muslim women face other oppressions than white cisgender women, because they are not only oppressed by sexism, but they also face racism, islamophobia and transphobia. If a black transgender Muslim women is harassed, it is not simply because she is a woman, or because she is a Muslim, but because she has multiple identities that co-construct each other. Since then, intersectionality is not just a theory anymore, but the way feminists do research. A more recent approach on intersectionality can be found in the work of Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge. Hill Collins and Blige state: “When it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves.” (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016, p. 2). Thus, the social and political lives of

people cannot be understood as shaped by one factor, but they are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and influencing ways.

There has been some critique in the past few years on the way intersectionality has evolved. The initial idea of intersectionality by Crenshaw proposed race as the central factor of the theory, yet race has been decentralised. Crenshaw states: “There is a sense that efforts to repackage intersectionality for universal consumption require a re-marginalizing of black women. This instinct reflects a fatal transmission error of ‘Demarginalizing’s’ central argument: that representations of gender that are ‘race-less’ are not by that fact alone more universal than those that are race-specific,” (Crenshaw, 2001, p. 224). Sirma Bilge, whom I have cited in the previous paragraph, calls this ‘Whitening intersectionality’. She states that there is an increasing ‘whitening’ of intersectionality (Bilge, 2013, p. 3). She refers to the fact that race has been decentralised in intersectional thought, while it should be the centre of the debate. In order to restore this, Bilge believes (like Crenshaw) that there needs to be a re-marginalisation of black women.

Intersectionality is relevant for this thesis, because I am not only going to look at transgender people in Dutch media, but at the intersecting identities of the trans people in Dutch written media. It is not only important to know whether trans people are present in Dutch written media, but also *who* these trans people are, what intersecting identities they have and how that affects their representation in media.

2.4 Conclusion

It is now clear that representation of transgender people is important, especially *truthful* representation. Truthful representation does not show stereotypes of transgender people, but shows a variety of stories and it reflects, in a way, the reality of transgender people. The trans people in media should have intersecting identities, since different identities yield different reactions and stories. Also, the reality of each trans person is different, so a diverse representation is preferred, both in the identities of trans people as in their roles and narratives.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In order to collect data for this thesis, I labelled all articles that had to do with trans people or issues. I will explain how I did this in this chapter. Furthermore, I will describe how I developed my chosen research from theories on methodologies to a detailed description of the labelling and analysis of the articles in 2018.

The goal of this thesis, is to outline what the dominant voices, namely the Dutch media, have to say about the stories of the minority, which are transgender people. During this process, I have made use of Donna Haraway's notion of 'Situated Knowledges' (Haraway, 1988). Donna Haraway is an American scholar, who wrote about objectivity and truth, and she argues that this does not exist, and it is impossible to achieve. Scientist sometimes claim they are objective, but this is impossible, since there is always a human involved in the process of truth making. They cannot be objective if they only see subjects with their eyes and from their perspective, making it almost automatically subjective. According to Haraway, the Feminist alternative is 'Situated Knowledge'. Situated knowledge is about knowledge placed in a certain context. Although the point of view within a context has a narrower scope than the external and disembodied objectivity, situated points of view are in fact richer in content, because they take in account the various bits of information, creating the context and the environment of that point of view (Haraway, 1988, p. 581). In the process of labelling the articles, there were several truths and perspectives. First of all, there was my perspective. I was aware that my own history and positionality affected my decision while labelling the articles. I have not claimed that I was neutral during the process of labelling. I am aware that I was biased. An example of this, are the articles that fall under the label 'trans as an attack on the natural order'. Whenever I saw that the source of the article was Christian, I already assumed that it would fall under this tag, because many Christian sources would feel that transgender people are an attack on the natural order, but this is of course not per default the case. Second, there are the writers of the articles, They are not objective, and we cannot see the articles as isolated items, because the writer is always involved and they play a role. When they write about the victimhood of trans people, they are saviours, or admirers when writing about successful trans people. The articles are therefore not neutral objects for readers to analyse, but products of other people's view on matters.

For the analysis of the articles, I have made use of qualitative content analysis. According to Hesse-Biber "a qualitative approach would focus more on the ways in which the

texts generate meaning” (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p.511). The strength of qualitative content analysis is that it provides a way of systematically analysing the meanings that are present within data and it is better able to allow subtleties of meaning and also variations in interpretation of textual elements (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 514). This means that I have looked at the articles and looked for their meaning, but I took multiple things into account, among which the source, the writer and context. In chapter four, I asked the same questions in every paragraph, so that each paragraph would have a consistent structure. This also helps to find out the meaning of a text, and Hesse-Biber describes that researchers who do a qualitative media analysis should be aware that media texts are always *polysemic*. Polysemic means that a text contains “a multitude of potential meanings and can be interpreted in different ways by different people.” (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 512). The statements I made during the analysis of the articles in 2018 are thus not the only statements that can be made about these articles.

This thesis is a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. It is quantitative, because I have gone through 6039 articles and labelled all the themes and characteristics I found in them. It is qualitative, because I tried to observe underlying patterns and reasons in these articles, and provide an insight in the possible problems the Dutch media present.

For this thesis, I have used the software ‘Meltwater’ in order to collect my data. I have decided to focus on all written Dutch media. This included big national daily newspapers like Volkskrant, het AD and NRC, but also daily and weekly regional newspapers like Noord-Hollands Dagblad and Harlinger Courant. Webistes (Linda.nl, Joop.nl) and magazines (VIVA, de Groene Amsterdammer) were also included in the data, as well as small blogs and websites. In Meltwater, you can look for any article that appeared in the media via keywords. The keywords that were used were: transgender, transsexual, trans man/woman and transsexuality. The keywords were all in plural and singular form and with or without space. There were 6039 articles in total. In order to collect the data, I have made use of ‘tags’. These tags were partially provided by the previous research conducted by Atria about the representation of transgender people in the Netherlands (Van den Berg, 2017), and most of them were provided by Transgender Netwerk Nederland (TNN) and myself. These tags were categories under which I sorted the articles. The articles were sorted under different groups. The groups used were: theme, representation, age, story and category. Under these groups were different ‘tags’. For the ‘themes’ I used the same themes as the research by Atria, and I added the theme ‘work’. The first group that was used, was ‘criminality’: articles about murder, assault, robbery and fraud, in which the perpetrator is a trans person. Second is the theme ‘discrimination’. Under the group ‘discrimination’ fall all articles about discrimination, violence or exclusion of

transgender people. These articles also include bullying and verbal violence. Another group of articles fall under 'emancipation'. These are articles that have a direct association with the improvement of the social, economic and societal position of transgender people or LGBTQ+ people. 'Art and culture' are articles that are associated with art and culture, for example films, work of art and museums. Next are articles about a specific location, for example a new location for street prostitution, or an impression of a certain bar or city. They are categorised under 'public space'. 'Showbiz' articles are about celebrities abroad and in the Netherlands, like Loiza Lamers or Caitlyn Jenner. Another group of articles fall under 'transition'. These articles are about the transition of a transgender person, medically/physically and socially. 'Work' articles are articles about work and the workplace. The group 'science' are articles about new research from the fields of medicine, gender studies and ethics, but also from scientific institution like the Netherlands institute for social research. Lastly, articles that fall under the group 'legislation' are articles about national and international laws and legislation.

I first looked at the articles, and then decided what group they would fit under. The same goes for 'category'. I have chosen to also look at categorisation, so that we can know what type of articles readers see when they read about trans people and issues. There were seven groups for 'category'. Firstly, 'news articles' are factual articles about a certain development or occurrence. Second, the articles that give additional information about a certain news fact or event are considered as 'background' articles. 'Announcement' is an article that announces a certain event, film, tv-program or exhibition. Another group of articles are 'reviews'. These are articles that give a review of tv programs, films, books, exhibitions, etc. and thus give a judgement about these things. Articles that zoom in on the life of someone who identifies as a transgender person are categorised as 'portraits'. 'Opinion' is a group of articles written by someone with a clear opinion and judgement about trans people or issues. Lastly, the group 'Other' consists of articles that cannot be categorised under other categories, such as a letter by a reader in the newspaper.

I had decided to focus on the age of transgender people in media too, since this is valuable information. It is valuable, because it is important to have a diverse group of trans people visible. Not only in gender identity or ethnicity, but also in age. I chose seven age categories: 0-12, 13-16, 17-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54 and 55+. I have chosen these seven categories for several reasons. First of all, I have chosen for the age limit of 12, because at that age, puberty starts and transgender children can take puberty blockers. Second, when a person is 16, they are allowed to change their gender at the municipality. For the other age groups, I

have chosen to copy the age groups that TNN uses in other research, like *Transgender en werk* (2016).

The tags for ‘representation’ were divided into several groups of characteristics of people. First of all, their gender identity. The tags were: trans woman, trans man and non-binary person. As said in chapter two, transgender is an umbrella term, so I decided to not only focus on men and women, but also on non-binary people. Also, I looked at their skin colour by using the tags ‘white trans person’ and ‘trans person of colour’, because wanted to know if there is a difference in the way that Dutch media present them. I also looked at specific groups, like sexworkers, refugees and trans people with a disability.

Lastly, I looked at what kinds of roles existed around trans people. I have made use of six roles that were also presented in the research by Atria, namely successful trans person, pawn, criminal, victim, pioneer and fraud (see chapter 2). I included a few other roles: layered story, trans person in function, trans person as a joke, regret and trans person as an attack on the natural order. I have chosen to include these, since I noticed these stories when I looked at the articles of 2018, and I could not group them under the original six stories. The layered story was added, since many trans people I spoke to said they missed this story in media. The story of a trans person with regret was added, because of a documentary in December 2018. After this documentary, many journalist wrote about trans people who regretted their transition. The story of the trans person in function was added, since this was one of the recommendations of the research by Atria. In 2018, there was an incident with a Dutch football analyst who made fun of trans people, thus the story of the trans as a joke was included. Lastly, the story of ‘trans person as an attack on the natural order’ was included, to look at all the less positive articles in Dutch media.

Once the tags were complete, I went through all the 6039 articles and put the tags on them. One article thus had multiple tags. When the word ‘transgender’ came up because it was used in the abbreviation ‘LGBT’ (LHBT in Dutch), I only put one tag on it, because the article was not about transgender issues but about LGBT issues. I read the articles, and then put the labels on them. With some articles, it was already clear from the title and first paragraph what sort of article it was.

For this thesis, I have analysed four articles in depth in chapter four. These articles all represent a theme (discrimination, emancipation, transition and work). Three of these articles are representative for the majority of the articles in the same theme. For one theme, I have chosen to include an article that is different than the other articles, in order to show the variety that exists in Dutch media.

The methodologies used in this thesis have provided enough insights and materials to analyse, which you can read in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Analysis on the Dutch written media of 2018

Introduction

This chapter discusses the various roles and identities of transgender people in Dutch media. As discussed in chapter 3, there are several ‘themes’ around the articles about trans people. The themes were: art&culture, criminality, discrimination, emancipation, showbiz, transition, public space, science, legislation and work. Not all themes will be used in the analysis. The themes that will be used in this chapter are: discrimination, emancipation, transition and work. These themes are chosen, because of several reasons. First of all, not all themes had enough articles. For example, criminality and public space only had several articles, that were more or less the same. Other themes were also not diverse. The articles in showbiz, for example, were too monotone to work with. Other themes were not suitable, because they featured too many fictional trans people, like the theme art&culture. The articles that have been chosen to analyse are discrimination, emancipation, transition and work. These four themes show a variety of roles and articles, and there were many articles that fell under these themes. Furthermore, the themes are important themes in the lives of transgender people, because they are present in their day-to-day lives. Within these themes, I have looked at the identities and roles of the trans people. I have looked at age, gender, and skin colour. I also looked at more specific groups like refugees, sexworkers and people with disabilities. There were no trans people with disabilities presented in Dutch written media. At each theme, three questions have been asked in order to analyse each theme. The questions are:

- What are the identities of the trans people?
- What roles do they have?
- To what extent is this role stereotyping?

I also analysed four articles in depth, one article per theme. I did this, in order to see what kind of articles are present in the Dutch media. I looked at language, tone, roles, identities and other aspects that stood out.

4.1. Discrimination

The first theme I will discuss is the theme ‘discrimination’. During the process of labelling articles, I put all articles about discrimination, (sexual) violence or exclusion of transgender people under the theme ‘discrimination’. There were 1109 articles that involved discrimination of the 6039 articles in total. That is almost 20% of all articles. The stories in these articles are diverse. In most cases, the articles were about discrimination (56%), which were articles about bullying, exclusion, verbal violence and when someone was not granted access to a space or institute. In 15% of the cases, a trans person was victim of violence, followed by discriminatory legislation for trans people (13%). 4% of the articles that fell under ‘discrimination’, reported a murder on a trans person. In 2% of the articles, there was domestic violence and 2% was about the medical world, for example the exclusion of transgender people when it came to HIV care and medicines. 1% of the articles wrote about suicide.

4.1.1. Roles and identities

It might not come as a surprise that the most dominant role in this theme was the role of ‘victim’. The role of victim is described as: “a trans person who is a victim of discrimination or (sexual) violence”. This is a very dominant role, because it was used in almost all articles. The roles that were applied to the transgender people in this theme are therefore not diverse. Trans people of colour were portrayed as a victim more often than white trans people. 12% of the articles about white trans people were about discrimination or (sexual) violence. Trans people of colour were a victim in 56% of the articles about them. When looking at age, we can see that the age group between 35 and 44 were most often labelled as victims. They were the age group that was a victim of discrimination and (sexual) violence most often, followed by the age group 25-34. With the general population of the Netherlands, the age group who is most often a victim of crime are people between the age of 15 and 24 (Veiligheidsmonitor, 2018). It is therefore interesting that trans people between 35 and 44 are more often a victim than other age groups, since this is not in line with the total population of the Netherlands. There is relatively no difference between the gender identity of the trans people that were portrayed as victims. Both trans men and women were depicted as a victim in respectively 21% and 23% of the articles. In 48 articles, the trans people depicted in the articles were transgender refugees. Transgender refugees are a vulnerable group. They fled their country because of discrimination and (sexual)

violence, and their lives are also not easy once they are in the Netherlands. Either they faced discrimination and (sexual) violence in their country of origin, or in the Netherlands.

There was one article where the trans person was not labelled as a 'victim', but as a 'pawn. In the role of 'pawn', trans people are used to demonstrate how liberal the Netherlands is, and how backwards 'other' countries in for example Eastern Europe or in the MENA region are. This article will be discussed later in this chapter.

4.1.2. To what extent is this stereotyping?

In this paragraph, I will discuss that the role of 'victim' is stereotyping. As stated in the background chapter, many transgender people face violence and discrimination. It therefore seems logical to have a large amount of articles about the victim role of transgender people. However, media play a role in the way society thinks about trans people. According to Keegan, whom I have stated in chapter two, one of the stereotypes presented in media is the portrayal of the trans person as the tragic victim that will never *fit* in society (Keegan, 2013, p. 1-2). The great amount of articles where a trans person had been labelled as a victim show that the stereotype that Keegan presented, is present in the theme of 'discrimination'. Lastly, there was one article about the role of pawn. In the next paragraph, I will elaborate on this role and the problems I have with this role.

4.1.3. In depth analysis of an article

In August of 2019, the online news blog 'De Dagelijkse Standaard' wrote about the violence in an asylum seekers centre. De Dagelijkse Standaard has a right-winged and liberal orientation, as stated on their website. Their narrative is not representative for other news articles about this topic, but they showed an example of problematic news coverage. I would like to illustrate how homonationalism manifests itself in this article and how the trans people are being used as pawns. Homonationalism is the use of LGBTQIA+ rights to target religious groups, countries, migrant communities, and nations that are considered "backward, trans- and homophobic" and therefore threaten the Western countries' sexual freedom (Puar, 2006, p.68). It is a process of normalizing homosexuality and queerness where homosexuality is modelled around heterosexuality, arranging space for some queers and gays that are non-threatening to heteronormativity (Puar, 2006, p.68). De Dagelijkse Standaard wrote about two trans people who got harassed in an asylum seekers centre. They begin the article by stating that people

come to the Netherlands because of the “open and tolerant culture, like homophiles and transgenders” (De Dagelijkse Standaard, 2018). There are two aspects about this statement that are problematic. First of all, the Netherlands is not always open and tolerant towards LGBTQI+ people. Second, it is regarded as inappropriate to call homosexual men ‘homophiles’, and transgender people prefer to be called ‘trans(gender) people’ instead of transgenders. Later, they stated that they got harassed by ‘people from the same country or religion’. The transgender people were from Iran, so it is presumed that the religion the Dagelijkse Standaard refers to is the Islam. They state: “It shows how people think that come into the Netherlands”. This statement is problematic, because it shows that the journalist finds the Islam a religion that does not accept transgender people. Although there are examples of discrimination of transgender people among Muslims, the journalist cannot simply say that the entire religion is intolerant. Transgender Network the Netherlands would like to separate trans refugees from other refugees, but according to the Dagelijkse Standaard, that would throw away the ‘norms and values’ of the Netherlands. Their solution would be to make clear what the rules are in the Netherlands, because “conservative refugees would not adjust to the dominant Dutch culture”. This is an example of homonationalism, because the Dagelijkse Standaard suggests that the values of the refugees (who are mostly Muslims) are conservative towards transgender people, thus out-dated. By stating that the Dutch culture is the dominant culture, they suggest that the ‘conservative refugees’ should adjust to the Dutch culture, and accept transgender people. The transgender people in this article, are thus used as ‘pawns’ for homonationalism, whereas it would be more beneficial for them to be seen as victims, since this is a position from which they can get help.

4.2. Emancipation

The next theme I will discuss is the theme ‘emancipation’. This is the second largest theme with 635 articles, which is 10% of the total of articles. Articles that fall under the theme ‘emancipation’ are articles that have a direct association with the improvement of the social, economic and societal position of transgender people or LGBTQ+ people. When looking at the daily national newspapers that write most frequently about the emancipation of transgender people, we can see that the Volkskrant and the Algemeen Dagblad relatively write the most articles about emancipation. The NRC, Trouw and Reformatorisch Dagblad write the least about the emancipation of transgender people. This is interesting, since Trouw used to be a reformed newspaper, and the Reformatorisch Dagblad is still a reformed newspaper, meaning its ideology is Christian conservative. Of other news sources, Vice and Oneworld write relatively often about emancipation. The theme emancipation is important for transgender people, since emancipation will lead to a better society for trans people to live in.

4.2.1. Roles and identities

In this theme, there were two visible roles. Most articles that fall under this theme had the tag ‘successful trans person’. The role of the ‘successful trans person’ is the narrative of a trans person who is happy after their transition, and who has supportive people around them. The trans people who were portrayed in these articles were, first of all, mostly white. White trans people were labelled as successful in 53% of the articles. Trans people of colour were labelled as successful in 4,5% of the articles about emancipation. In other themes, white trans people were depicted as more successful more often than trans people of colour. 80% of white trans people are portrayed as successful, in contrast to trans people of colour (35%). This means that mediamakers use white trans people more often when they want to write an article about a happy trans person. The different gender identity of trans people in Dutch media is unbalanced. Most trans people that are portrayed in articles are trans women. 75% of the articles present a trans woman, whereas 20% depict trans men. In only 5% of the articles, there is a non-binary person. The percentages are different for cisgender people. According to knowledge institute Atria, 63% of the people in the Dutch media of 2015 presented themselves as male, and 37% were female (Atria, 2015, p. 5). Although many trans women are depicted in Dutch written media, they are relatively less often portrayed as successful. In 40% of the articles about trans men, the trans man was successful. With trans women, this was only 17%. Second, when

looking at the age of the people who were regarded as successful, relatively more young people were labelled as successful. The people from 0-24 were successful in more than 75% of the articles about them. Another age group that was regarded as very successful were the people older than 55. They were regarded as successful in 95% of the articles about them. Some of the articles had the tag of 'victim'. These were articles about better legislation around discrimination and violence around transgender people. This is regarded as 'emancipation', since this will contribute to the emancipation of trans people and (hopefully) improve the living conditions of transgender people. A role that was not presented was the role of the 'layered story', thus a story of a trans person who is not solely a victim or successful, but who has many qualities and roles in one story.

4.2.2. To what extent is that stereotyping?

We can safely say that the fact that white trans people were labelled more often as successful than trans people of colour is stereotyping. Stereotyping takes the traits of a certain group, and amplifies and reduces them. Trans people of colour are more often depicted as a victim than a successful person, which reduces them to one trait, which is problematic. The narrative of the successful trans person is a very popular narrative in Dutch articles, and it seems like it is a positive story. However, it suggests that trans people were first unhappy with the way they appeared, and that they are always happy after their transition, which is not always the case. Some people still experience body dysphoria, and of course, life is not always nice, something that is the same for cisgender people. Also, as Capuzza states, it is stereotypical to have the 'wrong body' narrative. The 'wrong body' narrative is problematic, because it reduces gender identity and expression to reproductive systems (Capuzza, 2015, p. 103). The trans people who are 55 years or older are labelled more often as successful than other age groups. This is surprising, because these people were raised in a society that was not very accepting of transgender people. They might have faced more discrimination in their lives, and therefore, not be successful. In the background chapter, it was clear that in the fifties and sixties, relatively more trans women were visible in the Netherlands than trans men due to the existing gender roles in that time. It might be because of that history, that media usually think of trans women instead of trans men when they want to write an article about trans people. It is thus stereotyping that the division of gender representation is not equal.

4.2.3. Text analysis

In the Algemeen Dagblad (AD) of October 2018, there was an article about the city of Dordrecht. The municipality of Dordrecht had decided to train the civil servants about how to deal with transgender people when they come to the municipality for services like changing their gender in their passport. I chose this article, because it is representative for other articles in this theme. Also, in this article, there is a lot of advice that cisgender readers can take away from the article, and I was curious how the AD would do this.

The article highlights a good tip that the training uses, namely that when civil servants are in doubt how to refer to the trans person, they should ask how they would like to be called. It is a tip that the journalist could have used as well. One thing that is directly noticeable is that the journalist refers to trans people as 'transgenders'. Trans people prefer not to be called 'transgenders', because they are more than their gender identity.

A victim role has been put on trans people in this article. One example of this is the way the journalist describes how an encounter between a civil servant and a trans person can be. They state that this could be 'awkward', and that the civil servant could be shy towards trans people. Another example is that the article refers to a research that states that 30% of the trans people keep their gender identity a secret, and that trans people are more often unemployed and that they make less money than cisgender people. In the last paragraph of the article, the article mentions how people raised rainbow flags in many places in Dordrecht for Coming Out Day. This article is an example of an emancipatory article, because this training helps making the lives of trans people more liveable. It is nice when people know how to approach transgender people, and what not to say. Also, it is important that big institutions like municipalities recognize the struggle that trans people have, and that they do something about it.

4.3. Transition

Articles that fall under this category are about the transition of a transgender person. This can be medically, physically, legally and socially. The transition of a trans person is an important event in their life. It is therefore that I chose to include this theme. Furthermore, this paragraph will show some interesting problems that appear in Dutch media when they write about the transition of trans people. There were 108 articles that fell under this category.

4.3.1. Roles and identities

Relatively more trans men than trans women were featured in this theme. Articles about trans men had the tag 'transition' in 6,6% of the articles. For trans women, this was 1,4%. Furthermore, relatively more white trans people fell under the category 'transition' than trans people of colour. It is fascinating that the older the trans person is, the less articles there were about their transition. There were many articles about the age group 0-12, and with each age group, the number of articles went down, except for the age group 55+. This was the age group with the most articles, since Bo van Spilbeeck, a Belgian news anchor, came out as transgender. There were as many articles about the transition of a trans people of colour as there were articles about white trans people. In half of the articles, I labelled the article with the tag 'successful trans person'. These were articles about how happy trans people were after they transitioned. The other half were 'victims'. The articles about the role of victim were about the long waiting lists in hospitals and about bankruptcy of certain hospitals, following a stop in the medical transition of trans people who transitioned there. In 72 articles, the subject of the article had a medical connotation, thus it was either about surgeries, waiting lists in hospitals or hormone use. There were 15 articles about the social transition of somebody. This is quite low, especially in relation to the articles about the medical and physical transition of a trans person. This will be elaborated on in the paragraph about stereotypes within this theme.

4.3.2. To what extent is this stereotyping?

It is not surprising that there is a large focus on the medical transition of someone, and not on the social transition. As stated in the theoretical framework articles often medicalise the transgender body by focussing on gender affirmative surgery. As a result, this could lead to a reduction of gender identity and expression to reproductive systems (Capuzza, 2015, p. 103). This is problematic, because their gender identity and expression are of value too, not only their

bodies, and there usually is a great impact in the lives of trans people when they transition socially. Furthermore, there is a problem with the language that the Dutch media use when talking about the transitions of trans people, especially when talking about surgeries. Almost every article that mentions the surgeries of transgender people refer to 'gender reassignment surgeries'. However, the preferred term is 'gender affirmative surgeries'. 'Gender reassignment surgeries' suggest that a person's gender is changed after the surgery. However, this is not the case. A trans person is always the gender they identify as. A trans man, for example, has always been a man. A surgery does not change this. The bottom surgery (which is completely optional) only affirms the gender that the trans person always had. That is why the media should use the term 'gender affirmative surgery' instead of 'gender reassignment surgery'. Unfortunately, only two articles use this term, whereas 50 articles use the term 'gender reassignment surgery'. The roles of trans people in their transition that showed up during the labelling of the articles are monotonous. The trans people are either a victim, or a successful person.

4.3.3. Text analysis

In November 2018, de Gelderlander, a provincial newspaper, posted an interview with Emma Voerman, who reflects on her transition. Emma is 56 years old and white and came out a year before this interview. This interview was written in a style that is representative for other interviews with trans people about their lives. I looked at several interviews that fell under this theme, but the one with Emma is most suitable, because it shows multiple roles, and there are some positive actions of the journalist, and some negative actions. My goal is to illustrate these positive and negative actions in this analysis.

The journalist is relatively sensitive with the language they use in this article. First of all, they use 'she' throughout the interview, instead of 'he' when talking about her past. Also, they use motivating language. For example, they say about her appearance that they think that nobody would notice that Emma used to present herself as a man, and that they find her elegant. Yet, there are also some nuances in language that would make the interview even better. The biggest issue is with the title of the interview. The title of the interview translates to: Insecure Jacob-Jan became Elegant Emma. Asking for the name a trans person used before coming out is seen as inappropriate by many trans people, because being associated with their previous name is a tremendous source of anxiety, or it is simply a part of their life they wish to leave behind.

A clear role in this interview with Emma is the role of the ‘successful trans person’. They talk about the life she had before, and how unhappy and insecure she used to be. That changed after she transitioned. They describe how that was a difficult decision, but she had a very supporting environment, including her four children. Now she states that she is “incredibly happy”. This narrative is very common in Dutch media. There is first an insecure and unhappy trans person who has not come out yet. Then, they transition and after they had all surgeries, they are happy and satisfied. The problem with this, is that this is not the case for all trans people. Not everyone wants surgeries, and not everyone is happy for eternity after they transition, because many people still experience dysphoria about certain body parts, or they are not accepted, or there are life events that cause unhappiness, which is the same for cisgender people.

Another role the journalist tried to put on Emma, is the role of the ‘trans person with regret’. In this case, the journalist asked Emma whether Emma regrets the fact that she transitioned at a later age. Emma does not, and she is happy that, because of her later transition, she was able to have children.

This interview has some aspects that are very positive, like the right usage of pronouns and the journalist tried to be very positive about Emma. Yet, it also shows some problems. The journalist used some leading questions, and they asked things that are seen as inappropriate. It is up to the journalist to be more sensitive when talking to transgender people, yet asking leading questions is also what many journalist do, so it might be good for trans people to get more media training on how to respond to these questions.

4.4. Work

The theme work are articles about work and the workplace. This is a relatively smaller theme, yet I chose this, because work is a big part in a person's life. People spend a lot of time of their lives at work. For transgender people, work can be difficult. Relatively many trans people are unemployed, and they make less money than cisgender people (Keuzenkamp, 2012, p. 10-29). There were 124 articles with the theme 'work'.

4.4.1. Roles and identities

A big group in the theme 'work' are trans sexworkers. According to the Trans Health Survey of Transgender Europe, 7% of trans women have experience in sexwork. This is more than cisgender women, 3% of both cisgender men and women in the adult population (19 to 69 years of age) reported ever having received money for sex (Bakker & Vanwesenbeeck, 2006) and there are no numbers about trans men working in the sex industry. Furthermore, the sexworker in Dutch media is often female, with only 1 article about a trans man being a sexworker. Lastly, in 96% of articles in which the sexworker's skin colour was shown or mentioned, the sexworker is of colour. This is a large percentage, especially in contrast with the articles about other jobs. In other job positions, white trans people were more often represented than trans people of colour. There were only two articles about working trans people of colour, and 37 about white trans people. There were 29 articles about the transgender people in the US military, since Donald Trump reinstated the ban of transgender people in the army (RTLZ, 2018). The trans people in these articles had various roles. First of all, they had the role of the successful trans person in 30 articles. These were articles about trans people with supporting workplaces and employers, or about an employment agency for trans people. Second, in many articles, the trans people had the role of 'victim'. For example, in more than half of the articles about transgender sexworkers, the sexworkers were seen as victims, followed by 15 articles where they are seen as successful. The articles about the role of victim sexworkers were mostly about murder (4 articles), violence (7 articles) and discrimination (6 articles). The articles about the ban on transgender people in the US army were all labelled under the role of 'victim', because this is an example of exclusion and discrimination based on gender identity.

4.4.2. To what extent is this stereotyping?

Again, we can draw some conclusions from these articles. First of all, the sexworkers are often depicted as victims. It is true that trans sexworkers face a lot of violence and discrimination (Fitzgerald et al., 2015, p.4), and it is important to hear these stories, because it then validates the experiences of the trans sex workers. The same goes for the successful trans sexworker. It is important to hear stories of sexworkers who enjoy their job, because it serves a greater goal; the destigmatisation on sex between two or more consenting adults. As stated before, 3% of both cisgender men and women reported ever having received money for sex. The Dutch media of 2018 reported only one article about a trans man who works in the sex industry, versus 41 articles about trans women. There are no numbers around how many transgender male sexworkers, there are, but we could conclude that one article about a male trans sexworker is unbalanced. In the Dutch media of 2018, trans people are only depicted as sex workers in 0,8% of all articles. This could be seen as a positive fact, since transgender people have been historically hypersexualised through pornographic imagery and an association with prostitution (Espineira, 2016, p. 326). The focus in media is not on their sexuality, but on a variety of topics.

4.4.3. Text analysis

This will be a text analysis of an article about a radio interview with two sexworkers, Velvet and Dinah. Velvet is a cisgender woman who works for a lesbian escort service, and Dinah is a trans woman who works as an international sexworker. I will focus on the differences and similarities between the roles of the two women and I will focus on the language the journalist uses throughout the article. First of all, the fact that Dinah is a trans woman is not immediately clear. They introduce her as Dinah, a sexworker. Later, they tell that she is a trans woman. This is positive, because it does not put the focus on her gender identity, but on who she is. She is, of course, also her gender identity, but there is more to her than just her gender. Velvet tells that she has never experienced physical violence, but she did encounter people who asked inappropriate questions when she told them about her work. Dinah unfortunately has experienced violence and experiences violence on a regular basis. She also mentions the fact that every 22 hours, a transgender person dies, and that 60% of these people are sexworkers. It is thus dangerous for her to work, but she does it anyway. This is an example of a 'victim' role, since Dinah has experienced violence. The victim role is also recognisable later in the interview.

Dinah states that she cannot stop working in the sex industry, because “there is almost no other option” She tells about the bullying in other workplaces and troubles with employers because of someone’s gender identity. Velvet, on the other hand, gets the opportunity to tell about the things she enjoys about her job. Dinah also gets the chance to talk about that topic, which has been labelled as the role of ‘successful trans person’. She states: “Not everyone in this society is open to be in a relationship with an LGBT person like me. I cannot experience my sexuality like other people, but in my job, I have the pleasure of experiencing what it is like to be valued for who I am.” There is a victim role and a successful role in this quote. She mentions that she is not able to experience her sexuality like other people, which falls under the role of victim, but she enjoys the attention and valuation she gets in her job, which is an example of a successful trait. When Dinah speaks about the abuse, violence and inequality in the sex industry, she talk from a personal perspective. It is fascinating that whenever Velvet talks about these things, she mentions the broader statistics and experiences from other people, not from herself, because she has never experienced something like that.

4.5. Conclusion

The articles that were categorised in these four themes all showed stereotypes. Many people were young, female, white and labelled as either successful or a victim. This is not representative for the entire transgender community in the Netherlands, although the narratives of a successful trans person or a victim are not directly damaging the trans community. However, there were hardly any harmful and problematic articles, and journalists hardly use offensive language. They are quite positive about transgender people, or sympathise with them. In the next chapter I will elaborate on which narratives would be even better when writing about trans people and issues.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis explored and outlined the representation and stereotypes of transgender people in Dutch written media of 2018. The research question was:

What did the representation of trans people with intersecting identities in Dutch written media look like in 2018, and what are the consequences for their emancipation?

The sub-questions were:

1. What do the narratives of transgender people look like?
2. What intersecting identities do the trans people who appear in the articles of Dutch media have?
3. What is the importance of media representation of and for transgender people?

First of all, there was a large group of young white able-bodied trans women present in the media, who were mostly portrayed as successful people, and middle-aged, trans people of colour were often portrayed as victims. This is, of course, not representative for the entire transgender community, and it is limiting the stories about trans people. As Stuart Hall stated, stereotyping takes the traits of a certain group, and amplifies and reduces them (Hall, 1997, p. 247). Victimhood and success after a coming out are certainly traits of transgender people, since a lot of trans people experience discrimination and/or (sexual) violence and there are trans people who feel like their transition or coming out is a 'success'. However, because these two narratives are the most present in the articles, it almost distracts from the real life experiences of transgender people. There are other roles or narratives about trans people, yet the majority of articles are about the success and victimhood of trans people. A role that is hardly present is the role of the more 'layered story'. In this role, the trans person is not solely a victim or a successful person, but has many qualities and life events, making them a more complex person. I miss the story of a trans person who is not happy after their transition, or who is in love, but still struggles with other aspects in life, just like we all do. This will give a more truthful representation of the lives of transgender people.

These roles do not only say something about the trans person, they also say something about the writer of the article. You cannot see the articles as objective truths, since the writer also plays a role. This could be the role of the saviour, when writing about the victimhood of trans people, or the role of admirer, when they write about the 'successful trans person'. Second,

the roles of the most present trans people in media are not the only thing that is problematic, their identities are also not very diverse. As stated before in this chapter, the most present trans people are mostly young, white, able-bodied and female. Susan Oboler (1998) states that: “stereotyping puts people in boxes and creates images that result in false presumptions accepted as inconvertible truths” (Oboler, 1998, p. 27). The Dutch media create an image of a trans person which is not entirely true. It is obvious that the young, white, able-bodied trans woman exists, but the transgender community is more diverse than that. It is not clear whether these false or incomplete images lead to “false presumptions accepted as inconvertible truths” (Oboler, 1998, p. 27). This is one of the suggestions for further research. The Dutch media write quite positively about transgender people. They hardly use problematic roles or language, apart from some less sensitive words like ‘transgenders’ and ‘gender re-assignment surgeries’. Also, Jamie Capuzza (2015, p. 103) stated that media sometimes oversexualise transgender people. Yet this is not really the case in the Dutch written media of 2018. However, Dutch media also show problematic behaviour, and this behaviour is the same behaviour that Capuzza sees. First of all, Capuzza states that media often portray trans people as people who will never *fit* into society, due to their victimhood. This is also the case in Dutch media, as the roles of ‘victim’ is the most frequent role. Furthermore, Capuzza states that media sometimes fail to state the proper pronoun or chosen name of the trans person. This is also true in Dutch media. In the example of the article in the transition theme about Emma, we can see that they still ask for her old name, and also state this in the article. This does not only happen in Emma’s case, but it happens more often. Lastly, Capuzza argues that the media often medicalise trans people. When talking about their transition, Dutch written media often focus on the medical and physical transition of a trans person, and less on their social transition. Although there is a debate to what extent media representation should reflect reality, we can state that there is a link between representation and reality, and that truthful media representation is important for the transgender community (Ghazali & Nor, 2012, p. 185). Dutch media play a role in the emancipation of transgender people, and they are doing relatively well, yet need to listen more to the needs of transgender people and experts. This is also something that lacks in this thesis. I have looked at how the dominant culture (Dutch written media) writes about a minority (the transgender community), but for further research, I would recommend a qualitative research about what transgender people want to see in Dutch media, and how they would like to be represented. Another recommendation for further research would be to focus on visual media and series, both fiction and non-fiction. A focus group or an interview would have been a nice addition to this thesis. Furthermore, this thesis did not look at the economic status and class of

the presented transgender people. Also, this thesis did not look at the sexual preferences of transgender people. It would be interesting to see if Dutch media show only straight trans people, or also queer trans people.

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