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Children And News Consumption: Tailoring News Broadcasts For Young Audiences

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CHILDREN AND NEWS CONSUMPTION: TAILORING NEWS BROADCASTS FOR
YOUNG AUDIENCES

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2019

CHILDREN AND NEWS CONSUMPTION: TAILORING NEWS BROADCASTS FOR
YOUNG AUDIENCES

by

YVETTE VAN OIJEN

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Abstract

It is important for children to know what is going on in the world, but they should not get afraid of what they see in the news. The Dutch children television news show *Jeugdjournaal* makes the news more understandable and suitable for children by using strategies. The present study investigated *Jeugdjournaal* to discover how the show uses the consolation strategies by Van der Molen and De Vries (2003), and if they use any other strategies during tragedies to comfort children. Also, the show was investigated to find how they frame messages for children during all different news items. A media analysis was conducted on 40 episodes of the news show over the last 20 years, which were two episodes per year. In addition, a media analysis was conducted on the coverage of the entire month of November 2015, when the major tragedy of the Paris terroristic attacks happened. The results showed that *Jeugdjournaal* did a good job in using the consolation strategies during tragedies, however, they started to use new strategies over time. These new strategies are redirecting the focus of what happened and creating a more positive ending after heavy topic items. Implications for parents and producers are provided.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The attack on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001 shocked the whole world as one of the most well-covered acts of real-life violence. The event had an enormous political and emotional impact on the world. News reporters documented the complete violent sequence, ranging from the actual violent event about the aircraft hitting the towers to the profound physical and emotional consequences of the ruined buildings and devastated people. Given the worldwide news coverage of the tragedy and the overpowering video footage, it is not surprising that both children inside and outside the United States were affected by the events (Van der Molen & De Pundert, 2003). One consequence was that children were afraid that a terroristic event would also happen to them.

There has been a lot of research done on the effects of television news on children and the results are profound. Smith and Wilson (2002) found that news items make children really afraid, especially items about violent topics. They also argued that children experience more fear-related feelings and more concern for their personal safety than adolescents do. According to Cantor and Nathanson (1996), children find events on television frightening and they are afraid that something similar will happen to them. Gunter and McAleer (2005) argue that television violence viewing correlates positively with aggressive behavior by children. Cantor (1998) contends that violent television shows are the most important cause of fears and anxieties by children. Portrayals of violence and personal injuries are linked to long-term problems, such as sleep difficulties, aversions to certain animals, and fear of being alone in certain areas of the house. Riddle, Cantor, Byrne, and Gusé-Moyer (2012) found that 35.3% of the children become afraid after watching the news on television. As a result of these studies, it is clear that something needs to change in the content of television news programs and shows.

In my country, the Netherlands, as for many other countries, audiences are concerned as

to how news should be broadcast to children. Our government-produced news television show for children is a daily television news show for children aged 9-12 and it shows the news of that day. The show is called *Jeugdjournaal* and it is broadcasted daily at 7 pm. Their goal is to show children what is going on in the world and at the same time to protect them from any possible negative effects when they see scary news (<https://jeugdjournaal.nl>). Their task is to broadcast news to children, in a way that children can understand it and so that they know what is going on in the world. *Jeugdjournaal* selects news topics, such as tragedies, violence, accidents, or attacks, based on the news value (Nedad, 2011). The producers often debate whether they should cover violent news events or not (Gunter, Furnham & Griffiths, 2000). *Jeugdjournaal* searches for ways to present these topics to children, without making children afraid. Besides showing all the bad news in the world, *Jeugdjournaal* also shows light topics, like pleasant and funny news stories, for variety (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003).

It is important for children's development to know what is going on in the world, but children should not experience any negative effects, like fear, from watching television news. This Dutch children news show *Jeugdjournaal* is aired on the same channel as the Dutch adult news show. Both shows have access to the same resources and the same footage. *Jeugdjournaal* can make choices about what to broadcast and what to leave out when they cover news items, and they adjust the news so that it is more suitable for children. To date, there has only been one research study completed about this show. Van der Molen and De Vries (2003) looked at how the show covered the events of September 11 and what strategies they used to reduce any negative effects by children after watching the show. They came up with what they call consolation strategies, which were used during the events of September 11 to adjust the news for the children (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). The producers used these strategies to lighten the news and to make the news more understandable for children. *Jeugdjournaal* has continued this approach

to make sure that children do not become anxious, worried, or fearful of the daily news. This study of Van der Molen and de Vries (2003) was done a long time ago, so we do not know how *Jeugdjournaal* uses these strategies now, how they use the strategies during other tragedies, and if these are all the strategies that the show uses. In addition, it is useful to understand such strategies and how they might be used by other countries or media organizations to create news programs for children.

Although previous studies have examined the effects of television news on children, rarely have they examined how a television news show is produced. The producers of the show, however, have a huge impact on the children's reaction to a television show, according to Van der Molen and De Vries (2003). As such, in this study, I will examine how *Jeugdjournaal* broadcast news to children and how *Jeugdjournaal* changes their messages and uses certain strategies when they cover a tragedy. First, I will analyze how *Jeugdjournaal* used the consolation strategies over the last 20 years, to discover patterns of how *Jeugdjournaal* actually uses the consolation strategies and how this has changed over the years. Then, I will look at a specific month, November 2015, because a major tragedy happened during this month. There were several terrorist attacks all over Paris on the night of November 13, 2015. These attacks consisted of six coordinated outbreaks that in total killed 130 people and wounded another 413 individuals. This tragedy brought with it violence, destruction, and heartache through detailed broadcasting, which was conveyed to the Dutch community in television news broadcasts, social media, and other Internet news outlets. It was a shocking tragedy in the Netherlands because Paris is close to the Netherlands and many Dutch people have relatives there.

This study contributes to the literature by examining how the show frames messages and to also look at different tragedies. In addition, this study provides some useful information for parents. It is important for parents to know if they can let their children watch *Jeugdjournaal*

without being afraid that it includes too much violence. Finally, this study provides some practical implications for the producers of the show. Upon completion of this study, I will provide the producers with an overview of what strategies they use to cover topics about a tragedy. Also, this might be useful for producers in other countries who want to start a television news show for children like *Jeugdjournaal*.

The remainder of the thesis is organized into four chapters. In the next chapter, the literature review, I examine cultivation theory, the theoretical anchor for this study, and I also review previous research that has been done about the effects of television news on children. In the methodology chapter, I will explain my approach to collecting data. In the analysis chapter, I organize and code my data into major themes to advance my argument. In the last chapter, the conclusion, I will explore how my analysis of data supports my argument. Besides that, I will explain what contributions my study makes for both practical and theoretical purposes.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Learning about news events is essential for children's development to be aware of what is going on in the world, but children should not become afraid of what they see in the news.

Jeugdjournaal selects news topics based on its news value and covers heavy topics about violence, crimes, crises, and tragedies. To offset the possible harmful effects of a violent news topic, *Jeugdjournaal* applies several consolation strategies (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). Van der Molen and De Vries (2003) defined these consolation strategies after analyzing how *Jeugdjournaal* covered the events of 9/11. The consolation strategies include all strategies that are intended by the producers to adapt to the audience or to provide their viewers with a better framework to understand news information. Using these consolation strategies helps reduce children's fear. In this study, I propose to find out if *Jeugdjournaal* puts into action these strategies when a tragedy occurs, to help understand how the strategies are being used. In order to do so, first, I analyzed how *Jeugdjournaal* used the consolation strategies over the last 20 years, to discover patterns of how *Jeugdjournaal* actually uses the consolation strategies and how this has changed over the years. Then, I focused on one major tragedy; the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015. People in the Netherlands were really shocked by these attacks since Paris is in close proximity to the Netherlands. Many people were afraid that terroristic attacks like these in Paris could also happen in the Netherlands. This study explores how *Jeugdjournaal* framed the messages about these attacks and how they showed the news to the children. I investigated all the episodes of November 2015 to examine how *Jeugdjournaal* frames messages during other topics, such as human-interest topics, in order to see how this differs from covering a tragedy.

Government's role

In the Netherlands, there is a widespread belief that the government is responsible for

education. A stable society is impossible without a minimum degree of knowledge about what is happening in the world (Friedman, 1955). Education promotes a stable society and every child should receive an education. Children can receive this through their parents, their teachers at school, and also through television shows. The government in the Netherlands has a subsidy to spend on children's education, a part of this money is spent on televised news reports to educate children. Gunter and McAleer (2005) found that children between 7-12 years old show signs of mental maturity so that they can view and process news as well as draw conclusions from what they see on television. Wright, Huston, Murphy, St Peters, Pinon, Scantlin, and Kotler (2001) researched the relationship between television viewing for children, readiness, and vocabulary of children. They found that children who watched children-appropriate, informative shows had more academic skills later. They also found that the more informative shows children watch at an early age, the more informative shows they would watch when they are older. Another research project found that watching educational television designed for children resulted in better letter recognition and reading skills (Truglio, Huston, & Wright, 1986).

Several studies have shown that educational television shows are effective. This is a good reason for the Dutch government to invest in and produce *Jeugdjournaal*, but also in other educational shows. *Jeugdjournaal* is currently a government produced show. However, this is not just an issue in the Netherlands, but also in the United States and all other countries in the world. In the United States, PBS is partially supported by government funds; they produce similar educational television shows for children. Similar children news shows like the Dutch *Jeugdjournaal* could be on this channel. Since several studies have shown that educational television shows are so effective for children, governments around the world should support these kinds of programs.

Cultivation theory and agenda setting theory

It is important to understand children as a television audience. Often it is assumed that children are a passive audience while watching television. It is assumed that children are not like adults when it comes to television viewing. Children are not as critical, reflective, and self-aware as adults are. According to Heller (1982), this is just a way of thinking that was only based on behavioristic psychology during the 1950s and 1960s. It is a misleading description of the way that children watch television. Children's relationship with television is way more complex and interesting than people used to think. Emery (1975) stated that television viewing would make children more hyperactive rather than passive. Children view television as fun, exciting, and as finding out about the world (Palmer, 1986). Children from the age of eight know the shows they like best on television and they can make deliberate choices (Palmer, 1986). According to Alwitt, Anderson, Lorch, and Levin (1980), the child viewer does not passively incorporate content, but applies his or her own experience and understanding to that content. Children do most of their talk and acting out from what they see on television (Van der Molen & Bushman, 2008). They can make sense of what they see on television, and they do talk a lot with peers about what they saw on television. It provides an important basis of shared experience for children.

According to Wilson and Smith (1998), children need three cognitive skills to make sense of television news. First, children need to have the ability to understand verbally presented information. Children's limited language skills can make it difficult for them to comprehend news stories. Second, children need to have the ability to distinguish fantasy from reality. The last skill involves a shift from perceptual to conceptual processing of information. Children need to have the ability to group items based on their conceptual properties. Even when children have these skills to understand the news, there is still a big chance that they will get scared of what they see in the news. Cultivation theorists (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner & Gross, 1976) believe that

heavy television viewers tend to see the world in ways that reflect social reality as presented on television. Cultivation theory examines the effects of television consumption on viewers' perceptions of diverse social phenomena (Shrum, Wyer, & O'Guinn, 1998). Shrum and Bischak (2001) found that those who heavily watched television tend to perceive that violence and crime are more prevalent in the real world than lighter viewers. Nabi and Sullivan (2001) state that television can shape distorted attitudes toward the world. According to Potter (1991), there are two types of cultivation effects: first-order cultivation effects and second-order cultivation effects. First-order cultivation effects are the extent that people think that what they watch on television can also happen to them. Second-order cultivation effects are the values and beliefs people have after watching certain things on television. These cultivation effects can also occur with children. In an era of around-the-clock television, opportunities for children to be exposed to disturbing content are ever increasing.

It is important for a show like *Jeugdjournaal* to make sure that children see not as much disturbing content, and if they do, that the content is child-friendly. The news producers should understand the target audience to purposefully shape an agenda of appropriate stories (Cottle, 1993). Media agenda setting theory posits that the media shape public priorities (Ader, 1995). The media have the ability to influence what the target audience gets to see in the media. Zucker (1978) argued that the fewer experiences people have with a topic, the more they rely on the media for information about that topic. What people get to see in the media is bounded by the decision of the news producers. The media have a big influence on how people think about certain topics and issues. This is also the case for children, since television news shows might be the only source from where they get certain information (Matthews, 2009). According to Strohmaier (2007), the producers of children's news have the responsibility to protect the children from the realities of scary news. They need to be aware of the effects they have on

children's fears. The producers need to make selections during their news-making process and they need to have good reasons for presenting sensitive news topics, such as violence and crime (Prince, 2004). Making these selections is called newsgathering, an important process where decisions are made on resources in the news bulletin (Schlesinger, 1990). News producers of *Jeugdjournaal* need to be aware of their role and they can use certain strategies to make the news more suitable for the children, which will be explained later. In the next section, I will talk briefly about the negative effects that television news can have on children.

Effects on children

Cantor (1998) concludes in her book about children and television that television shows are the most important cause of fears and anxieties by children. Portrayals of violence and personal injuries are linked to long-term problems, such as sleep difficulties, aversions to certain animals, and fear of swimming or of being alone in certain areas of the house. Gunter and McAleer (2005) argue that television violence viewing correlates positively with aggressive behavior by children. Children who are heavy viewers of television news or regular programs start thinking that violence is normal. For example, Smith and Wilson (2002) found that news has a huge influence on children's feelings and that children get afraid after watching news items. In particular, children between 10-11 years old are more likely to be frightened by the news and perceive themselves personally vulnerable when there is a news item about something that happened locally. Riddle, Cantor, Byrne, and Gusé-Moyer (2012) investigated children's fear responses to everyday exposure to the news. They found that 35.3% of the children get afraid after watching the news on television. The results of this research stated that children are most afraid when they see natural disasters, kidnappings, wars and burglaries on television. Children up to 13 years old are most afraid of kidnappings, but this depends on age and the amount of

television use (Wilson, Martins & Marske, 2005). Smith and Wilson (2002) found that children experience more fright-related feelings and more concern for their personal safety than adolescents do. In addition, children who are heavy viewers of television news are more frightened than children who do not watch a lot of television. Van der Molen and Bushman (2008) stated that fear-reactions of children are larger for younger children, but this also depends on the amount of how much they watch television shows. Cantor and Nathanson (1996) found that children find events on television scary and real. Children are afraid that something similar will happen to them. For example, when they see a murder on television, they have real fears that this will happen to them too.

During the last ten years, there was more violence in television news all around the world (Buijzen & Van der Molen, 2007). *Jeugdjournaal* seeks to cover news related to violence in consideration of children's fear to avoid these fears as much as possible. They use consolation strategies to avoid this, which will be explained in the next section.

Consolation strategies

Since we know that children often get afraid of what they see on television, it is important for *Jeugdjournaal* to use strategies to make the news less scary. Using strategies is a way of communicating the news to children. Van der Molen and De Vries (2003) investigated how *Jeugdjournaal* covered the news of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center. They followed the news that whole week and examined how *Jeugdjournaal* showed this news to the children. Van der Molen and De Vries (2003) found that consolation strategies were used to convey the terrible news of this terrorist attack to the audience of children. Van der Molen and De Vries (2003) came up with the term consolation strategies, and argued that consolation strategies were all the different strategies that *Jeugdjournaal* used to make the news more

suitable for the children and to make sure that children experience less anxiety. Consolation strategies were also used to prevent cultivation effects by making the news more understandable and less heavy for children. According to Van der Molen and De Vries (2003), there are three categories with more subcategories, which will be explained below.

The first category is consolation strategies applied at the program level, which include two subcategories. The first subcategory is the avoidance of violent topics. Topics that are too scary are left out to protect the children. The other subcategory is a formula called the sandwich formula. The sandwich formula means that heavy and light topics are alternated, so after a violent topic there is a light topic. Research suggests that this leads to fewer fears and anxieties for children (Van der Molen & Pundert, 2003). Also, producers believe that light items may take the weight off previous negative information (De Vries, 2002). An example of the sandwich formula is that the news show first covers a heavy topic about a war, and after this they cover a light topic about animals.

The second category is the consolation strategies applied to the news item itself. When *Jeugdjournaal* needs to cover a violent topic, these are strategies they can use to make it less scary. There are three subcategories. The first subcategory to reduce fear is supplementing distressing news with explanations from experts. Experts, such as researchers or psychologists, explain to children that it is normal to be scared or sad about this event and that they are not the only ones who have such feelings. They also tell the children that this is a rare event and that there is little chance that this would happen to them. The second subcategory is presenting the news from the kids' perspective. News items will be adjusted so that the news will be easier to understand. Also, certain shots will be avoided, like close shots. The third subcategory is sharing the reaction from other children. News can sound less scary when another child discusses the news (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). *Jeugdjournaal* often interviews other children on what

they think about the topic. By doing this, other children see how their peers deal with this, and they can handle it easier because they know they are not the only scared one. These strategies will help to avoid first-order cultivation effects: the extent that children think that what they watch on television can also happen to them.

Third, there are consolation strategies for the shot level, and they can be divided into four subcategories. Strategies at this level are important because many children have mentioned that violent shots are what make them fearful (Van der Molen, Valkenburg, & Peeters, 2002). The first subcategory is avoiding violent shots. To do this, another shot or image can be chosen that is less violent. This is done because children can remember the violent shots and will get scared every time they recollect the images (Riddle et al. 2012). The second subcategory is using a more distant shot when something bad happens. Mattheys (2009) states that children are less scared when it is recorded from a far away distance. The third subcategory is reducing the sound volume. And finally, the last subcategory is avoiding the repetition of scary shots (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003).

All these categories are adjustments made for children. For example, in the news for adults they will show certain shots, but for children these shots will be left out. The consolation strategies are important strategies that are used by *Jeugdjournaal* to make the news more suitable for children. However, Van der Molen and De Vries (2003) only investigated the news coverage of one week, while the actual news coverage of 9/11 went on for a very long time. They found these consolation strategies being used in that one particular week, but this is just a short window of news coverage. It is unknown if and how *Jeugdjournaal* uses these consolation strategies during other times.

Cultural differences in news reporting

There are many cultural differences in news reporting around the world. Often, there is a tendency in the literature to talk about television news in general. However, most research is based on single-country studies. According to Livingstone (2003), research on television news falls prey to the assumption that what holds in one country will also hold anywhere else. Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) call this 'naïve universalism'. Therefore, it is important to look at the differences in news reporting among countries. In general, European news coverage focuses a lot on offering in-depth context to news stories and it provides all the facts of the news events (Swanson & Mancini, 1996). News coverage also tends to give politicians a lot of airtime, significantly more than television news in the United States does (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2010). The United States focuses more on making the news events personalized, providing news coverage devoid of context, and focusing less on the background to news stories (Dimitrova, 2006). The television news in the United States also offers viewers fewer reasons for particular problems that are mentioned in the news, and it offers less information about possible solutions to these problems (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2005). The news coverage in the United States relies more on the presence of a journalist talking to the camera on location, the presence of an anchor interview of the journalist covering the story live on location, and the inclusion of an anchor interview of a journalist or news commentator in the studio (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2010). In other words, the audiences of television news in the United States are more dependent upon the journalists and their framing. European news coverage has a less journalist-centered television news reporting style (Esser, 2008). European news coverage focuses more on showing actual footage of what happened at the events (Meinhof, 1994). It is considered normal to show all the available footage, where in the United States, particular footage is often considered inappropriate. According to Hallin (1989), for U.S. American news coverage, it is normal to show no more than

a quick shot of someone who is wounded. Instead of showing footage of what happened, the news presenter explains what happened. Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2010) concluded, based on their study, that television news programs in the United States offer only limited opportunities for their audiences to learn about and understand current affairs in general and foreign affairs in particular. It is likely that the United States television news, at least compared to the European television news, provides its audiences with only limited opportunities to learn from the news. In addition, the United States has often been criticized for being too focused on domestic affairs, rather than foreign affairs. Rössler (2004) found that television news shows in the United States devote significantly less attention to foreign news than European television news shows. According to Graber (2006), this is found on all dominant US television channels. European television news shows focus on a lot of foreign news, from all over the world.

Gaps in the literature

A lot of research has been done about the effects of television news on children, but rarely have they examined how a television news show is produced. The producers of the show, however, have a huge impact on the children's reaction to a television show (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). Van der Molen and De Vries (2003) demonstrate how *Jeugdjournaal* has used consolation strategies to prevent children's fear of the news and we know how *Jeugdjournaal* used these strategies during the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). However, there are still some gaps in the literature that require more research. It is unknown how *Jeugdjournaal* covered the news during other tragedies and if this differs from the strategies used during the coverage of September 11. Also, we do not know how *Jeugdjournaal* covers the news during other topics, like human-interest topics. So, there are certain gaps in the literature about this topic, and my study will accommodate those gaps. My

research questions for this study, then, are:

RQ1: How does *Jeugdjournaal* frame messages for children?

RQ2: In covering a crisis or tragedy, how do messages for children on *Jeugdjournaal* change?

Chapter 3: Methodology

To discover how *Jeugdjournaal* uses the consolation strategies during another tragedy and how they frame messages during all the news items, I conducted a media analysis; such an approach goes beyond just studying the content of media; it makes the researcher more aware of the process, meanings, and emphases reflected in the content (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). Studying the frequency and pattern of messages can tell us what is happening to audience members. Episodes of *Jeugdjournaal* are about 20 minutes long and consist of 5 to 7 news items. Usually, one of these news items is about a heavy topic, like a tragedy, and all the other news items are about more light topics, for example about animals, sports, or events. I have access to a database with all the episodes of the show. In the results section, I will sometimes use direct quotes from the show. These quotes are translated by me from Dutch into English.

First, I analyzed how *Jeugdjournaal* used the consolation strategies over the years, to discover patterns of how *Jeugdjournaal* actually uses the consolation strategies and how this has changed over the years. I looked at how *Jeugdjournaal* has been using the consolation strategies over the last 20 years. For this, I was building off the consolation strategies of Van der Molen and De Vries (2003) to see how the show uses these strategies, and to see what new strategies the show used that were not part of the original consolation strategies. To determine patterns, I watched 40 episodes of the news show over these last 20 years, which was two episodes per year and these episodes were randomly selected. These 40 episodes were about 13 hours of television. I made notes and coded for specific patterns while watching all the episodes about what topics they covered and how the show used the consolation strategy. These results give a good overview of how *Jeugdjournaal* used all the strategies over the years, and this will be helpful to understand the various consolation strategies.

Then, I investigated one major tragedy and its subsequent news coverage: the Paris terrorist attacks of November 2015. The reason why I chose this month is that a big tragedy occurred in this month. There were several terroristic attacks in Paris and these attacks consisted of six coordinated outbreaks that in total killed 130 people and wounded another 413 individuals. This tragedy brought with it violence, destruction, and heartache through detailed broadcasting, which was conveyed to the Dutch community in television news broadcasts, social media, and other Internet news outlets. It was a shocking tragedy in the Netherlands because Paris is close to the Netherlands and many Dutch people have relatives there. For this reason, November 2015 is an interesting month to analyze, since I know for sure that this month addressed a big tragedy, and this month also covered other topics. I analyzed all the episodes of November 2015 in order to see how the show covered the news about the Paris attacks, and to find out how *Jeugdjournaal* frames messages during other topics and how this differs from the coverage of a tragedy. Here I also building off of the consolation strategies of Van der Molen and De Vries (2003). There are 30 episodes during November 2015 and this includes about 10 total hours of television. This serves as a representative sample to learn about how *Jeugdjournaal* frames messages in general and how their messages change when covering a tragedy (Fursich, 2009). I watched all the episodes on my laptop, so I was able to pause and stop the episode whenever needed. I made notes while watching the episodes and looked especially for the kind of topic they covered, how they used the consolation strategies, and if they used any other strategies. After watching all the episodes, I analyzed my notes in order to find patterns. I also had to re-watch some episodes to make sure I did not miss anything important.

Since the Paris attacks are 14 years after the September 11 attack, it is important to compare the uses of consolation strategies during these two tragedies in order to better understand how consolation strategies might have been adapted and changed. This allowed me to

see how *Jeugdjournaal* covered the news during other tragedies and if their use of consolation strategies has changed since then.

Chapter 4: Analysis of data

In this chapter, I will first discuss my results about the regular news coverage in the past 20 years. Then, I will discuss my results about the November 2015 Paris terroristic attacks.

Regular News Coverage in the Past 20 Years

In this section of the analysis, I analyze my data on how *Jeugdjournaal* used the consolation strategies over the past 20 years. These results provide a good overview of how *Jeugdjournaal* used various strategies. I have organized my data into four major themes. First, the three categories of the consolation strategies, namely the consolation strategies at the program level used in the show, the consolation strategies at the news item level used in the show, and the consolation strategies at the shot level used in the show. My last theme was other strategies that were not part of the original consolation strategies by Van der Molen and De Vries (2003).

Consolation strategies at the program level. Strategies on this level are the avoidance of violent topics and using the sandwich formula (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). The sandwich formula means that heavy and light topics will be alternated, so after a violent topic they will have a light topic. Research suggests that this leads to fewer fears and anxieties for children (Van der Molen & Pundert, 2003). Also, producers believe that light items may take the weight off previous negative information (De Vries, 2002). Since I analyzed the episodes from 1998 until 2018, I divided this into two periods of ten years each (1998 until 2008, and 2009 until 2018). In the first ten years, *Jeugdjournaal* covered fewer violent topics, from the episodes that I analyzed. Where they covered 27 violent topics in the first ten years in the episodes analyzed, they covered only 21 violent topics in the last ten years. Violent topics vary from accidents, murders, wars, kidnappings, earthquakes, fires, etcetera. In the first ten years, in every episode they covered at

least one violent topic, while in the last ten years some episodes did not cover any violent topics. Where they covered more violent topics in the first ten years, they also explained the topics in complex ways, which I will discuss in the next section.

The second strategy, using the sandwich formula, was used a lot in both periods. It seems like *Jeugdjournaal* had already been aware of this formula since 1998. After they covered a violent topic, they covered an easy and/or light topic to make the children relax more and let them think about something nicer. For example, on January 15, 2001, they covered a news item about a huge fireworks disaster. The fireworks disaster was in Enschede, a city in the Netherlands. The news presenter explained that 22 people died in this disaster, and he also mentioned that this disaster could have been prevented. It was a big tragedy, especially since it was someone's fault. After this item, they had a topic about the yearly Tina festival, a Dutch festival for children under 18 years, where a lot of famous Dutch singers perform. The story featured happy music about a positive topic, to promote a less stressful story for kids. In another example, on May 8, 2014, they covered a long topic about the kidnapping of a young girl in Nigeria who was kidnapped and was still missing. It was a sad topic, and *Jeugdjournaal* used interviews with people in Nigeria who knew the girl, and they were all crying. One woman said: "I know this little girl and her family. This is horrible. My prayers go to her and her family." After this topic, *Jeugdjournaal* covered a light topic about dinosaurs. A new species had been discovered. *Jeugdjournaal* made the story funny by showing some funny pictures about the new species.

Jeugdjournaal avoided violent topics more in the last ten years than in the first ten years. This is a move in a positive direction because, according to Van der Molen and De Vries (2003), covering less violent topics helps to reduce children's anxiety. Also, covering less violent topics helps to reduce cultivation effects (Potter, 1991). Children who watch a lot of television can think

that what they watch on television can also happen to them. The more violence they watch on television, the more likely they are to experience the cultivation effects. In addition, *Jeugdjournaal* used the sandwich formula a lot in this second period as well, which reduces the emotional impact on children (De Vries, 2002).

Consolation strategies at the news item level. Strategies used at this level are explanations from experts, sharing the reaction from other children, and presenting the news from the kids' perspective (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). These strategies help to avoid first-order cultivation effects, the extent that children think that what they watch on television can also happen to them. When *Jeugdjournaal* needs to cover a violent topic, these are strategies they can use to make it less scary. Interviews with experts and with children were used a lot in the last ten years. However, in the first ten years, they did not use many interviews with experts or with children during items about violent topics. The first time they interviewed children about a violent topic was in 2004, and the first time they interviewed an expert about a violent topic was in 2005. So from 1998 until 2004, *Jeugdjournaal* never used one of these strategies. In the first ten years, they interviewed children only five times and experts only three times in the episodes that I analyzed. This increased a lot in the last ten years. In total, they used interviews with children nine times, and interviews with experts twelve times. However, since I only analyzed two episodes each year, I do not want to say that this is a drastic change, since it can be coincidental.

When experts were interviewed, the show tried to reduce the children's fear. They explained that there is a little chance that this can happen to the children, or they mentioned that it is normal to be scared (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). For example, on January 19, 2007, there was a big fight between a member of the parliament and citizens. This fight happened

during a congress in Taiwan. An expert was interviewed and said: “There is no reason to be scared, because something like this will never happen in the Netherlands.” Another example, on May 8, 2013, *Jeugdjournaal* covered a topic about two Dutch boys who had been missing for days already. The boys were siblings of 7 and 9 years old. *Jeugdjournaal* explained the case and showed pictures of the boys. It was a sad story, since their dad had committed suicide not too long ago, and now his two sons were missing. An expert was interviewed and said: “It is okay to be afraid. I spoke to a lot of children and they are all really worried about this situation. But the police are doing everything in their power to find these boys.” He and his colleagues even opened an online blog where children could respond to this situation and talk to each other about it. One last example, on January 18, 2005, a Dutch politician was murdered because of his negative opinions towards Islam. There was also an attempted murder on his coworker who shared the same opinions. The coworker had gone into hiding, since she did not feel safe. An expert was interviewed and said: “This is a really rare event. It has never happened before in the Netherlands that someone was murdered because of his opinion, and it also has never happened before that someone is threatened with death. We feel sorry for the family of Ali, and hope that something like this will never happen again.”

Children were being interviewed a lot as well. The presentation of personal experiences by children may make certain news events more tangible (Van der Molen, Valkenburg, & Peeters, 2002). To a child viewer, a shocking event may be better understood when it is explained by their peers, because such a personal account might prevent children from fantasizing too much about what might have happened, something that may be scarier than hearing what really happened. For example, on January 19, 2007, there was a huge windstorm in the Netherlands that killed four people and continued to persist for even longer. *Jeugdjournaal* interviewed children about their experiences with the storm and about how scared they were. One child said: “I am

really scared. The wind blew the roof of my friend's house off and it hit a woman. She is in the hospital now." Another example, on May 8, 2015, there was an earthquake in Nepal that killed thousands of people. The survivors of the earthquake needed a lot of help since the earthquake destroyed everything. *Jeugdjournaal* interviewed children at a primary school in the Netherlands. Their teacher talked a lot about the earthquake, so the children in the class knew what was going on in Nepal then. The children explained during the interviews what happened and they also mentioned that they were collecting money for the children in Nepal. According to Van der Molen and De Vries (2003), the news sounds less scary when children tell it.

The last strategy at this level is presenting the news from a kids' perspective. *Jeugdjournaal* can adjust news items so that the news will be easier to understand for children (Van der Molen & De Vries). According to Wilson and Smith (1998), children need to have the ability to understand verbally presented information. Children's limited language skills can make it difficult for them to comprehend news stories. *Jeugdjournaal* can make it easier for the children by explaining the topics in a more simple and understandable fashion. Most of the time, the news presenter explained what happened. In the first couple of years analyzed in this paper, I noticed that the explanations were not really clear. For example, on October 16, 1998, *Jeugdjournaal* presented an item about the war in Kosovo. They tried to explain what the war was about, but even I did not understand what they were saying. Over the years, they have clearly improved this. They started to use images of the situation to explain what was happening. The first time I saw this was on May 6, 2004. There was an item about people being tortured in Iraq. It was a really sad item, but *Jeugdjournaal* did a good job of explaining why people were being tortured and explaining more about the situation in Iraq. In the last ten years, they used a clear explanation every time that they covered a violent topic. For example, on May 8, 2013, *Jeugdjournaal* covered an item about the war in Syria. The news presenter explained this war

really well, he used clear words, and used images to clarify the situation more. Most of the time, the news presenter provided this explanation, but sometimes someone else who was involved in the situation explained it.

Another interesting aspect during the first ten years of this show is that a lot of interviews from other news programs were used. In the first ten years, *Jeugdjournaal* did not do a lot of interviews by themselves, relying instead on partner organizations to provide interviews. In the last ten years, almost all the interviews they showed were interviews that they did themselves. It seemed like they went more on the road to places all over the Netherlands to do the interviews. Furthermore, *Jeugdjournaal* sometimes ended a violent news item by saying that the situation is still not resolved, especially during the first ten years of analysis. For example, on January 15, 2001, *Jeugdjournaal* talked about the earthquake in El Salvador. The earthquake had killed a lot of people and also a lot of other people were missing. At the end of this news item, the news presenter said that it was still not going well with the survivors of the earthquake, because the situation had not got any better and there were not a lot of opportunities for aid organizations to come and help since all the roads were blocked. They implied that the survivors would still be suffering for a long time. It is notable that *Jeugdjournaal* did this less frequently in the last ten years; they often ended with a positive conclusion. For example, on January 19, 2011, there was a huge fire at a company in the Netherlands. During the item, the news presenter explained that the fire happened at a chemical company, but that there was no environmental pollution because of the fire. Then they ended the item with more positive news: the whole fire had been extinguished and the employees could go back to work.

Jeugdjournaal infrequently used all of these three strategies in the first ten years, though in the last ten years, they started to utilize these strategies more effectively and more frequently. It is also clear that they improved these strategies a lot. *Jeugdjournaal* went a lot on the road and

interviewed children and experts all over the Netherlands. They also explained the information in the news items very clearly and thoroughly. These more effective strategies help children to be less scared and reduce cultivation effects (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). It is also interesting that *Jeugdjournaal* tried to end news items more with a positive ending, instead of a negative ending as they did in the first ten years of the analysis period. This is a strategy they used that was not part of the consolation strategies discussed previously.

Consolation strategies at the shot level. Strategies at this level include: avoiding violent shots, using a more distant shot when something bad happens, reducing the sound volume, and avoiding the repetition of scary shots (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). Strategies at this level are important because many children have mentioned that violent shots are what cause them to become fearful (Van der Molen, et al. 2002). It is clear that *Jeugdjournaal* did not use these consolation strategies in the first ten years. A lot of violent shots were used, and even I was afraid of some shots. A couple of examples: on October 16, 1998, there was an item about the war in Kosovo. During this item, *Jeugdjournaal* showed some close and scary shots of soldiers using their guns in this war. On January 15, 2001, *Jeugdjournaal* reported on a fireworks disaster and showed some close shots of the fire and also of the survivors. The shots seemed like they would be scary to see for children of the target audience age. Later in this same episode, they covered a topic about an earthquake in El Salvador, and they showed images of dead children, which would be shocking for children to see. They also showed shots of rubble after the earthquake. On January 2002, *Jeugdjournaal* covered an item about a forest fire in Australia. They showed a shot where a child was really close to the fire, and they also showed shots of the fire that was still going on.

Fortunately, in the latter ten years period, the producers seemed to use these consolation

strategies way more often. The first strategy is the avoidance of violent shots. According to Van der Molen and De Pundert (2003), most children's news shows usually make an effort to explain the seriousness of an event without showing the most graphic film footage in an attempt to prevent children from getting too upset by certain news topics, a strategy used frequently in the second ten year period. I observed that often *Jeugdjournaal* did not show any violent shots, but instead they showed other shots to change the focus, further explained in the following section. The second strategy at this level is to use a more distant shot when something bad happens. I did not see *Jeugdjournaal* doing this until 2004. Since then, it was a much more common strategy. For example, on January 20, 2004, a cargo ship turned over in Norway and all crewmembers died. The news presenter explained that it was unknown how the ship turned over. He also mentioned that there were Dutch people on the ship. Then *Jeugdjournaal* showed shots of this ship, but it is from a far distance. On May 8, 2007, there were forest fires in Hollywood and the fire department was trying to get all the fires under control. *Jeugdjournaal* used shots of these fires, but it is from a far distance; it did not look really scary from that far away. On May 8, 2010, there was a big oil explosion in the United States. *Jeugdjournaal* showed shots of this explosion from a far distance, thereby diminishing the fear factor. The third strategy at this level is reducing the sound volume. I noticed that *Jeugdjournaal* reduced the sound volume on January 19, 2007, where they covered an item about a huge windstorm. They showed shots of people screaming when it happened, but it was clear that they reduced the sound volume of those people screaming. In other episodes, it was harder to determine if this strategy was used, because it is difficult to measure or know who was adjusting the sound volume, the show itself, or how the sound emerged in footage captured. The last strategy is avoiding the repetition of scary shots. During all the 20 years, I did not see *Jeugdjournaal* repeating any scary shots; shots that might evoke fear were only used one time in all the episodes analyzed.

Overall, the show avoided violent shots, used a more distant shot when something bad happened, and reduced the sound volume a lot more in the last ten years than in the first ten years. In the first ten years, the shots used were often shocking. I believe *Jeugdjournaal* used the same shots as the television channel used for their adult news show. The program may have had their camera people participate in training on how to film shots more suitable for children. It seems they were learning as they progressed. *Jeugdjournaal* avoided the repetition of scary shots a lot from the beginning already and kept doing this over the years. According to Van der Molen, et al. (2002), shots are what make children most afraid. It is good that the shows avoided violent shots and used shots from a further distance, since this can reduce any possible cultivation effects (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). It was also interesting to see that *Jeugdjournaal* often changed the focus of the news item by using other shots. This strategy is not part of the consolation strategies, but may also be a good strategy to reduce children's fear, which I will explain in the below section.

Other strategies: Redirecting Focus & Creating Positive Endings. The previous three themes were themes that I expected to find, based on previous research. However, there were also other strategies that I found in my analysis that were not part of the original consolation strategies by Van der Molen and De Vries (2003) and that have not been discussed in any previous research papers. First of all, one important, new strategy is that the show often changed the focus of the news item during a tragedy. I noticed that often *Jeugdjournaal* did not show any violent shots, but instead they showed other shots to change the focus. For example, on May 9, 2009, *Jeugdjournaal* covered an item about a huge forest fire in Australia. A lot of people and animals died during this fire. *Jeugdjournaal* clearly avoided any violent shots while covering this item. Instead, they showed shots of veterinarians helping hurting animals. They also interviewed a

veterinarian about what happened to all the animals, and he gave advice about how to help an animal when you find a hurt animal. So instead of using scary shots of the fire, or talking too much about the fire, *Jeugdjournaal* redirected the focus and focused more on helping the hurting animals. This makes it less scary, but they still provided information about the forest fire, so the children still knew what was happening. In another example, on January 19, 2017, there was an avalanche in Italy, in which a lot of people died and a lot of buildings collapsed. *Jeugdjournaal* featured an interview with the minister of Italy and also with an expert who explained how this had happened. Then *Jeugdjournaal* chose to use shots of people who were clearing the snow from the streets, instead of using any shots of the avalanche or of the collapsed buildings. So instead of using scary shots of the avalanche, they redirected the focus and addressed something less scary. This is an interesting story angle that directed attention to a positive action of snow clearing, and it still provided information about the avalanche. *Jeugdjournaal* repeatedly used this strategy over the last ten years.

Another strategy that I found during my analysis that is not a part of established consolation strategies is to end a news item with a positive ending. In the first ten years of my analysis, *Jeugdjournaal* often ended a news item with a negative ending. For example, on October 16, 1998, during the news item about the war in Kosovo, *Jeugdjournaal* ended their story by mentioning that they expected to have new bombardments in the next couple of days. This could make children in the audience feel scared and unsettled about what would happen to people in Kosovo, concluding with a feeling of fear rather than a more hopeful outlook. In another example, on January 12, 2002, during the item about the forest fires in Australia, *Jeugdjournaal* ended by saying that it could take a long while until all the fires would be extinguished. In my analysis, it became clear that the show avoided these negative endings in the last ten years and turned to more positive endings. For example, on January 19, 2007, there was

an item about a huge windstorm in the Netherlands. Some people ended up in the hospital because of this storm. *Jeugdjournaal* chose to end the story with a positive ending. They concluded by noting that the storm was over, it was not expected to come back, and that all the people in the hospital would recover soon. On January 19, 2009, there was news coverage about a war in the Gaza strip. *Jeugdjournaal*'s journalists explained a lot about this war and then they interviewed experts to explain more. They ended the item with some really good news: there would be a ceasefire agreement. *Jeugdjournaal* also showed some shots of children there who were happy with the ceasefire. *Jeugdjournaal* also covered an item about an earthquake in Haiti on January 19, 2010. The earthquake was very strong which led to a lot of chaos, and left people without access to food, water, and shelter. Even though this story conveyed terrible and sad news, *Jeugdjournaal* ended the item by saying that auxiliaries were on their way to help, and many helicopters were planning to bring food to help the survivors. In one last example, on May 8, 2014, there was an item about the girl in Nigeria that had been kidnapped. *Jeugdjournaal* concluded by mentioning that the Nigerian government was doing everything in their power to find the girl, and even other countries were helping too.

These two strategies could be added to the consolation strategies since they are both useful ways to reduce children's fear, while still communicating necessary information about tragedies. Also, both strategies were used to make the news more suitable for children. They would probably not use these strategies in the adult news show in the same way, as such audiences can cope with terrible events more easily than children can process them.

November 2015 Paris terroristic attacks

After providing this overview of how *Jeugdjournaal* used their different strategies over the past twenty years, I will now zoom in on the month of November 2015. In this section, I will

organize my data of all the episodes of November 2015 into the same four themes to advance my argument about what strategies the show uses to cover tragedies. But before this, I will explain what topics the show covered during this whole month, including the light topics, and how the show covers these items about light topics.

Coverage November 2015. During the whole month of November 2015, *Jeugdjournaal* covered 134 news items in total. 114 news items of the 134 in total were considered light topics. This means that these topics were not considered tragedies, covering stories related to animals, famous people, sports, social media, new buildings, music, technology, games, and events. The items about these light topics were really short compared to the items about heavy topics. Whereas the heavy topic news items ranged from 2 minutes and 15 seconds to 7 minutes and 2 seconds, the light topic items ranged from 0 minutes and 25 seconds to 3 minutes and 53 seconds. Per episode, *Jeugdjournaal* covered five to seven news events in total. Usually, one of these was a heavy topic news item, while all the others were light news stories. Most of the time, a light topic news item started with the news presenter talking about the topic. He or she introduced the topic, often by just generally explaining what the topic was about. After this introduction, they switched to footage of the event, and sometimes they interviewed someone about the topic. Also, sometimes they used a lot of happy background music as a mechanism to portray the light mood of the story. I will provide some examples to show how these items are structured. For example, on November 2, 2015, *Jeugdjournaal* covered an item about Robin van Persie, who is a famous soccer player in the Netherlands. The coverage started with the news presenter talking about him, and later he kept on talking while footage of Robin van Persie was shown. In another example, on November 4, 2015, there was a story about robots. Robots had been chosen as the best toy of the year for children. The news presenter started the item by talking about the contest, and then the

coverage switched to footage of children in a classroom playing with robots. Also, some of these children were being interviewed about their opinions about the robots. At the end of the item, they showed again footage of the children in the classroom playing with the robots, with happy music in the background. All the light topic items are structured in this fashion. *Jeugdjournaal* covered significantly more light topics in a short, easily digestible format than an adult news show would (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003).

The producers of *Jeugdjournaal* also covered a lot of light topic news items because it probably takes the weight off previous heavy topics (De Vries, 2002). However, I realized that *Jeugdjournaal* also used these light topics as a form of education. It seems that *Jeugdjournaal* was trying to educate children during these light topics in a variety of ways. During most light topic news items, they do not just mention what is going on, but they also explain aspects of the topic in a way that the children can learn something from it. For example, on November 6, 2015, there was an item about the Pope. The reason for this story was that a Dutch boy had won a contest, and his prize was to interview the Pope. *Jeugdjournaal* showed footage of the Dutch boy interviewing the Pope. *Jeugdjournaal* also explained in detail who the Pope is and what he does, in order to educate audiences a little bit more than the mere event of the contest winner interviewing the Pope. In another example, on November 10, 2015, there was an item about SeaWorld. *Jeugdjournaal* said that SeaWorld was planning to stop their killer whale shows, since they received a lot of criticism about the shows. *Jeugdjournaal* used this news item to explain what killer whales are, and why the shows may be bad for the whales. In one last example, on November 25, 2015, there was an item about Suriname, since they had a public holiday that day. They were celebrating that exactly 40 years ago, they became independent from the Netherlands. *Jeugdjournaal* showed footage of Surinamese celebrating this day, but they also used this opportunity to talk about Suriname; what kind of culture it is, what people live there, and what

nation it is. In addition to the educational part, *Jeugdjournaal* also used some of these light topic items as a form of entertainment. Often there was some happy background music during the light topic items, and most light topic items were about a fun topic. This entertainment aspect makes it fun for children to watch the show, while also learning about global politics, religions, cultures, and geographies.

In the next sections, I will explain how *Jeugdjournaal* covered heavy topics during this month, and to what extent they used the consolation strategies here.

Consolation strategies at the program level. Strategies at this level are the avoidance of violent topics and using the sandwich formula (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). The sandwich formula means that heavy and light topics are alternated. According to Van der Molen and Pundert (2003), this alteration will lead to fewer fears and anxieties for children. Also, producers believe that light items may take the weight off previous negative information (De Vries, 2002). I analyzed all the episodes of November 2015, and since a major tragedy happened in this month, the show had to cover this violent topic in the news, and it was impossible for *Jeugdjournaal* to avoid talking about this event. In total, *Jeugdjournaal* covered twenty items in which violence was a central theme during November 2015, and six of these were about the Paris attacks. In addition, another four items were about Brussels, where the police were afraid of another terroristic attack after what happened in Paris. The remaining ten items were about several accidents, fires, a hurricane, an earthquake, and a murder. The six items about the Paris attacks were covered from November 14 until November 20. These were the six consecutive days after the attack on the night of November 13. It is interesting that they only covered six items about the Paris attacks, since usually for an event like this, an adult news show can go on for a long time about it (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). So six days in a row, *Jeugdjournaal* spent a few

minutes discussing this tragedy. The stories discussed what exactly happened in Paris, including interviews with experts and children, the aftermath of the tragedy, information about the perpetrators of the shootings, a commemoration of the tragedy, the killing of the perpetrators, and an item about how children coped with this tragedy. Then, starting on November 21, there were four items about Brussels. In Brussels, police had reasons to believe that another terroristic attack would be carried out. The four items were about providing information why the police were afraid, information about what they did to try to prevent it, interviews with children in Brussels, and a concluding story that it was safe again in Brussels. The second strategy, using the sandwich formula, was used every single time; every time after *Jeugdjournaal* covered a violent topic, they covered a light topic immediately afterwards to make the children in the audience more relaxed, to comfort them, and to take their minds off the heavy topic. For example, on November 3, 2015, they covered a news item about a hurricane in the Philippines. They then covered an item about Adele, saying that she broke her own record with her new song. They showed the clip and they played the song, reinforcing the sandwich approach of featuring a tragedy and then a happy story with uplifting music (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). In another example, on November 14, 2015, the day after the Paris attacks, they covered a very long item of 7 minutes and 40 seconds about the tragedy in Paris. After this item, they covered a news item about the arrival of *Sinterklaas*, the Dutch legendary figure based on Saint Nicholas. He had just arrived in the Netherlands, which is a cause for celebration among Dutch children.

It is hard to determine if *Jeugdjournaal* avoided any violent or tragic topics, but they did cover 20 stories related to violence this month, and there were a total of 134 topics covered during the whole month. This means that less than 15% of the topics covered were violent or tragic topics. The other 85% are considered light topics, and this seems like a good amount for children. According to Van der Molen and De Vries (2003), covering more light topics helps to

reduce the children's anxiety. Children think that what they watch on television can also happen to them (Potter, 1991). Therefore, it is important that children do not watch too many violent topics. In addition, *Jeugdjournaal* used the sandwich formula every single time. It seemed that they understand the importance of the sandwich formula (De Vries, 2002).

Consolation strategies at the news item level. There are three strategies at this level; explanations from experts, reactions from other children, and presentations of the news from a kids' perspective (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). These three strategies help to avoid first-order cultivation effects; the extent that children think that what they watch on television can also happen to them. When *Jeugdjournaal* has to cover a violent topic, these are strategies they can use within a news item to make it less scary.

When experts are being interviewed, the show tries to reduce the children's fear. They can explain that there is a little chance that this can happen to the children, or they can mention that it is normal to be scared (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). During all the twenty violent topics that were covered during November 2015, interviews with experts were done nine times. For example, on November 14, 2015, *Jeugdjournaal* covered an item about the tragedy of the terroristic attacks in Paris the night before. In this item, *Jeugdjournaal* provided information about what exactly had happened. Also, a terrorism expert was interviewed to explain the situation more, and he said: "Realistically, a tragedy like this can also happen in the Netherlands. However, I can assure you that the government does everything in their power to minimize the chance of this happening." On November 16, 2015, *Jeugdjournaal* had again an item on the events in Paris to talk about the aftermath. Another expert was interviewed and said: "It is hard to understand why this happened. It is understandable that you are afraid of this news. More children are afraid. Therefore, it is good to talk to your peers or with your parents about this

tragedy.” After this interview, *Jeugdjournaal* showed footage of a classroom where they talked in a circle about the news of the events in Paris. In another example, on November 21, 2015, there was an item about terroristic prevention in Brussels. The police made every person in Brussels stay inside, because the police had reasons to believe there might be a terroristic attack being planned here. They closed all schools, stores, and businesses. A police officer was interviewed and he said: “Don’t be afraid, we have everything under control. We are just doing this for prevention. We do everything to keep you safe.” And again, on November 25, 2015, *Jeugdjournaal* covered an item about a fight between Turkey and Russia. Turkey had shot down a Russian warplane, and the pilot had died. Putin was really angry. An expert was interviewed and said: “This is a really rare event, something like this never happens. My colleagues and I believe that Russia and Turkey will not go to war together, neither will they fight together.”

Interviewing children is another strategy to comfort the children who are watching the show (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003). According to Van der Molen, Valkenburg, and Peeters (2002), this reduces children’s fears, because a shocking event may be better understood when their peers explain it, and it also helps to hear that their peers are also afraid of what happened. Of the twenty violent topics that were covered during November 2015, interviews with children were used eight times. For example, on November 15, 2015, *Jeugdjournaal* covered an item about the Paris attacks, and they focused on children in Paris. They went to schools in Paris and interviewed children about the tragedy. One child said: “The police came into our classroom this morning, and they told us that they do everything they can to protect us, and they advised us to go straight home after school.” Another child said: “I’m scared. But today in class, we talked the whole time about what happened. Everyone shared their feelings with each other, and this felt good.” On November 16, 2015, *Jeugdjournaal* covered again an item about Paris, but with a different angle. This time it was not filmed in Paris, but in a classroom in the Netherlands. They

interviewed Dutch children about their thoughts on the tragedy. One child said: “I don’t understand why this has happened. I feel so bad for all the people in Paris.” Another news story on November 21, 2015, featured a warning for everyone in Brussels to stay inside to prevent another terroristic attack. This item focused on the children in Brussels. It was a strange day for them; they could not go to school and they could not participate in extracurricular or outdoors activities. A child was interviewed at home, and he said: “It is crazy that they think that terrorists are planning an attack here. It scares me.” According to Van der Molen and De Vries (2003), it helps to hear that a peer is afraid, because it gives a child the feeling that he or she is not the only one who is scared.

The last strategy on this level is presenting the news from a kids’ perspective.

Jeugdjournaal has to adjust news items so that the news will be easier to understand for the children (Van der Molen & De Vries). According to Wilson and Smith (1998), children’s limited language skills can make it difficult for them to comprehend news stories. *Jeugdjournaal* can make it easier for the children to explain the topics really easily, and in a different way than the adult news show is presented. The news presenter plays an important role in helping children understand an event or story. He or she can explain what happened, by using easy words and a clear explanation that children would understand. During November 2015, the news presenters often used images of the situation to explain what was happening. The images were really useful and helped a lot to make the news easier to understand. In addition, the presenter often used very comforting words. For example, on November 19, 2015, *Jeugdjournaal* covered an item about the perpetrators of the tragedy. The police had shot one of the terrorists who killed a lot of people. The presenter explained that it was good that the police caught him, and he concluded by saying that politicians in the Netherlands make sure that there is not the slightest chance that terroristic attacks will happen in the Netherlands.

Jeugdjournaal used all of these three strategies very well during all the tragedies. They went a lot on the road to interview children and experts, not only all over the Netherlands, but they even went to Paris and Brussels to interview there. They interviewed children in schools, on the streets, and in their homes. They also used experts from all different areas to explain the situations.

Consolation strategies at the shot level. According to Van der Molen and De Vries (2003), strategies at the shot level are avoiding violent shots, using a more distant shot when something bad happens, reducing the sound volume, and avoiding the repetition of scary shots. These strategies are important because many children have mentioned that violent shots make them scary (Van der Molen et al., 2002). The first strategy is the avoidance of violent shots. As mentioned before, most children's news shows usually make an effort to explain the seriousness of an event without showing the most graphic film footage in an attempt to prevent children from getting too upset by certain news topics (Van der Molen & Pundert, 2003). *Jeugdjournaal* did this a lot during this month; it was clear that they avoided using too scary shots. Especially during the news items about the terroristic attacks in Paris, *Jeugdjournaal* did not use a lot of violent shots. Instead, *Jeugdjournaal* tried to change or redirect how people were thinking and understanding the tragedy. They focused more on telling the story about what happened, and then chose to show some footage that was related to this event, but not too overwhelming for children. I will explain this in more detail in the next section. The second strategy on this level is to use a more distant shot when something bad happens. *Jeugdjournaal* did this a lot as no shots were filmed from close up. For example, on November 6, 2015, there was an item about an airplane that was crashed in Egypt. The ministry was not sure if it was an accident or a terroristic attack. Experts said that it was not safe to go to Egypt now and all Dutch tourists were advised not to go.

Jeugdjournaal showed shots of the airplane after the crash, but the shots were clearly from a far distance, making the event seem less frightening for kids. In another example, on November 9, 2015, there was a huge fire in the Netherlands. *Jeugdjournaal* showed shots of this fire, but again from a far distance. On November 26, 2015, there was a huge forest fire in Australia. Again, *Jeugdjournaal* showed shots of this fire, but the shots were from a distance. The third strategy on this level is reducing the sound volume. I noticed that *Jeugdjournaal* reduced the sound volume on November 16, 2015, where they covered an item about the Paris attacks. They showed shots of policemen that approached the crime scene by car, and you could hear the sirens. It was clear that *Jeugdjournaal* reduced the sound volume of the sirens. For the other stories featuring violence or tragedy, it was not clear that *Jeugdjournaal* used this strategy on purpose, but it is difficult to discern a change in volume at the producer level. The last strategy is avoiding the repetition of scary shots. During this whole month, I did not see *Jeugdjournaal* repeating any scary shots in the violent or tragic news stories.

Overall, the show avoided violent shots, used more distant shots when something bad happened, reduced the sound volume, and avoided the repetition of scary shots. *Jeugdjournaal* did not use a lot of scary shots in general, since shots are what make children most afraid (Van der Molen, et al. 2002). It was also interesting to see that *Jeugdjournaal* often changed or redirected the focus of the news item by using other shots. This strategy is not part of the consolation strategies, but may also be a good strategy to reduce children's fear. I will further explain this now.

Other strategies: Redirecting Focus & Creating Positive Endings. The previous three themes were what I expected to find, based on previous research. However, there were also two other strategies that I found in my analysis that were not part of the original consolation strategies

by Van der Molen and De Vries (2003). These are the same two strategies that I also found during analyzing the last 20 years of *Jeugdjournaal*: redirecting focus and creating positive endings.

First of all, *Jeugdjournaal* often redirected the focus when covering tragedies a few times during November of 2015. This is not part of the consolation strategies, but can be considered a consolation strategy much like those established by Van der Molen and De Vries (2003). For example, on November 9, 2015, there was a huge fire in Geleen, a city in the Netherlands. The news presenter talked briefly about the fire. However, instead of talking too much about this fire, he quickly mentioned it and then interviewed children who live in that area. In this way, the news item was still about the fire, but it changed the angle, making it less scary for children. In another example, during all the news items about the Paris attacks, *Jeugdjournaal* focused more on telling the story about what happened, and then chose to show some non-scary footage that was related to this event. For example, instead of showing shots about what happened during the tragedy, they showed a lot of footage about the day after. They filmed the empty streets, and they filmed flowers that have been put on the streets in respect for the victims. *Jeugdjournaal* also showed footage of a speech from the French president. In addition, *Jeugdjournaal* really focused on the children. They showed shots of French children playing at the playground the next day, and they also showed shots of Dutch children talking to each other about what happened in France. By doing this, *Jeugdjournaal* still provided the information about the tragedy, so the children still knew what was going on, but they tried to make it less scary by avoiding violent shots and avoiding to focus too much on the actual events. Instead of focusing on the actual events and talking only about what terrible things happened during the events, they redirected the focus and focused more on the day after and on the children. Another example, on November 3, 2015, there was an item about a hurricane in the Philippines. The hurricane happened a few

weeks prior, and *Jeugdjournaal* did not spend much time talking about the hurricane. Instead, they focused on children who had helped raise money for the victims of the hurricane.

Jeugdjournaal also showed footage of children in the Philippines who were happy again, because of all the help they had received and they could finally go back to school. This item really focused on all the help that had been given to the victims on the hurricane, instead of spending any time talking about what exactly happened.

Another interesting strategy that I found was that *Jeugdjournaal* often tried to end news items more with a positive ending, instead of a negative ending. This is a strategy they used in November of 2015 that also was not part of the consolation strategies. For example, on November 16, 2015, *Jeugdjournaal* covered an item about the Paris attacks. This item was about the fact that the perpetrators of the attack still had not been found. The news presenter mentioned this and did a short recap of the events. Then, instead of ending a news item about possible dangers of on-the-loose terrorists, *Jeugdjournaal* chose to end this news item by saying that Paris was using all their policemen to make and keep the city safer. In another example, on November 23, 2015, there was a news story about Brussels, where the police were taking precautions because they had reasons to believe that terrorists might have been planning a terroristic attack there. This item focused on children in Brussels, in which *Jeugdjournaal* went to schools in Brussels and interviewed children. All the children in Brussels were afraid, which could make the Dutch viewers also afraid. However, *Jeugdjournaal* ended this item on a positive note; they said that the police in Brussels were doing everything in their power to prevent another terroristic attack. Also, they said that the Dutch government did not expect anything like this to happen in the Netherlands. In one last example, on November 25, 2015, *Jeugdjournaal* covered an item about a dispute between Turkey and Russia. *Jeugdjournaal* ended this topic by saying that

experts believe that Turkey and Russia would not go to war, a more positive tone to conclude the story.

These two new strategies could be added to the consolation strategies since they are both useful ways to reduce children's' fear, while still communicating necessary information about the tragedy. Also, both strategies were used to make the news more suitable for children. In the adult news, they would probably not use these strategies, because adults are more able to cope and handle such news events.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study has filled in a gap in the existing research on how news programming can be effectively and safely conveyed to children. Only one research study has been done about this show before (Van der Molen & De Vries, 2003) and they examined how *Jeugdjournaal* covered the events of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center, and how the show used the consolation strategies during this tragedy. However, it was unknown how *Jeugdjournaal* used these strategies over longer periods of time, how *Jeugdjournaal* frames light topic messages for children, how *Jeugdjournaal* uses strategies during other tragedies, and whether or not their strategies have changed. This study investigated first how *Jeugdjournaal* used their strategies over the last 20 years, to give an overview of the show and to see how the show changes the use of the consolation strategies over the years. Most strategies were not used in the first couple of years that were analyzed, but over the years *Jeugdjournaal* started to use them. For the consolation strategies on the program level, *Jeugdjournaal* avoided violent topics more in the last ten years than in the first ten years. This is a move in a positive direction because, according to Van der Molen and De Vries (2003), covering less violent topics helps to reduce children's anxiety. In addition, *Jeugdjournaal* used the sandwich formula a lot in this second period. Then, for the consolation strategies on the news item level, *Jeugdjournaal* infrequently used all of these three strategies in the first ten years, though in the last ten years, they started to utilize these strategies more effectively and more frequently. For the consolation strategies on the shot level, the show avoided violent shots, used a more distant shot when something bad happened, and reduced the sound volume a lot more in the last ten years than in the first ten years. It seems they were learning as they progressed. From this data, it can be concluded that *Jeugdjournaal* is doing well in using these strategies. *Jeugdjournaal* clearly improved all the strategies over the years.

This means that they do their best to avoid that children get scared of what they see in the news (Van der Molen & Pundert, 2003).

This study has also shown how *Jeugdjournaal* frames messages for children, and how these messages change when covering tragedies. *Jeugdjournaal's* news items about light topics are much shorter than news items about tragedies. Most of the time, a light topic news item starts with the news presenter talking about the topic. After this, they switch to footage of the topic, and sometimes they interview someone about the topic. It is all presented in a light-hearted manner, the topics are short, and they use a lot of happy background music. According to De Vries (2002), *Jeugdjournaal* covers a lot of light topic news items because it takes the weight off heavy topics. However, the data of this study have shown that there are two other possible reasons why *Jeugdjournaal* covers so many items about light topics. I realized that they use these light topics as a form of education; they try to educate children during these items about the topics. They take on every opportunity to teach the children different things about the topics. In addition, they also use these items as a form of entertainment. Often there is some happy background music during the light topic items, and most light topic items are about a fun topic. This entertainment aspect makes it fun for children to watch the show.

Jeugdjournaal covers a lot more light topic news items than heavy topic news items; however, they put a lot of effort into the heavy topic news items. *Jeugdjournaal* clearly uses all the different consolation strategies on all different levels. On the program level, they use both the strategy of avoidance of violent topics and the strategy of using the sandwich formula well. *Jeugdjournaal* uses the sandwich formula every single time, and they also seem to avoid violent topics since they cover not a lot of them. On the news item level, *Jeugdjournaal* uses all three strategies a lot. They went on the road frequently to interview children and experts, not only all over the Netherlands, but they even went to Paris and Brussels to interview children there. They

also used experts from all different areas to explain the situations. Also, they presented the news from a kids' perspective. They used a lot of extra explanations for the children. On the shot level, there are four strategies; avoiding violent shots, using a more distant shot when something bad happens, reducing the sound volume, and avoiding the repetition of scary shots. *Jeugdjournaal* avoided a lot of violent shots, they often used a more distant shot, they never repeated any scary shots, and they also reduced the sound volume sometimes. It seems that *Jeugdjournaal* is well aware of these strategies and used them a lot and also in the right way.

This study brought an important theoretical contribution to the literature. During my study, I found that *Jeugdjournaal* used all the consolation strategies really well, but it seemed that the consolation strategies have been changed since Van der Molen and De Vries (2003) came up with it after investigating the news coverage of 9/11 in 2001. They use two more strategies that are not part of the original consolation strategies. An important strategy that I found that the show used a lot, but was not part of the original consolation strategies, is that the show often changed the focus of the news item during a tragedy. For example, on November 14, 2015, the day after the tragic Paris attacks, *Jeugdjournaal* showed a lot of footage about the day after instead of showing shots about what happened. They filmed the empty streets, and they filmed flowers that have been put on the streets in respect for the victims. *Jeugdjournaal* also really focused on the children. They showed shots of French children playing at the playground the next day, and they also used shots of Dutch children talking to each other about what happened in France. By doing this, *Jeugdjournaal* still provided the information about the tragedy, so the children still know what is going on, but they try to make it less scary by avoiding violent shots and avoiding to focus too much on the actual events. Another example, on January 19, 2017, there was a huge avalanche in Italy and a lot of people died and buildings collapsed. *Jeugdjournaal* chose to use shots of people who were clearing the snow from the streets, instead of using shots of the

avalanche or of the collapsed buildings. So instead of using scary shots of the avalanche, they changed the focus and started to focus on something else less scary. *Jeugdjournaal* used this strategy a lot in the last ten years.

Another strategy that I found during my analysis that is not a part of the consolation strategies is to end a news item with a positive ending. In the first ten years of my analysis, *Jeugdjournaal* often ended a news item with a negative ending, for example, that a lot of people were missing in the Italian avalanche. I realized that the show avoided these negative endings in the last ten years and turned it more into positive endings. During the month of November 2015, they used this strategy a few times. For example, the police still had not found the terrorists a few days after the Paris attacks. Instead of ending a news item with this information that dangerous terrorists were still free in the general public, they chose to end a news item by saying that Paris is using all their police force to make and keep the city safer. These two new strategies could be added to the consolation strategies since they are both useful ways to reduce children's' fear, while still communicating necessary information about the tragedy. Also, both strategies were used to make the news more suitable for children. In the adult news, they would probably not use these strategies. More research, possibly also using quantitative methodologies, on the use of these strategies during tragedies in the last couple of years might be needed to make a new model of the consolation strategies that are currently used by the show.

Another thing I found interesting that the show did a lot was overpromising. *Jeugdjournaal* often made promises to comfort children. For example, during a lot of heavy topic items, the news presenter or an expert that was being interviewed in the item said that something like this will never happen in the Netherlands, or that the Dutch government will do everything in their power to make sure that a tragedy like this will not happen in the Netherlands. I am wondering if it could possibly have a negative effect if *Jeugdjournaal* overpromises and then

something bad happens, especially when they are talking about bad things that did just happen. It can be a good strategy to comfort children, but it can also have possible negative effects, since this is something you cannot promise.

This study has also provided some practical contributions. First of all, it is important for parents to know about this study. Parents should be able to let their children watch a news show without being afraid that their children will experience any cultivation effects (Potter, 1991). This study has shown that *Jeugdjournaal* is doing a great job to make the news suitable for children. This is great news for Dutch parents, and they should be encouraged to let their children watch *Jeugdjournaal*. Second, this study can be useful for the producers of the show. They will be provided with a good overview of how the show actually uses the consolation strategies. They can see that they are doing a good job, but since the importance of this study, they need to realize that it will stay important for them to keep improving the consolation strategies. In addition, this study can be very useful for producers in other countries who are looking to start a children news show like *Jeugdjournaal*. Right now, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, England, and Ireland also have a similar children news show like the Dutch *Jeugdjournaal*. However, a lot of other countries are looking to start a news show like this. For producers, it can be really hard to start a children news show without any experience. This current study might be really useful for them, in terms of how to use different strategies to make the news more suitable for children. I believe more countries should have a children news show, since it is so important for children to be aware of the news in the world. In the future, I hope the United States will also start a children news show like *Jeugdjournaal*. Hopefully, with this thesis, I have brought some attention to people here towards the issue of how news should be broadcast to children and the importance of a children news show.

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Vita

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