



Pedophilia in the News Media: The Influence of the News Media on the Stigmatization of Pedophiles

Jessie van Sambeek

Snr. 1274835

Student University College Tilburg

Supervisor: dr. E.A.A. Dreezens

Second assessor: prof. dr. A. van Lenning

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of the news media portrayal of pedophiles on the stigmatization of non-offending pedophiles. Additionally, it investigates whether stigmatizing attitudes can be decreased by presenting non-stigmatizing information on pedophilia in the news media. The participants of this study were either exposed to a stigmatizing news media article, or a non-stigmatizing news media article on pedophilia, after which their level of stigmatization towards pedophiles was assessed with the use of a questionnaire. The results of the linear regression indicated that total stigmatization towards pedophiles was dependent on the news media portrayal of pedophiles. The current portrayal of pedophiles in the news media showed to contribute to stigmatizing attitudes towards non-offending pedophiles, while the exposure to non-stigmatizing news media information was found to decrease stigmatization towards pedophiles. It is important to investigate the role of the news media concerning the stigmatization of non-offending pedophiles, in order to be able to reduce social isolation of pedophiles, improve their well-being, and decrease offending risks.

Keywords: Stigmatization, Pedophilia, News Media, Non-offending pedophiles

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Pedophilia is not a popular topic to discuss, but when we hear a story about pedophilia, the chances are that it is about a man who is under investigation for the possession of child pornography or for the sexual abuse of children. A recent example of how pedophilia is discussed by the news media is the article published by De Gelderlander (2018); “*Arnhemmer suspected of pedophilia moves to different address as precaution*”. The article describes the situation of a man who was caught arranging a sex date with a 10 year old girl during an undercover television show, who had to leave his home for safety reasons after people spread his address and identifiable pictures. There is something interesting happening in the title, since it states that the man is being suspected of *pedophilia*. What is meant with this claim is that the man is being investigated for sexually abusing children and for the possession of child pornography. The term *pedophilia* is thus used in this news article as if it has a similar meaning as *child molester* or *sex offender*. It also suggests that pedophilia is illegal in itself, while a sexual attraction to minors is not in violation with the law.

1.1 Pedophile or Pedosexual

Even though the news media uses the term pedophile interchangeably with the terms child molester or pedosexual, there is actually an important difference between the terms. *Pedophilia* is the stable sexual preference for children, and is, according to most experts, best explained as a sexual orientation similar to e.g. heterosexuality and homosexuality; “*a deeply rooted sexual preference that cannot be changed*” (Op Goede Grond, 2014, p. 226). A *child molester*, or *pedosexual*, is defined as someone who has committed a sexual offence against a child (Op Goede Grond, 2014). The common belief that in order to be a child molester you have to have pedophilic feelings does hold true, according to the Dutch report “Op Goede Grond” (2014). Only 20% of the suspects of sexual offences against children are people with a deviant sexual preference, of which some are pedophiles. This means that in 80% of the cases, children are being sexually abused by people who are dominantly heterosexual. It is estimated that less than 5% of the general public is dominantly pedophilic (Seto, 2008), but unfortunately accurate numbers are still unknown. Additionally, it is very likely that this estimation is too small, due to the fact that pedophiles are a very stigmatized group in society. Out of the fear of discovery, it is credible that pedophiles are underrepresented

in studies that investigate their prevalence rate. An accurate estimation of the amount of pedophiles that are currently living in the Netherlands is thus very difficult to obtain, also due to factors such as social desirability and a lack of understanding and agreement on what it means to be pedophilic. Accordingly, it is unsure which percentage of pedophiles never offends and which percentage does, making it difficult to determine if there is a significantly higher risk factor for pedophiles to sexually abuse children over people with a non-deviant sexuality. However, it is known that having a pedophilic sexuality is only in a few cases of child sexual abuse the primary motivation behind the incident (Op Goede Grond, 2014).

1.2 The Stories of Pedophiles

In the media, we rarely hear about the pedophiles who are in control of their sexuality, and live a rather ordinary life. In an interview done by RTL nieuws (2011), a pedophile explains how the portrayal of pedophilia in the media was extremely challenging for him when he was younger; *“It is the only thing you hear around you, in the media, that people who are pedophiles have sex with children. This had a very negative influence on me”*. Later, he elaborates his point; *“It seems normal that everyone with such feelings will eventually act on them, it gives you the idea that you are doomed, it alienates you from your surroundings”*. However, later in his life he realized that his isolation was completely unnecessary, because of his ability to cope with his feelings and his confidence in that he will never offend. More recently, NRC (2016) published an interview with Ben; Ben is a 49 year old man with an office job, loves to wear good looking suits, enjoys traveling, and is a pedophile. In the interview they discuss what it is like to be a pedophile who has been in control of his sexual urges for more than 30 years. Ben explains what it means to him to be a pedophile, and that a pedophile should not be treated as a potential perpetrator. Therefore, he finds it particularly disturbing when people use the word *pedophile* while they mean *child molester*. Furthermore, he explains that his biggest struggle as a pedophile is his anxiety for social rejection by family and friends when they would find out about this pedophilic interest; *“It can be an overpowering and paralyzing fear”*.

1.3 Stigmatization of Pedophiles

It is clear that pedophiles are a severely stigmatized minority group, who are often regarded as child molesters or potential perpetrators. Data gathered by Jahnke, Imhoff & Hoyer (2015) using

two comparative studies, indicated that nearly all reactions to people with pedophilia were more negative than to alcohol abusers, antisocial people, and sexual sadists. The research also showed that 14% (study 1) and 28% (Study 2) of the participants agreed with the statement that people with pedophilia should better be dead, even when they had never committed a crime. The research indicates that pedophiles are a stigmatized group who are at risk of being the target of fierce discrimination. These findings are corresponding with the results of Imhoff (2015), who measured whether people hold punitive attitudes against people with a sexual preference for children, and if this effect is strengthened by the clinical label pedophilia. With the use of two online studies it was measured to which extent participants saw pedophiles as necessarily committing child sexual abuse, responsible for their sexual interest, and clinically disordered, before judging their endorsement of means of punishment. Both studies showed high degrees of punitive attitudes against sexually deviant men, especially when the label pedophilia was used. Another remarkable finding of the study was that punitive attitudes against pedophiles were positively associated with social desirability, unlike any other stigma. In other words, participants considered a strong disapproval of pedophiles as particularly socially desirable, which has never occurred for any other stigmatized group.

1.4 News Media and Stigmatization

In order to understand the negative stigma towards pedophiles, it is important to know what is causing the severe stigmatization of pedophiles. Even though it is unclear what exactly causes the negative attitudes, the previously mentioned news articles and interviews suggest that the news media could play a role in this. Pedophilia is still a taboo and the topic is often left undiscussed or kept secretive in education and private spheres. For this reason, the media potentially forms a primary source of information in society on the topic of pedophilia. Therefore, it could be that the news media influences the opinion of the public and nourishes the stigmatization of pedophiles in society. Current research on pedophilia focusses on how pedophiles experience discrimination, how society should deal with pedophiles, and what causes someone to be a pedophile. Surprisingly, there is little research on what is causing the stigmatization towards pedophiles who have never sexually abused children. In order to start filling up that gap in the literature, this research will focus on the role of the news media in the stigmatization of pedophiles. The term *news media* refers to all official news distributed by the media, which includes national broadcastings of news,

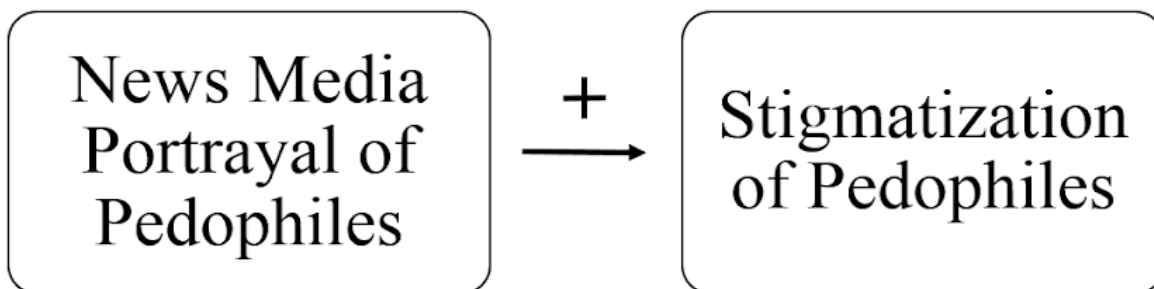
official newspapers, and online news articles published by official news pages. In addition, all social media pages of official news organizations will be included as media in this research too, but personal and unofficial social media pages will be left out. The reason for this specification is to narrow down the broad meaning of media to only official articles and posts of news organizations, and to filter out information in the media that cannot be considered as news media. Also, this specification is particularly interesting since news organizations are expected to be reliable and objective providers of information, and are generally considered by the public as more reliable sources of information than the information spread by non-official news pages on, for example, social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter.

1.5 Research Question

Accordingly, the research question of this paper is:

Does the news media portrayal of pedophiles increase the stigmatization of pedophiles?

1.6 Conceptual Model



1.7 Academic Relevance

Investigating the relation between the media and the stigmatization of pedophiles is necessary, since it is important to understand what is actuating the severe stigmatization of pedophiles in order to possibly reduce it. When the stigmatization of pedophiles would decrease, less pedophiles will suffer from living their life in isolation, and it will become easier for them to contribute to society. There is reason to suspect that the news media is framing pedophiles as (potential) perpetrators and child molesters, and could therefore be a source of stigmatization. Investigating this issue is also relevant in order to increase our understanding of what is causing wide spread punitive feelings towards specific outgroups. In addition, pedophilia is still a topic that is left

relatively uninvestigated, especially on particular aspects of the phenomenon. Jahnke & Hoyer (2013) identified that there is a need for more theory-driven, rigorous, and representative empirical studies on the topic of stigma against people with pedophilia. Gaining insight in what forms our judgements about others is relevant in order to tackle discrimination, and to prevent the spreading of hatred.

In the next chapter, a thorough literature review on the topic of pedophilia, stigmatization, and the influence of the news media will be given. In the third chapter, the method of the research will be described, after which the results of the research will follow in the fourth chapter. Finally, in the fifth and last chapter, the findings will be discussed together with the limitations of the research and the recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Theory

2.1 Pedophilia

2.1.1 *Inborn or Learned?*

According to Seto (2012), pedophilia is best defined as a sexual age orientation that is comparable to a sexual gender orientation such as hetero- and homosexuality. It is comparable with a sexuality based on the age of onset, involvement of romantic and sexual behavior, and stability over time. Schaefer et al. (2010) found that the mean age at which pedophiles become aware of their sexual preference for minors is at 20. Grundmann et al. (2016) conducted a research on the stability of sexual arousal to fantasies involving pre- and early pubescent children in pedophiles over a period of 29 months. Their results suggest that the sexual arousal in pedophiles to fantasies involving minors is stable over time, which supports the concept that pedophilia can be considered a sexual age orientation, and thus makes an argument for that pedophilia is inborn. Tozdan and Briken (2015) found a relation between the age of onset for a sexual interest in children, and the stability of that interest over time. The earlier pedophiles discovered their sexual interest in minors, the more stable their sexuality persisted over time. Moreover, men who were exclusively attracted to minors (and thus are not also interested in adults) indicated that their attraction is stable and unchangeable, which are both characteristics that suggest that pedophilia is a sexuality rather than a learned attraction such as a fetish.

Even though the majority of researchers consider pedophilia to be an inborn sexuality, there are also researchers who consider pedophilia as a learned sexual interest, which can therefore also be unlearned (Muller et al., 2014). In a study of 1.310 Finnish adult male twins, an association was found between having a sexual interest in children and having a stronger libido, masturbating more frequently, and with being sexually or physically abused as a child (Santtila, 2015). That there might be a relation between being sexually abused as a child and the development of pedophilic interests was also argued in other studies (Klein et al., 2015), which suggests that pedophilia can also be at least partially a learned behavior. However, no causal relationship can be drawn from these findings. All in all, the literature suggest that pedophilia is neither entirely inborn, nor fully learned, but probably a combination of both.

2.1.2 Beyond Sexual Attraction

A Dutch study by Houtepen, Slijtsema & Bogaert (2016) suggests that pedophilia goes beyond just the sexual attraction to children, since it also includes a set of complex emotional and romantic experiences. Their participants consisted of 15 men who considered themselves to be pedophilic, and described to have romantic feelings towards minors, such as falling in love or having fantasies about being a couple together. Their answers also indicated that an emotional connection with a child was generally considered to be more fulfilling than the thought of being sexually in contact with a child. In some cases, the respondents were in an emotionally satisfying relationship with an adult, which caused their pedophilic interest to play a smaller role in their life. In order to satisfy their sexual needs, half of the participants reported to watch adult pornography, and also the use of child sex dolls was reported once.

2.1.3 Social Support

It is complicated for pedophiles to talk about their pedophilic feelings with others, because of a risk to be rejected, stigmatized or ostracized. Therefore, pedophiles do not experience sufficient social support, as was shown by Houtepen et al. (2016). Of the few participants in the study who did experience some forms of social support, all emphasized the importance of such contacts and how helpful they were to them. These social contacts helped them by giving them feedback on their behavior, detecting potentially distorted thinking, and by stimulating them to maintain boundaries with children. Additionally, more openness about pedophilia and social support show to be effective in diminishing the risk of offending (Houtepen et al., 2016). The study highlights the importance of social support for pedophiles in order to control their behavior and to cope with emotions, but also emphasize the necessity of making pedophilia more discussable. Eventually, improved social support can lead to an increase in life satisfaction of pedophiles, and less incidents of child sexual abuse by pedophiles.

2.1.4 Offending Pedophiles (OP)

In order to understand the phenomenon of pedophilia, it is important to be aware of the difference between offending pedophiles (OP) and non-offending pedophiles (NOP). OP include the category of pedophiles who are having sexual contact with children and/or are in the possession of illegal child sexual material. This group represents those who have a dominant attraction to children

(pedophiles), and are sexually abusing children (pedosexuals). Being a pedosexual is defined as: “*Being or constituting pedosexuality, sexual activity between an adult and a child*” (Yourdictionary, n.d.). This means that not all pedophiles are also pedosexuals, and that not all pedosexuals are also pedophiles. Data from a research conducted by Beier (1998) indicates that pedosexuals who also identify as pedophiles have a higher risk to recidivate than pedosexuals who do not identify as pedophiles. Pedosexuals who were exclusively pedophilic had an 80% chance to recidivate, while this was only 50% for pedosexuals who were non- exclusively pedophilic. Pedophilia is thus found to increase chances of recidivism, but is definitely not the most frequent motivation for pedosexuality. As mentioned earlier, only in 20% of the cases child sexual offenders have a deviant sexuality, which means that in at least 80% of the cases the perpetrators are heterosexual, and have therefore another motive for their offence than a dominant sexual attraction to children. Other explanations for sexual violence against children can be found in biological, cultural, psychological and social factors, or can emanate from personally learned behaviors (Op Goede Grond, 2016).

2.1.5 Non-Offending Pedophiles (NOP)

Non-offending pedophiles (NOP) are the category of pedophiles who never were sexually in contact with children, and never accessed illegal child pornography (Cantor & McPhail, 2016). Even though there is no difference between OP’s and NOP’s when it comes to their level of sexual arousal and enjoyment of imaginary scenarios involving sexual contact with children (Mitchell & Galupo, 2015), there are some important differences between both groups. In comparison to pedophiles who have had sexual contact with children in the past, NOP are less likely to indicate a tendency to engage in sexual contact with a child (Mitchell & Galupo, 2015). They also typically express the desire to never be in sexual contact with a child (Cantor & McPhail, 2016). Additionally, less supportive attitudes towards being sexually active with children, and higher levels of self-efficacy (the belief in one’s own capacity) for controlling sexual urges are found in NOP than in OP (Jahnke et al., 2015). In general, NOP are more likely to believe that they are able to control their sexual desires and behavior than OP, and to consider sex with children as unacceptable (Cantor & McPhail, 2016). NOP do not act against the law, and more importantly, do not harm children in any way. It is particularly interesting that this group is dealing with a similar stigmatization as OP, which is probably best explained by the lack of social discussion of

pedophilia and a lack of awareness of the existence of NOP. In this research, the focus will be on NOP in order to determine if the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media affects attitudes towards NOP.

2.2 Stigmatization

2.2.1 Definition

The word *stigma* stems from the Greeks, who used the word to refer to bodily signs exposing something deviant and negative about a person's moral status (Goffman, 1963). Later, Goffman (1963) redefined stigmatization as *the process of global devaluation of an individual who possesses a deviant and deeply discrediting attribute*. Stigma arises when an individual's social identity is not corresponding with the normative identity that the society is expecting from the individual. Stigmatized individuals are assumed to be incapable of meeting the role requirements necessary for social interaction, and can become socially rejected as a consequence (Goffman, 1963). People who are evaluated as incompetent, unpredictable or as a threat to social interaction are those who experience stigmatization (Elliot et al., 1982). Examples of a few groups that are dealing with stigmatization in today's society are women (Smith et al., 2008; Stewart et al., 2008), refugees (Morrice, 2013; Quinn, 2014; Baranik et al., 2018), the mentally ill (stuart, 2003; Crisp et. al., 2000), and people with deviant sexualities (Luhtanen, 2002; Huebner et al., 2004; Meyer, 2013; Reese et al., 2014). As a consequence of being perceived as illegitimate for participation in social interactions, stigmatized individuals are placed beyond the protection of implicit social norms, which may result into ostracization (Elliot et al., 1982).

2.2.2 Ingroup and Outgroup

In a paper by Shkurko (2015), the system of social categorization is explained, and how it often results into discrimination. Humans use social categorization as a practical tool to make sense of the complex social world, and to make social contact more predictable. According to these categories, we position ourselves and others in the social world, and use this as a guideline for our behavior (Shkurko, 2015). Various types of personal features are used to form social categorizations, but frequently used features are race, gender and economic status. Based on the categories that we belong to ourselves, we can identify who are in the same social categories (the

ingroup), and who are in other social categories (the outgroup) (Plous, 2003). As a consequence of categorical thinking, people's perceptions can get distorted which causes them to become unable to objectively evaluate people from similar and different social categories. This distortion consists of people's inaccurate expectations of others by judging them based on the social categories they belong to. Such expectations are often generalizations of people from a specific category that do not necessarily hold true for every individual within the category, and can result into prejudice, stigmatization and discrimination. Additionally, in order to feel good about our own identity and to maintain a high self-esteem, people have the tendency to believe that the groups they belong to are better than those they do not belong to. Brewer (1999) found in her research that discrimination can also be caused by *ingroup favoritism*, which is an effect of social categorization in which there is a general preference for ingroup members over outgroup members. Positive feelings such as sympathy and trust were often found to be reserved for ingroup members only, resulting in a disadvantage for outgroup members when competing with ingroup members (Brewer, 1999).

2.2.3 Social Contact

In the contact hypothesis of Gordon Allport (1954), it is suggested that contact, or social interaction, with outgroup members results into more positive attitudes towards outgroup members, especially when the contact is positive and intensive. Positive intergroup contact with stigmatized individuals has been found to be an effective method to counter social distance and stigmatization (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Positive experiences with stigmatized individuals show to decrease stigmatization and lead to more positive intergroup associations. However, these experiences do not necessarily result into more positive attitudes towards the entire stigmatized group (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Therefore, in order to decrease general stigma, positive experiences with one stigmatized person is often not enough, since the individual can also be perceived as the exception, or the positive experience as incidental. Still, social contact is found to be one of the most effective ways to counter prejudice and discrimination (Oskamp & Jones, 2000).

2.2.4 Negative Consequences of Stigmatization

Being a member of a stigmatized group often negatively affects people in their daily lives. Individuals that belong to stigmatized groups experience negative consequences solemnly due to the fact that their group is perceived as incapable, unworthy, or immoral. In society, there are many

different groups that are systematically dealing with stigmatization of which the members are at greater risk of social exclusion and of becoming the victim of hostile acts (see 2.2.1 for examples) (Kuzban, 2011). Stigmatized individuals can experience many discriminatory behaviors, ranging from being ignored in social settings to being denied housing or job opportunities (Corrigan, Thompson et al., 2003). Stigmatized minority group members learn to anticipate on the possibility that the other person is prejudiced (Meyer, 2013), which can result into a state of '*double consciousness*'. Double consciousness is a state of self-perception in which one's own positive perspective and the others negative perspective is combined, resulting in a conflicting perception of the self which makes it difficult to maintain a stable and coherent self-concept (Harbin, 2012). Furthermore, stigmatized individuals can also derive an inconsistent or vulnerable self-perception from the fact that they are often cautious during interactions with majority group members to not reveal their stigmatized group membership to them. Even though concealing one's stigmatizing attribute is often used as a coping strategy, it can be an extra stressor for the individual (Miller & Major, 2000). Hiding a stigmatized, personal attribute is shown to be a real mental burden (Smart & Wegner, 2000), and not sharing important aspects of one's identity is found to negatively affect both one's mental- and physical health (Pennebaker, 2001).

Stigmatization has a negative impact on someone's mental health in more ways than the stress that results from concealing a stigmatized attribute. Meyer (1995) explains that when the norms and values of a minority are in conflict with those of the majority, this can result into a phenomenon known as *minority stress*. When the norms and values of the majority form the dominant culture, minority group members can feel like they do not belong, because there is an incongruence between their being and their social environment (Meyer, 2013). It is important for all human beings to feel like they belong and are being valued by others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). When people lack social attachment, this is shown to have negative consequences on an individual's mental health and their well-being in general (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Also, being the victim of harassments and violent acts due to an individual's group membership significantly contributes to stress and mental health problems. In a study by Huebner et al. (2004) on discrimination and physical violence among young gay and bisexual men, it was found that victims of these types of mistreatment were lower on self-esteem, and were two times more likely to report having suicidal thoughts. Moreover, it can be an extra obstacle for members of stigmatized groups to seek

professional help for their mental health issues, out of a fear of being discriminated by professionals (Cheng et al., 2013).

2.2.5 Controllability of Stigmatized Features

Some features can even amplify stigmatization, such as the perception that the feature on which the individual is being stigmatized is preventable, and is thus within the control of the individual (Kurzban & Leary, 2001). For example, attitudes towards people who suffer from Anorexia Nervosa are often more negative than towards people with other diseases, because a large percentage of the population still believes that it is a choice to barely eat, instead of it being a mental illness that takes away the autonomy over the body. The more the individual is perceived to be in control over their membership to a stigmatized group, the more likely people are to hold negative attitudes towards them (Greenleaf, Petrie & Martin, 2017). However, it is not always the case that (perceived) controllability is an accurate determinant for the level of stigmatization, because also individuals that are not in control over their own group membership can experience stigmatization. Examples of such groups are ethnic and racial groups, or AIDS patients who got their condition through an infected blood transfusion (Sheehan, Lennon & McDavitt, 1989). Furthermore, when someone is causing suffering to other people, controllability over the condition suddenly becomes not so important anymore. In cases in which an individual's condition is harmful to other people, it can be expected that attitudes are generally more negative and not that dependent anymore on (perceived) controllability (Jahnke, Imhoff & Hoyer, 2015).

2.2.6 Stigmatization of Pedophiles

People with pedophilia are considered to be among the most stigmatized groups in Western societies. Jahnke et al. (2015) investigated the severity of the stigmatization of pedophiles, using two studies in which pedophilia was defined as: *"The dominant sexual interest in children."* (p. 21). They also included items on alcohol abusers, sexual sadists, and antisocial people, in order to compare their findings with other stigmatized groups in society. They examined participants' emotions, agreement with stereotypes, and social distance, in which social distance is defined as *the extent to which people reject a stigmatized individual at different levels of personal contact*. More than 80% of the participants indicated to feel angry when thinking about pedophiles, and the sample generally perceived pedophiles as highly dangerous. These results suggest that the public

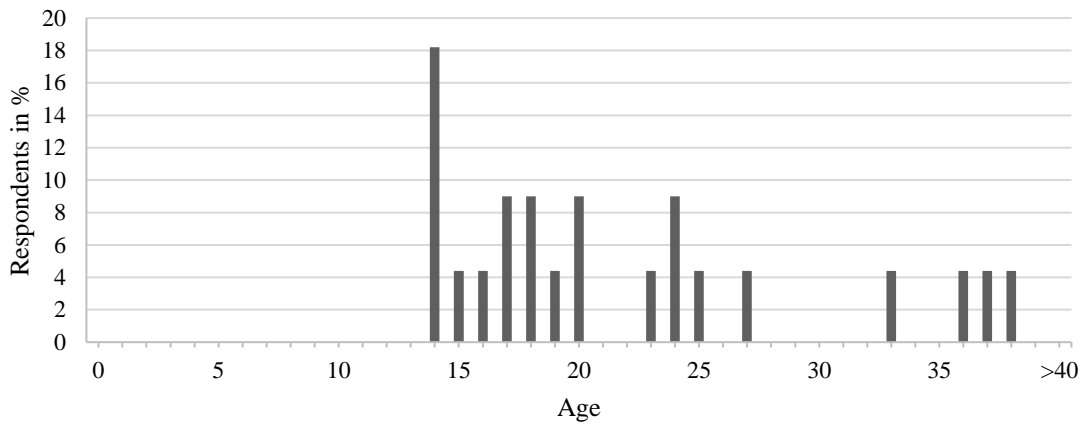
holds the opinion that pedophilia is closely linked, or even identical to the criminal act of sexually abusing children.

Another finding of Jahnke et al. (2015) showed that one third of the participants considered a sexual attraction to children a personal choice, which means that these participants argue that pedophiles are in control over their sexual interests. Furthermore, very high levels of social distance were found among the participants, which indicates the refusal of participants to have personal contact with pedophiles. The stigmatization of pedophiles was found to be more extreme than the stigmatization of the other groups included in the study. For example, even when it was explicitly mentioned that the statements were only about pedophiles who had never committed a crime, when combining the results of both studies, 39% encouraged imprisonment and 21% agreed that pedophiles should better be dead. For the other stigmatized groups, only an average of 4% of the participants agreed with similar drastic measures.

It can thus be concluded that the stigmatization of pedophiles is very present in Western cultures, having serious consequences for the well-being of pedophiles. Cantor & McPhail (2016) investigated the impact of negative attitudes on NOP, finding that NOP experience stress due to a fear of discovery. Also, fear of discovery was associated with a lower self-esteem, social isolation, and higher fear of being negatively evaluated by others. B4U-ACT is an organization that strives for better mental health care for pedophiles, more awareness of pedophilia in society, and also conducts research on the topic of pedophilia. B4U-ACT spread two online surveys in 2011; one on the youth, suicidality and care seeking of pedophiles (Study 1), and one investigating the opinion of pedophiles on mental health care & professional literature (Study 2). In study 1, 193 people with pedophilic feelings participated. Of the 171 respondents to the questions on suicidal thoughts and behaviors, 45% seriously considered to end their life for a reason related to their attraction to minors, 32% planned a method to end their life, and 13% actually attempted suicide. Also, results indicated that suicidal thoughts and behaviors among pedophiles start really early, with 14 being the most common age of pedophiles first suicide attempt, and an average age of 22 (see Figure 1). Other extreme findings of this study were related to the opinion of people with pedophilic interests on mental health services. Of the 175 respondents, 82% agreed that there are pedophiles who could benefit from mental health services for reasons related to their sexual

interest in minors, other than changing their sexual interest. However, 88% disagreed with the statement that mental health professionals have a good understanding of pedophilia, and only 20% would seek professional help if needed.

Figure 1: Age of First Suicide Attempt of Pedophiles
(B4U-ACT, 2011)



Research by Cantor & McPhail (2016) found similar attitudes, since 52% of their sample of NOP reported to consider seeking professional help, but only 36% believed a professional would understand their problems. Results from study 2 of B4U-ACT (2011) indicated that stigma is the main reason why pedophiles are skeptical to seek help, fearing negative reactions of professionals. Very few minor-attracted individuals were of the opinion that mental health professionals would treat them nonjudgmentally (12%), with respect (18%), ethically (21%), or would keep their feelings confidential (24%). The participants indicated that their beliefs about mental health services resulted from perceived societal attitudes, statements made by professionals, and personal experiences with professionals. 48% indicated to experience negative consequences of stigma that could be improved by receiving high quality professional help, such as depression (19%), self-hatred/low self-esteem (12%), suicidal thoughts/attempts (10%), and isolation/loneliness (10%).

What can be concluded from these findings, is that the stigma towards pedophiles does not only have important negative effects on pedophiles themselves, but also restrict opportunities to prevent potential sex offences. The severe stigmatization and discrimination can put pedophiles into social isolation, placing them outside the social control of society, as well as making other opportunities to intervene with preventative measures impossible (Jahnke & Hoyer, 2013). If pedophiles do not

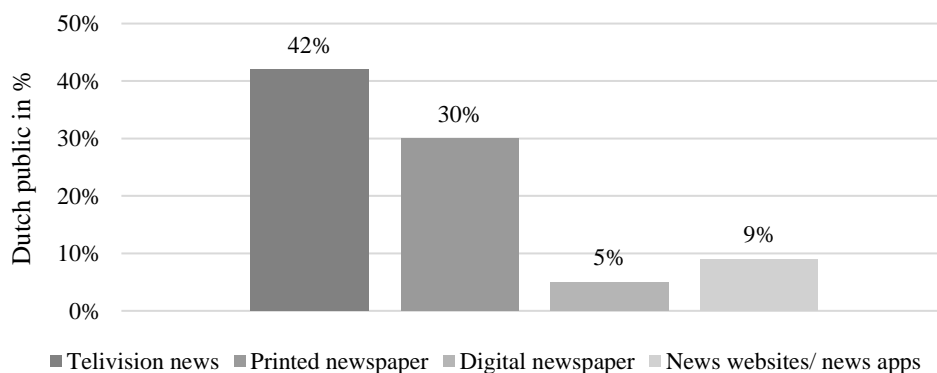
receive the necessary and desired help, they can fall into dangerous and harmful behaviors (Janke et al., 2015). Therefore, it is also in the interest of the society at large to consider the stigmatization of pedophiles a serious issue.

2.3 The News Media

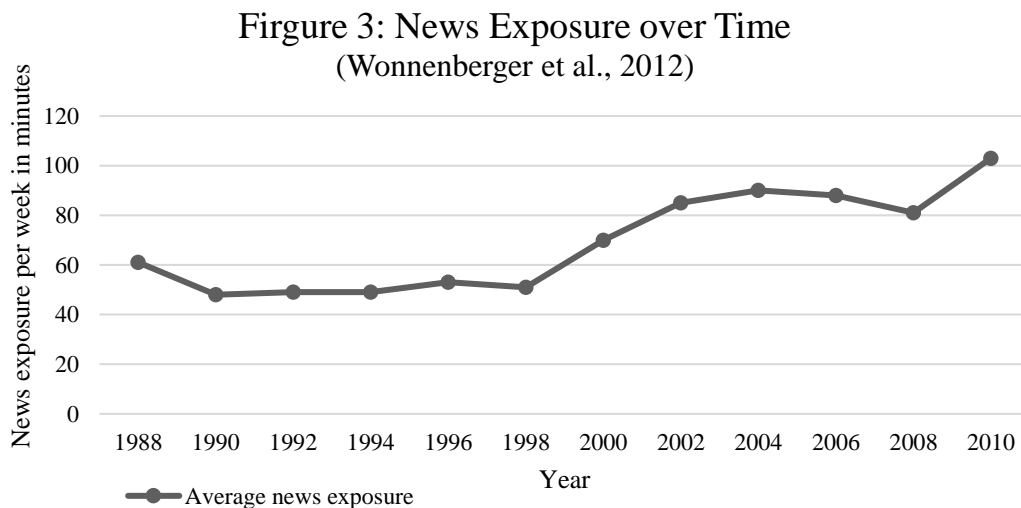
2.3.1. Relevance of the News Media

The media is the umbrella term for all mass communication sources present in developed countries. All forms of media have their own specific function, but generally the media's primary function is to carry out information through which people come to understand the modern world (Anderson, 1997). The media provides society with frameworks that shape the perception of the public, and influence attitudes (McCartan, 2010). The media also functions as a public space on which the public can discuss societal issues. Moreover, the media selects topics they think the public is, or should be, concerned about (Waal & Schoenbach, 2008). Especially information coming from the news media is very impactful in society. Under the term *news media*, all news published or broadcasted by officially recognized news organizations are included, such as national broadcastings of news, official newspapers, and online articles. Of the Dutch public, 42% watch television news, 30% read printed newspapers, 5% read digital newspapers, and 9% use news websites or news apps (see Figure 2). Television was thus in 2013 still the most popular source to access the news. In a research by Wonnenberger et al. (2012), it was investigated how much time Dutch television viewers spend on watching the news in the past decades. Results indicated that

Figure 2: News Media Exposure in the Netherlands
(Statista, 2013)



watching the news has become more popular throughout the years. In Figure 3, the average exposure to the news of Dutch television consumers is shown. In 1988, the average time spent on watching the news was 61 minutes per week, which has increased to 103 minutes in 2010. Furthermore, Wonnenberger et al. (2012) found that the amount of television viewers who avoid the news remained relatively stable over time, fluctuating in between 10-15%. However, 88% still watched the news at least once a week in 2010, even with the availability of all the competing news media sources.



The role of the news media is particularly important, since they have a responsibility to convey relevant and reliable news that is in the interest of the public (McCartan, 2010). Furthermore, research indicates that the public is invested in the news and trust their preferred sources, which makes the news media powerful in shaping attitudes (McCartan, 2010). Moreover, exposure to television news or newspapers is found to be very influential, since it is shown to improve the understanding of societal issues (Waal & Schoenbach, 2008), and is even associated to steer behaviors, such as the likelihood to turn out to vote (de Vreese & Boomgarden, 2006).

2.3.2 Stigma in the News Media

Not only does the media raise awareness of current societal issues, the media also shapes the opinion of the public on such issues. Unfortunately, when the news media spreads information that puts a particular societal group in a negative light, this is found to propagate prejudice and discrimination (Corrigan et al., 2005). The image of reality created by the news media is unrealistic,

and has been previously found to foster stigmatization of specific social groups (e.g. the mentally ill) (Corrigan et al., 2005). The media does this through a variety of psychological and societal processes, such as moral panics, norm reinforcement and stereotyping (McCartan, 2010). A *moral panic* is an excessive social concern caused by a shocking event in which a specific group crossed fundamental norms and values of the society (Cohen, 1972). The role of moral panics are important, since they stabilize social order by stressing fundamental social norms (Thompson, 1998). Nevertheless, a moral panic often triggers intense negative emotions towards a specific group, which can overshadow the actual problem that is destabilizing society. The group of interest will experience stigmatization and discriminatory behaviors in an attempt of the public to reinforce societal norms.

Moral panics can be triggered or kept alive by the news media, and can be very beneficial to the news media since it is an effective method to draw the public's attention. When the news media publishes a negative story about a certain group, it spreads prejudice towards that group, and supports and maintains social stigmatization (Plous, 2003). Research has shown that the news media is full of stereotypes (Corrigan et al., 2005), and exposes the public to stereotypes on a daily basis (Plous, 2003). Thus, the role of the news media in shaping public opinion and propagating stigma is significant, and has to be taken seriously.

2.3.3 Changeability of Opinions

Even though the media is found to effectively shape opinions, not all opinions are equally shapeable. According to the Social Judgement Theory of Carolyn Sherif, Muzafer Sherif, and Carl Hovland it is more difficult to change the opinions of people who feel very strongly about their opinion than people who have a weak attitude (Sherif & Hovland 1961; Sherif & Sherif, 1967). The stronger someone's attitude is, the less likely they are to change their mind. People do not accept messages to be true when they are extremely conflicting with their own opinion, and will tend to ignore or avoid such information. People are most likely to alter their attitudes when their attitude is rather weak, and the information that they are exposed to is only slightly different from their own. Thus, the news media is not likely to influence the opinions of people who have an attitude that is in conflict with the presented information, or when the opinion of the reader is already established and strong. Besides, people have the tendency to only search for information

that is in accordance with their own opinion (Milan, 2016). Of course, when someone is unwilling to be exposed to information that is opposing their opinion, the news media is unable to change attitudes. However, when the news media presents information that is confirming ones opinion, it is likely to increase the strength of their attitude. Thus, the news media generally influences the attitude of the public, but its effectiveness is dependent upon the willingness to exposure and attitude strength of its audience.

2.3.4. Pedophiles in the News Media

Pedophilia is one of the most widespread moral panics in contemporary society (Cohen, 2002). Media coverage on pedophilia typically focuses on child sexual offences, and on the proceedings of the criminal trial (Theaker, 2005). Especially the language and sentiment used by the news media in items on pedophilia may contribute to the stigmatization of pedophiles, since it generalizes pedophiles and frames them as dangerous (Thomas, 2005). In addition, the news media puts the focus of the public on the most extreme and shocking cases of child sexual abuse, in which one or multiple children have been sexually abused by someone who is automatically given the label of *pedophile* (Thomas, 2005). The news media thus fails to distinguish between different kinds of offenders, keeping alive the myth that all child sexual offenders are pedophiles. The media coverage of pedophilia does not provide the public with information that represents the complexity of reality, leaving out the diversity of child sexual offenders, the stories of NOP, motives of child sexual offenders, and information on prevention (McCartan, 2010). Also, it takes away the attention from the real threat that comes from within the home, since most sexually abused children were abused by family members rather than by a complete stranger (McCartan, 2010). The news media currently promotes the distorted image that most child sexual abuse happens outside the home with the perpetrator being a stranger. Therefore, the news media may contribute to the public's misunderstanding of pedophilia (McCartan, 2010).

Chapter 3: Method

3.1 Participants

In this research, the goal is to measure the influence of the news media on the opinion of the general public on pedophilia. Pedophilia is being covered by the news media in many countries, and manage to reach a very broad audience with their publications. Therefore, this study will focus on gathering a broad variety of participants from all ages, genders, socioeconomic statuses, sexualities, countries, and races. However, this research requires participants to read and understand English, which will result in an exclusion of people who do not possess adequate knowledge of the English language. Two surveys will be spread out, with as only difference the introductory news article on pedophilia. Public transport users will be approached in between Tilburg and Breda. Participants will also be collected through sharing the survey on social media such as Facebook. It is aimed to collect a minimum of 50 participants per survey, resulting in a total of at least 100 participants in the entire study.

3.2 Procedure

The data will be collected from the 10th of April until the 17th of April, 2018. The two surveys that will be spread out are exactly identical, except for the introductory news articles in the surveys. The first survey introduces the topic of pedophilia with a typical, stigmatizing news media article titled: “*British pedophile Richard Huckle gets 22 life sentences*”, that discusses a shocking and extreme case of child sexual abuse, in which the perpetrator is referred to with the use of the word ‘pedophile’ (CNN, 2016). In the second survey, the topic of pedophilia is introduced by an informational, non-stigmatizing news media article with the title: “*The young pedophiles who say they don’t abuse children*”, in which a NOP is interviewed (BBC News UK, 2017). The article also highlights the difference between pedophiles and child molesters. The articles were both published by official news sites, however, both news articles have been shortened in order to not lose the attention of the participants, and to keep the time to complete the survey at around 10 min. After the participants have read the article that manipulates the influence of the news media portrayal of pedophiles, the rest of the survey will measure the level of stigmatization towards pedophiles.

The questionnaire used in this research is retrieved from the research of Jahnke, Imhoff & Hoyer (2015). Some small adaptations to their questionnaire will be made to make it suit the purpose of this particular research better. In the survey, participants will be asked about their opinion on *people with a dominant sexual attraction to children*, to prevent misconception and bias that may present itself when using the term *pedophile*. The introduction of the topic before the manipulative article is presented in a morally neutral way, in order to reduce bias and to promote honest answering. The same holds true for the questions after the article. In that way, only the portrayal of pedophiles in the news media articles will be able to influence the opinion of the participants.

3.3 Measures

3.3.1 Controllability

Jahnke et al. (2015) developed the controllability scale in order to measure whether participants hold the belief that having a dominant sexual interest in children is controllable, and thus a choice. The controllability scale consists of the three best pre-tested items on controllability. The reliability of the three items in their research showed to be good ($\alpha = .89$). An example of one of the items on controllability is: “*A dominant sexual interest in children is something that one can choose*”. Participants will be asked to express their opinion on a 7-point Likert scale (0-6), that ranges from ‘do not agree at all’ (0) to ‘completely agree’ (6), for each individual item.

3.3.2 Dangerousness

The dangerousness scale in the survey of Jahnke et al. (2015) consists of three items, measuring to what extent participants perceive people with a dominant sexual interest in children as a danger to children, adolescents and adults (one item for each group). The scale was also previously tested to be sufficiently reliable ($\alpha = .69$). An example of one of the items that will be part of the dangerousness scale is: “*A person with a dominant sexual interest in children poses a danger to children*”. The opinions of the participants will be assessed on a 7-point Likert scale (0-6), that ranges from ‘do not agree at all’ (0) to ‘completely agree’ (6).

3.3.3 Sexual Behavior

The sexual behavior scale, as formed by Jahnke et al. (2015), consists of four items that evaluate whether participants believe that people with a dominant sexual interest in children automatically have sexual contact with children. For example, participants are asked whether or not they agree with the statement; *“Sooner or later a dominant sexual interest in children will pave the way to child sexual abuse”*. Participants can express their opinion on each individual item on a 7-point Likert scale (0-6), that ranges from ‘do not agree at all’ (0) to ‘completely agree’ (6).

3.3.4 Affective Reactions

Based on the items from the survey of Janke et al. (2015), participants will indicate whether they experience fear, anger or pity when they are asked to think of people with a dominant sexual interest in children. In this research, disgust will be added to the aforementioned affective reactions. Assessing these emotions will provide an indication to what extent participants have affective reactions towards pedophiles. Participants will answer the question: *“When I think of a person with a dominant sexual interest in children, I feel...”* All four emotions have their own item, and will also be assessed on a 7-point Likert scale (0-6). On this scale, participants can indicate their opinion ranging from ‘do not agree at all’ (0) to ‘completely agree’ (6).

3.3.5 Social Distance

In this section of the questionnaire, it will be measured to which extent participants would be willing to interact with people with a dominant sexual interest in children. To measure this, the social distance scale as modified by Jahnke et al. (2015) will be included in the questionnaire. Jahnke et al. (2015) made some alterations to the social distance scale originally designed by Bogardus (1933), in order to make it more suitable to measure the social distance between participants and pedophiles. Participants will be asked; *“How do you feel about interacting with people who are dominantly sexually interested in children, but have never committed a crime?”*. They are able to indicate the level of closeness they consider to be acceptable categorized in 6 items ranging from *“I would have these people as friends”* to *“These people should better be dead”*. People can indicate their level of agreement with each item ranging from ‘Do not agree at all’ (0) to ‘Completely agree’ (6), on a 7 point Likert scale.

3.3.6 Changeability of Opinion

In this research, it is assessed to which extent the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media influences the opinion of participants on people with a dominant sexual interest in children. However, it could be that no significant difference between the results of the two surveys will be found, because people already formed a stable opinion on pedophiles before participation. In that case, the manipulation (the news media articles) will not be able to influence the opinion of the participants. In order to assess the changeability of the opinions of participants on pedophilia, two items are included. Participants can agree on a 7 point Likert scale, ranging from ‘do not agree at all’ (0) to ‘completely agree’ (6), with the statements; *“My opinion on people with a dominant sexual interest in children cannot be changed”*, and *“There is nothing that I do not already know about people with a dominant sexual interest in children, that could make me change my opinion”*.

3.3.7 Overall Stigmatization

At the end, the controllability scale, the dangerousness scale, the sexual behavior scale, the social distance scale, and the items on the affective reactions (fear, anger, pity, disgust) will be combined into one final scale, measuring the overall stigmatization towards pedophiles. Based on the reliability of the scale, it will be determined whether a scale has to be excluded from the final, combined stigmatization scale. All the items included in this scale have been measured on a 7 point Likert scale, ranging from ‘do not agree at all’ (0) to ‘completely agree’ (6).

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Descriptives

In total, 171 people participated in this study, of which 89 people responded to survey 1, and 82 people responded to survey 2 (see appendix for surveys). The demographics of the participants of survey 1 and survey 2 are displayed in Table 1, in order to determine the differences between the two groups. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two surveys based on their date of birth (odd or even date of birth), resulting in a division in which the different characteristics of the participants are approximately equally represented in both groups. When evaluating the table, the biggest difference between participants from survey 1 and survey 2 lies within the demographics gender and nationality. In survey 1, 39,3% of the participants identifies as male, and 60,7% as female, while in survey 2 there were more men (51,2%), less women (45,1%), and a few

Table 1 Descriptives and frequencies (in %) of demographics participants

Demographic	Stigmatizing News Media Article	Non-stigmatizing News Media Article	Demographic	Stigmatizing News Media Article	Non-stigmatizing News Media Article
Gender			Inhabitants		
N	89	82	N	89	82
M/SD	0,61 (0,59)	0,52 (0,57)	M/SD	0,54 (0,50)	0,52 (0,50)
1: Male	39,3 %	51,2 %	1: < 100.000	46,1 %	47,6 %
2: Female	60,7 %	45,1 %	2: > 100.000	53,9 %	52,4 %
3: Other	-	3,7 %			
Age			Sexuality		
N	88	82	N	89	82
M/SD	1,67 (1,29)	1,63 (1,29)	M/SD	1,3 (0,66)	1,27 (0,74)
1: 16-24	75,0 %	75,6 %	1: Heterosexual	80,9 %	86,6 %
2: 25-34	4,5 %	7,3 %	2: Homosexual	7,9 %	3,7 %
3: 35-49	6,8 %	4,9 %	3: Bisexual	11,2 %	6,1 %
4: 50-64	5,7 %	2,4 %	4: Other	-	3,7 %
5: 65+	8,0 %	9,8 %			
Education			Relationship Status		
N	89	82	N	89	82
M/SD	3,03 (1,25)	3,02 (1,21)	M/SD	1,55 (0,67)	1,62 (0,62)
1: No diploma	2,2 %	2,4 %	1: No partner	51,7 %	42,7 %
2: High school diploma	48,3 %	48,8 %	2: Married/partners	44,9 %	54,9 %
3: College diploma	10,1 %	6,1 %	3: Widowed	3,4 %	2,4 %
4: Bachelor's degree	25,8 %	30,5 %			
5: Master's degree	10,1 %	11,0 %			
6: Doctoral degree	3,4 %	1,2 %			
Nationality			Children		
N	89	82	N	89	82
M/SD	1,28 (0,71)	1,38 (0,76)	M/SD	0,19 (0,39)	0,12 (0,33)
1: West European	84,3 %	79,3 %	1: No children	80,9 %	87,8 %
2: East European	5,6 %	3,7 %	2: Children	19,1 %	12,2 %
3: American	7,9 %	17,1 %			
4: Other	2,2 %	-			
Ethnicity			Young Children		
N	87	75	N	87	82
M/SD	1,07 (0,26)	1,03 (0,16)	M/SD	0,07 (0,25)	0,05 (0,22)
1: Caucasian	93,1 %	97,3 %	1: No young children	93,1 %	95,0 %
2: Other	6,9 %	2,7 %	2: Young children	6,9 %	5,0 %

participants who chose other (3,7%). When assessing participants nationalities, it is notable that less Americans filled out survey 1 (7,9%) in comparison to survey 2 (17,1%). In the analyses below, the influence of gender, age, education, sexuality, children and young children will be controlled for.

In Table 2, the responses of the participants are displayed per scale, measuring a specific stigmatizing attitude (see appendix Table 1.1 for agreement per item). The mean and standard deviation of the responses are shown together with the percentages of respondents who agreed with the presented items of the scale. Generally, Table 2 already gives us reason to expect the news media articles to have influenced the level of stigmatization of the participants. Nonetheless, the question remains if the effect is significant. On every item that measured stigmatization towards pedophiles (except for pity), participants who read the stigmatizing news media article in survey 1 agreed in higher percentages with the stigmatizing scales than participants did who read the non-stigmatizing news media article in survey 2. The participants of both groups did, however, agree in equal amounts whether their attitude towards pedophiles was still changeable or not. 23% of the participants in both studies agreed that their opinion could not be changed by receiving more information on pedophilia.

Table 2 Means, SDs, and frequency of agreement (in %) of Scales

Scale	Items	Stigmatizing News Media Article (Survey 1)			Non-stigmatizing News Media Article (Survey 2)		
		N	M/SD	Agreement	N	M/SD	Agreement
Stigmatization Total		89	3,05 (0,99)	52,8%	82	2,53 (1,02)	30,5%
Controllability		89	2,04 (1,56)	22,5%	82	1,48 (1,36)	9,8%
Dangerousness		89	4,15 (1,56)	68,5%	82	3,21 (1,52)	46,3%
Sexual Behavior		89	2,64 (1,24)	37,1%	82	2,13 (1,28)	24,4%
Affective reaction	Fear	89	2,96 (1,89)	43,8%	82	2,62 (1,68)	37,8%
	Pity	89	3,34 (1,86)	50,6%	82	3,65 (1,57)	62,2%
	Anger	89	3,49 (1,95)	56,2%	82	2,60 (1,91)	34,1%
	Disgust	89	4,46 (1,73)	74,2%	82	3,60 (1,77)	57,3%
Social Distance	Friend, Neighborhood, Work, Talk	89	3,37 (1,55)	53,9%	82	2,60 (1,65)	31,7%
	Prison, Death	89	1,07 (1,16)	4,5%	82	0,93 (1,29)	4,9%
	Total	89	2,60 (1,29)	34,8%	82	2,05 (1,39)	19,5%
Changeability		89	2,46 (1,53)	23,6%	82	2,49 (1,53)	23,2%

Defined on a 7 point Likert scale (0-6) Agree: 4-6; Neutral: 3; Disagree: 0-2

4.2 Factor Analysis

A factor analysis was conducted in order to determine which items measure the same factor, as is shown in Table 3. Based on the factor analysis, it was concluded that it was necessary to split up the Social Distance scale into two separate scales. The items: “*These people should better be dead.*” and “*These people should be locked away.*” were formed into a new scale, called ‘Social Distance Extreme’. The other 4 items of the Social Distance scale stayed together, and was named ‘Social Distance Contact’.

Table 3 Factor analyses items surveys

Scale	item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Controllability	Pedophilia is a choice	,413	-,736		
	Pedophilia is a decision	,611	-,625		
	Sexual interest in children is a choice	,599	-,676		
Dangerousness	Danger to children	,791			
	Danger to adolescents	,782			
	Danger to adults	,692			
Sexual Behavior	Pedophiles are sexual with children	,656			
	Pedophiles are sexual offenders	,789			
	Pedophilia leads to child sexual abuse	,791			
	Pedophiles can control their urges	,431			
Affective reaction	Fear	,500	,421		
	Pity	-,468			
	Anger	,819			
	Disgust	,738			
Social Distance Contact	Friend	,701		-,469	
	Neighborhood	,766		-,426	
	Work	,793		-,455	
	Talk	,773		-,423	
Social Distance Extreme	Prison	,753			-,300
	Death	,541			-,688

4.3 Reliability

The reliability of the scales was measured using a Cronbach’s Alpha analysis as shown in Table 4. All scales showed to be sufficiently reliable, but a few minor changes were made to the scales in order to improve their reliability. From the controllability scale, the item: “*People with a dominant sexual interest in children are able to control their sexual behavior towards children*” was removed, improving the reliability of the Controllability scale from P=,790 to P=,841. Also, the item: “*When I think of a person with a*

Table 4 Reliability of scales

Scale	ρ
Stigmatization Total	,888**
Controllability	,887**
Dangerousness	,874**
Sexual Behavior	,841**
Social Distance Contact	,932**
Social Distance Extreme	,760*
Changeability	,825**

*α >0,6; ** α >0,8

dominant sexual interest in children, I feel pity” was removed from the Stigmatization Total scale, since its removal resulted in an increase of the scale’s reliability from $P=,807$ to $P=,888$. Also, this analysis shows that the separation of the original Social Distance scale was sensible, since the reliability of both the Social Distance Contact scale ($P=0,932$), and the Social Distance Extreme scale ($P=0,760$) showed to be profoundly sufficient.

4.4 Regressions

In order to determine the effect of the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media on the stigmatization of pedophiles, a linear regression was conducted with the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media as predictor of stigmatizing attitudes towards pedophiles, while controlling for gender, age, education, sexuality, children and young children. Table 5 shows the difference in the level of

Table 5 Linear regression news media portrayal of pedophiles on stigmatization towards pedophiles

Scale	Constant	B/ Std. error	Sig. (α)
Stigmatization Total	3,368	-,472 (.150)	,002**
Controllability	2,494	-,529 (.233)	,025*
Dangerousness	4,325	-,871 (.236)	,000***
Sexual Behavior	2,809	-,490 (.220)	,028*
Fear	3,484	-,183 (.262)	,487
Pity	3,396	,219 (.275)	,427
Anger	3,721	-,816 (.292)	,006**
Disgust	5,360	-,791 (.265)	,003**
Social Distance Contact	3,786	-,704 (.242)	,004**
Social Distance Extreme	,934	-,084 (.188)	,655

***= $\alpha \leq ,000$; **= $\alpha \leq ,01$; *= $\alpha \leq ,05$

Controlled for variables: Gender, Age, Education, Sexuality, Children, and Young children

stigmatization towards people with pedophilia between people who read the typical, stigmatizing news media article (survey 1), and those who read the informational, non-stigmatizing news media article (survey 2). In the Stigmatization Total scale, all scales measuring one specific stigmatizing attitude towards pedophiles were grouped together into one final stigmatization scale. Remarkable is that the constant of the scales shows that generally the responses of participants to the stigmatizing statements after reading the stigmatizing news media article were rather neutral (score around 3 on scale of 0-6), except for dangerousness, disgust and extreme social distance. Nevertheless, a tendency towards a stigmatizing attitude rather than a more accepting attitude towards pedophiles is suggested by the data in table 5. However, the effect of the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media on the level of stigmatization is much more radical according to the results. The non-stigmatizing news media article showed to be negatively related to stigmatization in total ($B=-,472$; $P=0,002$). Having read the non-stigmatizing news media article instead of the stigmatizing news media article, was negatively related to the level of

perceived controllability ($B=-,529$; $P=,025$), danger to children and adolescents ($B=-,871$; $P=,000$), and sexual contact with children ($B=-,490$; $P=,028$). Also, the non-stigmatizing news media article significantly resulted in less (extreme) experiences of anger ($B=-,816$; $P=006$) and disgust ($B=-,791$; $P=,003$). Additionally, the non-stigmatizing news media article was negatively related with the level of social distance (contact) ($B=-,704$; $P=,004$). The influence of the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media on the stigmatization of pedophiles was strongest for perceived dangerousness ($B=-,871$; $P=,000$), experiences of anger ($B=-,816$; $P=006$) and disgust ($B=-,791$; $P=,003$), and social distance (contact) ($B=-,704$; $P=,004$).

The effect of the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media on feelings of pity ($B=,219$; $P=,427$), fear ($B=-,183$; $P=,487$), and extreme social distance ($B=-,084$; $P=,655$) towards pedophiles, was not significant in this research. Remarkable, however, is that if the relation with pity would have been significant, it would suggest that people experienced more pity after reading the non-stigmatizing news media article, than people did who read the stigmatizing news media article. Unfortunately, no such conclusion can be drawn from this research, since the relation was not significant ($P=,427$).

It was analyzed whether the 5% of the participants who agreed with the statements of the Social Distance Extreme scale also scored high on the Changeability scale. The results showed that only 2 of the 16 participants who had an extremely stigmatized opinion on pedophiles indicated that their opinion could still be influenced by new information.

In order to access whether there were other factors influencing the level of stigmatization of participants, a linear regression was conducted on the influence of several demographics on the total stigmatization towards pedophiles. In Table 6, the results of the linear regression are displayed. From the data in table 6, it can be concluded that sexuality negatively influenced the level of stigmatization towards pedophiles after participants read the stigmatizing news media article ($B=,384$; $P=,034$), and that gender ($B=,421$; $P=,044$) and age ($B=-,303$; $P=,006$) significantly influenced the level of stigmatization towards pedophiles when participants read the non-stigmatizing news media article.

The influence of education, children, and young children were in neither of the surveys found to be significant. Notable is that the effect of having young children on stigmatization towards pedophiles is the highest of all demographics in both surveys (B=,508; B,771), however, the effect was in neither of them significant (P=,338; P=,771). Remarkable is that age was negatively related with stigmatization towards pedophilia, suggesting that older people are less stigmatized than younger people.

Table 6 Linear regression demographics on total stigmatization towards pedophiles

Demographic	Stigmatizing news media article		Non-stigmatizing news media article	
	B/ Std. error	Sig. (α)	B/ Std. error	Sig. (α)
(Constant)	4,074 (.473)	,000***	2,512 (.352)	,000***
Gender	,005 (.226)	,983	,421 (.205)	,044*
Age	-,273 (.189)	,153	-,303 (.108)	,006**
Education	-,080 (.096)	,409	,058 (.098)	,555
Sexuality	-,346 (.160)	,034*	,067 (.148)	,652
Children	,384 (.671)	,569	-,145 (.533)	,786
Young Children	,508 (.527)	,338	,771 (.678)	,259

***= $\alpha \leq ,000$; **= $\alpha \leq ,01$; *= $\alpha \leq ,05$

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

The goal of this research was to empirically investigate how the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media affects the stigmatization towards pedophiles. In order to measure the impact of the news media, two surveys were conducted including two different news media articles on pedophilia, after which a variety of questions measured the level of stigmatization of participants. Firstly, the way in which the news media portrayed pedophiles showed to have a substantial impact on the level of stigmatization indicated by the public, which is in congruence with the predictions. The majority of the participants showed to hold stigmatizing attitudes towards pedophiles after being exposed to stigmatizing information about pedophiles, representing the way in which the news media is currently portraying pedophilia. Secondly, when the public was instead exposed to non-stigmatizing information about pedophiles, lower levels of perceived controllability, dangerousness to children and adolescents, sexual contact with children, and experiences of anger and disgust were found. However, it is interesting that the attitudes of participants in the stigmatizing news media article condition were still not extremely stigmatized towards pedophiles. This is inconsistent with previous research on the stigmatization towards pedophiles that did find extreme stigmatizing attitudes towards pedophiles (Jahnke et al., 2015; Imhoff, 2015). Thirdly, next to the portrayal of the news media, stigmatizing attitudes towards pedophiles were dependent upon a few individual characteristics, such as gender, age and sexuality. However, not all demographics that were expected to influence attitudes towards pedophilia were found to have an effect, which contradicts the findings from previous research (Jahnke et al., 2015).

5.1.1 Controllability

The effect of the portrayal of pedophilia by the news media on perceived controllability was supported by the statistical analysis. After reading a typical, stigmatizing news media article (survey 1), 22,5% of the participants agreed that pedosexuality is something that one can choose. Of the participants who read the non-stigmatizing news media article, only 9,8% actually agreed that a pedophilic attraction is a matter of choice. Therefore, unlike what was found by other researchers (Jahnke et al., 2015; Imhoff, 2015), the vast majority of participants believed that

pedophiles had no, or no full control over their sexual attraction towards children. This surprising finding can possibly be influenced by the introductory text of the surveys, which specified the difference between pedophiles and pedosexuals, namely that pedophiles are people with a dominant sexual interest in children, and those who actually have sexual contact with children are pedosexuals. Typically, people hold the stigmatizing attitude that all pedophiles are sexually in contact with children (Jahnke et al., 2015; Imhoff, 2015). The behavior of having sexual contact with children is established to be a choice, which is likely to result in people to argue that the sexuality is a choice too, because they link the sexuality to the behavior. Since it was stressed in this study that the statements were only on non-offending pedophiles (NOP), it could have resulted in fewer people to agree that pedophiles are in control over their sexual attraction. Also, this could partially be an explanation as to why the overall stigmatization towards pedophiles was generally lower than the levels of stigmatization found by previous studies.

5.1.2 Dangerousness

According to the results of this study, perceived dangerousness of pedophiles is extremely influenced by the portrayal of pedophiles in the news media. After reading the stigmatizing news media article, 68,5% agreed that pedophiles are a danger to children and adolescents, while only 46,3% of the participants who read the non-stigmatizing news media article indicated agreement. This finding suggests that in the current situation in which the news media spreads primarily information that confirms stigmatizing beliefs, 2 out of every 3 people agree that pedophiles are a danger to children and adolescents, even though it was emphasized that the survey was about non-offending pedophiles only. This high level of perceived dangerousness indicates that exposure to stigmatizing information from the news media confirms, or even stimulates people to believe that pedophilia is closely related, or even identical, to the sexual abuse of children. This result represents a lack of awareness, or even denial, of the existence of people with pedophilia who believe that sexual contact with children is wrong, and therefore deliberately abstain from it. When people are instead informed with non-stigmatizing information on pedophilia by the news media, more than half of the participants (instead of just $\frac{1}{3}$ in survey 1) disagree that pedophiles are dangerous to children and adolescents.

5.1.3 Sexual Behavior

This research investigated whether the public holds the belief that people with a dominant sexual interest in children inevitably sexually abuse children, and whether this belief is being kept alive by the way in which the news media reports on pedophilia. After reading the stigmatizing news media article, 37,1% of the public believed that pedophiles without exception have sexual contact with children. The literature implies that this belief is untrue, since many pedophiles report to have never had sexual contact with children, nor would want to, out of a conviction that it is unacceptable and harmful to the child (Schmidt, 2002). The results indicate that only a minority of the sample group agrees that pedophiles are without exception child sexual offenders, while other researchers found a higher prevalence of this belief (Jahnke et al., 2015; Imhoff, 2015). Again, this could be the result of the clear distinction that was made at the start of the survey between pedophiles and pedosexuals, and the fact that it was stressed that this survey was only about non-offending pedophiles (NOP). However, it is surprising that even though this distinction was very pronounced in the study, still 37,1% argued that NOP are nonexistent. Moreover, the belief that being a pedophile is identical to being a child sexual abuser may also be related to the underreporting of stories of child sexual abuse motivated by something else than a dominant sexual interest in children. Even though 90% of children that are victims of child sexual abuse are not abused by pedophiles (Op Goede Grond, 2014), this is consistently left out by the news media, or labeled as a consequence of pedophilia anyway. When participants were asked whether they believed that all pedophiles sexually abuse children after reading the non-stigmatizing news media article, only 24,4% would argue pedophiles inevitably sexually abuse children (instead of 37,1% in the stigmatizing news media article condition). Thus, even though in this study a minority was convinced that pedophilia is identical or very closely linked to child sexual abuse, this belief could be decreased by spreading non-stigmatizing information on pedophilia in the news media.

5.1.4 Affective Reactions

According to this research, affective reactions towards pedophiles showed to be widespread under the public. Anger (56,2%) and disgust (74,2%) were both experienced in higher levels in the stigmatizing news media article condition, than in the non-stigmatizing news media article condition (anger= 34,1%; disgust= 57,3%). Remarkable was that the difference between the number of people who experienced feelings of fear between the two conditions was not significant.

Therefore, this research did not find support for that people's experience of fear towards pedophiles is substantially influenced by the way in which the news media portrays pedophilia. Also, in both conditions, only a minority of the sample indicated to experience feelings of fear towards pedophiles at all, which was not in accordance with the expectations.

Unlike fear, the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media did have a significant effect on people's experience of disgust. Out of all the affective reactions in the stigmatizing news media article condition, most people agreed upon experiencing feelings of disgust when thinking of pedophiles (74,2%). Of the people who were exposed to the non-stigmatizing news media article, a small majority of 57,3% agreed to feel disgust when thinking about pedophiles. This probably has to do with the fact that the news media primarily exposes the public to the most extreme, shocking incidents of child sexual abuse (McCartan, 2010; Corrigan et al., 2005; Theaker, 2005), in which the perverse perpetrator is usually given the label *pedophile*. Since such a news media article was used in survey 1, it is very likely that such shocking stories drastically arouse feelings of disgust in people, especially when a specific case is still fresh in their minds.

Lastly, as was expected based on previous research (Jahnke et al., 2015), pity was the only variable that was experienced more frequently by people in the non-stigmatizing news media article condition (50,6%), than in the stigmatizing news media article condition (62,2%). However, the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media did not end up to significantly relate to the level of experienced pity. Further research is necessary in order to explain why anger and disgust were influenced by the way in which the news media portrays pedophilia and why pity and fear were not. Also, it would be interesting for further research to investigate whether this result is the consequence of a sampling bias, or if there is an underlying mechanism at play.

5.1.5 Social Distance

As predicted, the way in which the news media portrayed pedophiles affected the extent to which the public experienced pedophiles to be socially distant from them, such as refusing to work with them, live in their neighborhood, be friends with them, or even talk to them. On average, 53,9% of the public indicated to be socially distant from pedophiles after reading the stigmatizing news media article. When people were in the non-stigmatizing news media article condition, this

percentage was more than 20% lower (32,7%). These results suggest that if the news media would spread more general information on the phenomenon of pedophilia, together with giving insight into the personal experiences of pedophiles, they would be able to make people less socially distant from pedophiles.

This research also assessed whether participants were extremely socially distant from pedophiles, even when the pedophiles had never committed a crime. Remarkably, in both conditions, only a few of the participants agreed with the statements of the extreme social distance scale, stating that pedophiles should be incarcerated (11,2% & 8,5%) or should better be dead (2,2% & 3,6%), which is way lower than was found in the research of Jahnke et al. (2015). What can be concluded from this, is that the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media was not able to lower social distance of this type of severity, as was also implied by the results of the analysis. This could be explained by the fact that people who hold such an extreme opinion feel very strong about the matter, and thus do not easily change their opinion when they are exposed to new information that opposes their opinion. To them, the new information will come across as incredible and untrue, and is thus not likely to change their opinions. Therefore, the way in which the news media portrays pedophiles is not likely to have a big impact on people with very extreme attitudes. However, this does not mean that the news media could not have fueled such extreme opinions by only distributing the most extreme and shocking cases. Investigating whether this is the case would be a very interesting topic for further research.

In both the stigmatizing and non-stigmatizing news media article condition, 23% of the participants actually indicated that their opinion on pedophiles could not be altered by receiving new information on the topic, and therefore had an unchangeable attitude. As was predicted based on the literature on changeability of opinion, people who were extremely stigmatized towards pedophiles almost all indicated that their opinion could not be influenced by new information. Of the 16 participants who were extremely socially distant from pedophiles, only 2 indicated that their opinion could still be influenced by new information. However, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the participants did actually indicate that their opinion on pedophiles is still very influenceable by new, or more elaborate information on pedophilia. This is in congruence with the literature that argues that the news media has a big influence on the public's attitude and opinion, since many people are thus still forming

their opinion on pedophilia, which is especially the case for topics that are so seldom discussed. All in all, this suggests that the news media has a lot of potential to reduce public stigma towards pedophiles in order to lower offending risks, and to reduce suicide rates under pedophiles as a consequence of stigmatization.

5.1.6 Stigmatization Total

Finally, the overall level of stigmatization was determined by combining the individual stigmatization scales into one final scale (except for pity). Of the people who read the stigmatizing news media article, 52,8% were found to generally hold stigmatizing attitudes towards non-offending pedophiles. This percentage drastically dropped to 30,5% when people were exposed to non-stigmatizing information on pedophilia presented by the news media. Accordingly, the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media is found to play an important role in shaping the public's attitude towards pedophiles. The results indicate that the stigmatizing information spread by the news media also increases the stigmatization towards pedophiles who are not in sexual contact with minors. Hence, the news media has the power to battle stigmatizing beliefs towards pedophiles, in order to prevent pedophiles to become ostracized by society based on their sexuality.

When a decrease in public stigma towards pedophiles is achieved, it will become easier for pedophiles to build a satisfactory life, to find social support, and to get professional help when needed (Houtepen et al., 2016). Furthermore, pedophiles will be more frequently exposed to social norms when they are less isolated from society, which is associated with a lower risk to offend (Jahnke & Hoyer, 2013). Therefore, reducing stigmatization towards pedophiles in general will not only be beneficial to the well-being of people with pedophilia, but will also help prevent child sexual abuse. The result that the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media affects public stigma towards pedophiles suggests that the news media is thus likely to have contributed to the current level of public stigmatization towards pedophiles, and has therefore indirectly contributed to the problem of child sexual abuse. Hence, it is time for the news media to take responsibility in providing the public with information that actually represents reality, to stop framing every child sexual abuser as a pedophile, and make the issue of child sexual abuse more discussable.

5.1.7 Demographics

Unlike the findings of previous studies, educational level, having children and having young children did not significantly influence overall stigmatization in this research. Even gender, age and sexuality did not have a significant effect on stigmatization toward pedophiles in both surveys, but just in one of the two. In the stigmatizing news media article condition, sexuality influenced the stigmatization towards pedophiles; heterosexuals showed to be more stigmatizing than people with other sexualities, such as homo- and bisexuality. A possible explanation for this result is that people with minority-group sexualities are more likely to have a better understanding of the diversity of sexuality, and are therefore more aware of common stigmatizing beliefs about sexualities that are incongruent with reality. Furthermore, the level of stigmatization they experience themselves due to their membership to a minority-group may stimulate them to consciously avoid stigmatizing others, which serves as an explanation for the low level of stigmatization towards pedophiles

Another interesting result is that women scored higher on total stigmatization than men did in the non-stigmatizing news media article condition. An explanation for this finding could be that even though women are found to hold less stigmatizing attitudes towards sexual minorities in general, women are also more fearful of crime (Lagrange & Ferraro, 1989). This could make them more stigmatizing towards pedophiles, because they are more likely to believe that pedophile will eventually offend. In addition, even though the analysis controlled for having (young) children, women may also result to be more stigmatizing towards pedophiles due to women being potentially more concerned about the well-being and safety of children in general.

Even more striking was that age was associated with lower levels of overall stigmatization in the non-stigmatizing news media article condition. In other words, older people were less stigmatizing towards pedophiles than younger people in study 2. This finding was not in congruence with the expectations, and is therefore an interesting starting point for future research to replicate, in order to confirm this relation and to find a corresponding explanation.

Furthermore, it could also be that younger people have been more exposed to the ‘moral panic’ around pedophilia that the media is generating. Pedophilia is argued to be the most prevalent moral

panic of recent years, which refers to the anxious reaction of the public to the extreme and shocking publications of the news media in which pedophiles are generalized as perverse monsters for which the public has to keep up their guard (McCartan, 2010; Cohen, 2002). As a consequence of the moral panic of pedophilia being a recent phenomenon, it is possible that the hype mainly reached a younger audience, also by news going viral on social media.

5.2 Limitations & Recommendations

There are some important limitations to this research that need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. First of all, due to limited time and a lack of resources to collect participants, it was decided to collect data from participants that came from several countries, cultures, and backgrounds. As a consequence, the result of this research do not represent one specific group in society. It may be interesting for future research to limit the sample to one country of interest, so conclusions can be drawn over the stigmatization within a specific region or population.

Secondly, in this research, the situation in which the news media is currently portraying pedophilia was used as the control group. The stigmatizing news media article that was shown in the first survey was a typical news article on pedophilia that can currently be found in the news media. Therefore, the results of survey 1 were used as a control group that was compared with the results of survey 2, which measured the attitudes of the public towards pedophilia when the news media would spread non-stigmatizing, informational news on pedophilia. It was decided to not create a neutral control group in which participants' level of stigmatization towards pedophiles was measured without being primed by a news media article first. Such a control group would have required the gathering of more participants, and would have resulted into more data to analyze and interpret than there was time. However, it would be interesting if future research would include such a control group in a similar research, to decide if the influence of the news media when comparing to a control group also shows to be significant. Additionally, when a control group would have been incorporated, the findings on the general stigmatization towards pedophiles apart from the influence of the news media would have been more accurate and easier to determine.

Thirdly, this research does not investigate the consequences for society when pedophiles would be less stigmatized and would become more involved in society. Even though the literature suggest

that lower levels of stigmatization towards pedophiles will eventually lower suicide rates among pedophiles, and lower the risk for pedophiles to sexually abuse children, there are many effects that could arise in such a situation that possibly increases suicide and offending risks again. Examples of such consequences are a closer proximity to children, more confrontations, and stressors that come with managing social relationships. Therefore, a lot more research is necessary to be able to argue that the social reintegration of pedophiles in society, and the diminishment of public stigma towards them, will eventually result in more benefits than disadvantages for the society as a whole (Cantor, 2016).

Besides the recommendation for future research to replicate this study in order to confirm the relationship that was found between the portrayal of pedophiles by the news media and stigmatization towards pedophiles, there are also some additional recommendations for future research. The results indicate that experiences of anger and disgust were influenced by the portrayal of pedophiles in the news media, but pity and fear were not. It would be interesting if future research could replicate this finding, but also investigate which mechanisms are behind these relationships. Additionally, some people showed to hold extremely stigmatizing attitudes towards pedophiles. It would be very relevant to investigate what made their opinion so extreme and stable, and whether the news media contributes to the formation of such opinions. Analyzing what is causing such extremely stigmatizing attitudes towards pedophiles would not only result in an improved understanding of stigma towards pedophiles, but could also be helpful to efficiently tackle public stigma towards pedophiles.

Further research is necessary in order to determine if the relationships found between gender, sexuality and age, and the stigmatization of pedophiles is consistent. Moreover, investigating the underlying causes of the relations between personal characteristics and stigmatization towards pedophiles is desirable, in order to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of stigma towards pedophiles. Some underlying causes were suggested in this research, which could serve as a starting point for future research.

5.3 Conclusion & Implications

The portrayal of pedophiles by the news media has a big impact on the public stigma towards pedophiles that is present in modern society. When the news media exposes people to information that supports stigmatizing ideas about pedophilia, this is found to foster stigmatizing attitudes towards pedophiles. Simultaneously, reading non-stigmatizing information presented by the news media that contradicts stigmatizing beliefs is shown to decrease public stigma towards pedophiles. The news media is particularly influential in shaping perceived dangerousness, experiences of anger and disgust, and social distance towards pedophiles. Generally, a majority of the sample resulted to hold stigmatizing attitudes towards non-offending pedophiles after being exposed to a news media article with stigmatizing content. However, when participants were exposed to a news media article with informational, non-stigmatizing content, public stigma was 20% lower than in the first condition. Hence, the news media is very powerful in nurturing public stigma, and should therefore share information about pedophilia in responsible ways.

If the news media would stop publishing only the most shocking and extreme cases of child sexual abuse in which every perpetrator is automatically categorized as a pedophile, and would introduce more non-stigmatizing articles on the topic of pedophilia, it has the potential to substantially decrease public stigma towards pedophiles. In case the news media would take serious steps to reach that goal, it is suggested to increase the well-being and life opportunities of pedophiles, decline suicide rates among pedophiles, and decrease the social isolation of pedophiles, all resulting in lower offending risks. However, publishing shocking, and extreme stories is in the interest of the news media in order to draw the attention of the reader, and to run a profitable business. Therefore, finding a solution to the problem of stigmatization in the news media is complicated, and needs further assessment, also from other fields of research, in order to determine how society as a whole should deal with this issue. Nonetheless, the public also has a personal responsibility to engage with information that is not in congruence with their initial beliefs, and to not only search for information that confirms their current beliefs. As long as the public avoids information that they do not agree with, it will be difficult for the news media to influence, or even change attitudes. Therefore, it is important for the public to be aware of this unconscious behavioral pattern, so they can make informed decisions about their news consumption. Also, the

news media could help to tackle this issue by spreading articles containing both perspectives, making it less likely for the public to only get exposed to one side of the story.

Now that support has been found for the hypothesis that *the news media portrayal of pedophiles increases the stigmatization of pedophiles*, it provides motive to investigate whether the portrayal of the news media also increases public stigma towards other groups in society. Some suggestions are to investigate the influence of the news media on the stigmatization of homosexuals, transsexuals, immigrants, or refugees. The news media may also foster stigmatizing beliefs towards these groups, resulting in potentially more groups in society benefitting from the implementation of a less-stigmatizing reporting style by the news media.

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7. Appendix

***Questionnaire Controversial Sexualities** *(Based on Questionnaire Jahnke et al. 2015)*

Thank you for taking interest in this questionnaire survey. The estimated time to complete this survey is 10 minutes.

Please be aware that you are free to choose whether you want to participate in this study or not. In order to be able to decide if you want to take part, you will be first informed about what your participation will involve.

People differ in their opinion on people with unusual sexual interests. Some may feel more accepting towards these people, while others may hold more negative attitudes against them. In this survey, you will be asked about your opinion on pedophiles, who are people with a dominant sexual interest in children.

Pedophiles are different from pedosexuals, because pedophiles do not act upon their feelings and thus do not have any physical sexual contact with children. Pedosexuals, however, do have sexual contact with children. In this study, you will be asked about your opinion on pedophiles only.

Also, you will be asked about your gender, age, family status, and whether or not you live in a large city. However, you will not be asked for information that makes you personally identifiable, such as your name and address, since this survey is completely anonymous. Please note that the following news article and questionnaire were designed for scientific purposes, and are not necessarily a reflection of the opinion of the researcher.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the researcher by using the following contact details: Jessie van Sambeek,

The following questions will ask you for your socio-demographic information.

I am...

- male
- female
- other

What is your age?

- I am ___ years old

What is the highest level of education you have attained?

- Doctoral degree
- Master's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- College diploma
- High school diploma
- No diploma

What is your nationality?

- ___

In which country are you currently living?

- ___

What is your ethnicity?

- ___

Do you live in a place with more or less than 100.000 inhabitants?

- less than 100.000 inhabitants
- more than 100.000 inhabitants

Think of your sexual identity. Would you say that you are:

- homosexual (gay/lesbian)
- heterosexual (straight)
- bisexual
- (other?)

What's your relationship status?

- no partner
- married/relationship
- divorced
- widowed

How many children do you have?

If you have no children, please write "0" in the box.

- _____

How many among them are 14 years old or younger?

If you have no children, or no children who are 14 or younger, please write "0" in the box.

- _____

Survey 1: Stigmatizing news media article condition

Please read the following news article; "British Pedophile Richard Huckle Gets 22 Life Sentences", in which you will receive more information about the topic. Make sure you will read the news article carefully. Feel free to take as much time as necessary.

A London court handed 22 life sentences to a man after he pleaded guilty to 71 child abuse offenses while in Southeast Asia.

Richard Huckle, 30, was arrested at Gatwick Airport near London in 2014 as he returned home from Malaysia, where he committed most of his crimes. He confessed to abusing almost 200 children on a blog he published on the dark web, an area of the Internet not easily accessible to the general user. Huckle posed as a Christian English teacher to groom and abuse children, including one as young as 6 months, in a poor Malaysian community over nine years. He also committed child abuse in Cambodia.

The court heard that he took pictures and videos of himself raping children that he groomed from schools and orphanages, and shared the images with other pedophiles on the dark web. In his blog, Huckle awarded himself "Pedopoints" on a type of scorecard, claiming to have abused 191 children. He forced victims to pose with signs to advertise his business and wrote a 60-page guide entitled "Pedophiles & Poverty: Child Lover Guide" that the judge called a "truly evil document". The NCA said officials had recovered more than 20,000 indecent images of children from Huckle's computers and cameras, including more than 1,000 of which showed him raping and abusing children in his care.

Huckle has been ordered to serve at least 25 years of his sentence. The court heard about several horrific cases of Huckle's abuse, including that of a 5-year-old girl on her birthday at his home. Huckle offered private English language tuition to earn the trust of children and their families.

Huckle traveled in and out of Asia over many years, in 2006 spending two weeks in Cambodia, staying with a local family, whose 3-year-old child was one of his victims. In 2007, he returned to Malaysia and stayed with the family of two young girls, taking up a voluntary teaching post at a small tuition center in the village. He abused the girls over eight years.

Survey 2: Non-stigmatizing news media article condition

Please read the following news article; "The Young Pedophiles Who Say They Don't Abuse Children", in which you will receive more information about the topic. Make sure you will read the news article carefully. Feel free to take as much time as necessary.

Adam is in his early 20s, but he could pass for younger. He has brown hair, clear skin and a soft voice. Not "creepy looking" at all. He describes himself as "normal" and says he likes to hang out with friends, go travelling and play video games. On the surface, it's hard to argue with his self-description, but he has a secret; He is a pedophile.

That term is widely used today. It's used interchangeably with child sex abuser by the public. You can find it in many news reports describing the actions of abusers. But academics defined it as a form of mental health condition where an adult has a primary sexual attraction to children. It doesn't mean that they have abused children, and in fact, psychiatrists believe that not all child abusers are pedophiles. Instead, many child abusers are motivated by a desire for power or control.

People like Adam refer to themselves as "anti-contact" pedophiles. They recognize their own attraction to children, but understand that it is wrong to abuse them.

When Adam was 13 he started thinking about boys who were younger than him, but the age gap was just a few years. "As I got older, the age stayed the same and got even younger." Adam spent the next few years doing what almost every teenager does - trying to fit in. But Adam explains that this wasn't easy. "I felt isolated. I tried to hide it, tried to ignore it. Pretend it wasn't there, pretend I was normal, concentrate on my schoolwork, concentrate on playing football."

Adam dislikes the word "pedophile" because of the way the media uses it interchangeably with "child rapist" or "child abuser". Instead, he refers to himself as a "MAP", which stands for "minor-attracted person". Adam wants to speak out, he says, because he wants to protect children. He explains that he gets very upset when he sees stories about child abuse on the news: "I'm doing this so that some people will stop doing that." Adam says he has never abused a child, either online or in person. He doesn't even wait until the end of the question before replying: "I would never do that." He says he would kill himself before hurting a child.

All the items that follow from this point onwards will be about people with a dominant sexual interest in children, but who have never committed a crime.

What do you think about people with a dominant sexual interest in children?

- a. A dominant sexual interest in children is something that one can choose.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

- b. People with a dominant sexual interest in children have taken a deliberate decision to have these interests.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

- c. People have the choice whether they have a dominant sexual interest in children or not.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

How dangerous are people with a dominant sexual interest in children for other people in general?

- a. A person with a dominant sexual interest in children poses a danger to children.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

- b. A person with a dominant sexual interest in children poses a danger to adolescents.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

- c. A person with a dominant sexual interest in children poses a danger to adults.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

What do you think about people with a dominant sexual interest in children?

a. People with a dominant sexual interest in children have sexual contact with children.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

b. People with a dominant sexual interest in children are perverted sexual offenders.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

c. Sooner or later a dominant sexual interest in children will pave the way to child sexual abuse.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

d. People with a dominant sexual interest in children are able to control their sexual behavior towards children.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

When I think of a person with a dominant sexual interest in children, I feel ...

a. ... fear

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

b. ... pity

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

c. ... anger

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

d. ... disgust

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Do not agree at all Completely agree

How do you feel about interacting with people who are dominantly sexually interested in children, but have never committed a crime?

- a. I would have these people as friends.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Do not agree at all Completely agree
- b. I would accept these people in my neighborhood.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Do not agree at all Completely agree
- c. I would accept these people as colleagues at work.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Do not agree at all Completely agree
- d. I would talk to them.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Do not agree at all Completely agree
- e. These people should be locked away.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Do not agree at all Completely agree
- f. These people should better be dead.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Do not agree at all Completely agree

The following items are about the changeability of your opinion on people with a dominant sexual interest in children.

- a. My opinion on people with a dominant sexual interest in children cannot be changed
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Do not agree at all Completely agree
- b. There is nothing that I do not already know about people with a dominant sexual interest in children that could make me change my opinion.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Do not agree at all Completely agree

Comments

Do you want to make any comments about this study? If you noticed anything either negative or positive that caught your attention, please feel free leave a remark in this field. Do not forget to press send.

STIGMATIZATION OF PEDOPHILIA IN THE NEWS MEDIA

*Table 1.1 shows the means, standard deviation and frequencies of agreement in % of the participants on all individual items, in both survey 1 and survey 2.

Table 1.1 Means, SDs, and frequency of agreement (in %)

Scale	Items	Typical News Media Article (Survey 1)					Informational News Media Article (Survey 2)				
		N	M/SD	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	N	M/SD	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Controllability	A dominant sexual interest in children is something that one can choose.	89	1,98 (1,80)	19,2	11,2	69,7	82	1,68 (1,72)	17,0	8,5	74,4
	People with a dominant sexual interest in children have taken a deliberate decision to have these interests.	89	1,94 (1,63)	20,2	14,6	65,2	82	1,23 (1,34)	8,5	6,1	85,4
	People have the choice whether they have a dominant sexual interest in children or not	89	2,20 (1,73)	20,3	15,7	64	82	1,54 (1,51)	12,2	7,3	80,5
Dangerousness	A person with a dominant sexual interest in children poses a danger to children.	89	4,58 (1,53)	74,2	12,4	13,3	82	3,71 (1,61)	56,1	19,5	24,4
	A person with a dominant sexual interest in children poses a danger to adolescents.	89	3,71 (1,74)	55	19,1	25,8	82	2,71 (1,67)	35,4	23,2	41,5
	A person with a dominant sexual interest in children poses a danger to adults.	89	2,74 (1,90)	28,1	13,5	58,4	82	1,67 (1,61)	18,2	8,5	73,2
Sexual Behavior	People with a dominant sexual interest in children have sexual contact with children.	89	2,12 (1,36)	14,6	31,5	53,9	82	1,55 (1,21)	3,7	24,4	72,0
	People with a dominant sexual interest in children are perverted sexual offenders.	89	2,48 (1,78)	34,8	14,6	50,6	82	2,22 (1,92)	25,6	17,1	57,3
	Sooner or later a dominant sexual interest in children will pave the way to child sexual abuse.	89	3,06 (1,84)	41,6	18,0	40,4	82	2,27 (1,70)	26,9	24,4	48,8
	People with a dominant sexual interest in children are able to control their sexual behavior towards children.	89	3,10 (1,54)	37,1	30,3	32,6	82	3,62 (1,44)	51,3	26,8	22,0
Affective reaction	When I think of a person with a dominant sexual interest in children, I feel fear.	89	2,96 (1,89)	43,8	15,7	40,4	82	2,62 (1,68)	37,8	22	40,2
	When I think of a person with a dominant sexual interest in children, I feel pity.	89	3,34 (1,86)	50,6	21,3	28,1	82	3,65 (1,57)	62,1	13,4	24,4
	When I think of a person with a dominant sexual interest in children, I feel anger.	89	3,49 (1,95)	56,2	16,9	27,0	82	2,60 (1,91)	34,2	17,1	48,8
	When I think of a person with a dominant sexual interest in children, I feel disgust.	89	4,46 (1,73)	74,1	10,1	15,7	82	3,60 (1,77)	57,4	15,9	26,8
Social Distance	I would have these people as friends.	89	1,97 (1,63)	17,9	22,5	49,6	82	2,72 (1,75)	36,6	18,3	45,1
	I would accept these people in my neighborhood.	89	2,24 (1,82)	25,9	20,2	53,9	82	3,10 (1,88)	42,7	22,0	35,4
	I would accept these people as colleagues at work.	89	2,78 (1,74)	33,7	27,0	39,3	82	3,39 (1,83)	58,6	18,3	23,2
	I would talk to them.	89	3,55 (1,72)	52,8	24,7	22,5	82	4,20 (1,72)	74,4	9,8	15,9
	These people should be locked away.	89	1,55 (1,48)	11,2	16,9	71,9	82	1,40 (1,57)	8,5	15,9	75,6
Changeability	These people should better be dead.	89	0,58 (1,09)	2,2	7,9	89,9	82	0,46 (1,27)	3,6	0	93,9
	My opinion on people with a dominant sexual interest in children cannot be changed	89	2,76 (1,59)	28,1	31,5	40,4	82	2,76 (1,63)	29,2	28,0	42,7
	There is nothing that I do not already know about people with a dominant sexual interest in children that could make me change my opinion.	89	2,15 (1,72)	17,9	20,2	61,8	82	2,23 (2,69)	20,7	20,7	58,5

Defined on a 7 point Likert scale (0-6) Agree: 4-6; Neutral: 3; Disagree: 0-2