



Media and juvenile delinquency: A study into the relationship between journalists, politics, and public

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Nel Ruigrok

Centre for Media, Communication and Culture, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Wouter van Atteveldt

Department of Communication Science, VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Sarah Gagestein

Director, Taalstrategie, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Carina Jacobi

Department of Communication Science, University of Vienna, Austria

Abstract

Between 2007 and 2011, the number of registered juvenile suspects declined by 44 percent, but the Dutch public did not feel any safer. In this research, we study media coverage of youth crime and interview journalists and their sources in order to investigate the relationship between journalists, their sources, and the possible effects on the public with respect to fear of crime. We find an overrepresentation of youth crime in news coverage, especially in the popular press, and a stronger episodic focus over time. All media focus increasingly on powerful sources that focus on repressive framing, but this is especially found in the elite press. We conclude that news coverage in all media groups, although in different ways, does contribute to the fear of crime in society and the idea that repressive measures are needed. The fact that this fear of crime is also caused by news coverage is acknowledged, but neither journalists nor politicians are able or willing to change this.

Corresponding author:

Nel Ruigrok, Erasmus University, P.O. Box 1738, NL-3000 DR Rotterdam.
Email: nelruigrok@nieuwsmonitor.org

Keywords

Elite press, framing, indexing, popular press, youth crime

Introduction

Following an increase between 2000 and 2007, youth crime in the Netherlands declined rapidly after 2007. Between 2007 and 2011, the number of registered juvenile suspects declined by 44percent – in line with crime in general (Kalidien and De Heer-de Lange, 2013; Van der Laan and Blom, 2011). At the same time, the Dutch public did not feel any safer: a poll showed that about 25percent of the population felt unsafe from time to time in both 2007 and 2011 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [Central Bureau for Statistics] (CBS), 2012). Research shows that news coverage influences fear of crime among the public (Weitzer and Kubrin, 2004), especially when direct experience with crime is lacking (Chiricos et al., 2000). In this study, we investigate the media coverage in the Netherlands about youth crime and we interview journalists producing this news and their sources. The combination of content analysis and interviews helps us understand the processes behind crime coverage and how these processes can contribute to possible biases in this coverage.

Media pay disproportionate attention to youth crime, both with respect to the facts and in comparison with other youth topics (Clark et al., 2008; Wayne et al., 2010). This coverage is the result of a journalistic production process, embedded in our current media landscape with an increasing number of media providing news (Strömbäck, 2008; Strömbäck and Esser, 2014). Contemporary journalism shows a dominance of commercial considerations and a dependency on sources (Bennett et al., 2007; Cook, 2005; Shoemaker et al., 2008; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). As a result, media coverage of youth crime can show different forms of bias with respect to the actual facts: regarding the selection of news, the sources quoted in the news, and the perspective used to present the news. Earlier research on the consequences of commercialization for news coverage in different media outlets show that so-called popular news media focus more strongly on what their audience wants than so-called elite news media (Bakker and Scholten, 2013), causing stronger biases in their coverage. The same is true for online news sites (Ruigrok et al., 2013). With more new media entering the media landscape, it is useful to look at the differences between these media outlets. This article focuses on the following research question:

To what extent does coverage of youth crime in elite newspapers, popular newspapers, and news blogs show bias in respect of the amount of news coverage, the sources quoted, and the frames used?

This question is answered through a quantitative manual content analysis of the media coverage in both 2007 and 2011, combined with qualitative interviews with 12 journalists and two press officers of the Ministry of Security and Justice. This combination allows us to show not just what kind of bias occurs, but to also shed light on the way journalism works in the traditional media in fierce competition with journalism, and with non-journalism, in new forms of media, such as news blogs. This provides information about how news is produced and the possible effects this can have on either the fear of crime or on public support for punitive measures.

This article contributes to the literature on media bias in youth crime coverage by showing to what extent different types of media exhibit different forms of bias. By comparing coverage in 2 years with different actual levels of youth crime and different government coalitions, we can show the effects on coverage of influence from real-world developments and political changes. Finally, by including in-depth interviews with journalists, we provide a more complete picture about the consequences of commercialization and source dependence on the production of news.

Theory

In a representative democracy, people require information on societal and political developments in order to participate as voters and as active citizens (Strömbäck, 2005). Lacking direct experience with most developments, people heavily depend on media for this information, looking to the media to provide ‘information that people can trust and act upon’ (Strömbäck, 2005: 339). News, however, is the result of journalistic choices rather than a simple reflection of reality, and the journalistic process can cause systematic distortions in coverage (Cook, 2005; Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). Journalism is guided by a strong sense of professional norms, especially independence and objectivity, that manifest itself in diverse and balanced reporting and a critical watchdog role, scrutinizing the political elite and informing citizens (Schudson, 2002; Strömbäck and Esser, 2014). However, journalists are dependent on their sources, which allows especially the politically powerful to strongly influence coverage and framing (Bennett, 1990; Wolfsfeld, 2014). Moreover, as most news organizations are commercial enterprises, they also need to produce a marketable product in order to survive and thrive in a competitive market.

In particular, our media landscape shows an increasing number of media outlets that compete for the attention of news consumers, leading to a form of journalism that is more market-oriented than socio-politically-oriented (Harcourt, 2005). This commercialization and fierce competition also mean that media outlets’ resources and time investments shrink, making it more attractive for news editors and journalists to focus on news stories that are likely to please large audiences and advertisers (McManus, 2009), meaning those stories highest in news value. A recent study shows how audience clicks on news media websites influence the news selection process of journalists working both for the paper version of the newspaper as well as for the online versions of the news media (Welbers et al., 2015). Powerful political actors are also newsworthy, meaning that media will tend to quote these sources as much as possible.

These tendencies increase the chance of a structural bias. Such bias can occur in three aspects: the selection of the news, the sources used in the news coverage, and the storytelling techniques, or frames, which media use because it fits their format or because it appeals to the public (Strömbäck, 2008).

Youth crime in the news

The professional and often institutional (Cook, 2005) journalistic norms make journalists cover certain events while neglecting others. Galtung and Ruge (1965) found several characteristics of events that make them more newsworthy for journalists. Crime by

definition is deviant and negative and therefore newsworthy. Moreover, the proximity of crime is also present: crime can happen to all of us. Jewkes (2011) adds other news values of crime news as well, such as risk. Media prefer to cover the unpredictable over-reporting on certainties. Because youth crime often has such high newsworthiness, it may be covered in the news disproportionately often. Dorfman and Schiraldi (2001) found that news coverage of crime in the United States is exaggerated compared to actual crime rates (see also Beale, 2006; Dowler et al., 2006). This is especially true for popular newspapers. They sensationalize crime and promote fear more than elite newspapers (Ericson et al., 1987; Heath and Gilbert, 1996). Online news media also tend to focus more on crime stories than their printed versions (Maier and Tucker, 2012). This leads to our first hypotheses:

H1. News coverage of juvenile delinquency shows a bias compared to the recorded number of juvenile delinquencies.

H2. A bias toward overrepresentation of coverage of juvenile delinquency will be stronger in popular newspapers and news blogs compared to the elite press.

Episodic and thematic coverage of crime

Barnhurst (2010) shows that crime stories are short, providing only factual information about the crime and lacking contextual information. News on youth crime tends to focus on individual crimes as isolated events (Dorfman and Schiraldi, 2001). Lack of references to the context in which crime is reported provides the audience with little knowledge about the circumstances of the perpetrators and the broader picture of the development of crime and its impact on society.

Dividing the news coverage into these aspects shows parallels with the distinction between episodic and thematic framing (Iyengar, 1991). Episodic news only focuses on the actual incident, without mentioning context, often in a dramatic and empathetic manner. Thematic news coverage also provides context to the events by giving additional information such as policy proposals and historical or social developments. Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) showed that news coverage treating crime as distinct events intensified public fear of crime (Gross and Aday, 2003; Weitzer and Kubrin, 2004). Moreover, news consumers who read episodic news showed support for repressive measures by the government, while thematic news coverage, focusing on socioeconomic causes of crime, caused an increased preference of preventive measures among the public (Iyengar, 1991).

As Maier and Tucker (2012) show in their study of print and online news coverage, the print newspapers supplied more in-depth coverage, including context to a story, while the online papers provided more up-to-the-minute reporting, but lacking contextual information. German research into news coverage on youth crime shows the same differences between media. The popular newspaper *Bild* focuses more heavily on episodic framing with a strong focus on personal drama, while the 'elite' newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* pays more attention to context and complexity of youth crime (Reichert, 2013). Crime coverage on online news media shows the same tendency for an episodic focus over a thematic focus (Barnhurst, 2010).

In the Netherlands, free dailies and popular newspapers focus heavily on violent crimes (Ruigrok et al., 2011). With a public preference for crime stories (Ruigrok et al., 2013) and an increased influence of audience preferences on the news selection of media (Welbers et al., 2015), we can expect a bias on youth crime as well. Although this bias will be apparent in all media outlets, we expect this bias to be stronger in both popular media and news blogs compared to the elite newspapers:

H3: News coverage on youth crime has an episodic focus.

H4: The episodic focus in news coverage on youth crime is stronger in popular newspapers and news blogs than in the elite press.

Sources in the news

The increased competition and budget constraints, however, mean that the number of staff on editorial desks is diminishing rapidly, while the same amount of news coverage needs to be produced. This tendency makes journalists rely more heavily on sources and press releases written by both press agencies and stakeholders (Davies, 2008; Witschge, 2012). This is especially true for popular newspapers (Van Leuven et al., 2014).

With respect to governmental sources, the indexing theory argues that journalists tend to 'index' the views of those in perceived positions of power (Bennett, 1990). This implies that the views expressed in mainstream news are limited to those present in the political debate and the spectrum of debate reflects the level of official conflict and consensus (Bennett, 1990; Bennett et al., 2007). Structural bias in the news can therefore be explained by indexing theory since journalists are '... more likely to index legitimate voices in the news according to the range of views expressed by prominent officials and members of institutional power blocs likely to influence the outcome of a situation' (Bennett, 1990: 106–107). In other words, perspectives originating in non-coalition circles are only reported when there is a strong opposition toward the governmental policy (Bennett et al., 2007).

In the Netherlands, too, we see a journalistic preference for powerful political parties in the news (Scholten and Ruigrok, 2006). Van Gestel (2006) concludes after two case studies involving local crime that media indeed show a preference for authoritative sources (p. 309). The 2011 coalition in the Netherlands included the extreme right-wing Freedom Party as a junior member, leaving only the left-wing parties and the decimated Christian Democrats in the opposition. Since these parties are generally not considered to be issue owners of security issues (e.g. Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2007), we expect the opposition to be weak and therefore government sources to be dominant in 2011:

H5: Government sources dominate the news coverage of youth crime in 2011 more than in 2007.

Empirical evidence on differences between the elite press, on one hand, and the popular press and new media, on the other, is mixed. Some researchers show a wider range of opinions in popular news media and new media (Powers and Benson, 2014), while other

researchers state that popular newspapers might be able to provide a different public sphere next to the elite press since the latter represent the voice of the establishment and become too disconnected from public life (Deuze, 2008), while tabloid newspapers represent the voice of the people. The same is true for Internet news sites and news blogs having interactive features that traditional media lack. However, research shows that online media appear not to live up to this potential in reality (Örnebring, 2008; Richardson and Stanyer, 2011). The commercialization of the news also makes it more difficult for media to focus on a wide range of opinions (Welbers et al., 2015). Moreover, online media can cater easily to the public preferences using the audience metrics, and audiences like straightforward news coverage (Tandoc, 2014). This leads to the following research question:

RQ1: To what extent do the elite press, popular press, and news blogs differ in their preference for government sources?

Sources and framing: Repression and prevention

According to Sheaffer (2001), politicians who ‘invest their creativity, initiative, and energy’ in parliamentary activity rather than in playing the media game ‘are missing the point or wasting their time’ (p. 730). Politicians use the media as a strategic tool to communicate with their peers and their constituency (Cook, 2005), and the contest over the media can be seen as part of the general struggle for political control (Wolfsfeld, 2014). The strategic goals of politicians can be described as *vote seeking*, *office seeking*, and/or *policy seeking* (Strøm, 1990). For our research, we look at the first and latter considerations. ‘Policy-seeking’ behavior means that a political actor tries to influence the policy process through media coverage. Research shows that politicians create public support for their policies through media coverage (Zaller, 1992). Jewkes (2011: 62) shows that episodic news about youth crime goes hand in hand with a loud call for repressive measures by conservative politicians. Beckett (1997) states that public opinion about repressive measures against criminal offenders is influenced by the political voices of politicians exaggerating the facts.

Vote-seeking behavior leads to politicians framing the news in a positive way for themselves or their political party. A party in favor of punitive measures against criminals will blow up each incident in order to make the fear of crime more salient and the call for tough measures louder (Pan and Kosicki, 1993). For governmental actors too, it is important to communicate in this way to influence a positive electoral outcome. Especially where certain policies are important for a government, it is important to emphasize the problem at the beginning of the term and express determination to solve these problems (ambition communication). In the run-up to the next elections, it is important for governmental actors to communicate that progress is being made (result communication; Kleinnijenhuis and Van Hoof, 2009).

Following the elections of 2010, the center-left coalition between the Social Democrats (Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA)), the Christian Democrats (Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA)), and the Christian Union was replaced by a center-right coalition with the liberal party (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD)) and the Christian Democrats. Since the two parties did not have a majority in Parliament, they received parliamentary

support from the extreme right-wing Freedom Party (Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV)). Both PVV and VVD emphasized repressive solutions to youth crime, including youth crime. The PVV (2010) expressed their support for a ‘zero tolerance policy’, while the VVD (2010) framed it in terms of ‘three strikes, maximum punishment’ during the election campaign. With this in mind, we would expect an increased attention for repressive measures in 2011 compared to 2007, both in the statements of governmental actors and the total news coverage:

H6: Governmental actors will communicate more in terms of repressive frames in 2011 than in 2007.

With media depending more than ever on official sources for their news coverage, we expect the focus in the total news coverage about youth crime to also be affected in terms of a stronger focus on repressive frames. Earlier research shows that popular newspapers focus more heavily on the sensational aspects of the news about youth crime (Ericson et al., 1987; Heath and Gilbert, 1996) than elite press. Crime coverage is what people are presumed to prefer (Beale, 2006; Dowler, 2003), and since news sites are focusing more on audiences wishes to provide crime as a form of entertainment (Beale, 2006; Dowler, 2003), we expect a repressive frame to be more popular also in news blogs than in the elite press:

H7: The focus on repressive frames increases in the overall news coverage due to the strong focus on the governmental actors.

H8: The focus on repressive frames is stronger in popular press and online news blogs than in the elite press.

Method

Data collection

A comparison of the news coverage in 2007 and 2011 is at the heart of this study. We chose these years because in 2007, the youth crime rate was much higher than in 2011, and neither years figured election campaigns. All news items dealing with youth crime were included in the study (see Table 1). In the study, a distinction is made between ‘elite’ newspapers, ‘popular’ newspapers, and news blogs.

Elite newspapers. The elite news media consist of both news media and public service television news. For a categorization of news media, we look at the relation between (political) information versus entertainment. The elite news media are news media with relatively much (political) information and little entertainment. In this research, the national newspapers *de Volkskrant*, *NRC Handelsblad*, and *Trouw* are classified as elite newspapers, with *de Volkskrant* being a leftist newspaper; *NRC Handelsblad*, a liberal newspaper; and *Trouw*, a newspaper focusing on Christians (Bakker and Scholten, 2013).

Popular newspapers. News media with a relatively high number of entertainment articles are considered to be popular news media. For our research, we include as popular news

Table 1. Number of news items on youth crime in different media groups in 2007 and 2011.

	2007	2011
Elite newspapers	201	97
Popular newspapers	221	220
News blogs	192	251
Total	681	605

media the national newspapers *Algemeen Dagblad* and *De Telegraaf*. Both newspapers are considered to the right side of the political spectrum with *De Telegraaf* explicitly in favor of the population driving a car (Bakker and Scholten, 2013).

News blogs. As news blogs, we include two news blogs that were available both in 2007 and 2011: *GeenStijl.nl* and *Fok.nl*. Besides newspapers with a high level of entertainment, news blogs too are considered popular news (Bakker and Scholten, 2013). *GeenStijl.nl* is considered a right-wing blog that provokes purposely. Since the form of the news outlets differs, we consider the news blogs a separate media group.

For our comparison of media coverage of crime with official statistics, we also include the official figures on the development of juvenile crime as published in the report by the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Netherlands (Kalidien and De Heer-de Lange, 2013).

Methods and operationalization

To answer the research questions, a quantitative content analysis has been combined with semi-structured interviews.

Quantitative content analysis. The quantitative content analysis included all news items on youth crime published in 2007 and 2011. The documents were coded using a code-book focusing on the following aspects: type of crime, the sources mentioned, episodic versus thematic framing, prevention versus repressive framing. The reliability of the coded data was measured by coding a random sample of 40 articles by the two different coders. Inter-coder reliability was very good, with an average Krippendorff's alpha of 0.91 (Krippendorff, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews. To analyze the production process of the news coverage on youth crime, semi-structured interviews were held. In total, 12 journalists and two persons involved in the press office of the Ministry of Security and Justice were interviewed. We selected the journalists based on their specialization in the topic of youth crime and their availability. Although we were not able to interview journalists working on fixed contracts at news sites, we did interview four freelance journalists working for different media, including news sites. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed systematically on the following aspects: news selection, mentioning of sources, and the use of frames in the news coverage.

Measuring bias

The level of bias is measured for three aspects: the amount of news coverage, framing, and the usage of sources.

Amount of coverage. The bias of coverage is determined by comparing the actual figures about youth crime with the amount of news coverage as found in the different media outlets in both 2007 and 2011.

Episodic and thematic focus. We make a distinction between an episodic and thematic focus in the news coverage. An episodic focus is operationalized as mentioning criminal offenses without any further context. A thematic focus is operationalized as mentioning aspects of policy on youth crime, numbers, and developments. Episodic and thematic focus is coded independently, so both can be present in the same article.

Government sources. In order to measure the extent to which journalists index the sources, we focus on political sources. We make a distinction between governmental sources and sources stemming from political parties represented in Parliament. The ratio of both sources used in the news coverage is compared to determine whether there is an increase over time and whether there are differences between the media. Since indexing is a focus on official voices in contrast to more diverse coverage, articles containing both governmental and opposition sources are disregarded.

Solutions to youth crime: Prevention and repression. In addition to the usage of sources, we also code the solutions presented in news coverage. Preventive solutions are found when an article focuses on the possibilities of prevention. On the other hand, repressive solutions are operationalized as a focus on repression. Both solutions are coded independently, so they can be present in the same article.

Analyses

For all hypotheses, chi-squared tests will be used to determine significance. Since all dependent variables are dichotomous codings of whether an article deals with youth crime or whether a given frame or source is used and all hypotheses test differences between two groups of articles, a chi-squared test is more appropriate than a parameterized test that assumes a normally distributed dependent variable. Note that although all articles in the population were coded (so statistical tests are not strictly necessary to be able to generalize to the population), using a significance test gives a measure of the size of the effect relative to the variance.

Results

News selection: Media coverage of youth crime

Our first analysis focuses on the development of news coverage of youth crime over time. In Table 2, we present the news coverage of youth crime in the different media in

Table 2. Youth crime coverage in 2007 and 2011 per media group.

	2007		2011		Increase or decrease in comparison with 2007	
	N	%	N	%	In numbers	In % attention
Number of registered young crime suspects	97,659		54,433		-44%	
Elite newspapers	201	0.21	97	0.1	-52%	-0.11
Popular newspapers	221	0.21	220	0.23	0%	+0.02
News blogs	192	1.07	251	1.03	+31%	-0.04
Total	614	0.28	568	0.28	-7%	0

2007 and 2011 and compare this with the actual figures on youth crime. In the last column, we present the difference between the averages.

The analysis shows that media are biased in their selection of coverage of youth crime. Although youth crime in reality showed a decline of 44 percent in 2011 relative to 2007, the total amount of news coverage went down only 7 percent.

Taking a closer look at the differences between the media, we see that the coverage in elite newspapers declines significantly ($\chi^2=37.05$, $df=1$, $p<0.000$) during this period, in line with the actual development, so no selection bias is found in these newspapers. There is a bias though when we look at popular newspaper coverage where the amount of coverage on youth crime in 2011 is comparable with the coverage in 2007 ($\chi^2=0.83$, $df=1$, $p=0.36$). The same is true for the news coverage in news blogs. Although a small relative decline was found (-0.04%; $\chi^2=0.12$, $df=1$, $p=0.73$), this is insignificant compared to the actual numbers about youth crime. Therefore, we accept H2.

In the interviews with journalists, these tendencies are also confirmed. They acknowledge that youth crime is quickly chosen. It is newsworthy since it can be experienced by the individual reader of the news, it is recognizable and nearby. The reader does play an important role in this news selection process, acknowledges a chief editor of a popular newspaper. 'I can see this in all mass media [...] we listen very well to what the readers want'. These findings confirm earlier research showing that the public on online news outlets prefer stories on crime and youth crime (Ruigrok et al., 2013). This selection also influences the selection of topics by journalists for both the online and the print edition of newspapers (Welbers et al., 2015). All journalists acknowledge the influence of other newspapers as well. A journalist of an elite newspaper states,

Journalists tend to look at each other a lot [...] We also look at 'the talk of the town', but when you look why one thinks everybody is talking about it, it is only because the media are talking about it.

Youth crime is negative and negativity sells, as journalists say: 'our newspaper would not be sold if we would only bring positive news' states a journalist of a quality newspaper. 'In a strange way people want their feeling of unsafety be confirmed, even if there is

Table 3. Episodic versus thematic news in 2007 and 2011 in the media groups.

	Ratio of episodic/ thematic frame		News items including a frame		Total ratio
	2007	2011	2007	2011	
Elite newspapers	0.55	0.33	215	111	0.47
Popular newspapers	1.40	2.24	216	220	1.76
News blogs	2.90	2.95	191	249	2.93
Total	1.24	1.71	622	580	1.44

less crime at the streets', a journalist states. As Iyengar (1991) shows, such a feeling is also triggered the moment news coverage focuses heavily on (youth) crime. At these moments, positive news is not published, not even by the ministry as a press officer acknowledges. The ministry takes into account the fact that people are not feeling safe: 'even if there is less crime, there still is crime and people do feel threatened by it'.

Episodic and thematic focus in the news coverage

The second possible bias relates to the focus on different aspects of news coverage of youth crime. We compare the usage of an episodic focus with the usage of a thematic focus in the different media groups. In Table 3, we show the amount of newspaper coverage using either an episodic or a thematic focus. Both can be used in articles too, and also an article may contain no obvious focus. This latter category is very small, only 52 news items out of 1286 (4%).

In order to determine a bias in the news, we look at the ratio of articles in which only an episodic focus was used versus the articles in which only a thematic focus was found. The ratio is 1 when both types of articles are equally used.

The analysis shows that the news coverage of youth crime is focused more often in an episodic way than in a thematic way. In 2007, episodic coverage occurred 1.24 times as frequent as thematic coverage. In 2011, this ratio increased to 1.71. This increase is significant ($\chi^2(1)=7.2295$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, we can accept H3. In line with earlier research, we see that over time news media are increasingly focusing on incidents while paying less attention to the context in which youth crime takes place.

The fourth hypothesis focuses on the differences between news media, stating that the tendency to use an episodic focus will be stronger in popular news media and news blogs than in the elite press. The increase in the ratio of news coverage focusing on episodic frames is due to the news coverage as found in both the popular newspapers and the news blogs. The ratio in popular newspapers increased from 1.40 in 2007 to 2.24 in 2011 ($\chi^2(1)=5.0031$, $p<0.05$), while in the news blogs the ratio barely increased from 2.90 in 2007 to 2.95 in 2011. On the other hand, we found a decrease in elite newspapers, from 0.55 in 2007 to 0.33 in 2011. Episodic frames were used less often, although not significantly less ($\chi^2(1)=3.0033$, $p=0.08$). Moreover, the ratio is less than 1 in both years, meaning that less coverage solely focusing on episodic frames is found compared to thematic news coverage.

Most journalists admit that due to the fierce competition between media, less attention is paid to developments and policies. Journalists are not always aware of the frames they use, let alone the effect they might have on the public, as they claim. Another reason why so many incidents are covered is the fact that journalists are copying each other. 'Everything is becoming a media hype', states a reporter of an elite newspaper. Journalists experience a feeling of not being able to choose differently, and therefore, everybody is writing about the same topic. 'You discuss a media hype, while you're also part of it at the same time. That's strange, but it happens', a journalist of a free daily explains.

Sources in the news: Indexing

A third type of bias in the news coverage that we explore is the use of political sources. By examining source use, we investigate the mentioning of sources in the coverage when explicitly mentioned. RQ 1 deals with the indexing theory, asking to what extent the different media rely on authoritative sources. In a political context, this means the extent to which journalists focus in their news coverage on either governmental sources or opposition parties.

In Table 4, we show the ratio of governmental actors to political opposition parties quoted in the news, where articles containing both governmental and opposition sources are disregarded.

Table 4. Governmental actors versus oppositional parties as source of the news.

	Ratio of government/ oppositional		Articles including only governmental or oppositional source		Total ratio
	2007	2011	2007	2011	
Elite newspapers	0.84	4.13	70	41	1.41
Popular newspapers	1.56	2.25	46	39	1.83
News blogs	1.29	2.20	32	32	1.68
Total	1.11	2.73	148	112	1.60

One striking result is the increased attention for governmental actors in 2011 compared to 2007. Whereas in 2007 1.11 times as many articles only quoted governmental actors compared to articles quoting only opposition sources, this ratio has increased to 2.73 in 2011. This difference is significant ($\chi^2=10.4826$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$). This shows indeed an indication of indexing theory, and we therefore accept H5. The attention for opposition parties as a source of the news declined, while governmental sources, especially the Ministry of Security and Justice, were quoted more often in 2011 than in 2007. The reason for this can be found in the change of government in 2010. In that year, the liberal party VVD became the biggest party in the Netherlands, supplying two prominent politicians for the Ministry of Security and Justice. These politicians were presented as tough 'crime fighters' in the news coverage. The opposition parties were covered extensively in 2007, especially the extreme right-wing party PVV had less to say, since the

Table 5. Repressive versus preventive framing in news media in 2007 and 2011.

	Ratio of repression/ prevention			Ratio of repression/prevention by governmental actors		
	2007	2011	Total	2007	2011	Total
Elite newspapers	2.03	3.13	2.40	2.55	9.67	4.07
Popular newspapers	2.38	5.25	3.09	2.33	6.67	3.42
News blogs	3.13	4.56	3.89	3.00	1.86	2.27
Total	2.31	4.06	2.90	2.54	4.77	3.32

policies of the ministers were in line with their own preferences. Moreover, the PVV provided parliamentary support to the government in 2011. Also, the left opposition did not speak out on this topic since a general consensus arose among politicians that society was demanding tough measures.

Interesting differences can be seen when we compare the different news media. We see that the attention for governmental actors in elite newspapers increased much more strongly (from 0.84 in 2007 to 4.13 in 2011) than in popular newspapers (from 1.56 to 2.25) and news blogs (from 1.29 in 2007 to 2.20 in 2011). The increase in elite news media is significant ($\chi^2=11.4903$, $df=1$, $p<0.000$), whereas the increase in popular newspapers ($\chi^2=0.3318$, $df=1$, $p=0.5646$) and news blogs ($\chi^2=0.6$, $df=1$, $p=0.4386$) is not. Apparently, the voice of the establishment is stronger in the elite press than in the popular press and the news blogs.

Prevention versus repression

Solutions to youth crime are divided into a focus on prevention dealing with the circumstances that caused the offender to commit the crime and a focus on repression dealing with the incidents themselves and how society can be freed from such criminal acts.

In Table 5, we present the amount of coverage in the different media groups focusing on either preventive frames or repression frames in 2007 and 2011. Per year, we provide the ratio of news items focusing on repression without mentioning prevention versus news items in which only preventive measures were mentioned. Note that we used all articles in which one or both of the solutions were mentioned. In the first two rows, we first look at all the news coverage, while in the last row we only present the quotes of the governmental actors.

H6 states that due to the change of the coalition in the Netherlands, the governmental sources will increasingly use a repressive frame in their media statements in 2011 compared to 2007. Looking at the ratio of repression and prevention in the quotes of governmental sources, we see that the ratio increases from 2.54 in 2007 to 4.77 in 2011. However, the increase is not significant ($\chi^2(1)=2.0859$, $p=0.1487$) due to the small number of articles. Although the increase is evident, we cannot accept H6.

Especially elite newspapers focus more heavily on authoritative sources in favor of punitive measures. To a lesser extent, this is found in popular newspapers and news

blogs. The difference between elite media and popular media, however, is not significant ($\chi^2(1)=0.0298$, $p=0.863$) due to the small number of quotes. The same is true for the difference between elite press and news blogs ($\chi^2(1)=1.0201$, $p=0.3125$).

H7 states that due to a strong focus on official sources, the framing of the overall news coverage will also be affected. Looking at all the news coverage, we see a significant increase in the ratio between repressive and preventive framing from 2.31 in 2007 to 4.06 in 2011 ($\chi^2(1)=4.691$, $p=0.03032$). We therefore accept H7.

The media types show interesting differences. Whereas the ratio in the elite news media increases from 2.03 in 2007 to 3.13 in 2011 ($\chi^2(1)=2.8374$, $p=0.09209$), the increase in the popular news media is much higher, from 2.38 in 2007 to 5.25 ($\chi^2(1)=1.2787$, $p=0.2581$), while the focus on repressive framing is the highest in news blogs in 2007 (3.13), but the increase is less strong than the popular newspapers, resulting in a ratio of 4.56 in 2011. This increase is not significant ($\chi^2(1)=0.0802$, $p=0.7771$). The overall focus of the three media groups does not differ significantly. Therefore, we cannot accept H8, stating that especially popular media and news blogs will be focusing more on repressive framing than elite news media. An explanation can be found in the strong focus on authoritative sources by the elite press. Since their focus is strong on repression, the news coverage in total is more in line with the news as found in popular media and news blogs.

In our interviews, journalists acknowledge the focus on authoritative actors, especially if they distribute press releases. The press releases from governmental institutions are often directly copied. As a journalist states, 'If they conducted research we simply accept that as the truth'. Time pressure makes journalists more likely to copy press releases. A journalist of a free daily states, 'I don't have the time like other journalists [from elite newspapers] to research for months. We mainly provide news, not background stories'. Personal characters of authoritative sources help as well. The chief editor of a free daily states,

He [Van der Laan, Mayor of Amsterdam] is very trustworthy, he is extremely nice and you tend to accept what he says. You simply do not want to criticize him [...] when he states the Top-600 program [to help criminal youngsters] is a success, we simply write that down. This way we also have news.

Such interactions between journalists and politicians occur regularly. 'When I notice something, I know who to call to get the answer I want for my article', a journalist of a free daily acknowledges. Politicians, on their turn, use journalists as well. They provide information to a journalist 'off the record' to trigger news on the matter that can be used as inducement for Parliamentary Questions.

The pressure to publish, as a press officer at the Ministry of Security and Justice states, makes journalist focus on individual cases, like young perpetrators of crime. Journalists want a reaction of the ministry while no information about individual cases can be given. On the other hand, journalists do not call to verify information, especially when it is a sensational story. A press officer states,

Sometimes journalists do call and write that the information cannot be confirmed, but still they publish this unconfirmed information in order to be the first to bring the news. That is the most important for journalists, they'd kill for that.

On the other hand, journalists' focus on powerful sources provides press officers at the Ministry of Security and Justice the opportunity to have a proactive communication strategy in which they use catchy press releases that find their way to the news easily. A press officer states, 'They only call for an additional quote but that's it. They copy press releases without any scrutiny as well. That provides opportunities to influence the public debate'.

Conclusion

This study shows an overall bias consisting of an overrepresentation of youth crime in news coverage in the popular press and news blogs, whereas no such bias was found in the elite newspapers. Youth crime coverage in popular media and new media goes hand in hand with a stronger episodic focus over time, while the elite press covers youth crime increasingly thematically. Looking at the dependence on sources, however, we found a significantly increased focus on authorities in the news in 2011 compared to 2007, especially in the elite press. While publishing fewer items on the subject, they use more governmental sources. These statements, moreover, focus more on repression than on prevention and increases strongly in 2011 compared to 2007, especially in the elite newspapers. To a lesser extent, this is also found in popular newspapers, while the governmental sources quoted in news blogs focus to a lesser extent on repression in 2011 compared to 2007.

This research shows that although in different ways all media groups contribute to the public fear of crime through their news coverage. In popular and online news media, the news coverage about youth crime is exaggerated compared to the facts. Moreover, their news is dominated by episodic focus and repressive framing. With a strong focus on incidents only and too little context, such coverage will consolidate the existing feeling of insecurity rather than provide insights into the causes of and possible remedies for youth crime in general. On the other hand, though, elite newspapers do show a bias as well. Although they show a news coverage that is more in line with the facts and written in a more thematic way, the news coverage is dominated by governmental sources. With a Minister of Security and Justice arguing for punitive measures, this way the news coverage in the elite press contributes as well to the fear of crime. Journalists, citizens, and politicians are seemingly imprisoned by a feeling that the fear of crime reigns in society and that repressive measures are needed. The fact that this fear of crime is caused to a certain extent by news coverage is acknowledged but neither journalists nor politicians are able or willing to change this.

This study conducted a content analysis of all relevant newspaper articles in the 2 years studied. However, the choice of years and media are still limiting factors. Especially for understanding the effects of long-term processes such as commercialization and mediatisation, a more longitudinal focus would be beneficial (Strömbäck and Esser, 2014). Hereby also online websites of both popular and elite newspapers should be included since recent research shows a strong influence of commercialization on news selection of the online versions of the newspapers (Ruigrok et al., 2013; Welbers et al., 2015). Moreover, a deeper investigation into thematic and episodic framing is wishful since our research shows that even thematic news coverage can show a bias as well, when these

articles are dominated by governmental sources. Finally, although the interviews with journalists and spokespersons helped immensely in uncovering the mechanisms behind the found biases, to fully understand the interaction between journalists and sources, a more extensive qualitative study would be very useful. For example, using reconstruction interviews (Reich, 2014) and interviewing politicians or using their press releases could help understand better how they try to influence news framing.

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Author biographies

Dr Nel Ruigrok is owner of LJS Media Research, an organization that focuses on scientific research for several (semi) governmental organizations such as Ministries, foundations and NGOs in the Netherlands. Academically she is affiliated to the Erasmus Research Centre for Media, Communication

and Culture, Erasmus University, Rotterdam where she teaches a number of courses at the Master Media and Journalism.

Dr Wouter van Atteveldt is assistant professor at the Department of Communication Science of the VU University, Amsterdam. He works on using advanced text analysis techniques for studying political communication. As part of his research, he created the open-source AmCAT content analysis system and has developed multiple R packages for text analysis.

Sarah Gagestein, MA, is independent framing strategist for Taalstrategie. Taalstrategie designs frames for governmental and commercial organizations, researches public framing and writes about persuasive language. Her book ‘Denk niet aan een roze olifant’ [‘Do not think about a pink Oliphant’] on framing in practice was nominated for Communication Book of the Year 2014.

Dr Carina Jacobi got her PhD at the University of Amsterdam in 2016. Her research focuses on popular news, news diversity, and content analysis methods. She is also a researcher at LJS Media research, where she is specialized in analyzing media coverage of policy issues, media dynamics and the development of automated content analysis tools.