Institutional failure or individual perversity? (Framing Church Abuse in the News in Four European Countries)

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Abstract: Focussing on the perpetrators, this paper investigates news media framing of clergy sexual abuse in the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Ireland. Results show that the four national presses vary in the way they construct the crime and its perpetrators, depending on cultural differences in the way the church is embedded in society. Each nation's media frame the crisis in a way that fits their own rhetorical goals. The Netherlands and the UK share a focus that places blame on the Catholic Church as an institution and, in the case of the UK, on the Pope as holding ultimate responsibility. In Belgium and Ireland the offenders are portrayed as individuals. In all four countries media need to come to terms with what we call the dual offender: the individual priest and/or the institute that failed to control its employees and show compassion to their victims. The strategic construction of clergy abuse furthers the dominant ideological discourses of both paedophilia and Catholicism.

Keywords: Framing, abuse, catholic, church, content-analysis.

The last two decades have seen increasing revelations about child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. It appears that the systematic abuse of children in the care of Catholic institutions worldwide, be they seminaries, convents or schools, has been endemic for many years. Only in recent years, however, with an increasing understanding of child sexual abuse, and the diminishing deference to powerful organizations, have these offences come to light. This study examines a year of newspaper coverage (2010) from

four countries – Great Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium.

The allegations were essentially the same in the many countries where clergy abuse emerged as a crime problem over the years: priests and other members of the clergy sexually abused minors who were in their care. This similarity does not, however, determine their meaning. Various parties have attached different meanings to this issue: conservative and liberal Catholics, adherents of rival faiths, feminists, gay activists and others have each framed the issue in their own way [1] (Jenkins 2001). In the first major study of the social construction of clergy abuse, Jenkins (2001) [2] identified a number of these frames. In the present study we focus on news media framing and explore the question to what extent a nation's historical relationship with the Catholic Church resonates in the frames employed by the national news media covering the issue.

Jenkins focused on the origins of the 'pedophile priest' problem as it emerged in the US during the eighties. Our study analyzes newspaper coverage by the Dutch, Flemish, Irish, and British press in the crucial year 2010. Coverage in English and Dutch language European papers had spiked since late 2008 (Nieuwsmonitor 2013; PEW Research 2010) [3]. In 2010, 'coverage of the Catholic clergy sexual abuse scandal grew more intense this spring than at any time since 2002 and European newspapers devoted even more ink to the story than American papers did' (Nieuwsmonitor 2013; PEW Research 2010) [4]. The framing of clergy abuse makes a relevant case for research into the construction of perpetrators and victims in the news media. Coverage of this issue speaks to the way societies conceive of crime, guilt and innocence (Kellner 1995; Pollak and Kubrin 2007) [5]. Moreover, venturing beyond their usual role as secondary definers (Schlesinger and Tumber 1994) [6], news media have been instrumental in exposing and defining the problem. In the United States, Ireland and the Netherlands journalists were the actors who got the bandwagon rolling (Donnelly and Inglis, 2010; Houppermans, 2011; Jenkins 2001) [7]. News media seized the opportunity to confirm their position as the Fourth Estate: the clash over interpretations of clergy abuse is part of the struggle over moral authority between two competing institutions; the press and the church (Donnelly and Inglis, 2010; Soukup, 1997) [8].

A final reason why a framing analysis of Catholic Church abuse may add to our understanding of offender stereotypes and blame attribution lies in the nature of the offenders: unlike most traditional folk devils, the perpetrators are highly placed, respected, well-to-do people who represent a worldwide institute that promotes celibacy and family values. Black collar criminals, they share some of the characteristics of white collar criminals.

After a brief overview of the four cases, we review the literature on offender stereotypes and framing. Next, we set out the method. Focusing on the two dominant frames, Institutional Failure and Individual Failure, we relate these to the position of the Catholic Church in each country.

Clergy abuse in four countries: Overview

In this section, we present an overview of the 2010 clergy abuse allegations in the countries we studied, and briefly characterize the position of the Catholic Church in these countries.

The Netherlands. After reports of widespread abuse in church institutions in the United States, Ireland, and Germany the wave of publicity hit the Netherlands on February 26, 2010, when *NRC Handelsblad* and *Radio Netherlands Worldwide (RNW)* revealed that Salesian brothers of the Don Rua boarding school for boys in 's-Heerenberg had molested their pupils for years. This exposé was the result of collaboration by investigative journalists Joep Dohmen (*NRC Handelsblad*) [9] and *RNW's* Robert Chesal (Dohmen, 2010) [10].

Although clergy abuse had been mentioned sporadically in the Dutch news media since 1996, it took until 2010 to be recognized as a serious issue. For the first time, victims did not hide behind anonymity and named names and places. Television appearances in particular turned out to be crucial triggers for other victims to come forward (Houppermans, 2011; cf. Jenkins 2001) [11].

About 55 percent of the Dutch population consider themselves in some way religious; almost 30 percent identify as Catholic (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2008) [12]. The number of churchgoers, is significantly lower: 60 percent of the Catholics say they never go to church. In Dutch politics we see traces of compartmentalisation: there used to be political parties for Protestants and Catholics.

Broadly speaking, until the sixties Dutch society was organized along religious and political lines. In this 'pillarized' society, newspapers, too, belonged to one of the main 'pillars'. Increasingly though, newspapers no longer clung to the party line and nowadays, although a religiously affiliated press still exists, the main newspapers are independent (Dekker and Ester, 1996; Van Vree, 1996) [13]. Tellingly, the Dutch mediascape features two Protestant newspapers, but not a single Catholic one. Politically, Dutch journalists tend to lean to the left (Deuze 2002; Hermans, Vergeer et al., 2011) [14].

Flanders. Flanders is the western, Dutch speaking part of Belgium and it has a long and strong catholic tradition. On April 23, 2010 news broke that Roger Vangheluwe, the bishop of Bruges, had for years abused his nephew, causing a shock wave in Belgium. In a press statement, Vangheluwe admitted that he had sexually abused a young man from early on in his clerical career. A few days earlier relatives of the victim, sent an e-mail to several bishops publicising the case to the outside world.

Half of the Belgian population now call themselves Catholic, a decline compared to the eighties when figures were higher than 70 percent. A mere 10 percent of the population say they visit a church weekly; 70 percent never visit a church (Abts, Dobbelaere et al., 2011) [15]. Flemish press history mirrors its Dutch neighbours' depillarization: a commercial outlook that went hand in hand with media concentration replaced traditional political partisanship (Biltereyst and Van Gompel 1997) [16].

Ireland. Since the mid-nineties, there have been a series of damning reports about the abuse of children in various dioceses in Ireland, including Dublin, Ferns, Tuam, and Cloyne. Cases that stand out are those of Fr Brendan Smyth, who pleaded guilty to 74 charges of sexual and indecent assault in 1994, the 2005 *Ferns Report*, covering more than hundred cases in one diocese and the 2006 Dublin scandal over more than 350 allegations involving hundred priests (Donnelly and Inglis, 2010: 8) [17]. There has been continuing criticism of the Vatican for their apparent lack of intervention in Ireland. In response to this, Pope Benedict issued a letter to the diocese of Ireland in March 2010, and it is this letter that prompted much of the new wave of coverage examined in the Irish media section of this study.

Ireland – the single religiously homogeneous country in our sample – has traditionally been a strongly Catholic nation, and remains a majority Catholic country with 82 percent of the population identifying as Catholic in 2008 (O'Mahony 2010) [18]. Unlike Dutch and Flemish Catholicism, which in its heyday represented the 'pillar' type of organization, Irish Catholicism belongs to the 'monopoly' category (Conway 2013) [19]. Irish Catholicism, too, has undergone a process of de-institutionalisation (Inglis 2007) [20]. While attendance at mass has fallen in recent years, the vast majority of the population still self-identifies as Catholic. In comparison with other European countries, secularization has made fewer inroads into Irish culture. It is safe to say that Ireland, like Flanders, remains a 'culturally' Catholic nation.

Dominated by the Catholic Church since it became independent in 1922, since the sixties the Irish state severed more and more of its ties with the church. The Irish news media, too, grew in importance as the institutional power of the Church diminished. '[...] the media began to investigate and interrogate religious personnel and, in playing its role as the Fourth Estate, replaced the Catholic Church as the social conscience and moral guardian of Irish society […]' (Donnelly and Inglis, 2010) [21]. Since the 1990s, clergy abuse has been instrumental in the power shift (Donnelly and Inglis 2010) [22].

Great Britain. Since the English reformation, during which the Church of England broke away from the authority of the Pope in Rome, England is more or less at odds with the Roman Catholic Church. As a relatively non-Catholic nation, Great Britain has had comparatively few cases of sexual abuse by clergy. However, cases have become apparent, particularly those associated with Church-run schools and other institutions, notably the Benedictine order and the educational establishments run by them. In 2010 the Pope made a state visit to the UK, largely funded by the British taxpayer. This caused great controversy and highlighted the profoundly conflicted relationship the country has with Catholicism.

Great Britain has historically been a deeply anti-Catholic nation, instead identifying strongly as Anglican. In 2010, 8 percent of the adult population identified as Catholic (Field, 2014) [23]. There has been a recent rise in attendance of Catholic mass in Britain,

although this is a result of Eastern European immigration, rather than a rise in Catholicism in the indigenous population.

Theoretical background: Blaming and framing
The question we try to answer in this paper is: how do news media in four European countries frame the clergy sexual abuse issue, and in particular: who do they blame and which features do they use to attribute or to reduce guilt? Our point of departure is Nils Christie's concept of the ideal victim and the ideal perpetrator.

Ideal victims and ideal perpetrators
Pointing out that victimhood is not a given, but a social construction, Christie (1986) [24] famously defined the ideal victim as the person "most readily given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim." The child victims of church abuse mostly live up to society's demands in this respect: at the time of the abuse, they were young and vulnerable, and they were at school or in other Catholic institutions, i.e. places where they "could not possibly be blamed for being" [25]. Christie also discusses the 'ideal perpetrator' [26], a powerful, malicious male, who has no personal relationship to his victim. A stranger, he is "[…] a human being close to not being one."

Christie's ideal victims and perpetrators are symbolic creatures, whose features do not match those we know from crime statistics and victim surveys. Van Dijk criticized Christie's ideal victim for being: "based on an idealized conception of victimhood [...] that does not stand up to empirical scrutiny. [...] In this respect Christie's article is unconvincing. His notions on real victims are based on his personal experiences as a victim of a prank and of a minor theft, ignoring victimological knowledge on the characteristics and needs of victims." (Van Dijk 2009) [27]. This criticism is beside the point. Christie's portrait of the victim (and of the perpetrator) provides insight based not on "available research-based knowledge on victim needs" (Van Dijk 2009) [28] but on society's *perceptions* of ideal victims and perpetrators. In qualitative research these can be used as a Weberian ideal type, as a unified, analytical construct (Weber 1904, 1949) [29]. The ideal offender serves as a benchmark that helps to focus and to contrast it with the perpetrators as they are pictured in the press. This offender differs substantively from the average offender in crime statistics. For example, rapists are in general more often relatives than strangers to the victim. Some scholars in the field of crime and media even state that the content of most crime news coverage is the opposite of crime statistics (e.g., Pollak and Kubrin, 2007; Reiner, Livingstone et al., 2003) [30].

Elite offenders
While the victims of clergy abuse have a lot in common with Christie's ideal victims and with media representations of victims in general, the offenders do not (Greer, 2007; Hidalgo, 2007; Smolej 2010; Walklate, 2007) [31]. The offenders in this case are authority figures with respectable social positions; teachers, confessors, and other acquaintances of

the victim, they do not conform to the stranger stereotype. Hidalgo (2007) [32] even suggests that the priests often functioned as surrogate fathers and the Catholic boarding school as a surrogate family.

Cohen's (2002) [33] moral panic 'folk devils' complement Christie's 'ideal perpetrators' as an influential concept of offender stereotypes. The clergy abuse issue has indeed been characterized as a moral panic (Jennkis, 2001: 169-171; Bosco, 2012) [34]. Yet again, demonized as they may be, paedophile priests are not the stereotypical moral panic offenders as Stanley Cohen originally conceived them in his 1972 study *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*: Cohen pointed to 'the Mod, the Rocker, the Greaser, the student militant, the drug fiend, the vandal, the soccer hooligan, the hippy, the skinhead' (2002) – members [35], all of them, of criminalized, non-elite subcultures. In the introduction to the third edition of his classic book, however, Cohen broadens the scope to include paedophile priests in the category of 'traditional folk devils' (Cohen 2002) [36]. He also labels the social workers implicated in the abuse scandals of the mid-eighties 'middle-class folk devils' (Cohen 2002) [37]. Still, neither of the two are the usual 'soft targets, easily denounced, with little power and preferably without even access to the battlefields of cultural politics' (Cohen 2002) [38].

The offenders more closely resemble *elite deviants* (Simon and Eitzen 1982) [39], who are normally perceived as examples of respect and decency, or perpetrators of white collar crime, a term coined in the thirties by Sutherland and defined as "a crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his occupation" (Sutherland 1949) [40]. Other scholars call it *clergy deviance* (Clinard and Meier 2008; Shupe 1998; Shupe 2008) [41].

Apart from their social status, there is more that distinguishes the church abuse offenders from more stereotypical offenders. An important characteristic is that they are much older than most offenders we meet in the court room or in the press (Lotz1999; Reiner, Livingstone et al. 2003; Sacco, 1995) [42]. Moreover, in contrast to the stereotypical offender image in American research, they are all caucasian. Then again, in accordance with the stereotype, the majority are males (Weiss and Chermak, 1995; Pritchard and Hughes, 1997; Hidalgo 2007) [43].

Framing and blaming: Institutional and individual failure

Offender stereotypes are stock features of crime news coverage, but on their own, they do not suffice to explain an entire crime issue. As components of a frame, however, they help explain how we should understand and judge the problem of clergy abuse.

A frame can be conceived of as a cluster of elements that functions together, a media package (Gamson and Modigliani 1989) [44] or framing package (Van Gorp 2006, 2007) [45]. This package consists of three elements: framing devices, reasoning devices and an implicit cultural phenomenon like an archetype, a myth or a value (such as freedom of speech) that keeps the package together as a whole (Gamson and Modigliani 1989) [46].

The specific elements that make a frame visible in a text are called framing devices. Examples include word choice, metaphors, slogans, arguments, examples, and images (Pan and Kosicki1993) [47]. The reasoning devices are explicit and implicit statements that define and evaluate the problem, and identify its causes and effects (Gamson and Lash 1983; Gamson and Modigliani 1989) [48]. These devices are related to the four main functions a frame performs: it defines the problem, indicates who or what has caused it, pronounces a moral judgment, and suggests a solution (Entman 1993) [49].

The reasoning devices can adequately characterize a social problem, but do not provide ready-made categories to characterize perpetrators. To fit perpetrators in a frame, they can be seen as part of the problem definition and the framing devices like metaphors and stereotypes, lexical choices and visual images.

One of the main functions of crime frames is to attribute blame. According to the literature, at this point journalists have two major options to choose from: blaming the individual perpetrator(s), or blaming the institution they belong to.

On the one hand, Greer (2003) [50] identifies 'personalization' as one of the cardinal (crime) news values. Central to this value are the 'attribution and individualization of responsibility to an offender whose "individual pathology" […] marks him or her out as distinct from the rest of society […]'. This would predict that clergy abuse coverage mostly blames the pedophile priests. Miller et al. (2014) [51] concur, surmising that in the initial stages of covering a major sex crime, news media tend to blame the 'monstrous' perpetrators.

Later however, in follow-ups and more thorough investigative reporting, the officials and institutions that allowed the crime to happen, may be blamed. But on the whole, popular news media tend 'to individualize blame, with a particular focus on the pathology of individual offenders.' (Miller et al. 2014) [52]. This tendency of investigative reporters to blame the institution rather than the individual has also been identified as a rhetorical staple of investigative journalism by Ettema and Glasser (1988, 1998) [53]. Their study of Pulitzer-winning American reporters reveals their rhetorical strategies to channel the audience's outrage towards the system rather than the individuals.

This latter tendency would also fit the aims of anti-Catholic claimsmakers: 'In rhetorical terms, clergy abuse was invaluable for church critics, provided that the focus could be shifted from the individual misdeeds of a few clerics to the structural hypocrisy of the church hierarchy.' (Jenkins 2001) [54].

Whether news media in this case blame individual priests or the Church, we surmise, is more than a matter of investigative versus routine reporting. To be successful, frames and stereotypes need to resonate with the cultural background of those that are supposed to adopt them (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Sasson1995) [55]. 'The more clearly and unambiguously the deviant personality can be […] located within a context that will be culturally meaningful to the news reader ("proximity"), the greater the overall newsworthiness of the story.' (Greer 2003) [56].

Frames used with some measure of success in one country may not meet the same welcome abroad. An example is the counter-frame adopted by the Catholic Church the US: sexual abuse by members of the clergy should be understood as a problem of well-intentioned people led astray by the general moral laxness of the sixties and seventies. This frame, dubbed 'the Woodstock defense' by opponents, was employed by proponents of the Church in the Netherlands, but failed to get any traction (Kreemers 2011) [57].

We would also expect that efforts to frame the issue as one of 'infiltration of the Church by homosexuals', likewise employed by conservative Catholics in the US (Jenkins 2001: 23) [58], would fail to garner support in a country like the Netherlands, that is relatively tolerant of homosexuality.

Not only *how* the case is framed, but also *who* is seen as the offender, had our attention. Although there is no reason to suppose that the acts of abuse were different in the four countries, there are reasons to believe that the way the perpetrator is constructed may differ. One can expect that the frame depends on a combination of what is available and of what fits a tradition. Consequently it is to be expected that more guilt is attributed to the Pope in the UK than in the Netherlands or Belgium.

Method

To extract these assumed frames, our analysis uses the *grounded theory approach* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), as it is applied to framing analysis by Van Gorp (2007, 2010) [59]. The result is a matrix, distinguishing four reasoning devices: the definition of the problem, its cause, moral grounds for its evaluation, and a solution. Metaphors, specific verbal devices, images and examples are part of the rhetorical structure of the frame. Constructing the frame matrix is an iterative process, wherein during the collection, collation and analysis frames are constructed: it is a process of going back to the data and forward to the theory in the form of the constructed frames (Van Gorp 2006) [60].

News items studied were derived from the major newspapers published in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Flanders. All articles were published in 2010. In all four countries we selected upmarket broadsheets as well as more popular tabloids. In the Lexis Nexis and Factiva databases we searched for combinations of English and Dutch equivalents of words such as "church", "catholic" and "abuse". Saturation of the data determined the number of articles used.

Results: Four frames

We found four frames which are more or less represented in all four countries: Institutional Failure, Individual Failure, Purification, Change and Improvement and Witch hunt (see Appendix 1).

Here we restrict our findings to the two frames in which blame attribution and the role of the perpetrator are most salient: the frames of Institutional Failure versus Individual Failure.

Within the *Institutional Failure frame* the problem is understood as one of the organization; blame is attributed to the church as an anonymous institute. Within this frame the problem can be characterized as a management problem, which makes it possible to convert the abuse into a white collar crime, or at least draw the public's attention to maladministration. This frame locates the problem's cause in the church's closed, hierarchical structure. The moral ground is that an organisation like the church should set an example and practice what it preaches. The problem solution is sought in restructuring the management, in more openness and sometimes in the abolition of celibacy.

The *Individual Failure frame*, in contrast, defines the problem as one of deviancy of individual priests or other individuals connected to the church, but not the church itself. The problem is one of moral transgressions by individuals. The frame can also be converted to a convenient one for the church, when the problem is presented as one of "a few rotten apples". The cause is presented as psychological, as paedophilia, sometimes as a result of celibacy and (again) the closed and hierarchical power structure in the Catholic institutes. The solution that fits this conception of the problem is exclusion from the church of individuals and psychotherapy. Others point to more openness and a more twentieth century-like attitude towards sexuality.

The representation of the offender in these two frames differs. When the crime is presented as an institutional problem, the offender is a faceless, anonymous priest in a big organisation. In the Individual Failure frame the offender is a named individual, with a face and a history.

The construction of blame

The Dutch, Flemish, Irish, and British press, covering allegations of the same kind, seem to stress different frames, which appear to reflect the nation's relationship with the Catholic Church.

The countries' relationship with the Catholic Church is reflected in the tone of the coverage. Flanders and Ireland, sharing a strong Catholic identity, seem to take a far more individual approach to blame. The Netherlands and the UK share a focus that places greater blame on the Catholic Church as an institution and, in the case of the UK, on the Pope as holding ultimate responsibility.

The Flemish media provide a different picture. The key event that triggered massive media coverage was a case in which the offender still held his position and was well known and popular in the community: in Flanders, Bishop Roger Vangheluwe has become a symbol for the abuse. A high profile prelate, Vangheluwe was an obvious focus for the coverage, although his crimes were unusual as they were committed within his own family, rather than against members of his parish.

In the Irish coverage a number of individuals were named as perpetrators, as well as senior members of the catholic hierarchy who were implicated in the sexual abuse crisis. In the Irish media both frames compete for first place. 2010 saw a number of important events. Following a series of critical reports into a number of Irish dioceses, the Pope summoned a group of bishops to Rome to discuss the crisis. He then released a letter to the Irish diocese, addressing the crisis. The sheer scale of the Irish data is notable. Barely a day went past in 2010 when there was not an article addressing the clerical abuse scandal.

UK coverage differs from the other nations', in that there was not a specific UK based case that was central to the attention. The main focus was the controversial state visit by the Pope to the UK as well as overseas cases (especially in Ireland and the German case that implicated the Pope's brother). In 2010 the Pope made a visit to the UK which was mainly funded by the British taxpayer. As the country was in the depths of the financial crisis, the apparent extravagance of a state visit from the Pope to a deeply Protestant nation was met with outright hostility in much of the British press.

We argue that the framing of the issue, and focus on blame, serves an ideological rhetoric. News reporting is not a neutral, value-free information exchange; rather it is constructed by, and is constructive of, the culture of that news outlet and the nation it exists in. Thus, the profoundly critical, direct attacks of the UK press on the Vatican, and Pope Benedict individually, reflect the strongly held British attitudes to the Catholic Church. Equally, the raw, wounded tone in the coverage of the Irish press reflects that nation's close yet damaged relationship with Catholicism.

We now direct our focus to the specifics of blame attribution in the four countries' coverage.

The Netherlands. In the Dutch media, individual offenders themselves remained largely invisible. This was achieved partly through denial, and partly because the majority of the alleged offenders had died. As a result, victim testimony becomes the primary resource for blame attribution and representation of the perpetrators. In the victims' stories, individual perpetrators emerge as perverted priests, brothers or fathers within the unhealthy culture expressing their sexual frustration onto children and abusing their dominant position. Terms used by abuse victims are: mean, violent, oversexed, sexually frustrated, manipulative, stronger than the victim and sadistic.

> 'Stuff your parents had brought you was checked and if the brothers felt it was not good for you, they took it away.' (March 13, 2010, "Discipline, comfort, and tears", *Eindhovens Dagblad*) [60].
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> "They were big men of 1.80/1.90 and you were the little boy of 1.40/1.50" (March 2, 2010, "Call for church abuse investigation," *The Times)*.
>
> "Whether I cried or not, it did not matter, he was too big." (Dohmen 2010) [61]
>
> "Some friars' names come up more than once. Among them the 'washing brother', a semi-balding little man. He always came along with a large rubber glove when the boys were taking a shower in the cubicles. He washed and he groped." *(NRC*

Handelsblad, March 10, 2010, "The friar could do anything')

These selections emphasize the physical and institutional power the perpetrators wielded over their victims. This lack of a 'face' in the coverage, and the less individualised blame emphasise the Institutional Failure frame. The individual perpetrator is subsumed into a larger, institutional and cultural blame. News media labelled the perpetrators 'pedo priests'. For their victims *De Telegraaf* coined its alliterative counterpart: *paterprooi*, i.e. "Father fodder".

Flanders. Flemish coverage, unlike Dutch church abuse news, does feature a 'face'. Indeed, the use of a figurehead for the coverage is vital to the findings of our study. In discussions around an organisation of such magnitude as the Catholic Church, how can the reader understand the personal nature of the offenders? By having a 'face', the coverage moves from a discussion of a monolithic organisation to a more human level. By having an identifiable individual to blame, it becomes easier to address the question of attribution of blame and agency. The individual is easier to attack than the faceless organisation.

From the start, the perpetrators in the Flemish coverage were named individuals, whereas the offenders in the Netherlands remained largely hidden. This provided Flemish society with a target on which to focus its outrage. On the other hand, Vangheluwe, who was known and loved among the population, comes across as a round character rather than a stereotype. All Flemish newspapers praised him as 'accessible', 'convivial', and 'approachable'. In its nuances, the coverage reflects these mixed feelings, e.g. in an article describing a Bruges victim as 'the man who has talked Roger Vangheluwe to the gallows':

> "What Bishop Vangheluwe has done is terrible, but this nephew of his who was his victim, is not a good person either. He condoned this 'paedophilia business' for many years, didn't he? And why wait for twenty years before filing a complaint? Why now, just before Monsignor Vangheluwe retires?" ('This only strengthens our faith', *De Standaard,* April 26, 2010)

The Salesians of Don Rua may remain in the memory of the Dutch, but this faceless group makes less of an impression than the beloved bishop of Bruges:

> "Roger has betrayed us": Bruges will need time to get over Vangheluwe (*De Standaard*, April 24, 2010)
>
> "Despite grave mistake Roger remains a father figure for me": young priest struggles with mixed feelings after Bishop Roger Vangeluwe's confession. (*De Standaard*, April 24, 2010)

The preponderance of the Individual Failure frame in the Flemish media has, we may surmise, benefitted the church: the Vangheluwe case provided church leaders with a specific person about whom they could express disapproval and from whom they could openly disassociate themselves.

A second important event that has intensified these effects was the seizure of church records on 24 June 2010, known as Operation Chalice. On the orders of investigating judge

Wim De Troij church offices were raided to examine whether church leaders had attempted to cover up child abuse.

After this event, the Flemish coverage shifted to questions such as "How widespread was the abuse?" and "To what extent did religious leaders know of the abuse?" 'Cover-up culture' and celibacy became dominant news themes. Moreover, in Flemish newspapers individual perpetrators are occasionally presented as victims of the system:

> "I had the pleasure of meeting Bishop Vangheluwe of Bruges several times. The man is certainly no pathological paedophile. This type of behaviour is simply rooted in celibacy. Abolish celibacy, and the problem is practically solved. A priest must deny his sexuality all his life; he is expected to be an a-sexual being, which is absolutely impossible. And don't forget that this thing starts at a very early age, in the seminary. That lifestyle is unsustainable." ('Celibacy makes you sick', *De Standaard*, April 24, 2010,)

The emphasis on victim testimony (as in the Dutch media) is absent in the Flemish coverage. Moreover, in Flanders more emphasis is put on the question "What does this mean for the church?", indicating that – despite the attention for Vangheluwe - Flemish news media also – and not seldom - represented the perspective of the church, which sometimes seems to be the same as that of the pope:

> "The Church remains morally responsible for criminal behavior of individual priests." (Paul Quirynen in *De Standaard*, December 24, 2010)
> "Also, one should seriously reflect within the church on the necessary structural reforms." (Jürgen Mettepenningen in *De Morgen*, December 31, 2010)
> "The church has more than ever the evangelical duty to care for the weakest in society." (*De Morgen*, June 29, 2010)
>
> "Personally, I have committed no wrong, but as a member of the Church in which I want to function, I am responsible." (Herbert van der Smissen in *De Standaard*, April 24, 2010).
>
> 'Because every boss is responsible for his staff, one need not ask the Pope the same.' (Letter to the editor in *Het Laatste Nieuws*, March 24, 2010)

Ireland. The conflicting frames of the Irish data reflect the deep wounds of the Irish nation in addressing decades of physical and sexual abuse, meted out by members of the Catholic hierarchy. The Institutional Failure frame runs through much of the data, with outspoken criticism of the Catholic Church's influence and involvement with many aspects of Irish life. In the Irish coverage, this frame is divided into two further, discrete sub-sets – the failure of the Vatican, and the failure of the Irish Catholic hierarchy. These two institutional failure sets focus on specific individuals: the Pope for the Vatican set and Cardinal Brady for the Irish hierarchy. They become the faces of the coverage.

'[…] despite the many apologies the Pope has given, despite the call to support victims, the Pontiff and his Vatican "Brothers in Christ" are simply unable or unwilling to discuss *their* role in facilitating, prolonging and allowing sex offending against children to continue.' (Letter to the Editor, *Irish Times*, December 23, 2010).

'By failing to report Brendan Smyth to the authorities at the time he became aware of his sexually abusive behaviour, Cardinal Brady allowed many other children to be sexually abused and their lives to be devastated,' the agency's director, Maeve Lewis said. She said that the cardinal's stance was indicative of a belief within the church that 'past and familiar practices' could continue, which made it difficult to trust that any real change was happening.' (*Irish Times*, May 19, 2010).

In addition to this Institutional Failure frame, the Individual Failure frame is equally present. Unlike the Flemish case, which focused a single individual, Irish coverage focused on a large number of individuals whose cases were pertinent during 2010. These included Fr. Tony Walsh, Fr. Patrick Hughes and Fr. James Robinson. In many of these cases the voices of the victims frame the perpetrator and the power relationship:

"I just froze. He told me he was in love with me and I was the special one. As a boy I loved him. I probably just did tell him that he was my hero. I just lay there and thought 'Oh God, what has happened to me?' I felt so ashamed afterwards. I was totally under his control." (*Irish News*, October 6, 2010).

The individual failure and the identified individual as exemplar of the institution frames provide faces for the coverage, much like the Flemish data. Thus, the criticism of the church is shown as having a human face of blame, in contrast with the more anonymous Dutch data.

Great Britain. Much of the UK coverage of the clerical abuse crisis makes clear that the Pope should be held accountable, both as head of the Catholic Church and also for his previously held Vatican role. There is also concern about the Irish. These examples from the UK press best illustrate this.

"A priest who admitted indecently assaulting deaf boys at a school in Yorkshire has been allowed to remain as a cleric, The Sunday Telegraph can reveal, as the scandal over abuse cover-ups in the Catholic Church moves to Britain. […]

The disclosure comes as Pope Benedict XVI finds himself embroiled in new revelations over child sex abuse, following the emergence of a letter signed by him as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in 1985, before he became Pope, resisting the defrocking of Stephen Kiesle, an American priest who had been convicted of offences against young boys." ("Vatican allowed paedophile living in Britain to remain as a priest", *Sunday Telegraph*, April 11, 2010)

Even the more positive portrayals of the pope remind readers of his former gruff watchdog image, as in this *Sunday Times* headline:

'Rottweiller? No, he's a holy granddad; He was labelled evil and a scourge of gays, but Britain quickly learnt to love the Pope.' (September 19, 2010)

More typical of the British coverage however is praise for the Pope's apology to abuse victims offset by disappointment. From the identical *Sunday Times* issue:

'It is unlikely to stem the flow of allegations. Yesterday a former Catholic priest found living a quiet life in a secluded Japanese village in the shadows of Mount Fuji was accused of abusing at least a dozen children of parishioners and members of a Catholic youth group in Melbourne more than 30 years ago.

Victims claim hundreds of paedophiles infiltrated the Church and the Pope is in their firing line because in 2001, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, his office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, was given charge of investigating abuse cases.' ("Tears flow over apology for 'unspeakable' sex crimes," *Sunday Times*, September 19, 2010)

Abuse cases involving British priests are scarce; Irish cases predominate:

'Yet again, the [Murphy] report details how the Catholic Church failed to face up to the evil actions of this predatory molester, moving him around Dublin parishes even though senior figures knew of the abuse.' ([Belfast] *Irish News*, December 18, 2010)

Abuse victims are 'brave survivors', preyed upon by evil paedophiles and left out in the cold by an uncaring institution:

'Brave survivors of Catholic institutional abuse doorstepped the Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Trainor at church yesterday to demand a face-to-face meeting over their ordeals. […] The campaigner hopes the meeting will bring about an apology to the victims of institutional abuse which is starkly missing from the Papal letter.' (*Daily Mirror*, March 22, 2010; 4)

The British coverage is indicative of the profound mistrust of the Catholic Church, and of the Pope as the ultimate holder of responsibility for all that goes on within that church.

Conclusions

This study not only demonstrates that media in different countries each construct their own perpetrators in the church sexual abuse crisis. It also demonstrates that this image fits the way the church is embedded in a society.

Both frames – Institutional or Individual Failure - can rhetorically be used in two ways: to nail the offenders, i.e. the organisation or the individual, or to abduct guilt (by presenting the transgressions as a management problem in the Institutional Failure frame, or as incidents in the Individual Failure frame).

England's traditionally problematic relationship with the Pope is used to frame the crisis in the UK. British newspapers seem to put the blame where it can be used best strategically, by highlighting the role of the Pope and blaming him as the responsible authority. The Netherlands do not have such a problematic relationship with the Pope and in the

absence of one strong example, Dutch newspapers put the blame on the church as an abstract organization, without a representative face. In Flanders the abuse does possess a face: bishop Van Gheluwe personifies church abuse. Rhetorically this siphoned attention away from the church, creating space for the 'one bad apple'-excuse. The country with the most complex situation seems to be Ireland, where both frames co-exist and blame is evenly divided between the Church and a number of individual priests. .

This study is qualitative and explorative, in the sense that it elucidates the ways in which the problem is constructed in the four countries. Stronger statements about which frames are really dominant are here made based on a qualitative analysis and not based upon a quantitative analysis. The results can be a basis for a more quantitative study in which further statements can be made about the dominance of frames and their development over time.

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Appendix 1: General matrix of four salient frames

Frame	Reasoning Devices				Framing Devices
	Problem definition	**Causal responsibility**	**Moral grounds**	**Solutions**	**Metaphors and verbal devices**
1. Institutional Failure	The Church is an organization that condoned the abuse and valued its own interests above the needs of the victims.	A closed, hierarchical organization, failing system. Management is responsible. (In UK esp. the Pope.)	Church should be an example, should live according to their own rules.	Restructuring the management, modern open organization.	Hypocrisy, celibacy, the Church as an institution, structural, culture of silence, taboo, cover up, under the cap, scandal, conflict
2. Individual Failure	The abuse is a matter of deviancy of individual priests or other individuals connected to the church, but not officials. The problem is not structural, but incidents	Psychological, individual problems, pedophilia, environment where sexuality had to be hidden. Celibacy.	Family values, sex with under aged children is wrong, children are not legally competent.	Open attitude towards sexuality, abolition of celibacy.	Incidents, struggling men, crossing borders, psychiatric, illness, a few bad apples
3. Purification	Clergy abuse is a public relations problem. It also presents the church with opportunities for change and improvement.		The name of an honorable institute such as the church should not be blamed.	The Church must recognize its sins, repent. give victims recognition and satisfaction. This is an opportunity to reform the church.	Good sides of the church, painful but necessary, self-cleaning, make a clean sweep, purification, recognition
4. Witch Hunt	The problem is a moral panic.	Sensationalist and hostile media. (And in the US by lawyers who see opportunities to earn money.)	Fairness, proportionality. Media should strive for balanced reporting.	Better public relations management, show the better sides of the church.	Moral panic, zeitgeist, attack, no different from other institutes. Hatred of the church, injustice, thrill-sigh, smear, tsu-

					nami, demonization, stereo-typing: simplistic, sensa-tionalist media

References and note:

Literature: