Navigating the Tensions Between Gender and National Identity:

A Critical Analysis of News Discourse on Discrimination and Violence Against Transgender
and Gender Diverse People in the Netherlands

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PREFACE

I have always been fascinated by the relationship between media and identity, specifically gender identity, and its connection to social (in)justice and (in)equality. As a master student, I am constantly challenged to think critically about media representations of identity, their broader societal and cultural contexts, and the underlying meanings embedded in these representations. Over the years, I have become more and more aware of the progressive and queer-friendly reputation of the Netherlands, which was amplified through both consumption of international media and as a Dutch student in an international classroom. However, at the same time, I also (in)directly observed and heard stories about people struggling to accept queer people, as well as queer people feeling uncomfortable expressing their identities publicly. These contradictions left me with questions about the state of Dutch tolerance in light of the increasing queer visibility, for example, in media, and specifically an increased visibility for the broader spectrum of queer and gender identities. Combined with a personal interest in journalism, and current (global) political developments and their impact on the rights of transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people, motivated me to write this thesis about the ways in which Dutch journalists represent discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands.

As this thesis studied these representations through a media production perspective, its results could be valuable to the professional field. It highlighted the role of journalists in (re)producing existing power inequalities, the importance of inclusive and respectful representation, and presents some of the opportunities for journalists to move towards this goal. In doing so, it hopes to start a conversation among journalists and news editors about the ways in which they can achieve more sensitivity and nuance in their reporting on the issues that TGD people face. Additionally, it provides relevant and valuable information for other actors that engage in similar or related practices, such as academics or those responsible for educating and informing future generations of journalists.

Before continuing with the contents of this thesis, I would like to give a special thanks to my supervisor, prof. dr. Jeroen Jansz, whose continuous support, guidance, and enthusiasm gave me the confidence to succesfully complete this project. He patiently listened to my thoughts and ideas, asked me the right questions, and provided feedback that pushed me to further improve my work and overall helped shape this thesis into what it has become. Additionally, I would like to thank the teachers who have inspired me to explore my interests this past year, who introduced me to new theories and perspectives that have made me a better researcher, and who were there for me when I needed them. And finally, I would like to thank my friends and family, who have been with me throughout this process, who made me laugh in difficult times, and whose love and support has made my time working on this project even more enjoyable.

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have long acknowledged the powerful position of news media in society and its role as central channel through which people stay informed about the world, its structures, hierarchies, and phenomena. They have highlighted how this interconnectedness is evident through news media's meaning-making practices, which are closely connected to dominant ideologies, power inequalities, and general news routines and practices. This puts constraints on the representations of identities that challenge these hegemonic beliefs, such as transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people. In the Netherlands, TGD representation is shaped by the country's progressive and queer-friendly national self-image. However, recent years have seen a considerable increase in reports of gender-based discrimination and violence against TGD people. Therefore, this study explored the position and power of journalists in navigating these tensions in their news reporting on discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands. It centered around the research question: *how are Dutch online news media representing discrimination and violence against transgender and gender diverse people in the Netherlands?* Accordingly, a Critical Discourse Analysis was used to analyze Dutch news articles from both national and regional newspapers, as well as digital news websites.

The analysis demonstrated how journalists constructed five different discourses that either focused on discrimination and violence against TGD people or the Netherlands and its national self-image. The first discourse positioned the issue as a problem and was constructed through a progressive ideological lens, an emphasis on fact-checking, and an activistic stance that advocated for change. The second discourse presented TGD people as a polarizing topic of discussion and was constructed through a (seemingly) neutral approach that gave voice to both progressive and conservative perspectives. The third discourse centered a political perspective and was characterized by discussions on legislations and the responsibility of the government in this issue. The fourth discourse focused on the Netherlands and represented its queer-friendly reputation as a myth by stressing current intolerant attitudes and the unsafe environment this creates. The final discourse positioned the Netherlands in a more positive light and focused on progress, positive developments, and comparisons with less tolerant countries. Overall, this study provided insights into how the sociocultural context of the Netherlands both shaped and is shaped by the construction of discourses around discrimination and violence against TGD people. In doing so, this study presented an updated outlook on social understandings of gender diverse identities, their position in Dutch society, and the role of journalists in challenging these power inequalities through more inclusive and authentic representations.

KEYWORDS: *News discourse, journalistic practices, TGD representation, gender-based discrimination and violence, Dutch national self-image*

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1. Introduction

It is impossible for people to experience everything first-hand, and thus they turn to news media to stay up-to-date on current political, economic, cultural, and social affairs (Beckers et al., 2021, p. 255). In doing so, they rely on journalists' interpretations of (news) events to inform them about social phenomena (Van Dijk, 2002, p. 110). Consequently, news media play a central role in the construction of (social) reality, as journalists are perceived as "the eyes and ears of the people" (Machin, 2008, p. 62). This positions them as gatekeepers who make decisions about the social issues they report on and thus indirectly decide what is important for people to know about (Olveira-Araujo, 2023, p. 2271). In other words, these decisions send a signal to audiences about the significance of these issues and the importance of being informed on them. Hence, it is through this role of gatekeeper, that news media have the power to provide visibility for minorities, such as queer people, as they can decide to include them in their news stories or not (Bracco et al., 2024, p. 491). Additionally, in doing so, journalists have the power to facilitate mediated contact with these communities for mass audiences through (positive or negative) representations in their news articles (Bracco et al., 2024, p. 491).

So far, this queer representation in (news) media has mostly been limited to what this study consideres the more 'mainstream' queer identities, which include normalized sexual minorities, such as homosexuality and lesbianism (Billard, 2016, p. 4193; Kohnen, 2016, p. 16). More recently, scholars have witnessed an increasing visibility for 'minority' queer identities, which this study considers to include people whose gender identity falls outside of heteronormative gender binaries, such as transgender and gender diverse (TGD) identities (Mocarski et al., 2019, p. 416; Olveira-Araujo, 2023, p. 2271). However, scholars have also stressed that, despite these developments, media representations of TGD people are often still characterized by misrepresentation (Billard, 2016, p. 4196; Bracco et al., 2024, p. 502-503; Schotel, 2023, p. 451). Considering the role of news media in shaping perceptions of social phenomena and groups, this is considered problematic, as negative or wrongful representations of TGD people can result in "narrow[ing] the publicly accepted forms of TGD identification, thereby stigmatizing those who […] do not meet these […] standards" (Mocarski et al., 2019, p. 425). This notion highlights the importance of studying how journalists construct meaning around TGD identities and what narratives are promoted through their news articles.

1.1. TGD people in the (global) spotlight

The (mis)representation of TGD people has (re)gained relevance this year, with multiple developments across the globe resulting in an increased attention from news media. Earlier this year, the United States declared the (official) exclusion of transgender people from public spaces and activities (Pengelly, 2025, para. 2-3), while Hungary voted for the criminalization of events for LGBTQ+ people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and more) (Kassam, 2025, para. 3-4). Additionally, both countries also limited the official recognition of gender to (cis) male and (cis)

female (Kassam, 2025, para. 3-4; Pengelly, 2025, para. 2-3). In the spring, the United Kingdom followed in these footsteps and adjusted the legal definition of 'woman' to correspond with (biological) sex (Hatton, 2025, para. 1). These were newsworthy events that caught the attention of journalists and were discussed extensively by various international and national news outlets, and thus provided visibility for TGD people and their issues by bringing them into the (global) spotlight. These developments demonstrate how the legitimacy of gender diverse identities are being pulled into question and are resulting in a return to traditional understandings of gender that are further marginalizing this minority. According to Transgender Europe (TGEU) (2025), this is part of a larger (global) 'trend', as their *Trans Rights Index and Map* for 2025 shows that "for the first time in its 13-year history, setbacks in human rights of trans people across Europe and Central Asia now clearly outweigh progress" (para. 1).

Previous research suggests that TGD representation in news media is to some extent influenced by the social and/or cultural environment of the country in which these news articles are produced, specifically in terms of their acceptance of TGD people and (legal) support for their rights (Bracco et al., 2024, p. 505). This is relevant, as Szulc (2017) observed a shift where some countries, specifically in the West, have embraced queer people and "integrated [them] in the dominant notion of national identity" (p. 63). This provides an interesting context for studying TGD representation in news media and better understanding the relationship between media and society. Therefore, the current study focused specifically on the Netherlands, as previous research has shown that queer acceptance plays an important role in the politics and progressive self-presentation of the country (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p. 625; Mepschen et al., 2010, p. 966, p. 970).

However, this notion is paradoxical, as previous studies on queer acceptance in Dutch society have shown that it is limited to homonormative expressions of queerness that fit within the existing (domestic) image of family and partnership (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p. 628-629; Mepschen et al., 2010, p. 970-971). This becomes evident when exploring acceptance of TGD people, who do challenge the dominant heteronormative gender binaries. Despite its liberal and queer-friendly reputation, the Netherlands has also seen an increase in discrimination and violence against TGD people. According to *Discriminatiecijfers in 2024* (2025), gender-based discrimination against TGD people made up 21% of all reports of gender-based discrimination in 2021, which increased to 51% (which equals a total of 748 reports) in 2024 (p. 21). Additionally, the *Lhbtiqa+-monitor 2024* (2024) shows that intersex, non-binary and other gender diverse people more often felt unsafe, experienced disrespectful or hateful conduct both off- and online, and were more often victims of violence (p. 76-83).

This puts Dutch journalists in an interesting position when reporting on these incidents, as the presence of discrimination and violence against TGD people directly challenges the country's positive self-presentation. Hence, this study explored how Dutch news media are representing and constructing meaning around TGD identities in the context of (1) the (structural) discrimination and violence they

experience in the Netherlands and (2) the country's progressive and liberal reputation and self-image. Therefore, the following research question was formulated: *how are Dutch online news media representing discrimination and violence against transgender and gender diverse people in the Netherlands?*

To answer the research question, this study conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as described by Machin and Mayr (2012, 2023), of recently published Dutch news articles on various instances and forms of discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands. This study is rooted in theories from media, journalism, gender and queer studies, providing insights into this topic from the perspective of news production, journalistic practices, queer visibility, (mis)representation, and national identity. In the context of the increased attention on TGD people in both the Netherlands and worldwide, journalists have a crucial role and responsibility in mediating these identities and setting the tone for these discussions. Hence, this study aimed to shed light on the relationship between gender and national identity through the eyes of the journalists that report on it.

1.2. Scientific and societal relevance

This study is scientifically relevant as its focus moves away from exploring the representation of 'mainstream' queer identities, and instead addresses the importance of understanding how news media negotiate meaning around TGD identities, especially in light of current (political) developments and more generally the (structural) discrimination and violence they experience. Until now, this has remained understudied. Previous studies approached TGD representation in news media from (1) a general approach that explored all news articles discussing TGD people or (2) a more narrow approach that relied on specific (high-profile) case studies (e.g., Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 711; Billard, 2016, p. 4200; Bracco et al., 2024, p. 493). The first approach was most common in studies exploring this topic within the Dutch context, with Schotel (2023) studying the general framing of LGBTQ+ people in Dutch and German newspapers (p. 445) and Van den Berg and Marinus (2017) exploring the evolution of "trans scripts" in Dutch media over a longer period of time (p. 380). To improve understandings of TGD representation in Dutch news media and fill a gap in the research on this topic, the current study zoomed into a highly relevant, but previously overlooked, focus area: discrimination and violence. Rather than focusing on a specific incident or case, this study assumed discrimination and violence against TGD people is a structural problem. It aimed to map out how journalists construct meaning around these gender diverse identities in this specific context and shine light on what aspects of events were prioritized, how this information was presented, and generally what was deemed 'important' or 'worthy' to share with audiences.

This focus on discrimination and violence against TGD people was especially relevant considering the previously presented (social) perceptions of the Netherlands and its national identity. More generally, the intersection of queer and national identities, and specifically the tension between an (expected) progressive national identity and the presence of discrimination and violence against

queer people, has emerged as a topic of interest. However, this has remained limited to 'mainstream' queer identities (Verhoeven et al., 2023, p. 69). As for the Dutch context, the topic of queer acceptance in the Netherlands enjoyed a lot of scholarly attention in the 2010s and has mostly been approached from a political angle (e.g., Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p. 626; Mepschen et al., 2010, p. 964). These studies focused on the acceptance of homosexuality within the country, as this carried societal relevance at the time (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p. 625; Mepschen et al., 2010, p. 963). However, more than a decade has passed and social and academic understandings and visibility of queer identities have changed, which raises the question if these findings still hold true. Hence, this study aimed to expand on current understandings of Dutch tolerance towards queer minorities by shifting attention from homosexuality (sexual identity) to TGD identities (gender identity) and exploring these gendered power dynamics from a media perspective. In doing so, it aimed to provide an updated account of the position of queer people in the Netherlands in light of its current sociocultural and political context, as well as shine light on the tension between the lived experiences of TGD people (i.e., their experiences with discrimination and violence) and the hegemonic national and gender ideologies that shape both these power inequalities and news reporting on them.

This study highlights how hegemonic ideologies and journalistic practice shape the meanings created in news articles and thus indirectly what people know about the world around them (Kelsey, 2019, p. 249; Van Dijk, 2008, p. 195). This illustrates its societal relevance, as it highlights the possibilities for more inclusive and authentic representation of TGD people in (Dutch) news media, while illustrating the sensitivities required to achieve this. Additionally, it helps raise awareness among journalists about how both their (unconscious) biases and the (limited) linguistical choices available can lead to stereotypical representations of gender identity that reproduce societal hierarchies, processes of marginalization, and the social perception of TGD people (Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 718; Bracco et al., 2024, p. 491; Dekker & Duyvendak, 2024, p. 381). This is relevant, as their writing informs the general public about concepts such as gender and the gender diversity within society (Capuzza, 2014, p. 121; Verhoeven, 2025, p. 12). Additionally, these news stories also play an important role in the self-identification of TGD people and repeated misrepresations can result in them feeling constraint to behave accordingly or deny their (true) identity altogether (Mocarski et al., 2019, p. 426, p. 429). Especially in light of the increasing discrimination and violence against people who challenge dominant heteronormative ideologies (Discriminatiecijfers in 2024, 2024, p. 21; Lhbtiqa+-monitor 2024, 2024, p. 76-83), this study highlights the urgency of a new awareness and critical outlook among both journalists and audiences about what narratives are promoted through their news articles.

1.3. Outline of thesis

In accordance with the objectives and relevance of this study and its topic, this thesis is divided into four separate chapters that build towards answering the research question. The first

chapter presents the relevant theoretical perspectives that formed the foundation of this study. This chapter discusses the power and responsibility of news media, explains the (close) relationship between news and discourse, and introduces common routines and practices in news production. It considers these themes in the context of queer visibility and explores how both these practices and hegemonic gender ideologies result in the (mis)representation of TGD people. The theoretical framework concludes with an elaboration on the relationship between news media and national identity and discusses this in relation to Dutch nationalism and the country's history with liberal and queer-friendly policies. The following chapter outlines the methods used for this study. It specifies and justifies its research design, its data selection and collection process, its operationalization of theoretical concepts, and its data processing and analysis process. The methodology concludes with an account of the relevant ethical considerations and researcher positionality. The next chapter continues by presenting the the different discourses that this study identified, those on discrimination and violence against TGD people and those on the Netherlands and its progressive national self-image. Finally, the last chapter provides a discussion of these discourses in light of the study's theoretical framework and consequently an answer to the research question. It concludes with a reflection on the used research design and the limitations of the study, as well as some suggestions for future research on this topic.

2. Theoretical framework

This study approaches the representation of discrimination and violence against transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people from three perspectives: news production and journalistic practices, queer visibility and representation, and national identity and the sociocultural context of the Netherlands. First, this theoretical framework introduces news media as an important mediator between audiences and society. It highlights how news is 'produced' through a series of journalistic practices that promote specific interpretations of these stories. Second, it explores how this logic of the newsroom shapes queer visibility, and more specifically TGD representation in news media. It addresses the challenges of journalists in reporting on this topic and the (popular) misconceptions that consequently have emerged. Finally, it elaborates on the relationship between nationalism and news media, and discusses this in light of 'Dutch nationalism', the progressive Dutch national self-image, and the role of queer acceptance in this context.

2.1. News media, journalists and the construction of a mediated reality

2.1.1. The power and responsibility of news media

Earlier research on the role of news media in societies has established its central and powerful position, as it is connected to many aspects of the daily goings-on of societies (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 10-11; Van Dijk, 2002, p. 110). Especially Van Dijk (e.g., 2002) and his work on news discourse and media power have significantly shaped understandings of how news media (re)produce the discourses that shape social reality (p. 110). He highlighted that the persuasive power of news media is attributed to its pervasiveness and its (perceived) objectivity (Van Dijk, 2002, p. 110). First, news coverage is pervasive, as "there is probably no other discursive practice […] that is engaged in so frequency and by so many people as news" (Van Dijk, 2002, p. 110). Second, news was traditionally assumed to be objective and fact-based, and therefore more easily accepted as 'the truth' (Cramer, 2011, p. 146; Van Dijk, 2002, p. 110). Accordingly, Machin (2008) highlighted the powerful role of journalists in constructing a (mediated) reality and "creating informed citizens", as this is embedded in the daily routines of news outlets through the filtering and selecting of which news events to report on (p. 62).

Today, news media still play a key role in raising awareness about social and political issues, and contributing to how people understand them (Beckers et al., 2021, p. 255; Kelsey, 2019, p. 251). To illustrate this irrevocable relationship between the media and society, Deuze (2011) introduced the concept of media life:

> People […] engage with reality on the basis of a constant moving in between idealism (what we perceive) and materialism (what is apparent), using the tools and techniques of contemporary digital and networked media to edit and remix both their perceptions and the appearance of reality (p. 142-143).

This compliments Van Dijk's (2002) conclusions about the pervasiveness of news media (p. 110), and explains it further in relation to today's heavily mediated society and how this enables news media to shape audiences' perceptions (Deuze, 2011, p. 137). It stresses the difficulty of 'escaping' the discourses constructed by journalists on a specific phenomenon, such as discrimination and violence against TGD people.

2.1.2. The construction and reproduction of (dominant) discourse

However, Van Dijk (1995) also described this power as symbolic: it only shapes audiences' interpretation of events rather than their actual behavior (p. 11). Hence, this study understands news production as an intentional process, where journalists enact 'power' over readers through embedding "preferred models" into news stories that push audiences to interpret events as they were intended (Hall et al., 2013, p. 218-219; Van Dijk, 1995, p. 14). In other words, it is through these models, journalists construct and convey meaning around societal issues, structures and events. These models are shaped by media logic, as well as hegemonic social structures and ideologies (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 194-195). This suggests that, within the context of this study, news articles on discrimination and violence against TGD people are shaped by the dominant ideologies (e.g., gender ideologies) that shape how people in the Netherlands live their lives (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 116-117). Although these ideologies are intangible, they become visible through discourses, which "acquir[e], expres[s], enac[t] and reproduc[e]" them (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 124). Accordingly, news production can be understood as a discursive practice, as journalists both rely on existing discourses and specific ways of presenting information to explain news events in a way that makes them understandable to audiences (Van Dijk, 2002, p. 110; Van Dijk 2008, p. 194). In studying the relationship between minority and majority groups, the notion of power is pivotal to understanding (news) discourse. As discourses are meant to help (mass) audiences understand and interpret news events, Costelloe (2014) highlighted how they often favor the majority and are structured according to their values and beliefs (p. 316). This confirms Van Dijk's (1989) earlier work, which stressed how this leads to the perpetuation of power imbalances in society, as these inequalities are further legitimized through news discourse (p. 28). In the context of this study, this means news discourse can reproduce the existing power inequalities between cisgender and TGD people in the Netherlands.

To understand discourse, there are two dimensions to consider: (1) the actual language used to express oneself or describe events, and (2) its social and cultural context (Mayr, 2008, p. 7). As this study explores TGD representation from a production perspective, the second dimension is especially relevant, as it provides insights into the relationship between the sociocultural context of the Netherlands and the ways in which journalists represent discrimination and violence against TGD people. Within this dimension, language is understood as a "social practice", as it is strategically selected to convey a specific meaning or have a specific effect (Mayr, 2008, p. 7-8). This approach assumes that the meaning of language is situated in the context in which it is used, and that language

thus loses its intended or original meaning when presented in a different context (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 59; Mayr, 2008, p. 19). Hence, it is essential to move beyond what is written in news articles, and also consider its production processes and its sociocultural and political context, in order to understand the reality that is being constructed (Mayr, 2008, p. 19).

2.1.3. The routines and practices that shape news discourse

Over the years, media has become increasingly integrated into society, influencing its structures, processes, and basic functioning (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 113-114). This is what Hjarvard (2008) calls mediatization: "the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic" (p. 114). This concept holds relevance for this study, as it sheds light onto the mediated relationship between audiences and the world around them through news media. In his definition, Hjarvard (2008) stresses that a dependency on media equals a dependency on media logic (p. 114). This highlights the relevance of understanding media logic, as it shapes news production, and thus contributes to the construction of the preferred models around discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands (Van Dijk, 2002, p. 196).

According to Asp (2014), news media logic shapes how journalists report on issues, and consequently restricts them in their construction of discourses (p. 259). He suggests the definition of media logic to be twofold: (1) as an institution of itself, and (2) as shaping media production (Asp, 2014, p. 258-259). First, as an institution, news media logic needs to be understood as a "hybrid concept" whose impact is determined by journalistic, production, economic and business processes, as well as the technological limitations of a specific medium (Esser, 2013, p. 161, p. 167). Second, Altheide (2016) stresses how messages are partly shaped by the medium through which they are communicated, as each medium has its own "rules or codes for defining, selecting, organizing, presenting, and recognizing information as one thing rather than another" (p. 1). Following these 'rules' ensures the successful reception of messages and contributes to their (correct) interpretation (Altheide, 2016, p. 1-2).

Furthermore, news production processes are also influenced by other factors that either limit or expand the capabilities of journalists (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 195). According to Van Dijk (2002), the way in which information is organized in news articles contributes to the promotion of specific discourses, as it emphasizes the importance of specific information (p. 114-115). He highlights how the order in which information is presented often indicates a hierarchy of relevance (Van Dijk, 2002, p. 115). However, preceding these organizational decisions, journalists rely on news values to determine what events should be written about (Machin, 2008, p. 73-74). According to Machin (2008), journalists work on behalf of the public, making decisions based on the audiences' (best) interests, and since they cannot write about everything, they use news values to determine what is most important and interesting for their audiences (p. 62, p. 73).

However, more recent studies have highlighted how news values, rather than serving audiences, are shaped by the organizational and financial aims and the overall sociocultural context of the news outlet where news is produced (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017, p. 1472-1473). These studies stress how news values are also put in place to support the functioning (and survival) of the news outlet and as insurance that individual journalists are also working towards these collective goals (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017, p. 1472; O'Neill & Harcup, 2019, p. 214). This is especially relevant for news articles on minority issues, as news reporting is further influenced by the stressful environment and the abundance of deadlines that limit the amount of time journalists have to write a news article, and thus the amount of time to inclusively represent minority identities (Verhoeven, 2025, p. 11).

This perspective on news media contradicts its (traditional) social perception as mirroring reality and providing objective accounts of news events (Machin, 2008, p. 63; Mayr, 2008, p. 1). Although objectivity has long been one of the professional values of journalism (Asp, 2014, p. 261), its definition has recently become under negotiation, especially in the context of reporting on minority issues, such as the discrimination and violence against TGD people (Verhoeven, 2025, p. 6-7). In the context of news media logic, objectivity is understood as journalists creating neutral and informative news articles for the public (Asp, 2014, p. 261). Notably, this definition of objectivity seems to overlook previous understandings of news media and the hegemonic ideological beliefs that shape the preferred models embedded in news articles, which can consequently provide "an ideological defense of the legitimacy of the status quo" (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 196). This perspective on the relationship between news media and existing power structures has remained visible in news articles throughout the years, for example through sourcing practices (Capuzza, 2014, p. 116). However, more recent research has shown that journalists are also taking a more critical approach to these power structures, as Verhoeven (2025) highlights that in practice, journalists tend to separate objectivity from neutrality when reporting on minority issues, as they acknowledge the importance of "redressing systematic inequalities through their reporting" (p. 8). This latter understanding provides an interesting perspective as it highlights the powerful position of journalists that report on discrimination and violence against TGD people. It stresses their responsibility in challenging hegemonic beliefs about gender and informing audiences about these societal issues.

2.2. Queer visibility and the (mis)representation of gender diverse identities

2.2.1. Media and their power to put queer identities on the map (or does it?)

As both the concepts of mediatization (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 114) and media life (Deuze, 2011, p. 142-143) demonstrate the omnipresence of media in modern day society, it is important to further explore their roles in politics of visibility. As this study builds on the notion that media production is a discursive practice and closely connected to power structures and inequalities (Van Dijk, 1989, p. 28; Van Dijk, 2002, p. 110), it sees media as playing an important role in the (in)visibility of marginalized communities. This became evident through research on queer and gender representation in media,

which highlighted how media contribute to "regulating the boundaries of gender and sexual identities" through their promotion and construction of specific discourses (Capuzza, 2014, p. 115). This suggests that media are an important site for the negotiation of these identities, which is why Kohnen (2016) suggests that queer visibility in media needs to be understood in terms of the various factors that influence it: "knowledge, power, and sexuality", but also "production circumstances, cultural context, and reception practices" (p. 14).

Journalists contribute to this negotiation by providing audiences with representational systems that help them understand and construct meaning around societal structures, such as gendered power dynamics (Hall et al., 2013, p. 11). However, as these (gender) discourses can be understood as the embodiment of the hegemonic (gender) ideologies (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 124), these representational systems are often built around heteronormative discourses that reproduce a dichotomous understanding of gender that renders TGD people invisible (Capuzza, 2014, p. 125). Consequently, media representations that acknowledge gender diverse identities or the social construction of gender are often biased, as these notions challenge the heteronormative (gender) ideologies that pose binaries on a person's gender identity (Kohnen, 2016, p. 15; Mocarski et al., 2019, p. 420). In other words, media producers often do not have the tools to accurately and authentically represent TGD people, and therefore they will either exclude TGD people from their content or attempt to fit them within the hegemonic gender binaries by focusing on transnormative representations (Mocarski et al., 2019, p. 420). This highlights how queer representation in media is shaped by social understandings of gender identity and production practices and thus why it is important to consider how journalists shape the visibility of TGD people.

The study of queer visibility in media rose to prominence in the 1990s, as queer people became more visible through the incorporation of (authentic) queer characters in (popular) entertainment media (Kohnen, 2016, p. 12, p. 20, p. 25). Nevertheless, the quality of these representations has not improved accordingly, with queer representations still being shaped by hegemonic notions of heteronormativity that favor 'mainstream' queer identities (Kohnen, 2016, p. 18; Van den Berg & Marinus, 2017, p. 394). Interestingly, the majority of scholarly attention to queer visibility has concerned their representation in entertainment media. And although entertainment media play an important role in audiences' attitudes towards the queer community, Billard (2016) states that queer representation in news media is almost more impactful, as they "serv[e] as the primary agent of legitimization of communities and their issues" (p. 4194). This highlights the urgency of shifting attention from entertainment to news media to gain a better understanding of how they are represented, as well as their issues. This is required as the existing knowledge on queer visibility in entertainment media is not generalizable to news media, as this is produced in a different context (reality vs. fiction) and with different aims (informing vs. entertaining) (Kohnen, 2016, p. 22; Machin, 2008, p. 62). However, these developments around queer visibility in entertainment media do, to some extent, reflect an increasing queer acceptance within society, which is relevant in relation to this study.

2.2.2. TGD visibility in news reporting

In the past fifteen years, queer visibility has received increasingly more attention within journalism studies. And despite positive developments in queer representation, these studies showed a continuous under- and misrepresentation of TGD identities (Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 720; Billard, 2016, p. 4196; Bracco et al., 2024, p. 502-503; Jacobs & Meeusen, 2021; p. 2161; Schotel, 2023, p. 453). This could be explained by the tension between the increasing visibility of TGD people (Olveira-Araujo, 2023, p. 2271; Verhoeven, 2025, p. 1) and the limited availability of tools to accurately represent them in news media, which often results in negative and stereotypical representations (Capuzza, 2014, p. 115; Mocarski et al., 2019, p. 423). However, in the context of news media, this negativity can also partly be explained by the nature of news reporting and its focus on negative events (Jacobs & Meeusen, 2021, p. 2161; Mocarski et al., 2019, p. 428). This demonstrates how the workings of news media also shape how TGD people are represented in this context.

Throughout the years, the most common way in which journalists have misrepresented TGD people is through their invisibility, as they are often still being silenced or erased, even in the news stories about themselves (Capuzza, 2014, p. 121-122; Verhoeven, 2025, p. 11). According to Capuzza (2014), the selection of sources plays an important role in how news media construct discourses, as journalists, driven by objectivity, often turn to experts for input for their news articles (p. 121-122). However, when journalists do incorporate TGD people as sources, this selection is often still shaped by hegemonic definitions of gender and results in journalists favoring sources that are more easily placed within these gender binaries rather than those that challenge them (Capuzza, 2014, p. 125). Jacobs and Meeusen (2021) highlight this visibility as an important distinction between the two types of TGD representation in media: passive and active (p. 2148). They define passive representation as news media merely talking about TGD people and/or issues, whereas active representation refers to their actual visibility by allowing them to speak (Jacobs & Meeusen, 2021, p. 2148). In a later study, Verhoeven (2025) adds that the incorporation of TGD people as sources poses a challenge for journalists, as "transgender sources prefer to be interviewed by LGBTI journalists, who are perceived to be more knowledgeable" (p. 3). She highlights how this causes an issue, as the marginalization of TGD people in society is also translated into the journalist staff of news outlets, which consequently reproduces these patterns of exclusion (Verhoeven, 2025, p. 3). Furthermore, journalists often refrain from expressing specific opinions or emotions to appear objective, and instead use sources to create a specific message and/or interpretation of the story (Kelsey, 2017, p. 517; Verhoeven, 2025, p. 3), which can result in a passive representation that promotes an understanding of TGD people and their issues through the eyes of 'outsiders' (Jacobs & Meeusen, 2021, p. 2148).

2.2.3. TGD (mis)representation and meaning-making through language

As previously highlighted, language plays an important role in the production of meaning in news articles, as journalists not only use specific language to describe events, but also infuse these

descriptions with meaning by placing them within dominant discourses (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 22, p. 26). This is especially relevant when discussing gender identity, as research on (general) TGD representation in news media shows language is structured according to gender binaries and heteronormativity (Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 718). This relationship between language and ideology is also stressed by Machin and Mayr (2023):

> In any language, there exists no neutral way to represent a person. All choices will serve to draw attention to certain aspects of identity that will be associated with certain kinds of discourses (p. 108).

This citation highlights the difficulty that journalists face in (authentically) representing people in their news articles, and in the context of this study, the challenges posed on journalists when reporting on TGD people and their experiences.

Due to these linguistical challenges, misrepresentation of TGD people often starts at a (very) basic level, with journalists struggling to define transgenderism and other gender diverse identities (Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 718). In an attempt to explain them within the gender binaries imposed by language, journalists rely on the so-called "wrong body discourse" (Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 713; Schotel, 2023, p. 451). This discourse positions gender identity as "located in the body and in how bodily expressions and behaviors are read by (significant) others" (Van den Berg & Marinus, 2017, p. 392). It tries to explain transgenderism as a disconnect between the body and the mind that can 'easily' be solved through gender-affirming procedures (Olveira-Araujo, 2023, p. 2275; Schotel, 2023, p. 451). In other words, transgender women are presented as people that were assigned the male sex at birth (body), but identified with the female gender identity (mind). This is a form of misrepresentation, as TGD people have expressed that their identities are not limited to their physical bodies, i.e., whether or not they have male or female reproductive systems (Mocarski et al., 2019, p. 430). Consequently, this discourse has been criticized for its restrictive nature and inherent judgement of what is right and wrong (Billard, 2016, p. 4197; Schotel, 2023, p. 451).

Furthermore, misrepresentation occurs through an emphasis on difference and otherness (Van den Berg & Marinus, 2017, p. 388-389). TGD people are portrayed as belonging to the outskirts of society or as ill-intentioned as they pretend to be someone they are not (Billard, 2016, p. 4197-4198; Bracco et al., 2024, p. 492; Van den Berg & Marinus, 2017, p. 388-389). This narrative delegitimizes TGD people and signifies a general lack of understanding of these gender diverse identities. This also becomes evident through misgendering, misnaming, and the wrongful use of pronouns, as this is another common way in which TGD people are misrepresented by news media (Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 715; Billard, 2016, p. 4197; Bracco et al., 2024, p. 503). However, this study focuses on discrimination and violence against TGD people as a structural problem rather than a specific high-profile case with a named individual (where misgendering, misnaming and wrongful use of pronouns can be accurately assessed based on the available information about the person involved). Hence, this

falls outside of the scope of this study, as it would require making assumptions about the gender identities of those included in news articles, which reproduces these patterns of misrepresentation.

2.3. The Netherlands and its progressive national self-image

2.3.1. News media, national identity, and the nation

In the context of the representation of TGD people by Dutch journalists, it is important to consider the role of news media in the construction and strengthening of national identities and a national sense of belonging. According to Law (2001), traces of nationalism can especially be found in national newspapers, as these specifically produce news for national audiences and thus contribute to the strengthening of imagined national communities (p. 300). Despite the changes in the media landscape after the introduction of the Internet, the idea that news media have the power to shape nations and act as vessels for nationalistic ideology still holds true (Szulc, 2017, p. 53, p. 66-67). Here, a distinction is made between 'hot' and 'banal' nationalism, with the latter being especially relevant when discussing the spread of nationalistic ideologies through news discourse (Szulc, 2017, p. 61). In their reporting on social phenomena, journalists make subtle references to the nation by drawing upon national symbols and hence reminding audiences of their inclusion in a national community through (daily) exposure to these symbols (Szulc, 2017, p. 53-54). An important means through which this national identity is enacted is language, as those who understand the language and thus the message are part of the community (Szulc, 2017, p. 53, p. 58). Hence, Dutch news media contribute to the discursive and social construction of a (collective) Dutch identity (Slootman & Duyvendak, 2016, p. 71-72).

Van Reekum (2012) suggested that the Dutch national identity and community are further strengthened by emphasizing shared values (p. 590). Translating this to a journalistic context, Costelloe (2014) highlighted how journalists create this (national) sense of belonging through so-called "discourses of sameness" that shape understanding of 'the nation' by proposing definitions of "what you are not [and] what you are" (p. 322). These discourses strengthen the sense of community through an emphasis on similarities between members of the (national) community (us) and on the other hand highlights difference with the 'other' (them) (Costelloe, 2014, p. 316).

2.3.2. Dutch nationalism: The Netherlands and its position on nationalistic expressions

To fully understand the role of news media in the shaping and imagining of a Dutch nation and national identity, the concept of (Dutch) nationalism should be further explored. More classical interpretations of the concept present the nation as a group whose homogeneity stems from their shared national backgrounds (Van Reekum, 2012, p. 590). In its classic form, nationalism is closely related to the idea that belonging to a nation is accompanied by a (strong) sense of national pride (Kešić & Duyvendak, 2016, p. 584). However, when focusing specifically on nationalism within a Dutch context, previous studies have demonstrated how the Netherlands avoided being associated with

(overt) nationalism and nationalistic expressions (Van Reekum, 2012, p. 584; Van Reekum & Duyvendak, 2012, p. 456). These findings stem from a period of time in which the topic of Dutch nationalism enjoyed increased scholarly attention due to increasing discussion (or criticism) on the multiculturality of the Netherlands and its consequent policies on immigrant integration (Van Reekum & Duyvendak, 2012, p. 445).

Following the de-pillarization of Dutch society, Van Reekum and Duyvendak (2012) argued that the Dutch valued individuality and refused to force a collective (and homogenous) national identity upon its citizens (p. 465). However, this does not equate to a total absence of national identification. According to Van Reekum (2012), in both public and political discourse, the Netherlands is presented as a progressive and tolerant country, characterized by

> their open-mindedness, progressive attitudes on sex, gender, marriage and death, tolerance of different life styles, international orientation, peaceful and cooperative relations with other nations, egalitarianism, individualistic and pragmatic dispositions, but certainly not by their over-investment in the glory of the nation (p. 586).

Kešić and Duyvendak (2016) add that Dutch nationalism is located in the national (self-)image of the country that is rooted in the abovementioned values, rather than a fixed nation (p. 592-593). This progressive self-image is widely accepted, with even some (populist) right-wing parties, such as Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV), advocating for gay rights to promote and enact the Dutch national identity (Kešić & Duyvendak, 2016, p. 595). Hence, it is this progressive national self-image that is relevant for this study, as it reflects how Dutch people perceive themselves, especially in relation to queer minorities, which provides an interesting context for analyzing the representation of discrimination and violence against TGD people.

2.3.3. Dutch history: The birth of a queer-friendly nation

As national ideologies are connected to many aspects of social life, such as gender politics, they are repetively embedded in news stories (Law, 2001, p. 301). This stresses the importance of understanding how Dutch journalists embed meaning about TGD identities in their news articles, as queer acceptance is an important cornerstone in the positive and progressive self-presentation of the Netherlands (Mepschen et al., 2010, p. 966-967). In their study, Mepschen et al. (2010) mapped out the relationship between sexuality, queer rights and Dutch politics, starting from the country's liberal stances on conservative issues in the 1960s to the role of Pim Fortuyn in 'weaponizing' these values as "markers of the modern, individualistic character of Dutch (national) culture" against other countries (p. 966, p. 968). According to Mepschen et al. (2010), it was the latter that paved the way for a queer-friendly national identity (p. 968). This was further solidified by the fact that the Netherlands was a frontrunner in acknowledging and legitimizing queer people by embedding their rights into its laws,

through for example legalizing same-sex marriage in 2001 (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p. 625; Mepschen et al., 2010, p. 966-967; Van Reekum, 2012, p. 586).

However, this notion of Dutch tolerance stems from a time where queer identities were mainly understood in terms of sexual identities, with acceptance and tolerance mainly aimed towards gay and lesbian people in Dutch society (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p. 629). Over the years, this has resulted in what Mepschen et al. (2010) describe as a normalization process that repositioned homosexuality and lesbianism "from a deviant other to the mirror image of the ideal heterosexual" (p. 971). This is also referred to as homonormativity, where the behavior of queer people can still be categorized and thus understood according to a heteronormative framework, as these relationships do not challenge hegemonic social norms (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p. 629; Mepschen et al., 2010, p. 971). However, this raises questions about the acceptance of TGD people that are in fact challenging this heteronormative ideal and thus 'testing' the extent of the acceptance and tolerance that characterizes the Dutch national identity.

2.4. Summary of relevant theoretical perspectives

The beforementioned theories and perspectives have informed the current study and its subsequent research design, and guided the decision-making and analytical processes throughout the study. This chapter has highlighted how both media logic and the sociocultural context of the Netherlands provide an (ideological) framework for journalists against which they represent TGD people (and the discrimination and violence they experience) (e.g., Bracco et al., 2024, p. 505; Van Dijk, 2008, p. 194-195). This stressed an interconnection between media logic, queer visibility, and Dutch nationalism in journalists' construction of meaning and a mediated reality. This theoretical framework considered the power and responsibility of journalists in narrating news events and the fundamental practical strategies that shape these processes (e.g., Mayr, 2008, p. 19; Van Dijk, 2002, p. 110). Furthermore, it explored this power in the context of queer visibility and the representational systems available to describe TGD people and their experiences, as well as the restraints put on this representation by dominant gender ideologies (e.g., Billard, 2016, p. 4196-4197; Capuzza, 2014, p. 115; Kohnen, 2016, p. 15). And finally, this tension and the (potential) role of journalists in perpetuating inequality was discussed through the lens of Dutch nationalism and the relevant historical and cultural developments that led to the current sociocultural context of the country (e.g., Kešić & Duyvendak, 2016, p. 592-593; Mepschen et al., 2010, p. 966-967). All of this comes together in the central concept of (news) discourse, making it a leading principle in this study's analysis, which is further discussed in the following methods chapter.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

This research took a qualitative approach to studying news discourse on discrimination and violence against transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people in the Netherlands to gain a better understanding of meaning-making practices around 'minority' queer identities and the construction of (social) reality by journalists within this context (Brennen, 2017, p. 6, p. 18; Flick, 2022, p. 4). Rather than examining news articles as isolated objects, this study built on the notion that their meaning is co-constructed by the (broader) context in which they were produced (Brennen, 2017, p. 6-7), which is especially insightful when studying news media (Kelsey, 2017, p. 512). This study specifically approached this meaning-making from the perspective of news production and focused on the role of journalists in these processes. This is in line with Van Dijk's (1988) original work on news discourse and its relationship with journalistic practices and the overall functioning of news media (p. vii). This approach enabled an in-depth analysis of the ways in which journalistic practices shaped news discourse on this topic and contextualize them in relation to the progressive national self-image of the Netherlands (Brennen, 2017, p. 5, p. 23).

Hence, the current study used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to study the multiple meanings and nuances embedded in news articles. Specifically, the study focused on textual analysis within this approach, considering the predominantly textual nature of the format. This method provided a strong framework for analyzing news articles, as it positions language as a vessel for ideology and consequently as significant to social and power relations (Fairclough, 2017, p. 14-15; Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 4). These (social) power relations are especially relevant, as this study focuses on the representation of TGD people (in the context of discrimination and violence), which is a marginalized group and thus closely connected to concepts of dominance and power in society. In relation, Machin and Mayr (2023) pose important questions that are central for studying these power dynamics through CDA: "what kind of world is being created by texts and what kind of inequalities and interests might this seek to generate, perpetuate or legitimate?" (p. 36). These questions provide a critical perspective to analyzing news articles, as they aim to uncover the hegemonic discourses and social practices that are deeply embedded in social structures and daily routines, and thus have become normalized within society (Slemon, 2025, p. 1).

Through CDA, this study explored how journalists' linguistical choices supported and/or challenged these hegemonic discourses, and how this contributed to existing power structures and dynamics between social groups in Dutch society (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 27, p. 36). CDA provided a critical lens for studying news discourse on discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands, as it acknowledges news production, and thus its meaning, to be socially, culturally, and politically situated (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 59; Van Dijk, 2002, p. 116). This study used Machin and

Mayr's (2012, 2023) approach to analyze the construction of discourses through five linguistical lenses, which are further explained in the following sections.

3.1.1. Word connotations

According to Machin and Mayr (2023), at the most basic level, CDA looks at the specific words that are selected to describe a specific event, and their associated meanings (p. 49). Language provides journalists with a large vocabulary to choose from, and hence the selection of specific words over other alternatives provides insights into the intended meaning of journalists (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 22, p. 49). As this study focused on TGD representation in Dutch (online) news media, word choice and the role of language in representing gender identity formed an important foundation for the construction of discourses around this topic. Analyzing journalists' lexical choices around gender identity and their terminology to describe TGD people in their news stories provided insights into the position of TGD people in the Netherlands and the social attitude(s) that Dutch society has towards them.

3.1.2. Overlexicalisation

Additionally, salience also shapes the meaning embedded in news articles, as journalists can place emphasis on specific aspects of the story through repetition (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 54). This is also known as overlexicalisation, which includes both the repetitive use of specific words, synonyms and/or sentiments, as well as providing (unnecessary or irrelevant) descriptions of people and or situations (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 54). In the context of this study, overlexicalisation is of relevance, as Machin and Mayr (2023) highlight that it is often used to indicate a negative judgement about something (or someone) based on (dominant) ideological beliefs (p. 54). This lens provided insights into how journalists interpreted discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands within its sociocultural context, and what or who was defined as 'the problem'.

3.1.3. Suppression and absences

As journalists make decisions about which event(s) to write about and what information about these event(s) to include, examining news articles through the lens of suppression and absences showed what is deemed (un)important (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 60). The inclusion of specific information or specific words automatically results in the exclusion of other options (Slemon, 2025, p. 2), which leads to the absence of "lexical items that […] we might expect to be included" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 39). In the context of this study, by analyzing what was said, this lens made visible what was not being said and/or who was not represented in news articles on discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands. Additionally, Slemon (2025) emphasized how the analysis of suppression and absences provides "essential insights into a [person's] lived experience" (p. 2). This insight made it an important lens for this study, as it focused on media representation of historically under- and misrepresented groups, and thus specifically interested in understanding which

details are emphasized and which are (strategically) left out and how this contributes to social understandings of TGD identities, queer acceptance, and Dutch national identity.

3.1.4. Structural opposites (and ideological squaring)

According to Machin and Mayr (2023), the meaning of language, and more specifically words, is created through difference: what is 'normal' in society is defined by, for example, news media highlighting what is not 'normal' through their reporting of specific events (p. 63). In the context of representing identities, these definitions of 'normal' are established by journalists through "ideological squaring", which revolves around the (positive) representation of the in-group (e.g., the majority) and to the (negative) representation of the out-group (e.g., the minority) (Van Dijk, 2011, p. 397). In a broader context, Machin and Mayr (2023) refer to it as the "use [of] referential choices to create opposites, to make events and issues appear simplified in order to control their meaning" (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 109). Analzying news articles through this lens showed that journalists, through their news reporting on discrimination and violence, have the power to position TGD people as part of 'us' (as insiders or good) or part of 'them' (as outsiders or bad), which shapes social understandings of these people.

3.1.5. Genre of communication

In the context of this study, this lens approaches language and discourse from the perspective of news production, as it recognizes how media logic influences the linguistical choices made by journalists, as each medium has its own vocabulary (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 59-60). Within news articles, the ways in which journalists can communicate is limited, as it is approached from the perspective of newsworthiness and relevance (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 59). In doing so, journalists can either rely on formal or informal language to "communicate authority and social relations, [and] carr[y] information as to how we are seen and how we should act" (p. 59). As this study focused on the ways in which journalists represent discrimination and violence against TGD people, this lens demonstrated how news media logic shaped news reporting on this topic and how journalists positioned themselves in relation to this topic.

3.2. Data selection and collection

This study analyzed news articles from Dutch news media that addressed discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands. It focused on online news articles, as research from *Commissariaat voor Media* (CvM) highlighted that online news is becoming a major source of news consumption in the Netherlands (Schut et al., 2024, p. 50).

In line with news consumption patterns in the Netherlands, news articles were selected from online editions of legacy newspapers, regional newspapers and exclusively digital news websites (Schut et al., 2024, p. 52). To ensure diverse perspectives, news articles were selected from Dutch newspapers with different (political) leanings. Hence, this study selected news articles from De

Telegraaf, which is perceived to be more conservative, and Algemeen Dagblad, which is perceived as more centric, and De Volkskrant, which is more left-leaning (Bos et al., 2014, p. 239; Pew Research Center, 2018, p. 7-8). These newspapers ensured a large (national) reach, as research from CvM showed De Telegraaf and Algemeen Dagblad as popular sources for news consumption among Dutch audiences (Schut et al., 2024, p. 52).

News articles were also selected from regional newspapers, as the CvM-study showed them as another popular source of information (Schut et al., 2024, p. 52). Additionally, this provided a balanced sample that best represented the different areas in the Netherlands, as most legacy newspapers are based in the Randstad (a large urban area in the western part of the Netherlands). Previous research suggests that these areas often "hold more tolerant and progressive values around gender rights […] and homosexuality" compared to the countryside (Luca et al., 2023, p. 2330, p. 2343). Hence, this more progressive and liberal context could have shaped the news articles written for these legacy newspapers. Furthermore, in the Netherlands, most national and regional newspapers are owned by the same larger media corporations: DPG Media or Mediahuis (Vermeer & Groot Kormelink, 2024, p. 99-100). News articles were selected from De Limburger and Dagblad van het Noorden, as their content did not overlap with articles from De Telegraaf (all owned by Mediahuis), contradictory to regional newspapers associated with Algemeen Dagblad (all owned by DPG Media). Finally, research showed an increasing popularity of news websites as a source for news consumption, with the NOS being the most consulted source, especially among younger audiences (Schut et al., 2024, p. 51-52). Hence, this study also selected news articles from the NOS. Finally, considering this study's focus on language, and the data's semantic nature, visual elements from news articles were excluded from analysis.

This study took a purposive approach to data collection and used inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that selected news articles would provide insights to answer the research question (Douglas, 2022, p. 417). This study collected a total of 55 news articles: 5 from De Telegraaf, 12 from Algemeen Dagblad, 9 from De Volkskrant, 12 from De Limburger, 7 from Dagblad van het Noorden, and 10 from NOS (see Appendix A for a complete overview). These articles consisted of more than 300 words to ensure in-depth reporting and were published between 1 January 2020 and 19 March 2025 to best represent current attitudes and understanding of TGD identities. Additionally, articles that discussed discrimination and/or violence against drag performers were also included, as they are also considered gender non-conformative. Previous research highlighted that news articles often confuse TGD identities with drag or cross-dressing and thus group them together in their reporting (Billard, 2016, p. 4197). Finally, columns, opinion pieces, and editorials were excluded as these are opinionated in nature and do not reflect collective meaning-making.

As news reporting on discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands was relatively limited, a broad interpretation of the topic was employed to ensure the collection of enough news articles. Consequently, different types of articles were included, ranging from articles addressing

specific events to ones providing background and analytical perspectives, as all contribute to the construction of meaning around these issues. Additionally, articles that addressed international developments, but specified their impact within the Dutch context were also included, as well as articles addressing TGD people in the broader context of the LGBTQ+ community. And finally, a broad definition of discrimination and violence was adopted throughout the data selection process, which resulted in articles addressing instances of physical abuse, suicides, a lack of TGD acceptance, or resistance to more liberal legislations also being included.

The selected news articles were found using a combination of general search terms and specific events that occurred within the selected time frame. The general search terms included a combination of a TGD identity (e.g., "queer", "trans*", "non-binair", and "drag queen") and "discriminatie"/"geweld" and "Nederland". The latter was included to specify the search to incidents of discrimination and violence that occurred within the Netherlands and exclude articles that report on incidents that occurred abroad. To find news articles that involved transgender people, the asterisk was used to avoid exclusion of articles as a result of differences in the terminology used to describe them (e.g., "trans", "transsexual", "transgender"). Furthermore, the special search operator 'AND' was used to ensure that all news articles included these three important elements from the research question.

3.3. Operationalization

As Kohnen (2016) stressed the close relationship between queer visibility and media production (p. 14), it is crucial to understand how media logic shapes meaning-making in news articles. In its analysis, this study considered the various elements of media logic, including the news values that define news, sourcing practices, the implemented strategies to obtain objectivity, the ways in which news articles are structured, and news rhetoric.

As it is impossible for journalists to cover every event happening across the globe, news media are driven by newsworthiness in determining what (and what not) to write about (Kelsey, 2019, p. 252). Consequently, the instances of discrimination and violence against TGD people that are written about provide insights into what is thought of as 'relevant' for Dutch audiences and consequently what is not. Additionally, journalists make decisions about which sources to incorporate in news stories (Capuzza, 2014, p. 121-122; Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 60). Their decisions to include TGD people through their sourcing practices or to rely (solely) on expert sources or organizations highlights the influence of media logic as well as TGD visibility in Dutch society. Furthermore, journalists use the structure of news articles to signify the relevance of information by placing it in the headline, lead, or main events section (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 60; Van Dijk, 2002, p. 114). If Dutch journalists leave out TGD identities or the presence of discrimination or violence in these sections, this contributes to specific interpretations of these events by audiences. Finally, meaning is shaped by rhetorical choices, such as writing styles (e.g., how things are written) and linguistic choices around factuality (e.g., the inclusion of observations, descriptions, and quotes) (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 61).

These journalistic practices are closely intertwined with TGD representation and visibility in news media. Firstly, the lexical choices of journalists shape news discourse in two ways: 1) they position TGD people in a positive or negative way and 2) they place emphasis on specific aspects of their experiences, while leaving out others (Bracco et al., 2024, p. 492). For example, journalists emphasizing TGD people's bodily and medical experience through the wrong body discourse, while leaving out social aspects of their transition (Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 713; Schotel, 2023, p. 451). As language is central to processes of meaning-making, this study also used the *Regenboog Taaltips* from Gemeente Amsterdam (2017) to assess the inclusivity of journalists' lexical choices in relation to the preferred language of TGD people (p. 6-8). For example, the use of different terminology to describe TGD people, such as "transgenders" (transgenders) and "transpersonen" (trans persons), indicates differing levels of humanization. Analyzing these lexical choices showcased how journalists (and Dutch society) defined and interpreted TGD identities (Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 718). Secondly, unequal attention is often given to different gender diverse identities, and their experiences are often generalized through the grouping of all TGD identities and general discussions of their struggles (Bracco et al., 2024, p. 492-493). This emphasizes TGD experiences as different from the majority, through the creation of distinct groups.

In the context of this study, two relevant ways in which journalists (re)produce discourses that strengthen national identity and community are discourses of continuity and discourses of nationalism (Costelloe, 2014, p. 321). When reporting on discrimination or violence against TGD people in the Netherlands, journalists can emphasize the Dutch national self-image through stressing shared history and context, such as the Dutch history of queer acceptance, through "lexis, personification, and modality" (Costelloe, 2014, p. 324). Additionally, nationalistic discourses are constructed around opposites through the "well-known ingroup-outgroup polarization" (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 126). Accordingly, journalists structure their news articles around an 'us vs. them' narrative that relies on these pronouns to address specific groups (Costelloe, 2014, p. 328; Van Dijk, 2006, p. 126). In the context of this study, this includes decisions about who is positioned as 'them': are TGD people accepted as part of a (progressive) national 'us' or are they positioned as 'them' despite this progressive reputation?

3.4. Data processing and analysis

News articles from legacy and regional newspapers were collected through the academic news database Nexis Uni. Articles from NOS were collected directly from their website (www.nos.nl), as these were not available in the database. All were downloaded (or exported) and stored in PDF-format, as this allowed for easier analysis.

This study combined an inductive and deductive approach to its analysis, as this allowed for better understanding and improvement of existing theories around queer visibility and TGD representation in news media (Fife & Gossner, 2024, p. 2). For the deductive approach, the analysis

was guided by important concepts from the theoretical framework, which provided a position from which the data could be critically approached and analyzed (Silverman, 2011, p. 364; see Appendix B for an overview of the deductive coding process). This study used the software Atlas.ti to organize the data and keep track of observations and interpretations, as this enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the dataset (Silverman, 2011, p. 379). To support the analysis and identification of discourse in the news articles, codes were used to detail descriptions of observations on both a textual and higher level of interpretation (e.g., discourses, implications, context). Furthermore, codes included an indication of which and/or how tools from Machin and Mayr (2012, 2023) were used for their interpretation (e.g., "Action / Research is Required (WC / S)").

This was done through an iterative process that consisted of a first, more explorative, round of data analysis, followed by a second, more in-depth, round of analysis. During the first iteration, the news articles and their content were analyzed more broadly and focused on larger units of analysis, such as the topics discussed in the news articles, broader debates that were called upon, and their sourcing practices. The second iteration focused on smaller units of analysis and approached the news articles from a more detailed and linguistic perspective, such as journalists' lexical choices and their meanings. In between iterations, the relevance of codes was assessed based on their prominence in the dataset as well as their relevance to the research question, and the codes were organized (i.e., similar codes were merged, codes that were too general were split to allow for more detail, and irrelevant codes were deleted). Furthermore, these preliminary findings were compared to the theoretical framework to identify any overlooked themes and/or concepts. Throughout the analysis process, comments that were relevant for data interpretation and answering the research question were added to quotations, codes and documents. These comments included contextual information, preliminary thoughts and interpretations, and questions and considerations about the potential meanings of words, phrasings and/or articles within broader discourse(s).

After the analysis, the different codes and their co-occurance were examined and interpreted, taking into consideration the comments and general evaluations (and impressions) of news articles obtained throughout the analysis process. Accordingly, patterns in the dataset were identified and translated into the discourses on discrimination and violence of TGD people and discourses on the Netherlands and its progressive self-image that are discussed in the next chapter.

3.5. Ethical considerations

As this study used secondary data, that was publicly available and accessible through Nexis Uni, there were no ethical issues regarding data collection. As for the topic of this study, which touches upon implicit and explicit forms of transphobia and intolerant attitudes towards TGD people, it is important to recognize its sensitivity. Data was anonymized through pseudonymization to avoid potential harm to the journalists and people included in the selected news stories, but as this study did not work with human participants or involved (sensitive) personal information about these journalists

or people, no additional measurements to anonymize content were required (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021, p. 287). However, previous research has discussed the impact of studying sensitive topics on the researcher and found that it can be stressful for them, which can influence interpretation of results (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022, p. 7). Furthermore, following Talbert's (2019) definition, the ethics of engaging in minority research have been taken into account (p. 531). As this study addressed discourses around discrimination and violence against TGD people, and more broadly the (structural) marginalization that they experience in the Netherlands, it is essential that these patterns and (mis)representations are not reproduced within this research. Hence, additional attention was given to the rightful and respectful representation of these people throughout the interpretation of the data and reporting of the study's findings.

Another ethical consideration concerned positionality and the role of the researcher within the study, and the importance of reflexivity when conducting qualitative research (Brennen, 2017, p. 16). This is especially relevant in the context of CDA and minority research, as "[researchers are] never neutral in relation to discursive power" (Slemon, 2025, p. 6) nor are they (completely) free from the binaries of the ideological context in which they were raised and live their lives (Talbert, 2019, p. 535). Hence, it is important to acknowledge that I am a Dutch researcher and this study was inspired by my (in)direct observation of the tension between the tolerant and queer-friendly self-image of the Netherlands, and the persistent (and growing) negativity around and towards queer people. Although I am not a member of this community myself, I am very supportive of their (global) rights and have always surrounded myself with people with similar attitudes. This motivated the topic and focus of this study, as I wanted to better understand the 'real' position of TGD people in Dutch society through news reporting on discrimination and violence against them.

4. Results

Through its critical analysis of the selected news articles, this study was able to identify different discourses on discrimination and violence against transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people and their relation to the progressive Dutch national self-image. First, this results chapter discusses some general findings and reporting patterns that paint a picture of the kinds of news articles that were written and the language used to describe TGD people and their experiences. Second, it discusses the more specific findings. Although this study explored TGD representation through a lens of news production, this results chapter is organized according to the distinct (although sometimes complementary) discourses that were constructed by journalists. These discourses are presented and discussed according to the journalistic practices that shaped them, and thus look beyond their content.

4.1. General findings

4.1.1. What kind of news articles are written?

The selected news articles covered a wide variety of topics related to discrimination and violence against TGD people, which provided insights into what Dutch journalists perceive as the most important (and consequently least important) areas of tension, and thus their definitions of newsworthiness. Topics ranged from the impact of international regulations to Dutch-specific incidents and events. Many articles addressed issues surrounding (new) regulations for the inclusion (or exclusion) of transgender athletes in official sports competitions, with headlines such as "For swimming federation Fina, a trans woman only counts as a woman if she started early" (A19) [translated from original by the author; see Appendix C for a complete overview of translated quotes]. Another popular topic was discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ people in general, with headlines stating "Study: less discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, but more often violence and discrimination" (A32).

Most of the selected news articles were written in response to (big) incidents, such as the physical abuse of a volunteer at COC Eindhoven (A24). COC is a national interest organization that stands up for LGBTQ+ people and their rights. This shows that journalists are more reactive in their news reporting on discrimination and violence against TGD people. Only a smaller number of news articles discussed the issue more generally, without specific incidents laying at their foundation. These news articles often took a facts-based approach and relied on research and statistics to convey factuality and shine light on the issue at hand. Most journalists took a narrative approach, characterized by storytelling, detailed descriptions, quotes from experts or people involved, and a sense of chronology, to present their news stories.

The news articles were both written around the individual experiences of TGD people as well as more collective (structural) problems they face in the Netherlands. Especially the more emotional news stories relied on individual recollections to appeal to audiences, for example, articles with

headlines such as "I always thought that who I was had to be kept a secret" (A3). In doing so, TGD people were ascribed with a sense of humanity, which reduced their perceived otherness in these articles. However, this humanization was not present in all the selected news articles. Additionally, many of the articles wrote about issues relating to the LGBTQ+ community at large. When focusing on TGD people, the majority of news articles focused on transgender people, and more specifically transgender women. This shows that not all TGD identities are recognized and/or understood within the Netherlands, as non-binary and intersex people were considerably underrepresented.

4.1.2. The use of (inclusive) language to understand TGD experiences

The news articles showed a continuous tension between the lived experiences of TGD people and the language available to discuss them. Although rarely explicitly mentioned, the news articles normalized and promoted heteronormativity through their explanation of events, as their writing was interlaced with gender discourse that presented gender as dichotomous. This mainly became evident through definitions of transgender, non-binary or intersex identities, which were often rooted in biological understandings of being a 'man' or 'woman' and stressed the transition from one sex to the other, rather than separating biological sex from gender identity. For example, "intersex people are born in a body that does not fit the box of man or woman" (A3). This highlights the misunderstandings surrounding gender identity in the Netherlands and the dominance of heteronormative and dichotomous definitions of gender, as TGD identities are mostly understood (and recognized) in terms of their medical transition rather than their social transition.

Additionally, the analysis showed that journalists struggled with descriptions of LGBTQ+ people, or more specifically TGD people. Throughout the news artilces, a total of 84 different (combinations of) labels were used to describe TGD people, all signifying varying levels of inclusivity, humanity, and respect. Common language used in news articles that discussed incidents involving transgender people included "trans people"/"transgender people" (e.g., A6, A10, A18, A34) or "trans women"/"transgender women" (e.g., A2, A11, A19, A46). Similar language was visible in the articles that discussed non-binary or intersex people, such as "intersex people" (A3, A27, A28, A32, A39) and "non-binary people" (A8, A12, A20, A42). The use of this language acknowledges TGD people as humans and signifies a sensitivity towards their experiences, without reducing them to their gender identity. However, journalists also relied on more reductionist language to address TGD people. Frequent examples included: "intersexuals" (A37, A39, A51), "non-binaries" (A7, A18, A20, A42), "transgenders" (e.g., A1, A5, A13, A32). Many news articles were inconsistent in the language they used to describe and talk about TGD people, and combined humanizing and dehumanizing language.

4.2. Discourses on discrimination and violence against TGD people

4.2.1. Discrimination and violence as a problem to be solved

The first and most prominent discourse on discrimination and violence against TGD people positioned this issue as a problem (in need of a solution) that the Netherlands is currently facing. This discourse was characterized by a more negative and activistic undertone, with headlines that acknowledged both the presence of discrimination and the TGD people (or identities) involved. These articles often incorporated TGD people as sources, and were thus able to provide firsthand experiences of discrimination that stressed the hardships TGD people face (regularly) in the Netherlands.

This discourse found its footing in progressive ideology and implicitly argued that discrimination and violence against TGD people goes against Dutch 'standards'. This was mainly established through journalists stressing the difference between what is considered normal and not normal, while also passing judgement about the right and wrong ways to approach these issues. This became visible in the line of argumentation in these news articles, with descriptions of specific behaviors and/or attitudes almost immediately being followed up with an evaluation of this behavior. For example, one of the articles incorporated the following quote from a source: "The structural separation and basically isolation of vulnerable groups sends a wrong signal. It does not fit with the way in which we live together in the Netherlands" (A6). Other journalists questioned the discriminatory and/or violent behavior that was on display during these incidents. For example, one of the articles discussed the vandalization of a bench painted in rainbow colors (a queer symbol used to express support for the LGBTQ+ community) and followed it up with the question "who could possibly be opposed to a bench with six colors?" (A45). Consequently, these journalists promoted a progressive perspective as the 'right' one, implying that it is expected of Dutch people to be progressive and accepting of TGD people.

Through their argumentation, journalists linked this progressive attitude towards TGD people to the disapproval of discrimination and violence against them. Journalists included quotes from people that captured their reactions to the discussed incidents, using words such as "worrisome" (e.g., A17, 39), "shocking" (e.g., A23, A53), "sad" (e.g., A8, A10), and "angry" (e.g., A16, A25). These all have a negative connotation and communicate that discrimination and violence against TGD people is wrong. These reactions were often coming from sources that were directly or indirectly involved in the incidents, and were either part of the TGD community, part of interest organizations (such as Transgender Netwerk Nederland), or expert sources (such as researchers). Through combining descriptions of incidents with these reactions, journalists emphasized the hurt that is done to TGD people, presented this as wrong, and legitimized these sentiments through confirmations from experts.

This discourse also incorporated a fact-checking (or debunking) approach, which posed questions about the factuality of the argumentation of 'the opposition' or more directly presented research that counters their arguments, beliefs, and attitudes. For example, one of the articles discussed

two Dutch darts players quitting the national team after learning that their other team member is Noa-Lynn van Leuven, another Dutch darts player and also a trans woman (A5). The article described the incident and followed this up with the following statement: "the darts federation does not have a problem with it; Van Leuven meets all the requirements, the federation shared yesterday" (A5). Another article that presented conspiracy theories about transgender women as conspiring against women with the aim of sexual violence, highlighted "Steeman does not share these concerns about the changing law in relation to the safety of women. 'These are not based on facts'" (A20). Here, the journalist relied on the (expert) opinion of Suzanne Steeman, who worked as editor-in-chief at the Dutch feminist organization Women Inc. (A20). This shows journalists trying to educate people and promote progressive attitudes towards TGD people.

Finally, this discourse did not only label discrimination and violence against TGD people as wrong, but also advocated for action. It took a problem-solving approach and stressed the importance of taking action to reduce this discrimination and violence in the Netherlands. It did so by explicitly pointing out that things have to change: "first of all, violence where discrimination is proven (among which discrimination based on sexual identity) should receive more serious punishments" (A27). Other journalists took a more implicit approach, which included identifying pain points within Dutch society that are (potentially) causing discrimination and violence, and proposing solutions for these issues. The most prominent pain points that were identified by journalists include conservative thinking, the covid-19 pandemic, fake news, and some journalists even went as far as blaming the rise of social media in general (e.g., A15, A39, A41, A42). By also drawing attention to potential solutions to decrease discrimination and violence, such as easing the reporting process or more inclusive legislation (A3, A27), journalists signaled that there are things that can (and should) be done, while simultaneously highlighting the inactivity of authorities and institutions on this issue.

4.2.2. TGD rights as dividing Dutch society

Contrary to the previous discourse, the second one remained more 'neutral' as it presented TGD rights as a contested topic within Dutch society, with journalists presenting discrimination and violence against TGD people as part of a larger (ideological) battle. Consequently, these news articles were structured as a debate, where visibility and voice were given to both sides. As this discourse stressed the sensitivity of the topic, it also saw journalists attempting to create a sense of objectivity by distancing themselves from the opposing views on TGD rights and heavily relying on quotes from sources that represented both sides of the discussion to visualize this ongoing dispute.

This discourse centered around oppositions and disagreements and hence journalists relied on a conflict frame that highlighted polarization and the current Dutch political context as driving factors for the (increasing) discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands. For example, one of the articles mentioned: "the inclusion of transgenders in professional sports is a sensitive topic in the Netherlands as well" (A5). Additionally, journalists structured their arguments or used specific

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language to reference fighting and the presence of opposing sides. For example, "we hoped that we no longer had to fight for our rights here" (A7) stressed that TGD rights are a ground of conflict that TGD people actively have to fight for. Another article discussed the vandalization of an LGBTQ+ symbol, describing it as follows:

> And where the rainbow bench should have been a symbol of inclusion – everybody can be whoever they want to be – its vandalization made it part of a culture war. Between the people who preach diversity and those who see this as a dangerous ideology (A45).

This quote highlights how these opposites are brought back to those who are supportive of TGD rights (progressive) and those who are not (conservative), although some articles also honed into specific smaller conservative groups, such as right-wing politics, religion or radical feminism.

Consequent to providing visibility for both sides, this discourse presented TGD rights as a topic for (public) discussion or debate rather than something that is simply assumed. This was further established through journalists using words such as "the debate" (e.g., A20, A41) or "the discussion" (e.g., A13, A44), which take away the autonomy of TGD people through presenting them as a topic of discussion rather than actual human beings. This also became evident through the more passive role(s) assigned to TGD people through the sentence structure used by journalists. This was especially prominent in news articles that discussed sports-related issues. These articles incorporated sentences as "the international world of sports struggles with the presence of transgenders in women's sports" (A19), which positioned sports federations as the acting entities rather than centering the news story around the transgender women, i.e., they are something to be dealt with instead of recognizing their unfair treatment. This was further amplified by the passive representation of TGD people in these news articles, as they were denied to speak on the issue themselves. Instead, journalists relied on other sources to speak about them or on their behalf. For example, one of the articles addressed an incident from 2020, when YouTuber NikkieTutorials came out as transgender on her channel after being blackmailed, and instead of using her as a source, the article relied on research from Transgender Netwerk Nederland:

> Many trans people are also forced by their environment to talk about it [their gender identity], for example at a new job or at school. While not everyone feels the need to do this (A1).

Another example saw an employee of Gendercare, a Dutch company that supports TGD people going through transition, commenting on the experiences of TGD people:

> Trans people often already have a lot of experience with rejection, and you do not want to repeat that. They are probably already coming to a gym especially for women, because they are excluded from other places (A44).

Important to note is that despite these organizations supporting TGD people it is unclear from the articles whether or not these individuals were TGD people themselves or if they had any personal experience(s) with the incidents they were describing.

Within this discourse, journalists strategically incorporated the quotes from people and/or organizations that represented both sides of these 'debates' and indirectly promoted their respective perspectives on TGD people. Journalists positioned interest organizations, expert sources, and left-wing politicians on the 'progressive side', and placed them opposite of religious leaders, right-wing politicians, and conservative organizations, such as Stichting De Roze Leeuw, who advocate for a conservative stance on gender-nonconformity (A8). Although both views were included in these news articles, they were always clearly assigned to a specific organization, person or ideological stance. The progressive perspective was incorporated through their reactions to discrimination and violence against TGD people, such as "COC Nederland says the abuse is 'deeply saddening'" (A14). The conservative perspective was mainly incorporated through their reactions to TGD visibility and inclusion in Dutch society. This became evident through quotes as "she refers to the many recent attacks on the rainbow community from conservative [social media] influencers, twitter users, politicians and others" (A39). Journalists justified these contrasting beliefs and their vocalization by emphasizing the importance of freedom of speech and opinion in the Netherlands and implicitly expressing acceptance of the differing opinions on the issue. They stressed that people should be able to have civil conversations about this topic, where everybody is free to (respectfully) voice their opinions. This was realized through the inclusion of quotes such as "I understand the different opinions and everybody is allowed to have an opinion, but I am shocked by the Facebook-message and especially the reactions" (A23). This was the reaction from the director of the Dutch Darts Federation (Nederlandse Darts Bond) to the online reactions to the inclusion of Van Leuven, the Dutch darts player who identifies as transgender, in official women's darts competitions.

However, this discourse also recognized the expectation for Dutch citizens to have a progressive view on TGD people and their rights. Hence, journalists often labeled these 'debates' as highly sensitive and connected them to cancel culture. They presented TGD rights and freedom of speech as conflicting and a cause of tension, resulting in people wanting to stay away from the topic altogether out of a fear of being cancelled or labeled as controversial. Interestingly, this was mainly promoted through the inclusion of conservative sources and their perspectives. For example, one of the articles included the following quote from politician Kees van der Staaij, a member of the more right-wing and conservative Christian political party SGP, in response to the liberalization of the Transgenderwet: "the silence from other parties says something about the discomfort of this discussion. This is a proposal that you should not be against, but a large part of society is" (A13). This liberalization aimed to support TGD people in their social transitions by enabling sex-changes on their passports without the currently required expert declarations from psychologists (A13).

4.2.3. Discrimination and violence as an (unsolvable) political puzzle

The final discourse on discrimination and violence against TGD people discussed this issue through a political lens and focused on questions of responsibility within this context. In this discourse, journalists wrote about the various legislations and regulations that relate to TGD people, their rights and their position in the Netherlands, and used politicians as authorative sources to speak on this topic. It highlighted how Dutch society is struggling with the inclusion and recognition of TGD people and stressed the tension between discrimination and violence against TGD people being a problem that needs solving and the challenges this puts on politicians.

This discourse built on the notion that TGD rights are a political issue, and measured a country's queer-friendliness (or lack of discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ people, and in this case more specifically TGD people) through its political support of this minority. This is both explicitly and implicitly mentioned. For example, one of the articles was dedicated to the ranking of the Netherlands on the Rainbow Europe Index: "the list is mostly based on the presence of legislation and regulation in the context of LGBTQ+ in the researched countries" (A28). A popular topic within this discourse was the Transgenderwet, a law that supports the social transition of TGD people in terms of the official registration of their transition (A13, A20, A26, A28, A44). Journalists used this law as both an example that demonstrated the Netherlands is supportive of TGD rights, as well as one that showed the law is outdated. One of the articles emphasized that

> Thanks to this law, which was administered in 2014, it was no longer required to undergo a sterilising gender-affirming surgery before being able to legally change your sex, but you did still need a declaration from a specialist (A44).

While another article emphasized the proposed changes to the Transgenderwet as a source of contention, stating "the parliament has postponed the discussion of the so-called Transgenderwet multiple times and has now scheduled it for after the summer" (A13). By emphasizing the ways in which Dutch politics is (and is not) supporting TGD people and protecting them from discrimination and violence, journalists drew attention to the politicized nature of the topic.

This discourse was further supported by journalists suggesting that the responsibility to stop and prevent discrimination and violence against TGD people falls upon the government. This was established through the strategic use of sources and their quotes that showed various organizations looking towards politics for a solution. These quotes suggested the presence of a hierarchy when it comes to decision-making, and often highlighted an inability to enact change due to the protocols, regulations, and legislations imposed on them from higher up (i.e., politics, but also more general top-down structures in nation-wide organizations). For example, journalists wrote "the COC has urged the new state secretary of emancipation, Mariëlle Paul (VVD), to research the reduced gay tolerance among youth and to take action against it" (A9). This put the issue of discrimination and violence

against TGD people in the hands of the Dutch government, and has readers looking towards politics for a solution as well.

This was further amplified by journalists questioning the priorities of the government when it comes to discrimination and violence against TGD people, while highlighting feelings of disappointment about their inaction on this front. This disappointment suggests that people are expecting the government to do more to support TGD people. For example, one journalist included the results of a poll in their news article: "the majority of voters is under the impression that politics falls short in tackling this problem and that municipalities often look away from violence against LGBTQ+ people" (A17).

4.3. Discourses on the Netherlands and its (progressive) self-image

4.3.1. The myth of Dutch tolerance

The most prominent discourse on the Netherlands and its progressive self-image took a comparative approach to the topic of discrimination and violence against TGD people. It highlighted the recent 'glorious' past of the Netherlands and its reputation as progressive and liberal, and placed this opposite of the reality of living in the Netherlands as a TGD person. It was characterized by news articles with a disappointed and sometimes even hopeless undertone. This discourse built on the assumption that a progressive stance is 'right', and thus presented this contrast between the country's past and present as a 'fall from grace'.

This discourse was structured around the difference between the queer-friendly history of the Netherlands and its current struggle with increasing discrimination and violence against TGD people. These news articles included highlights of Dutch history, emphasizing how the Netherlands was once a frontrunner when it came to LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion, and interlaced this with a sense of nostalgia towards what was positioned as a 'better time'. For example, one of the articles mentioned "In 2001, the first-ever same-sex marriage was officiated in our country. And Amsterdam still likes to present itself as the gay capital of the world" (A9). This was further solidified through the use of an us-them dichotomy, that emphasized the presence of a national 'us' through linguistic choices, such as "we", "our country", and "our tolerance" (e.g., A6, A9, A17, A39). In doing so, journalists brought attention to the reputation of the Netherlands and how its citizens are expected to behave. It also implicitly passed judgement on current developments: if journalists presented the past as ideal and something to be proud of, they inevitably depicted the present as the opposite.

Journalists further strenghtened this disappointed sentiment by questioning the state of acceptance and equal treatment of TGD people in the Netherlands and critically approaching the reputation of the country in their news articles. For example, one of the articles highlighted how increased visibility of TGD people can be used as inspiration for future generations and immediately followed this with the statement:

It is the question whether or not that will actually work. The last LGBTQ+ monitor from Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, from 2022, still paints a sombre picture of the position of transgenders in the Netherlands. They struggle more often with psychological and physical issues, are more often single and have a considerably worse social-economical position than average (A2).

This shows how journalists explicitly questioned the reputation of the Netherlands. In this case, the results from the study represented the facts or the reality, and challenged the progressive and tolerant self-image of the country. Additionally, journalists placed this acceptance and tolerance under a microscope, and both implicitly and explicitly presented it as being superficial: an act driven by social expectations rather than reflecting a genuine sentiment. For example, one of the journalists included the following quote from a source: "This is representative for the society as a whole. People only pretend to accept us, but we still have a long way to go" (A18).

Furthermore, journalists presented Dutch tolerance as being a myth by stressing the difference between expectations and reality. This was established by actually painting a picture of current developments and attitudes, and placing these in a negative light. These news articles highlighted discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands as a structural problem by emphasizing the sizes of the opposition and the issue at hand. For example, journalists used numbers and statistics to indicate how often incidents of discrimination and violence take place in the Netherlands. These news articles included sentences such as "in the Netherlands, 65 percent [of LGBTQ+ people] say they have become victims of bullying, ridiculing, insults, and threats at school because of their sexual identity" (A32). Other articles highlighted the continuous nature of discrimination and/or violence or presented the issue as a collective struggle for TGD people. For example, "according to Transgender Netwerk Nederland, transgender people experience seven times as much abuse and threats as other Dutch people" (A37). This emphasized that in the Netherlands, their gender identity does put TGD people at risk of becoming victims of discrimination and violence, and generally paints the picture of the Netherlands as an unsafe environment. Additionally, it generalized this experience to the larger transgender community in the Netherlands, and in doing so highlighted that these are not singular or unique experiences.

Finally, journalists relied on TGD people as sources and allowed them to share their experiences with living in the Netherlands, which often revolved around them feeling alone, unsupported, and unsafe in expressing their identities. For example, "I felt ashamed and told nobody my full story" (A3), "Despite her fear, Ahlers decided to come out [as transgender]" (A47) or "The worst thing for him: nobody on the train did anything" (A15). Although these quotes do not include sentiments directly aimed at the Netherlands, they do imply an environment that enables, or at least allows them to feel this way. Hence, these experiences and the general presence of this gender-based

discrimination and violence served as a testament to the negative (general) attitude of the Netherlands towards TGD people.

4.3.2. The Netherlands as 'not that bad'

The other prominent discourse on the Netherlands in relation to discrimination and violence against TGD people approached the topic from a more positive perspective in an attempt to minimize potential damage to the country's reputation. Although this discourse acknowledged the issue, it was overshadowed by an explicit emphasis on all 'the good' the Netherlands is doing. Consequently, these news articles generally had a positive and hopeful undertone.

As this discourse centered around positivity, it was characterized by journalists taking a critical approach to discrimination and violence against TGD people, and questioning the seriousness of these incidents and the intention behind them: was it really gender-based? For example, one of the articles highlighted: "The police reports that, based on witnesses, it is a possibility that it involves LGBTQ+-related violence" (A14). In this case, the police did not provide a definite answer to the motive behind the incident, but rather highlighted it as a possibility. Another article posed the following question: "Yet, it is a relevant question. Is the changing room, with its red curtains, loud music, gold decorations and mirror balls really necessary to avoid incidents?" (A15). This question was preceded with a testimony from a drag queen about feeling unsafe when travelling in their drag outfit, which suggests that this should not be taken at face-value.

In this discourse, journalists emphasized positivity through a constant comparison between the Netherlands and other (less tolerant) countries to demonstrate that the situation is 'not that bad'. This underlying sentiment was established through sentences such as "because, despite the misery, he feels more welcome and safe in the Netherlands than in Lithuania" (A15) or "in China, it is not even a possibility to talk about LGBTQ+ rights, so it is very special for me to experience this" (A18). By incorporating queer sources from countries that have a reputation of not being queer-friendly, journalists were able to draw attention to the dire circumstances that these people had to experience and used this to make the Netherlands look more tolerant in comparison. This comparative approach was especially visible in the article that summarized the results of a European study into discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ people (A32). In this article, the Dutch statistics were accompanied by the statistics from the European Union (EU) to showcase that the Netherlands is doing 'better': "19 percent of the Dutch LGBTQ+ people says they avoid specific places out of fear for violence. In the rest of the EU, this is 29 percent" (A32).

However, this discourse also looked inward and examined discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands as a more isolated problem. It acknowledged the issue, but stressed that these negative sentiments towards TGD people are not representative for the entire population of the country. To accomplish this, news articles emphasized the large number of people, organizations and initiatives that accept and/or support TGD people in the Netherlands, while assigning negative

sentiments to a smaller, distinct group of people. For example, one of the articles refered to the outcome of a research study into the perpetrators of discrimination and violence against TGD people: "In a broad sense, the study shows that society is becoming more insensitive, with a part of society not accepting displays of queerness" (A27). In doing so, journalists made the presence of discrimination and violence against TGD people seem smaller and more contained.

Finally, journalists often brought discussion around discrimination and violence against TGD people back to positive developments and outcomes related to the specific incident or broader issue. This positivity ranged from journalists emphasizing the actions that were taken to reduce discrimination and violence, the benefit of increased visibility, the positive attitudes of TGD people, or the general progress the country has made in the past decades. This became evident in news articles through statements, such as "according to the spokesperson, there are multiple locations at which employees that are specialized in the topic [LGBTQ+] are present" (A40) and "she tries to emphasize the positive side: thanks to all the negative attention she has a larger platform to communicate her message" (A2). This presented discrimination and violence against TGD people as something the country is actively taking action against, while also stressing the positive consequences these incidents have had on the individuals involved and society at large.

4.4. Summary of findings

The previously discussed discourses demonstrate the interconnection between media logic, queer visibility and (Dutch) nationalism that was established through the theoretical framework. They showcase how, in Dutch news media, the issue of discrimination and violence against TGD people is inherently connected to the history and progressive national self-image of the country, as meaning around TGD people is constructed within this framework. First, this results chapter has highlighted how journalists represented discrimination and violence against TGD people as either a problem, as dividing Dutch society, and as an (unsolvable) political puzzle. These discourses were closely connected to the Dutch national self-image, as they displayed a (varying) reliance on a progressive ideology and desire to solve this issue, despite acknowledging and highlighting the struggle of realizing it. Second, this chapter has discussed how journalists represented the Netherlands in the context of this discrimination and violence against TGD people, with the identified discourses either suggesting that Dutch tolerance is a myth or that the situation is not as bad as it seems. These discourses highlighted a tension between a (potential) unwillingness to let go of the progressive self-image of the country and an inability to ignore the reality of the situation. The following concluding chapter discusses more in-depth the interpretations and contextualizations of these discourses, also in light of the theoretical framework and its operationalization.

5. Conclusion and discussion

This study focused on the intersection of gender(queer) and national identities in a country with a progressive national self-image (e.g., Van Reekum, 2012, p. 586). In light of the increasing discrimination and violence against transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people in the Netherlands (e.g., Discriminatiecijfers in 2024, 2024, p. 21), this study aimed to uncover how Dutch journalists are reporting on these issues, as their presence contradicts the national self-image of the country. This study has provided a better understanding of how both journalistic practices and sociocultural factors shape the representations of TGD people in news media. Additionally, this study set out to contribute to understandings of these relationships by demonstrating how societal structures inform news reporting and, in turn, how news reporting can shape perceptions of these social (power) structures.

First, this chapter discusses the findings of this study within the context of its theoretical underpinnings and highlights how they confirm, contradict, and/or contribute to previous studies on news production, TGD representation and visibility, and the progressive national self-image of the Netherlands. Second, it reiterates and summarizes these findings to provide an answer to the research question. And finally, it reflects on these findings in light of the study's research design and its limitations. Accordingly, it proposes directions for future research that will further understanding of TGD representation in news media in the Netherlands and more broadly in countries with (potentially) paradoxical national (self-)images.

5.1. Discussion

5.1.1. News production, ideology and power inequalities

The previous work of Van Dijk (e.g., 2002, 2008) on news production and discourse was pivotal to this study. This study showed how discourses on discrimination and violence, and gender and national identity are interlaced in news articles addressing discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands. This confirmed the ideological and contextual nature of news media, as described by Van Dijk (2006, p. 116-117), as these discourses reflected dominant social beliefs and understandings of gender and the Dutch progressive self-image. Furthermore, this highlighted the role of news media in the (re)production and legitimization of existing social structures and (gender) inequalities, specifically regarding TGD identities (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 124).

In line with Van Dijk's (2011) concept of ideological squaring (p. 397), this study highlighted how journalists (in)directly emphasized difference in these news articles. Their reliance on a conflict frame to discuss these issues either indicates an attempt to provide readers with a complete (and objective) picture of the various perspectives on this topic to educate or raise awareness, or a contribution to the notion that TGD people and their rights are a (legitimate) source of conflict. However, this approach was not unexpected, as discrimination and violence are forms of conflict, but did contribute to this ideological squaring, as this conflict was often reduced to progressive versus

conservative beliefs. This was especially prominent in the discourse that presented TGD people and their rights as a polarizing topic of discussion, and in which journalists emphasized the difference between TGD people and 'the rest' of Dutch society and thus hinted at others having the power to debate and decide on their inclusion and recognition. Consequently, this discourse reflects dominant power dynamics in Dutch society in the context of gender identity, as highlighted by Kohnen (2016, p. 14). Although characteristic for news production, journalists' reactive approach to TGD issues (i.e., something has to occur to capture the attention of journalists) could further legitimize these power inequalities. As journalists could also use their position to proactively and preventatively approach their reporting on discrimination and violence against TGD people, it could suggest that these issues are perceived as less important or newsworthy compared to other issues (that involve different people).

This study showed the quoting of sources as the most frequently used journalistic practice in news reporting on discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands. An interesting observation is that journalists relied on long(er) quotes from sources and more prominently presented them within news articles. This could be ascribed to the polarized nature of the topic, as highlighted in the news articles, and thus journalists wanting to create distance between themselves and (strong) sentiments towards the issue. This confirms previous research, as Verhoeven (2025) also highlighted a close relationship between objectivity and sourcing practices (p. 3). Although this study did not focus on the sources themselves, it did notice that, while still (repeatedly) relying on expert sources (Capuzza, 2014, p. 121), journalists also increasingly turned to TGD people to provide retellings of their experiences with discrimination and violence in the Netherlands

5.1.2. (Mis)understanding TGD identities

This study showed the tension between gender diverse identities and hegemonic gender ideologies. In line with previous research, it highlighted a dominance of the traditional gender dichotomy in news reporting on TGD people and their issues (Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 718). This stresses the persistence of these ideologies, as their consequent misrepresentations of TGD people are still present and relevant over a decade after Barker-Plummer (2013, p. 718) conducted their study. This demonstrates how news media contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities, which was especially evident in journalists' definitions of TGD identities and their reporting on gendered structures, such as the inclusion of TGD people in (official) sports competitions. Considering how sports activities are structured around dichotomous gender binaries, it was unsurprising that sports were a key area of interest for journalists reporting on these issues. This limitation to female and male competitions poses challenges on the acceptance and inclusion of TGD people, and therefore provides a solid example for the dominance of this gender ideology and the challenges faced by journalists in navigating these issues.

Additionally, this study identified an overall lack of nuance and sensitivity to the full spectrum of gender diverse identities in news articles on discrimination and violence against TGD people. In

line with previous research, this became evident through discrepancies in representation between the different TGD identities and generalizations (Bracco et al., 2024, p. 492-493). This study specifically showed an overemphasis on transgender women, which was especially notable when presented within a feminist context. This can be linked to issues around sexism that are an important cornerstone of the feminist movement. These news articles positioned transgender women as (biological) men that pose a threat to the feminist fight and its progress over the decades, which reproduced the traditional gender dichotomy and misunderstandings around gender identity. As for general discussions, this study showed journalists discussing specific challenges in light of the entire LGBTQ+ community. In doing so, these news articles are not acknowledging the vastly different identities within this acronym, who all have unique struggles that are not generalizable to all queer identities.

Previous research emphasized the stereotypical and reductionist portrayal of TGD people in news media (e.g., Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 720; Billard, 2016, p. 4196-4197). Although this study showed that journalists indeed relied on (common) stereotypes, these representations were not as central and rather supported specific narratives and understandings of TGD people within the broader context of the identified discourses. This could be explained by either the focus on specifically discrimination and violence or the more nationalistic discourses that accompanied these news articles. Both looked beyond TGD people as individuals and rather explored their representation in relation to the (structural) discrimination and violence they experience, as well as the Netherlands and its context.

Finally, the representation of identity through language and text formed an essential perspective for this study. Previous research from Barker-Plummer (2013) already stressed the linguistical barriers faced by journalists (p. 718), and this study confirmed that these difficulties still prevail. This demonstrates how gender ideology is embedded in some of the basic structures of language and thus restraints journalists in their inclusive reporting on these issues (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 126). Additionally, this study highlighted the inconsistencies in terminology to describe (or label) TGD and/or LGBTQ+ people, relying on both humanizing and dehumanizing language. This could be a reflection of journalists attempting to rely on inclusive and humanizing language or choosing to use different language to avoid repetition in their articles.

Overall, these findings highlight how hegemonic social structures, gender ideologies, and their consequent power inequalities shape how journalists report on discrimination and violence against TGD people. This demonstrates the relevance of this study, as it stresses the necessity for an increased sensitivity and critical approach among journalists to avoid the reproduction of power inequalities and further marginalization of TGD people in (Dutch) society. It emphasizes the (potential) role of journalists in improving the position of TGD people in the Netherlands through inclusive and respectful representations of TGD people in their news articles.

5.1.3. The presence of nationalism (or not?)

This study revealed a tension within the discourses on the Netherlands and its national self-image. On the one hand, it found that journalists emphasized Dutch history in light of queer acceptance and the progressive self-presentation of the country, while simultaneously recognizing and criticizing a (growing) lack of progressive attitudes when push comes to shove. This shows that, although the perceived reputation of the Netherlands as described by Mepschen et al. (2010) remains a guiding principle for how Dutch people are expected to behave (p. 966-967), it has become less matter-of-fact over the last fifteen years. This also aligns with the paradoxical nature of Dutch tolerance as presented by Hekma and Duyvendak (2011, p. 970-971) and suggests the possibility of people in the Netherlands feeling conflicted about their positions in relation to its historically progressive, liberal, and queer-friendly self-image. This study demonstrated how (and if) Dutch tolerance and understandings of queer idenitites have evolved since the early 2010s. This shows the relevance of this study, as it contributes a new layer of understanding to these findings by exploring their applicability in the (new) context of gender identity and highlight the importance of studying Dutch tolerance in this context. This study showed how the limitations of Dutch tolerance towards homosexuality also apply to TGD identities, as the larger attention for transgender people who have gone through medical transitions seemingly signals more tolerance towards those fitting within hegemonic gender binaries. Furthermore, it provided new insights into the role of this progressive self-image in the context of news reporting on discrimination and violence against TGD people.

However, as previously mentioned, it seems that the Netherlands is also not ready to fully let go of its progressive (self-)image. This became evident through the relatively limited news coverage of discrimination and violence against TGD people, which led to broad interpretations and criteria for data collection. This was remarkable considering their increasing occurance in the Netherlands (Discriminatiecijfers in 2024, 2024, p. 21). Additionally, the presence of more nationalistic discourses that accompanied news reporting on these issues, showed an attempt to avoid negativity and damage to the Dutch reputation. In line with previous research, this (positive) national discourse was constructed through an 'us vs. them' narrative, which emphasized a national 'us' and presented the Netherlands as a single acting entity (Costelloe, 2014, p. 324, p. 328). Additionally, this study also highlighted how journalists explicitly focused on positive developments surrounding TGD rights in the Netherlands, which confirmed "positive self-representation" as an important tool in constructing discourse around national identity and self-image (Van Dijk, 2011, p. 397). However, in the context of this study, this emphasis on positivity can also (unintentionally) make the issue of discrimination and violence against TGD people seem smaller or less urgent to audiences.

5.2. Discrimination and violence against TGD people in Dutch news media

This study aimed to understand how Dutch journalists are constructing meaning around TGD people through their news reporting on discrimination and violence against TGD people in the

Netherlands. Accordingly, this study was structured around the knowledge that news media have a central role in informing people about the world around them (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 10-11; Van Dijk, 2002, p. 110), news media are thus an important platform for visibility (Bracco et al., 2024, p. 491), and a progressive self-image lies at the foundation of Dutch national identity (Mepschen et al., 2010, p. 966-967). This study was informed by the research question: *how are Dutch online news media representing discrimination and violence against transgender and gender diverse people in the Netherlands?* Accordingly, this study identified three distinct discourses that represented discrimination and violence against TGD people (1) as a problem, (2) as dividing Dutch society, or (3) as an unsolvable political puzzle. Additionally, it also identified two discourses that addressed this issue in relation to the sociocultural context of the Netherlands that either presented (1) the progressive Dutch self-image as a myth or (2) the lack of tolerance as 'not that bad'.

First, to construct the problem discourse, journalists drew on progressive ideological beliefs and explored the issue through a negative lens that stressed the tension between discrimination and violence against TGD people and the Dutch national self-image. Journalists provided audiences with facts and arguments to debunk beliefs that they presented as potential causes for this issue, while simultaneously advocating for change and to realign with the progressive self-image of the country. Second, the polarization discourse approached the topic from a more neutral perspective, as journalists highlighted the different (conflicting) opinions and attitudes towards TGD people. Journalists presented TGD rights as a topic of public debate that is dividing Dutch society and consequently has become a sensitive topic that people prefer to avoid. Finally, journalists constructed the political discourse by presenting discrimination and violence against TGD people as a complex and challenging political issue. They explored tolerance towards TGD people in terms of legislation and promoted the notion that the government is responsible for solving the issue of discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands.

As for the discourses on the Netherlands and its progressive self-image, the myth discourse approached the topic from a critical perspective that emphasized a disconnect between the reputation of the Netherlands and the lived experiences of TGD people. Journalists relied on personal stories and experiences from TGD people that depicted the Netherlands as unsafe and intolerant, while stressing how this contrasts with the country's history. Contrastingly, the second discourse took a positive approach to reporting on discrimination and violence against TGD people, as it focused on the progress the country has made compared to other (less tolerant) countries. Journalists challenged the significance of the issue by highlighting the high number of people that accept TGD people and all measurements that have been taken to stop discrimination and violence against TGD people.

These discourses highlight some of the different perspectives on discrimination and violence against TGD people that are circulating in the Netherlands. The discourses that represented this issue as a problem and the Netherlands as progressive, were in line with prior expectations informed by the theoretical framework. The other discourses, although not entirely unexpected given the current

political climate of the Netherlands, were less obvious. Overall, this study concluded that the representation of discrimination and violence against TGD people in the Netherlands cannot be separated from its national self-image, as they continuously inform and shape each other.

5.3. Reflections on research design, limitations and future research

This study provided new insights into the role of Dutch journalists in constructing meaning around discrimination and violence against TGD people and how they (re)produced dominant discourses around this issue in the context of the progressive national self-image of the Netherlands. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provided a critical perspective and enabled a more in-depth exploration that revealed the (hegemonic) ideologies and production processes that shape news reporting (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 59; Slemon, 2025, p. 2; Van Dijk, 2002, p. 116). This enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the identified discourses and the ways in which societal structures and news media inform each other in creating meaning around TGD identities. Hence, CDA was especially relevant in questioning what was written in the selected news articles and considering the sociocultural context in which they were produced.

Machin and Mayr's (2012, 2023) framework for CDA supported a linguistical approach to studying TGD representation in news media, which provided a solid starting point for critically examining journalists' lexical choices and how these choices contributed to the (mis)representation of TGD people. Simultaneously, these insights into the lexical choices of journalists drew attention to the sensitivities and nuance required in reporting on the findings of this study. The lenses of word connotation, suppression, and structural opposites proved particularly relevant for questioning the data (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 49, p. 60, p. 63), as they were closely connected to the important concepts from the theoretical framework and their operationalization. These lenses helped unveil the dominant power structures (relating to minority and majority groups) that shaped the discourses constructed by journalists, and provided important insights into the position of TGD people in Dutch society and the ways in which their (structural) discrimination and experience of violence is perceived.

However, there were also some limitations to this study. Firstly, this study only considered the broader sociocultural context of the Netherlands in studying the meaning-making practices of Dutch journalists. Other potential factors, such as the journalists' backgrounds as a source of potential bias (Dekker & Duyvendak, 2024, p. 381) or ideological stances of the news outlets (Van Dijk, 1988, p. vii), were not guiding principles in its data analysis and interpretation. Hence, more research is needed to fully understand how news production and journalistic practices shape the representation of discrimination and violence against TGD people, for example through interview-based or ethnographic research with journalists and news editors. This would also allow a more detailed understanding of journalists' perspective on this issue and contextualize some of this study's findings.

Secondly, this study explored the representation of discrimination and violence against TGD people through a linguistical lens and thus limited its scope to textual data. However, considering the

popularity of digital newspapers and -websites (Schut et al., 2024, p. 50), their different affordances, such as more visual and interactive features, should be considered in future studies on this topic. As journalists are also responsible for the selection of images that accompany these news articles, a visual analysis could provide further understanding into the visibility and representation of TGD people in Dutch news media.

And lastly, this study focused on a more traditional medium for news consumption (newspapers and -websites) that allowed more long-form content, which enabled more extensive meaning-making. However, Schut et al. (2024) demonstrated that social media is becoming a popular news source among younger Dutch audiences (p. 52). This requires further academic attention. Social media enable more interactivity and engagement with content, which raises questions about the impact this has on audience reception (and interaction), considering this study showcased journalists presenting TGD people as a polarizing topic and connected to cancel culture.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Overview of dataset

Table A1

Complete overview of the news articles included in the dataset

No.	Newspaper	Publication date	Name of article
A1	De Telegraaf	15 January 2020	'Nikkie is meer dan trans'
A2	De Volkskrant	13 July 2023	Miss Nederland, transvrouw, met dood bedreigd
A3	AD	1 March 2025	'Altijd dacht ik dat wie ik ben geheim moest blijven'
A4	AD	9 April 2024	Paus: Niet zelf voor God spelen
A5	AD	26 March 2024	'Trans vrouw weren bij wedstrijden is discriminatie'
A6	De Telegraaf	11 March 2024	'Lhbt'er komt terecht in ontvluchte cultuur'
A7	De Volkskrant	15 August 2023	Gevluchte lhbti'ers zijn ook hier niet veilig: 'Ze haten ons'
A8	AD	12 April 2023	'Geen vuist tegen haat, maar een warm hart'
A9	AD	3 August 2024	Geen begrip meer voor 'verkeerde' liefde
A10	AD	16 January 2024	Geen asiel: Trans vrouw Katya stapt uit het leven
A11	De Volkskrant	19 August 2023	Fysieke sporten sloten trans vrouwen al uit, nu volgt met schaken ook een denksport
A12	De Volkskrant	5 August 2023	Hoe radicaal rechts zich op lhbti-rechten stort
A13	AD	2 July 2022	Transgenderwet wordt als hete aardappel over zomer heen getild
A14	AD	28 July 2021	Mishandelde Frédérique (14) wil geen wraak

No.	Newspaper	Publication date	Name of article
A15	De Volkskrant	7 August 2023	Op Amsterdam Centraal kunnen dragqueens zich veilig uitdossen
A16	AD	11 April 2023	COC pleit voor stilleggen duals bij antihomo-leuzen
A17	De Telegraaf	18 July 2023	'Opstaan tegen homohaat'
A18	AD	24 July 2023	'Er valt nog veel te doen. Het blijft nodig ons te laten zien'
A19	De Volkskrant	21 June 2022	Voor zwembond Fina telt een trans-vrouw voortaan pas als vrouw als ze er vroeg bij was
A20	De Volkskrant	27 December 2021	Lijf en leed
A21	De Telegraaf	30 September 2023	Het speelveld wordt oneerlijk en onveilig
A22	De Volkskrant	26 March 2024	Dartsters willen geen trans vrouw als teamgenoot en stappen uit Nederlands team
A23	AD	26 March 2024	'Iedereen mag een mening hebben, maar ik schrik hiervan'
A24	De Volkskrant	13 April 2023	COC Eindhoven staat op tegen homohaat
A25	AD	15 April 2023	'Hand in hand met mijn vriend? Zeker niet altijd'
A26	De Telegraaf	22 October 2022	Samenleven in lastige spagaat
A27	NOS	20 March 2024	'Daders van geweld tegen lhbtq-personen vaak man en bekend bij justitie'
A28	NOS	11 May 2023	Nederland opnieuw plaats gezakt op Europese lijst voor lhbti-rechten
A29	NOS	11 May 2022	Mensenrechtencollege: Ziekenhuis discrimineerde transgender man

No.	Newspaper	Publication date	Name of article
A30	NOS	27 July 2021	Familie mishandelde tiener Amstelveen overrompeld door steun
A31	NOS	16 April 2021	'Transpersonen door corona vaker in conflict met hun baas'
A32	NOS	14 May 2024	Studie: Minder discriminatie lhbtiq'ers in EU, wel vaker geweld en intimidatie
A33	NOS	24 March 2024	Dartsters stappen uit Oranje-selectie omdat teamgenoot trans vrouw is
A34	NOS	10 July 2023	Trans vrouw krijgt veel haatreacties na verkiezing tot Miss Nederland
A35	NOS	13 December 2024	Problemen op middelbare scholen rond Paarse Vrijdag
A36	NOS	19 February 2025	Zonder steun van NSC en CDA lijkt verbod op 'homogenezing' er niet te komen
A37	De Limburger	29 November 2021	Maastrichtse vereniging: 'We willen mensen een veilige haven bieden'
A38	Dagblad van het Noorden	17 May 2024	'Voor dit soort agressie zijn we gevlucht'
A39	De Limburger	22 April 2023	Homo? Prima, maar aan zoenen op straat kunnen we maar niet wennen
A40	Dagblad van het Noorden	26 November 2024	'Een kwetsbare groep mensen'
A41	De Limburger	28 May 2022	Durft iemand nog de vingers te branden aan het woke-debat?
A42	Dagblad van het Noorden	28 November 2020	Man of vrouw: 'Ik ben geen van beiden'

No.	Newspaper	Publication date	Name of article
A43	De Limburger	12 January 2024	Na zelfdoding van vriend maakt Salim zich grote zorgen
A44	Dagblad van het Noorden	24 September 2022	Geslacht naar wens
A45	De Limburger	7 September 2024	Radicale twist over 'een paar verfstrepen'
A46	De Limburger	10 December 2022	'Nu opgeven zou klap in het gezicht zijn van de trans vrouwen na mij'
A47	Dagblad van het Noorden	12 October 2021	Ondanks de angst uit de kast
A48	De Limburger	6 November 2021	Het azc was de hel voor transvrouw Zhou
A49	De Limburger	10 October 2020	'Blij als ik alles weer kan uittrekken'
A50	Dagblad van het Noorden	14 December 2024	Geknakt en gebroken
A51	De Limburger	24 July 2021	Kiezen voor menselijkheid of gaat eerlijkheid boven alles?
A52	De Limburger	26 March 2024	Roep om respect voor trans vrouw Van Leuven
A53	Dagblad van het Noorden	17 December 2024	Darten tegen de stroom in
A54	De Limburger	15 January 2020	YouTuber stimuleert acceptatie transgenders
A55	De Limburger	22 April 2023	'Drag Bingo' in Venlo als veilige haven voor de roze gemeenschap

Note. The abbreviation in the table is defined as follows: Algemeen Dagblad (AD).

Appendix B. Operationalization and deductive coding process

Table B1

Overview of operationalized concepts and their corresponding codes

Concept (theory)	Dimensions (operationalization)	Category codes (data analysis)	Example codes (data analysis)
		Structure	Headline
			Lead
	Structure of news articles (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Van Dijk, 2002)	Characteristics / Content of Headline	Discrimination / Violence Acknowledged
			Discrimination / Violence Not Acknowledged
			TGD Identity Included
			TGD Identity Not Included
			Uses Quote(s)
Media logic			General Discrimination / Violence
			Feeling Unsafe
		Topic of News Article	Physical Abuse
	News values / Newsworthiness (Kelsey, 2019)		TGD and Migration
			TGD and Politics / Legislation(s)
			TGD and Sports
		Type of News Event	General Discussion
			Incident / Event

Concept (theory)	Dimensions (operationalization)	Category codes (data analysis)	Example codes (data analysis)
			Structural Problem
			(Professional) athletes
			Court / Judge / Lawyers
			Drag Performers
			Employees
			Feminist Organizations
			Interest Organizations
			Intersex Person
			Medical Specialists / Experts
			Non-binary Person
	Sourcing practices (Capuzza, 2014; Pan & Kosicki, 1993)	Sourcing practices	Perpetrator / Person Behind Discrimination or Violence
			Politicians
			Professor(s)
			Public Opinion
			Queer Person
			Relative(s) / Friend(s) of Victim
			Research / Researcher
			Sports Organizations
			Transgender Person

Concept (theory)	Dimensions (operationalization)	Category codes (data analysis)	Example codes (data analysis)
			Transgender Person (Victim)
	Rhetorical choices (Pan & Kosicki, 1993)	News Rhetoric	Authority (WC)
			Descriptions of Observations / Situations
			Expert Knowledge / Sources
			Factuality / Objectivity (WC)
			Numbers and Statistics
			Quote(s)
		Writing Styles	Active Role for TGD Person
			Passive Role for TGD Person
TGD (mis)-representation and visibility	Inclusive / Exclusive language (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2017)	Terminology (TGD Identity)	Dragqueen / Drag queen
			Drags
			Intersekse
			Intersekse personen
			LHBTI-gemeenschap
			LHBTI-vluchtelingen / LHBTI-asielzoekers
			LHBTI'ers
			LGBTQ-personen
			Non-binair / Non-binairen
			Trans mensen / Trans mens

Concept (theory)	Dimensions (operationalization)	Category codes (data analysis)	Example codes (data analysis)
			Transgender personen / Transgender persoon
			Trans vrouw / Transvrouw
			Transgenders
		Negative View(s) on TGD People (WC)	"(woke) genderideologie"
			"ongeschikt […] voor kinderen"
			"schaamt[e]"
			"woke en lhbtiq+ gedram"
	Lexical choices (Bracco et al., 2024)	Representation / Position of TGD people as… (WC)	Disease / Temporality (WC / S)
			'Trickster' (WC / S)
			Having to Fight for Visibility (WC)
			Hiding Identity / Closeted (WC)
			Polarizing Topic (WC / S)
			Political (WC)
			Problem (S)
			Resilient (WC)
			Sensitive (WC)
			The Body / Transition (WC)

Concept (theory)	Dimensions (operationalization)	Category codes (data analysis)	Example codes (data analysis)
		Humanization of TGD People (WC)	Acknowledging TGD as People / Persons
			Backstory / Personal Details
			Naming TGD People (Victim)
		Presenting TGD Rights as… (WC)	"Cultuurstrijd"
			Achievements
			Battleground / Fight
			Debate / Discussion
			Struggle for Politics / Authorities
			Unimportant / No Priority (WC / S)
		TGD Experience (WC)	"geheim"
			Alone / Unsupported (WC / S)
			Feeling Unsafe / Unable to Express Identity
			Not Belonging (WC / SO)
			Supportive Friends / Family
	Diversity (Bracco et al., 2024)	TGD Identity Discussed in News Article	Drag Performers
			Intersex
			LGBTQ+

Concept (theory)	Dimensions (operationalization)	Category codes (data analysis)	Example codes (data analysis)
			Non-binary
			Transgender
		Dehumanization of TGD People	Reducing TGD People to Numbers / Statistics
			Reducing TGD people to Their Gender / TGD Identity
	Generalizations (Bracco et al., 2024)	Focus	Collective / Group Experiences
			Individual Experiences
		Representation / Position of TGD as… (WC)	Generalization / Grouping (LGBTQ+)
Discourses of sameness	Discourse of continuity (Costelloe, 2014)	DC-NL	Dutch as Queer Friendly (WC)
			Mention of Dutch History
			Personification of NL / NL as Acting Entity
			Reference to (Past) 'Better Times' (WC / S)
		Reference to Dutch Self-Image	Discrimination and Violence as 'New' / Unexpected (WC / S)
			Discrimination and Violence as Unacceptable / Not Normal / Wrong (WC / S)

Concept (theory)	Dimensions (operationalization)	Category codes (data analysis)	Example codes (data analysis)
			Expectations / Reputation of Country (S)
			Progressive and Tolerant (WC / S / SO)
		DN-NL	"ons land" / "eigen land"
			"het Nederlandse team"
			"wij" / "we"
			"onze tolerantie"
	Discourse of nationalism (Costelloe, 2014)	Emphasis on Difference	TGD / LGBTQ+ as 'Them' (SO)
			TGD People vs. Cisgender Men / Women (SO / S)
		Structural Opposites	The Netherlands vs. Other Countries (SO)
			TGD People vs. (Dutch) Society (SO)

Note. Some of the category codes (more general patterns/themes) have a lot of codes (observed manifestations of pattern/theme in data) attached to them (e.g., the category code 'Terminology (TGD Identity)' has a separate code for each different label used to describe a TGD identity) and therefore only the most relevant and/or most often occuring codes have been included in this overview. The abbreviations in the table are defined as follows: word connotation (WC), suppression (S), structural opposites (SO), transgender and gender diverse (TGD), discourse of continuity (DC), discourse of nationalism (DN), the Netherlands (NL), and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and more (variations of LGBTQ+).

Appendix C. Overview of translated quotes

Table C1

Complete overview of translated quotations from the results section

Original quote (Dutch)	Translated quote (English)
4.1.1. What kind of news articles are written?	
"Voor zwembond Fina telt een trans-vrouw voortaan pas als vrouw als ze er vroeg bij was"	"For swimming federation Fina, a trans woman only counts as a woman if she started early."
"Studie: minder discriminatie lhbtiq'ers in EU, wel vaker geweld en intimidatie"	"Study: less discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, but more often violence and discrimination."
"Altijd dacht ik dat wie ik ben geheim moest blijven"	"I always thought that who I was had to be kept a secret."
4.1.2. The use of (inclusive) language to understand TGD experiences	
"Intersekse personen worden geboren met een lichaam dat niet volledig past in een hokje van man of vrouw."	"Intersex people are born in a body that does not fit the box of man or woman."
"trans personen"/"transgender personen"	"trans people"/"transgender people"
"trans vrouwen"/"transgender vrouwen"	"trans women"/"transgender women"
"intersekse personen"	"intersex people"
"non-binaire personen"	"non-binary people"
"interseksuelen"	"intersexuals"
"non-binairen"	"non-binaries"
"transgenders"	"transgenders"

Original quote (Dutch)	Translated quote (English)

<p style="text-align:center">4.2.1. Discrimination and violence as a problem to be solved</p>

Original quote (Dutch)	Translated quote (English)
"Met het structureel separaat plaatsen en zo feitelijk isoleren van kwetsbare groepen wordt een verkeerd signaal afgegeven. Het past niet in de wijze waarop wij met elkaar samenleven in Nederland."	"The structural separation and basically isolation of vulnerable groups sends a wrong signal. It does not fit with the way in which we live together in the Netherlands."
"Wie kan er nu iets tegen een bankje met zes kleuren hebben?"	"Who could possibly be opposed to a bench with six colors?"
"zorgelijk"	"worrisome"
"schrik"	"shocking"
"triest(e)"/"verdrietig"	"sad"
"boos"/"woedend"	"angry"
"De dartbond heeft er in elk geval geen probleem mee; Van Leuven voldoet aan alle eisen, liet de bond gisteren weten."	"The darts federation does not have a problem with it; Van Leuven meets all the requirements, the federation shared yesterday."
"Steeman deelt niet de zorgen over de wetswijziging met betrekking tot de veiligheid van vrouwen. 'Deze zijn niet op feiten gebaseerd.'"	"Steeman does not share these concerns about the changing law in relation to the safety of women. 'These are not based on facts.'"
"Ten eerste moet geweld waarbij discriminatie wordt aangetoond (waaronder ook discriminatie op basis van sexuele gerichtheid) zwaarder bestraft worden."	"First of all, violence where discrimination is proven (among which discrimination based on sexual identity) should receive more serious punishments."

<p style="text-align:center">4.2.2. TGD rights as dividing Dutch society</p>

Original quote (Dutch)	Translated quote (English)
"Ook in Nederland zijn transgenders in de topsport een gevoelig onderwerp."	"The inclusion of transgenders in professional sports is a sensitive topic in the Netherlands as well."

Original quote (Dutch)	Translated quote (English)
"We hoopten hier niet meer te hoeven strijden voor onze rechten."	"We hoped that we no longer had to fight for our rights here."
"En waar het regenboogbankje het symbool van inclusie – iedereen mag zijn wie hij wil zijn – had moeten zijn, werd het door de bekladding inzet van een cultuur oorlog. Tussen mensen die diversiteit prediken en zij die er een gevaarlijke ideologie in zien."	"And where the rainbow bench should have been a symbol of inclusion – everybody can be whoever they want to be – its vandalization made it part of a culture war. Between the people who preach diversity and those who see this as a dangerous ideology."
"het debat"	"the debate"
"de discussie"	"the discussion"
"De internationale sportwereld worstelt met de aanwezigheid van transgenders in de vrouwensport."	"The international world of sports struggles with the presence of transgenders in women's sports."
"Veel transpersonen worden ook door hun omgeving gedwongen om erover te vertellen, bijvoorbeeld bij een nieuwe baan of op school. Terwijl lang niet iedereen die behoefte heeft."	"Many trans people are also forced by their environment to talk about it [their gender identity], for example at a new job or at school. While not everyone feels the need to do this."
"Transpersonen hebben vaak al veel ervaring met afwijzing, dat wil je niet herhalen. Waarschijnlijk komt ze al naar een sportschool speciaal voor vrouwen omdat ze op andere plekken wordt buitengesloten."	"Trans people often already have a lot of experience with rejection, and you do not want to repeat that. They are probably already coming to a gym especially for women, because they are excluded from other places."
"COC Nederland noemt de mishandeling 'diep triest'."	"COC Nederland says the abuse is 'deeply saddening'."
"Ze verwijst naar de vele recente aanvallen op de regenbooggemeenschap van conservatieve influencers, twitteraars, politici en anderen."	"She refers to the many recent attacks on the rainbow community from conservative influencers, twitter users, politicians and others."

Original quote (Dutch)	Translated quote (English)
"Ik snap de verschillende meningen en iedereen mag een mening hebben, maar van het Facebook-bericht en vooral van de reacties schrik ik wel."	"I understand the different opinions and everybody is allowed to have an opinion, but I am shocked by the Facebook-message and especially the reactions."
"De stilte bij andere partijen zegt iets over het ongemak in deze discussie. Dit is zo'n voorstel waar je eigenlijk niet tegen mag zijn, maar een groot deel van de bevolking is dat wel."	"The silence from other parties says something about the discomfort of this discussion. This is a proposal that you should not be against, but a large part of society is."

4.2.3. Discrimination and violence as a (unsolvable) political puzzle

"De lijst baseert zich voornamelijk op de aanwezigheid van wet- en regelgeving op lhbti-gebied in de onderzochte landen."	"The list is mostly based on the presence of legislation and regulation in the context of LGBTQ+ in the researched countries."
"Dankzij die wet, die in 2014 in werking trad, was het geen vereiste meer om een steriliserende geslachtsoperatie te ondergaan voordat je je geslacht voor de wet kon laten wijzigen, maar je had hiervoor nog wel een deskundigenverklaring nodig."	"Thanks to this law, which was administered in 2014, it was no longer required to undergo a sterilising gender-affirming surgery before being able to legally change your sex, but you did still need a declaration from a specialist."
"De Tweede Kamer heeft de behandeling van de zogeheten transgenderwet meermaals uitgesteld en nu over de zomer heen getild."	"The parliament has postponed the discussion of the so-called Transgenderwet multiple times and has now scheduled it for after the summer."
"Het COC heeft er bij de nieuwe staatssecretaris van emancipatie, Mariëlle Paul (VVD), op aangedrongen de afgenomen homotolerantie onder jongeren te onderzoeken en er actie tegen te ondernemen."	"The COC has urged the new state secretary of emancipation, Mariëlle Paul (VVD), to research the reduced gay tolerance among youth and to take action against it."
"De meeste stemmers hebben de indruk dat de politiek tekort schiet in de aanpak van dit probleem en gemeenten geweld tegen lhbtiq+'ers vaak door de vingers ziet."	"The majority of voters is under the impression that politics falls short in tackling this problem and that municipalities often look away from violence against LGBTQ+ people."

Original quote (Dutch)	Translated quote (English)
4.3.1. The myth of Dutch tolerance	
"In 2001 werd in ons land het eerste homohuwelijk ter wereld gesloten. En Amsterdam afficheert zich nog altijd graag als gay capital of the world."	"In 2001, the first-ever same-sex marriage was officiated in our country. And Amsterdam still likes to present itself as the gay capital of the world."
"wij"	"we"
"ons land"	"our country"
"onze tolerantie"	"our tolerance"
"Of dat gaat lukken, is de vraag. De laatste LHBT-monitor van het Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, uit 2022, schetst nog altijd een somber beeld van de positie van transgenders in Nederland. Ze hebben vaker psychische en fysieke problemen, zijn veel vaker alleenstaand en hebben een veel slechtere sociaal-economische positie dan gemiddeld."	"It is the question whether or not that will actually work. The last LGBTQ+ monitor from Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, from 2022, still paints a sombre picture of the position of transgenders in the Netherlands. They struggle more often with psychological and physical issues, are more often single and have a considerably worse social-economical position than average."
"Dat staat symbool voor de samenleving als geheel. Men doet alsof men ons accepteert, maar we hebben nog een lange weg te gaan."	"This is representative for the society as a whole. People only pretend to accept us, but we still have a long way to go."
"In Nederland zegt 65 procent op school slachtoffer te zijn geworden van pesterijen, spot, beledigingen en bedreigingen vanwegen de seksuele geaardheid."	"In the Netherlands, 65 percent says they have become victims of bullying, ridiculing, insults, and threats at school because of their sexual identity."
"Transgender personen worden bovendien zeven keer zo vaak mishandeld of bedreigd als andere Nederlanders, laat het Transgender Netwerk Nederland weten."	"According to Transgender Netwerk Nederland, transgender people experience seven times as much abuse and threats as other Dutch people."
"Ik voelde schaamte en heb niemand mijn volledige verhaal verteld."	"I felt ashamed and told nobody my full story."

Original quote (Dutch)	Translated quote (English)
"Ondanks haar angst koos Ahlers er toch voor om uit de kast te komen."	"Despite her fear, Ahlers decided to come out [as trangender]."
"Het ergste voor hem: niemand in de coupé doet iets."	"The worst thing for him: nobody on the train did anything."

4.3.2. The Netherlands as 'not that bad'

"De politie meldt op basis van getuigen dat het 'mogelijk om lhbtiq+-gerelateerd geweld gaat'."	"The police reports that, based on witnesses, it is a possibility that it involves LGBTQ+-related violence."
"Toch is dat een relevante vraag. Is de met rode gordijnen, luide muziek, goude slingers en spiegelbollen versierde omkleedplek écht nodig omdat er anders incidenten plaatsvinden?"	"Yet, it is a relevant question. Is the changing room, with its red curtains, loud music, gold decorations and mirror balls really necessary to avoid incidents?"
"Want ondanks die narigheid voelt hij zich in Nederland meer welkom en veiliger dan in Litouwen."	"Because, despite the misery, he feels more welcome and safe in the Netherlands than in Lithuania."
"In China kun je helemaal niet over lhbti-rechten praten, dus voor mij is dit heel bijzonder om mee te maken."	"In China, it is not even a possibility to talk about LGBTQ+ rights, so it is very special for me to experience this."
"Van de Nederlandse lhbtiq'ers zegt 19 procent bepaalde plekken te vermijden uit angst voor geweld. In de rest van de EU is dat 29 procent."	"19 percent of the Dutch LGBTQ+ people says they avoid specific places out of fear for violence. In the rest of the EU, this is 29 percent."
"Het onderzoek laat in brede zin zien dat er een verharding in de maatschappij lijkt plaats te vinden waarin een deel van de samenleving lhbtq-uitingen niet accepteert."	"In a broad sense, the study shows that society is becoming more insensitive, with a part of society not accepting displays of queerness."
"Er zijn volgens de woordvoerder op verschillende locatie medewerkers aanwezig die zich hebben verdiept in het onderwerp."	"According to the spokesperson, there are multiple locations at which employees that are specialized in the topic are present."

Original quote (Dutch)	Translated quote (English)
"Ze probeert de positieve kant te benadrukken: dankzij alle ophef heeft ze nu alleen maar een groter podium om haar boodschap te verkondigen."	"She tries to emphasize the positive side: thanks to all the negative attention she has a larger platform to communicate her message."

Appendix D. Declaration Page: Use of Generative AI Tools in Thesis

Student Information

Name: Anne van Dijken

Student ID: 694190

Course Name: CM5050 Master Thesis Project

Supervisor Name: Prof. dr. Jeroen Jansz

Date: 25 June 2025

Declaration:

Acknowledgment of Generative AI Tools

I acknowledge that I am aware of the existence and functionality of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, which are capable of producing content such as text, images, and other creative works autonomously.

GenAI use would include, but not limited to:

- Generated content (e.g., ChatGPT, Quillbot) limited strictly to content that is not assessed (e.g., thesis title).
- Writing improvements, including grammar and spelling corrections (e.g., Grammarly).
- Language translation (e.g., DeepL), without generative AI alterations/improvements.
- Research task assistance (e.g., finding survey scales, qualitative coding verification, debugging code).
- Using GenAI as a search engine tool to find academic articles or books

☐ I declare that I have used generative AI tools, specifically [Name of the AI Tool(s) or Framework(s) Used], in the process of creating parts or components of my thesis. The purpose of using these tools was to aid in generating content or assisting with specific aspects of thesis work.

☒ I declare that I have NOT used any generative AI tools and that the assignment concerned is my original work.
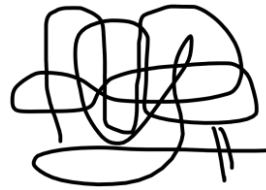
Extent of AI Usage

☐ I confirm that while I utilized generative AI tools to aid in content creation, the majority of the intellectual effort, creative input, and decision-making involved in completing the thesis were undertaken by me. I have

<u>enclosed the prompts/logging of the GenAI tool use in an appendix.</u>

Ethical and Academic Integrity

☐ I understand the ethical implications and academic integrity concerns related to the use of AI tools in coursework. I assure that the AI-generated content was used responsibly, and any content derived from these tools has been appropriately cited and attributed according to the guidelines provided by the instructor and the course. I have taken necessary steps to distinguish between my original work and the AI-generated contributions. Any direct quotations, paraphrased content, or other forms of AI-generated material have been properly referenced in accordance with academic conventions.

By signing this declaration, I affirm that this declaration is accurate and truthful. I take full responsibility for the integrity of my assignment and am prepared to discuss and explain the role of generative AI tools in my creative process if required by the instructor or the Examination Board. I further affirm that I have used generative AI tools in accordance with ethical standards and academic integrity expectations.

Signature: Anne van Dijken

Date of Signature: 25 June 2025