Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News

by Holli A. Semetko and Patti M. Valkenburg

We investigated the prevalence of 5 news frames identified in earlier studies on framing and framing effects: attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences, and morality. We content analyzed 2,601 newspaper stories and 1,522 television news stories in the period surrounding the Amsterdam meetings of European heads of state in 1997. Our results showed that, overall, the attribution of responsibility frame was most commonly used in the news, followed by the conflict, economic consequences, human interest, and morality frames, respectively. The use of news frames depended on both the type of outlet and the type of topic. Most significant differences were not between media (television vs. the press) but between sensationalist vs. serious types of news outlets. Sober and serious newspapers and television news programs more often used the responsibility and conflict frames in the presentation of news, whereas sensationalist outlets more often used the human interest frame.

Over the past 25 years, an impressive literature has contributed to our understanding of frames and framing effects (e.g., Edelman, 1993; Entman, 1991, 1993; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Gamson, 1992; Goffman, 1974; Graber, 1988, 1993; Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; McLeod, Kosicki, & McLeod, 1994; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997; Tuchman, 1978; Zaller, 1992). Framing analysis shares with agenda-setting research a focus on the relationship between public policy issues in the news and the public perceptions of these issues. However, framing analysis "expands beyond agenda-setting research into *what* people

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talk or think about by examining *how* they think and talk about issues in the news" (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 70, emphasis in the original).

Although there is no single definition of news frame or framing, the many that have been employed point up similar characteristics. News frames are "conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information" (Neuman et al., 1992, p. 60). They set the parameters "in which citizens discuss public events" (Tuchman, 1978, p. IV). They are "persistent selection, emphasis, and exclusion" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). Framing is selecting "some aspects of a perceived reality" to enhance their salience "in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Frames are to help audiences "locate, perceive, identify, and label" the flow of information around them (Goffman, 1974, p. 21) and to "narrow the available political alternatives" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 156).

Framing effects are "changes in judgment engendered by subtle alterations in the definition of judgment or choice of problems" (Iyengar, 1987, p. 816). Put another way, a framing effect is "one in which salient attributes of a message (its organization, selection of content, or thematic structure) render particular thoughts applicable, resulting in their activation and use in evaluations" (Price et al., 1997, p. 486). Experiments with question wording, for example, show that the framing of choices can have profound consequences for respondents' perception of risk (Kahneman, 1984; Kahneman & Tversky, 1982). Frames have also been shown to shape public perceptions of political issues or institutions. The opinion of European publics about the European Union and various EU-related issues can easily be swayed in different directions, depending on how the issue is framed in the survey question (Saris, 1997).

A number of recent studies have identified the importance of certain frames in the news by focusing on their consequences for the public's interpretation of events and issues (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Graber, 1988, 1993; Iyengar, 1987, 1991; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Neuman et al., 1992; Norris, 1995; Patterson, 1993). Although these and other studies have provided important information about the occurrence or the effects of frames, there is not yet a standard set of content analytic indicators that can be used to reliably measure the prevalence of common frames in the news. A reliable set of content analytic indicators is necessary for studying developments in the news over time and similarities and differences in the ways in which politics and other topics of national and international importance are framed in the news in different countries.

There are two possible approaches to content analyzing frames in the news: inductive and deductive. The inductive approach involves analyzing a news story with an open view to attempt to reveal the array of possible frames, beginning with very loosely defined preconceptions of these frames (see, for example, Gamson, 1992). This approach can detect the many possible ways in which an issue can be framed, but this method is labor intensive, often based on small samples, and can be difficult to replicate.

A deductive approach involves predefining certain frames as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames occur in the news. This

approach makes it necessary to have a clear idea of the kinds of frames likely to be in the news, because the frames that are not defined a priori may be over-looked. This approach can be replicated easily, can cope with large samples, and can easily detect differences in framing between media (e.g., television vs. press) and within media (e.g., highbrow news programs or newspapers vs. tabloid-style media).

The literature to date has identified a handful of frames that occur commonly in the news, although not necessarily simultaneously. Most studies focus on the existence of one or another frame in the news and its consequences for public opinion. The conflict frame, for instance, has been the subject of much discussion (Patterson, 1993; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997), as well as the attribution of responsibility in the news (Iyengar, 1991). A recent study by Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) is an exception in that these researchers identified several different frames that were common in U.S. news coverage of a range of issues, including conflict, economic consequences, human impact, and morality frames. Our study provides an extension of the research of Neuman et al. (1992) by investigating the occurrences of the different frames that have been discussed in the earlier literature. We also elaborate on the theoretical work of Iyengar (1991), who explicitly measured how audience members framed who was responsible for various social problems after they were exposed to two types of news formats: "episodic" news, which refers to specific events, and "thematic" news, which refers to more analytical, contextual, or historical coverage.

An additional review of the literature about the nature of news in the U.S. and Europe (Brants & Neijens, 1998; Brants, van Meurs, & Neijens, 1995; Diez-Nicolas & Semetko, 1995; van Dijk, 1988; van der Eijk & van Praag, 1987; Kleinnijenhuis, Oegema, & de Ridder, 1995; Neuman et al., 1992; Nossiter, Scammell, & Semetko, 1994; Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch, & Weaver, 1991; Semetko, Scammell, & Nossiter, 1994; Semetko & Schoenbach, 1994) confirmed that the aforementioned frames largely account for all the frames that have been found in the news. The literature, therefore, affords us the opportunity to opt for the second, deductive approach to assess the prevalence of frames in the news. Specifically, we investigated the following five news frames that have been identified in earlier studies:

Conflict frame. This frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest. Neuman et al. (1992, pp. 61–62) found that the media draw on a few central frames for reporting a range of issues and that conflict was the most common in the handful of frames in U.S. news they identified. Other research has also observed that discussion in the news between political elites often reduces complex substantive political debate to overly simplistic conflict. Presidential election campaign news, for example, is framed largely in terms of conflict (Patterson, 1993). Because of the emphasis on conflict, the news media have been criticized for inducing public cynicism and mistrust of political leaders (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). We are interested in establishing how visible a conflict frame is relative to other common frames in the news.

Human interest frame. This frame brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem. Neuman et al. (1992) described

this as the "human impact" frame, and, next to conflict, found it to be a common frame in the news. As the market for news everywhere becomes more competitive, journalists and editors are at pains to produce a product that captures and retains audience interest (Bennett, 1995). Framing news in human interest terms is one way to achieve this. Such a frame refers to an effort to personalize the news, dramatize or "emotionalize" the news, in order to capture and retain audience interest.

Economic consequences frame. This frame reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country. Neuman et al. (1992) also identify it as a common frame in the news. The wide impact of an event is an important news value, and economic consequences are often considerable (Graber, 1993).

Morality frame. This frame puts the event, problem, or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions. Because of the professional norm of objectivity, journalists often make reference to moral frames indirectly—through quotation or inference, for instance—by having someone else raise the question (Neuman et al., 1992). A newspaper could, for example, use the views of an interest group to raise questions about sexually transmitted diseases. Such a story may contain moral messages or offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave. Although Neuman et al. (1992, p. 75) found this frame to be more common in the minds of audiences than in the content of news, they nevertheless identified this frame as among the several used in reporting.

Responsibility frame. This frame presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group. Although the existence of a responsibility frame in the news has not been measured explicitly, the U.S. news media have been credited with (or blamed for) shaping public understanding of who is responsible for causing or solving key social problems, such as poverty (Iyengar, 1987). Iyengar (1991) argued that television news—by covering an issue or problem in terms of an event, instance, or individual (episodically) rather than in terms of the larger historical social context (thematically)—encourages people to offer individual-level explanations for social problems. Thus, the poor woman on welfare is held responsible for her fate, rather than the government or the system. We were interested in establishing how the use of the "episodic . . . formats" of television news, which refers to the fact that the vast majority of television news stories are about "specific events or particular cases" (Iyengar 1991, p. 2), are related to an explicitly measured responsibility frame in the news.

Research Questions

Our theoretical interest was to compare the use of frames in television news and the press and to consider whether there are important differences between and within media (e.g., television vs. press; serious and sober vs. sensationalist news outlets). Therefore, our first research question was:

RQ1: Does the use of frames vary significantly by outlet?

A second aim of this study was to compare the use of frames in the reporting of different topics or issues that are commonly in the news (political issues, for example, or crime), and to consider the implications of this for public understanding. Our second research question was:

RQ2: Does the use of frames vary significantly by topic?

Method

This study proceeded from a quantitative content analysis of the frames used in the Dutch national news media from May 1 to June 20, 1997, the period leading up to and including the so-called "Eurotop" meetings of the heads of government of the EU countries, held in Amsterdam during June 16–17, 1997. At these official meetings, prime ministers from all EU countries, including Germany's Helmut Kohl, Britain's Tony Blair, and France's Jacques Chirac, met to finalize agreement on monetary union. This event presented an opportunity to study how the national news media covered this major event and the key European issues addressed by the heads of state. We coded the four national newspapers with the highest circulation rates, the *Telegraaf, Algemeen Dagblad (AD), Volkskrant*, and the *NRC Handelsblad (NRC)*, and the three national daily television news programs with the highest viewing figures, *NOS Journaal, RTL Nieuws*, and *Hart van Nederland*. Because readers are unlikely to be familiar with these outlets, we briefly describe them in terms of audience size and style of reporting.

Press news. The *Telegraaf* has a readership of 15% of the Dutch population, the *AD*, 10%; the *Volkskrant*, 7%; and the *NRC*, 4%. On a continuum ranging from sensationalist, on the one hand, to sober and serious, on the other, the *Telegraaf* is closer to the sensationalist end, with the *AD* in the middle and the *Volkskrant* and the *NRC* at the sober and serious end. The *Telegraaf* has no actual equivalent in other countries; it is much more elaborate and politically oriented than Germany's populist *Bild* or the U.K. tabloid, *The Sun*. It contains a great deal of financial news and is widely read by businesspeople as well as by those with lower levels of education. The *AD* is aimed at a broad general audience and is much easier to read than the other two "quality" newspapers in our study. The *Volkskrant* might be compared to *The Guardian* in the U.K. and is widely read by professionals in education, social work, and the civil service. The *NRC* is the Dutch very serious equivalent to *The New York Times*, with very little attention to the popular kinds of stories found on the front pages of the *Telegraaf* or *AD*.

Television news. For decades, the *NOS Journaal* was the only television news program in the country, and different versions were broadcast at different times of the day. NOS is the Dutch equivalent to Britain's BBC. In 1989, privately owned channels funded by advertising were launched. RTL was the first private channel to introduce a news program to compete with NOS (van Praag & van der Eijk, 1998). These two programs are the Dutch equivalents of the main evening network news programs in the U.S. *Hart van Nederland* (translated as "the heart of

Holland"), however, is different. Although it is also a national news program, it reports stories rarely found on the other two more serious news programs, such as the cow that strayed out of the farmer's field, and it pays little attention to foreign news or political news.

We analyzed news related to politics or political themes in Holland and Europe, and we were able to see how prominent such news was relative to other news. In the press, we coded (a) all stories on page one, and inside we coded (b) all stories mentioning political institutions or politicians from Holland or any European country, and (c) all stories about the following four topics: European integration, drugs, crime or corruption, and immigration (asylum seekers, racial-ethnic issues). On television, we coded all news items each day in the three main evening news programs. In total, we analyzed 4,123 news stories: 2,601 newspaper stories—*Telegraaf* (n = 694), *AD* (n = 667), *Volkskrant* (n = 573), *NRC* (n = 667); and 1,522 television news stories—*NOS Journaal* (n = 449), *RTL Nieuws* (n = 553), and *Hart van Nederland* (n = 520). The large number of newspaper articles that met our selection criteria led us to decide to code newspapers every other day. This meant that in the even weeks, we coded the newspapers issued on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; in the odd weeks, we coded those on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturdays (in Holland there are no newspapers on Sundays). Therefore, the 2,601 newspaper stories occurred over 26 days.

Framing Measures

To measure the extent to which certain frames appear in stories that mention politics, we developed a series of 20 questions to which the coder had to answer *yes* (1) or *no* (0). Each question was meant to measure one of five news frames: human interest, conflict, morality, attribution of responsibility, and economic consequences. These were questions such as "Does the article reflect disagreement between parties/individuals/groups?" (conflict), "Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?" (human interest), "Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem?" (attribution of responsibility), "Does the story contain any moral message?" (morality), and "Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?" (economic).

We investigated whether these questions would cluster in such a way as to reveal underlying dimensions. To measure each frame, we considered a minimum of three questions. Because our approach to measuring the existence of frames was exploratory, and there was a chance that some of the question items would not cluster appropriately, we added extra question items for some frames.

Our framing analysis included all stories that mentioned Dutch or European politics, politicians, or stories that dealt with four issues: European integration, drugs, crime, or immigration and racial-ethnic issues. We identified these issues in advance as a basis for selecting stories because we wanted to compare how certain long-standing domestic issues of importance are reported in comparison with the broader contemporary issue of European integration. A full 85% (n = 2,212) of the press stories and 30% (n = 451) of the television stories met these selection criteria and were therefore used in the framing analysis.

Four coders content-analyzed Dutch television and press news. The intercoder reliability, conducted on a subsample of 50 newspaper and 50 television stories for each of the 20 framing questions, was between 92% and 100%.

Development of Scales to Measure News Frames

We conducted a principal component analysis with varimax rotation on the 20 framing questions to investigate the extent to which these reflect underlying dimensions. This analysis yielded a factor solution in which the framing questions clustered into five distinguishable frames: attribution of responsibility, human interest, conflict, morality, and economic consequences. The factor solution, which explained 54.2% of the variance of the framing items, is presented in Table 1.

Only the items with factor loadings higher than .50 were included in the scales, a threshold commonly used by researchers (Pedhazur & Pedhazur-Schmelkin, 1991). As Table 1 shows, two items did not meet the threshold—one item measuring the responsibility frame ("Does the story suggest the problem requires urgent action?") and one measuring the conflict frame ("Does the story refer to winners and losers?"). As Table 1 shows, these items were empirically and conceptually more distant to the remaining items that loaded on the same factors.

We chose to use simple yes-no categories to measure the occurrence of frames in the news. An advantage of such a binary coding strategy is that intercoder reliabilities are relatively high. A disadvantage of binary data is that they are measured with more measurement error, with the inevitable risk that correlations between such variables are lower than correlations between ordinal or interval variables. The attenuated correlations between binary variables could therefore readily mask an underlying factor structure that could be clearly visible if the variables had been on a higher measurement level. Despite the fact that our correlations could have been deflated, we found a very clear factor structure. There was therefore no compelling reason to perform another kind of analysis.

Nevertheless, we also verified that our variables clustered in the same way when we used a method specifically designed to classify binary-coded variables. We performed a hierarchical cluster analysis with the "nearest neighbor" method and lambda as the binary similarity measure. This analysis yielded exactly the same clusters as the factor solution. In addition, it revealed that the very two items with the lowest loadings in the factor analysis also did not behave well in the hierarchical cluster analysis.

We used Cronbach's alphas to measure the internal consistencies for the five scales values (Kuder-Richardson 20 method for dichotomous data, Cronbach, 1990). Alpha values were .75 for the attribution of responsibility frame (4 items); .69 for the human interest frame (5 items); .81 for the conflict frame (3 items); .77 for the morality frame (3 items); and .66 for the economic consequences frame (3 items). The intercorrelations among the five frames ranged from $r = -.22$ ($p < .001$) between attribution of responsibility and human interest frames, to .27 ($p < .001$) between attribution of responsibility and economic consequences frames.

We formed multi-item scales by averaging the unweighted scores on the individual items in each factor. The values of each framing scale ranged from .00

Table 1. Varimax-Rotated Factor Solution for the 20 Framing Items

	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
Framing items	Attr. of resp.	Human interest	Conflict	Morality	Econ. cons.
Attribution of responsibility					
Does the story suggest that some level of gov't has the ability to alleviate the problem?	**.80**	-.11	.10	-.04	.10
Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem?	**.74**	-.22	.12	.01	.10
Does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue?	**.69**	.04	-.02	.00	.09
Does the story suggest that an ind. (or group of people in society) is resp. for the issue-problem?[1]	**.67**	-.22	-.07	.04	.04
Does the story suggest the problem requires urgent action?	**.43**	.14	.26	.01	.02
Human interest frame					
Does the story provide a human example or "human face" on the issue?	-.01	**.76**	.06	.04	-.04
Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?	-.08	**.69**	.04	.11	-.03
Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?	-.08	**.64**	.06	-.02	-.00
Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors?	-.17	**.61**	-.02	-.00	-.00
Does the story contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?	.04	**.60**	-.06	.07	-.11
Conflict frame					
Does the story reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries?	.10	.02	**.88**	-.02	.01
Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another?	.01	.10	**.81**	.03	.02
Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?	.19	-.04	**.77**	-.04	.06
Does the story refer to winners and losers?	-.02	.01	**.29**	.06	-.02
Morality frame					
Does the story contain any moral message?	-.01	-.02	.02	**.91**	-.01
Does the story make reference to morality, God, and other religious tenets?	-.02	.09	.05	**.86**	-.03
Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?	.01	.07	.04	**.68**	-.03
Economic frame					
Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?	-.01	-.01	.03	-.02	**.81**
Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?	-.11	-.03	-.03	-.01	**.73**
Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?	.23	-.11	.03	-.03	**.74**

[1] Item was inversely coded.

Table 2. Percentage of Subjects Covered in Four Newspaper and Three Television Outlets

Subject	Press				Television				Total
	NRC	*Volks-rant*	*AD*	*Telegraaf*	*NOS*	*RTL*	*Hart v. Ned.*		*Total*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	*N*	%
Europe	28.0	25.5	18.7	19.0	18.7	12.8	5.4	773	18.7
Nonpolitical news	5.2	6.1	7.8	13.0	20.9	22.2	53.8	709	17.2
Crime	10.9	14.0	21.9	26.8	7.1	7.8	16.3	645	15.6
Politics	17.4	16.8	18.0	13.5	15.1	13.2	3.1	583	14.1
Social welfare/ education	15.0	17.6	17.1	14.0	7.8	7.1	12.1	549	13.3
Economy	9.7	9.8	7.6	7.1	4.7	14.5	1.0	327	7.9
Infrastructure/environ-ment/agriculture	7.0	7.9	7.2	6.2	6.5	7.1	8.1	293	7.1
Foreign news	6.6	2.4	1.6	0.4	19.2	15.4	0.2	244	5.9
Total *N*	667	573	667	694	449	553	520	4123	
%									100

(*frame not present*) to 1.00 (*frame present*). A high score on the attribution of responsibility scale indicated that the story suggests that some level of government has the ability to alleviate, or is responsible for causing, a certain issue or problem. A high score on the human interest scale indicated that the story puts a human face on the issue or problem, sometimes employing personal vignettes or other characteristics (verbal, visual, or both) that may generate strong feelings on the part of the viewer or reader. A high score on the conflict scale indicated that the story reflects disagreement between parties or groups or countries or refers to two or more sides of an issue. A high score on the morality scale indicated that the story contains a moral message or made reference to morality, God, or religious tenets. A high score on the economic consequences scale indicated that the story mentioned financial losses or gains or the degree of expense involved.

Results

Television news in Holland, as in the U.S., was predominantly "episodic," in Iyengar's (1991) sense of the term. In other words, it focused on specific events or occurrences in the past 24 hours. On television, such episodic news accounted for 92% of stories, whereas only 8% were thematic, i.e., taking information from different

Table 3. Mean Scores of the Visibility of Five Frames in Dutch Television and Press News Media

Outlet	Attr. of responsibility	Conflict	Economic	Human interest	Morality	*N*
Print News						
NRC	.62 (.36)[c]	.49 (.42)[d]	.21 (.32)[c]	.13 (.21)[a]	.02 (.10)[a]	533
Volkskrant	.50 (.36)[b]	.40 (.42)[c]	.22 (.31)[c]	.14 (.20)[a]	.01 (.07)[a]	485
AD	.46 (.37)[b]	.34 (.40)[b]	.16(.27)[b]	.14 (.20)[a]	.01 (.08)[a]	565
Telegraaf	.45 (.40)[b]	.32 (.37)[b]	.18 (.28)[b]	.19 (.26)[b]	.01 (.08)[a]	578
TV News						
NOS	.53 (.31)[b]	.49 (.37)[d]	.12 (.27)[a]	.22 (.24)[b]	.03 (.18)[a]	176
RTL	.51 (.31)[b]	.47 (.39)[d]	.10 (.23)[a]	.21 (.23)[b]	.04 (.18)[b]	169
Hart v. Nederland	.23 (.33)[a]	.17 (.32)[a]	.04 (.14)[a]	.31 (.28)[c]	.03 (.13)[a]	106
Whole Sample	.50 (.37)[z]	.39 (.41)[y]	.18 (.29)[x]	.17 (.23)[w]	.02 (.10)[v]	2612

Notes. Values in parentheses represent standard deviations.

Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

[v, w, x, y, z] Row values with different subscripts were significantly differenty from each other at $p < .001$.

[a, b, c, d] Column values with different subscripts were significantly different from each other at least at $p < .05$.

points in time and providing a context or interpretation for an event. In the Dutch press, the reverse was true: 32% of stories were episodic and 68% were thematic.

To familiarize the reader with the kinds of topics covered in Dutch news, a general overview of the stories in these outlets is provided in Table 2, which displays the main topics of news stories in the seven news outlets during the period under study here. The media in Table 2 are organized along a serious–sensationalist continuum. For the press, this puts the *NRC* on the left and the *Telegraaf* on the right, and for television NOS on the left and *Hart van Nederland* on the right.

There was little difference between NOS and RTL in the percentage of stories devoted to nonpolitical news, as well as political news, foreign news, social welfare, education, infrastructure, agriculture and the environment, or crime news. The only difference was that there were more stories about the economy on RTL and more about Europe on NOS. *Hart van Nederland*, by contrast, carried far more nonpolitical news stories, with almost no attention to foreign news, the

economy, or politics. Crime was a far more important subject in this program than in the other television news programs.

In the press, returning to the sensationalist–sober continuum, Table 2 shows that the more sensationalist the newspaper, the more attention was paid to crime news and nonpolitical news, whereas the more sober the newspaper, the more attention was paid to foreign news, news about Europe, and political and economic news. Crime, for example, accounted for 27% of stories in the *Telegraaf*, compared with only 11% in the *NRC*.

Use of News Frames in the Different News Media
Our first research question asked whether there was variation in the framing of news among the different print and television news media. To investigate whether the use of frames varied, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with type of news frame (attribution of responsibility vs. conflict vs. economy vs. human interest vs. morality) as a within-story factor and the news outlet as a between-story factor. Table 3 presents the mean framing scores per outlet.

The MANOVA yielded a significant main effect of type of news frame, $F(4, 10420) = 680.89$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .21$, indicating that, overall, some news frames are more frequently used than others. Post-hoc pairwise tests with Bonferroni adjustment revealed that all news frames differed significantly from each other at $p < .001$. As the bottom row in Table 3 shows, across all outlets, the attribution of responsibility frame occurred most frequently, followed by the conflict frame. The economic and human interest frames were less frequently used, whereas the morality frame hardly seemed to play a role in Dutch news at all. It must be noted, however, that the difference in the use of the economic frame and the human interest frame was statistically significant, but not substantively meaningful because of the large sample size and the power of the within-story analysis.

The MANOVA showed a significant main effect of news outlet, $F(6, 2605) = 23.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$, and a significant interaction between type of frame and outlet, $F(24, 10420) = 15.76$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$. This interaction effect indicated that, although in the overall sample, the most common frame was the attribution of responsibility, followed by the conflict, economic, human interest, and morality frame respectively, this rank order was not the case for all media. For the sensationalist news program, *Hart van Nederland*, human interest was the most important frame. Univariate tests showed that, for each of the five frames separately, there was a significant effect of news outlet. We used post-hoc pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustment to discuss how the outlets differed in their use of news frames.

Attribution of responsibility frame. The post-hoc comparisons revealed that the most sober and serious newspaper (*NRC*) used this frame most frequently (see Table 3). This was also the most common frame in the other newspapers. In television news, there was no significant difference between the more serious outlets, NOS and RTL, which were also equally likely to use this frame frequently. The more sensationalist news program, *Hart van Nederland*, however, employed this frame significantly less often than all the other media.

Conflict frame. The post-hoc tests revealed that the most serious newspaper, the *NRC*, used this frame more frequently than the others. The more serious the newspaper, the more the conflict frame was in evidence. In television news, there was no significant difference between NOS and RTL, which were equally likely to use this frame quite frequently. The more sensationalist news program, *Hart van Nederland*, however, employed this frame less often.

Economic consequences frame. Television news differed significantly from the press in utilizing this frame less often. Within the press, this frame occurred significantly more often in the two most serious and sober newspapers. Within television news, there was no significant difference in the use of this frame by outlet.

Human interest frame. Television news employed this frame significantly more often than the press. Within the press, this frame also occurred significantly more often in the most sensationalist newspaper, the *Telegraaf*, whereas there was no significant difference between the other three more serious newspapers. Within television, this frame occurred significantly more often in the sensationalist news program and equally less frequently in the more serious NOS and RTL.

Morality frame. There was very little evidence of this frame in any of the Dutch national news outlets, although there was a slight trend for television news to use this frame more often than the press (see Table 3).

Differences in the Framing of Topics

Our second research question asked whether there was any difference in the use of frames with specific topics. As mentioned earlier, we coded all stories that mentioned politics or politicians, as well as all stories about any of the following four topics: European integration, crime, drugs, and immigration or racial-ethnic topics. Two of these four topics—European integration and crime—emerged as the most important topics in the news during the 2-month period of our study. Of the entire sample, approximately 19% of news stories focused on Europe or European integration and about 16% focused on crime. It is worth noting that the number of stories about drugs and immigration were so small that they did not merit separate categories in Table 2 and were therefore too small for inclusion in our cross-outlet comparisons. NOS news, for example, had only six stories about drugs and only four stories about race and ethnicity during the period under study.

Therefore, we decided to focus our analysis on differences between stories about Europe and stories about crime. To do so, we conducted a MANOVA on the five news frames, with outlet and topic (Europe vs. crime) as a between-story factor. This MANOVA revealed a significant main effect of outlet, $F(6, 1239) = 10.06$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$, which we do not discuss here because it was discussed in the previous section.

The MANOVA also yielded a significant main effect of topic, $F(1, 1239) = 54.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$. As Table 4 shows, topics about Europe and the European integration were more frequently framed in terms of attribution of responsibility and economic consequences than were stories about crime. Stories about crime, on the other hand, were more often framed in terms of human interest. There was no significant difference between stories about Europe and those about crime in terms of the prevalence of a conflict frame.

Table 4. Mean Scores of the Visibility of Five Frames in Dutch Television and Press News Media by Issue

	Attr. of responsibility	Conflict	Economic	Human	Morality	N
Issue						
Euro	.60 (.33)**	.39 (.39)	.17 (.29)*	.13 (.21)	.01 (.08)	689
Crime	.13 (.25)	.32 (.38)	.10 (.22)	.25 (.26)**	.02 (.10)	564

Note. Values in parentheses represent standard deviations.
*p < .01, **p < .001.

Finally, the MANOVA revealed a significant three-way interaction among type of frame, outlet, and topic, $F(24, 4956) = 2.18$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .01$. Univariate tests showed that the interaction between outlet and topic held only for the responsibility frame, $F(6, 1239) = 4.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .02$, and not for any of the other frames, conflict: $F(6, 1239) = 1.78$, $p = .10$, $\eta^2 = .01$, economy: $F(6, 1239) = 1.60$, $p = .14$, $\eta^2 = .01$, human interest: $F(6, 1239) = .93$, $p = .47$, $\eta^2 = .00$, and morality: $F(6, 1239) = 1.84$, $p = .09$, $\eta^2 = .01$. The interaction effect between outlet and topic for the responsibility frame meant that the difference between stories about crime and Europe, in the use of the attribution of responsibility frame, was larger in some media than in other media. The pattern of occurrences was, however, always the same, in that all media framed stories about Europe more often in terms of responsibility than they did stories about crime. For the other frames, the patterns per outlet did not significantly deviate from the results in the overall sample. We therefore presented the framing results for the two topics across all outlets.

Discussion

Our first aim was to assess differences in the use of news frames among different types of outlets. To do this, we used 20 framing questions to empirically assess the five most common news frames discussed in the various literatures. Our framing items showed a satisfactory intercoder reliability as well as a satisfactory internal consistency. We studied the prevalence of these frames in the four national newspapers and three national television outlets with the highest audience ratings in Holland. Overall, the most common frames were, in order of predominance, attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, human interest, and morality.

Responsibility for causing or solving social problems could have been attributed to the individual or to the government. Our coding of this variable was done in such a way that a high score meant that responsibility was attributed to the government. Our results showed, therefore, that in Holland responsibility was

often attributed to the government. The predominance of the responsibility frame in these national media outlets suggests the importance and potential influence of political culture and context on the framing of problems and topics in the news. In Holland, where there is a strong social welfare state, the government is expected to provide answers to social problems. The responsibility frame was especially evident in the serious news outlets in the press and television, which may be due to our finding that the more serious outlets present more political and economic news than the less serious outlets.

Although we found that television news in Holland was just as episodic in character as in the U.S., we also found that the responsibility frame was heavily present in the serious news programs. This result is in disagreement with the argument of Iyengar (1987, 1991), who blamed the episodic nature of television news for encouraging viewers to attribute responsibility for social problems to the individual, rather than to the government. Our study showed that television news can be episodic and at the same time frame the government (rather than the individual) as responsible for social problems. This suggests that Iyengar's (1991) argument about the consequences of the episodic nature of TV news is actually culture bound and not generalizable beyond television news in the U.S. Our findings suggest that, although television news in many countries may be episodic, the way in which responsibility is framed in the news is influenced by the political culture and social context in which the news is produced.

The conflict frame was the second most common frame in Dutch news. The conflict frame occurred more often in the serious news outlets in the press and television, where there was also more political news. The tendency to report politics as conflict is similar to the U.S. (Patterson, 1993; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997), but the basis of conflict is potentially different in a parliamentary multiparty system. In Holland, there has always been a multiparty coalition government, with a multiparty opposition. Therefore, there is not only conflict between the government and opposition in the news, there is also conflict among the parties within the coalition and opposition.

We were interested in whether the prevalence of frames in the news varied by outlet. Our results suggest that more important than the medium is the sensationalist or serious nature of the outlet. The differences in the use of three news frames—the attribution of responsibility frame, the conflict frame, and the economic consequences frame—were at least as much dependent on the sensational or serious nature of the outlet. In general, we found that the more sober and serious newspapers and the "harder" television news programs were similar in their frequent use of the attribution of responsibility frame and the conflict frame, whereas the more sensationalist newspapers and "softer" news programs showed a similar emphasis on the human interest frame.

With respect to specific differences between press and television, there was a tendency for television news to use the human interest frame more frequently than print news media. This is what one would expect, based on previous news research that shows that television is more personalized and human interest oriented (Bennett, 1995). Although both print and television news used the morality frame infrequently, there was also a slight tendency for television news, more

than print news, to make reference to morality, God or other religious tenets, or to offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave. We also found that newspapers used the economic consequences frame more often than television news did. This could be attributed to our finding that Dutch print news is more thematic or analytic than the predominantly episodic television news, with the result that economic consequences may receive more attention.

A final aim of this study was to investigate whether framing of news varied by topic. We selected two topics that were prominent in the news during the period of data collection: crime and European integration. We found that the use of certain news frames did vary. In general, stories about Europe were framed in terms of the attribution of responsibility, conflict, and economic consequences. Stories about crime were more often framed in terms of human interest. Stories about crime often went into the personal details of victims and perpetrators and, hence, scored higher on the human interest frame.

Europe has already taken the first step toward monetary unification with the introduction of the common currency. With further political integration underway, it is important to identify characteristics in the presentation of institutions and issues in the news and to understand how this is shaped by culture and national context. The way European politics and issues are framed in the news can have important implications for public understanding and evaluations of issues, institutions, and political actors (Valkenburg, Semetko, & de Vreese, 1999). The multiparty system and the social welfare state are common throughout most of Europe, and the Dutch case is, therefore, an interesting point from which to begin.

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