The Notes of Benedict XVI on abuse by Catholic Clergy: an analysis of English and French media coverage in the international press

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ABSTRACT

The international press paid particular attention to Benedict XVI’s notes of 10 April 2019, on sexual abuse perpetrated by Catholic clergy. These notes are the personal thinking of the former Pope on the causes of the crisis and are entitled, ‘The Church and the scandal of sexual abuse’; their publication got the cover pages of the international press all over the world and drove criticism against the Pope Emeritus. Three news agencies, AFP, AP and Reuters, built up the narrative of the issue that was then reported by the international press, both secular and Catholic, which mostly uncritically assumed the biased reading of the issue presented. This research examines the media coverage of the issue in international English and French newspapers through a representative sample of 330 news items. The analysis focuses on the common places (topoi) and frames in the headlines/first paragraphs of news and editorial articles. Two hundred and thirty-eight of these news items (72% of those selected) did not even offer the link to the original notes. The case poses a question about the prejudices still hanging on in the mainstream newspapers about the figure of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI.

1. Introduction

In the context of the Vatican Summit convoked by Pope Francis from 21–24 February 2019, on the theme of ‘The Protection of Minors in the Church’ (Pope Francis 2019), Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI published a personal reflection as a contribution after having informed Pope Francis through the Vatican State Secretary. This eighteen-and-a-half-page essay on sexual abuse in the Church was entitled ‘The Church and the scandal of sexual abuse’ and was published on 2019 April 10 (Benedict XVI 2019). In this contribution, which was not offered to the participants of the summit, he examines in depth the context and the ultimate cause of pedophilia among the Catholic clergy.

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In his brief reflection, he draws his resolute conclusion as to the ultimate cause of this problem in the Church clearly in this key phrase: 'Why did pedophilia reach such proportions? Ultimately, the reason is the absence of God' (Benedict XVI 2019). In fact, the absence of God in this secularized society and the lack of faith of certain members of the clergy imply the loss of the sense of good and evil. This is a very important argument for the Pope Emeritus, because he has talked about it for years in most of his works (Ratzinger 1985, 1997, 2004; Pope Benedict XVI 2010). In addition, he explains that this exclusion of God from our current society is the result of certain precise historical phenomena such as the sexual revolution of the Sixties, the spread of homosexuality in the seminaries and the collapse of Christian morality. These events are strictly interrelated in that they are the cause of pedophilia in the clergy of the Catholic Church (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI 2019).

His analysis does not only consider organizational issues but embraces the transcendent field, because it is of the essence of the Church to be both a divine and human institution. That is something that we very often forget, he says, when trying to build a better Church with our own ideologies. Too often, the Church is viewed as a merely human organization; likewise, proposed resolutions to the problems which she faces are frequently secular in nature, failing to take into account the transcendent nature of the Church. However, this essay did not reach the public in an authentic manner, according to the Pope Emeritus. He said a few months after the appearance of his essay in an interview published in the German magazine Herder Korrespondenz that he regretted that God was not mentioned at all in the theological debates and the multiple media reactions, although He is the central theme underlined by the essay. On 27 August 2019, a piece at the Catholic News Agency stated:

The Pope emeritus has responded to criticism of his essay on the abuse crisis, saying many negative reactions have confirmed his central thesis that apostasy and alienation from the Faith are at the heart of the crisis – by not even mentioning God in their critique of his essay. (Wimmer 2019)

If Pope Benedict XVI’s claim turns out to be correct, it is worth investigating why his message was not cordially accepted in published opinion. Is it because some media have difficulty grasping the spiritual dimension of the life of the Church (González Gaitano 2016)? Is it due to unintentional media bias or is there intentional omission of relevant information by some key actors in the news media system? In the end, is it a combination of all factors? Whatever the journalists’ intentions, the fact is that if Pope Benedicts words did not reach the public in an authentic manner, then the truth has been distorted and public opinion misinformed, and Pope Benedict XVI has once again been the victim of prejudice and censorship based on the technique of frames and common places (topoi) often used for the diffusion of information.

This article is structured as follows: (1) Introduction; (2) Methodological approach: description and goal of the research; (3) Conceptual framework: the notions of frames/reframes and common places (topoi); (4) Media coverage of the French and English international press and the results of the number of articles analyzed; and, finally, (5) Overall assessment and conclusion.
2. Methodological approach

This research focuses on how the international press covered Pope Benedict’s essay on the scandal of sexual abuse by the clergy. The notion ‘international press’ refers to news agencies, general newspapers, magazines, Radio and TV websites with news sections, blogs, and Catholic or secular portals with news sections on the worldwide web that published information about the notes. I have carefully analyzed the titles and texts of the articles of mainstream and Catholic news pieces in the French and English-speaking world, grouped together on the web according to a specific content analysis methodology. This content analysis, which is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Berelson 2013, 21), should lead to the answer to a fundamental question: Was there a ‘de facto censorship’ in the media coverage of the English and French international press of the former Roman pontiff’s essay? When I speak of a ‘de facto censorship’, I mean an essential omission of relevant information that prevents people from understanding well the meaning of the events reported, regardless of the motives for such omission, whether they are intentional ideological motives, prejudices, etc. or non-intentional motives such as laziness, lack of documentation or superficiality. Certainly it is not the goal of this work to assess the subjective intentions of the writers of the texts, but rather to assess the texts as ‘verbal actions’, whose meaning can be understood and judged, as Analytical Philosophy (Austin 1975) and Linguistic Pragmatics (Tapia 2014) have abundantly proved.

To reach this goal, I proceed by an inductive method, that is to say, by considering the titles and texts of the online articles which published the notes, in order to give an answer to the question asked. The main and supporting sources of this research are the German Pope’s essay, followed by the articles of the news agencies, magazines, Radio and TV websites, Catholic or secular portals with news sections and press reviews that published the notes. I consider the various editions published within seven days of the first publication of the essay in the German magazine Klerusblatt [Clergy Gazette], a monthly publication intended for the clergy in most Catholic dioceses in Bavaria. However, other agencies and newspapers are at the main of the distribution of the first full-text translations in the two aforementioned linguistic circles. Among them were the Catholic News Agency (CNA), the American Catholic newspaper National Catholic Register (NC Register) and the Italian newspaper Il Corriere della Sera (CdS).

The samples of these articles online are chosen from the first ten (10) web pages displayed on the two most competitive search engines Google and Bing, opened through the Google Chrome browser between November 2019 and April 2020. We selected the articles by searching: « Les notes de Benoît XVI sur les abus sexuels du clergé » in French and ‘Benedict XVI’s Notes on Sexual Abuse of the Clergy’ in English. The selection of these phrases has been carefully done to avoid selecting them on the basis of preconceptions or prejudices and to avoid any sort of assortment for a media group. By distinguishing the results of the titles and texts of these articles in French initially and in English then, the five (5) most published titles are taken into account and each result is examined individually. That is, I inserted each of the five titles one by one in each search engine separately, and I got the number of articles obtained for analysis. Remember that all this was done with titles published during the week following...
publication of the Pope Emeritus’s notes, and on the first ten web pages, because they are the most influential and have much more impact when searching for any term.

Proceeding in this manner, a corpus of 330 articles was identified, including 124 articles in French and 206 articles in English. This number is made up of articles from all online media that published news items on the notes from the Pope Emeritus. In the space from November 2019 to January 2020, we selected the 124 mainstream and Catholic Church articles from the French-speaking area, and from February to April 2020, we selected the 206 others from the English-speaking area. Articles from the mainstream media and media affiliated with the Catholic Church were collected in the same triage mode of operation.

In fact, the articles from three main sources: *Association France Presse*, *Associated Press*, and *Reuters*, have been highlighted because they represent a large percentage of headlines and texts providing coverage on Pope Benedict XVI’s essay during these first seven days. This is because they are generally considered the three largest news agencies in the French-speaking and English-speaking areas. I analysed and compared the articles in order to understand the methodology of their dissemination. I identified the frames and common places (*topoi*) that characterize one of the processes used by the mainstream press in their publication (Studnicki 2018). At the same time, it is also necessary to point out the important role of certain media affiliated with the Catholic Church that, for their part, tried to orient the climate of opinion towards the authentic meaning of the message of the essay using the process of reframing.

### 3. Conceptual framework

#### 3.1. Framing and reframing

Frame analysis was studied for the first time by sociologist and linguist Erving Goffman. The concept of frames refers to the manner in which individuals perceive and respond to particular events and circumstances (Goffman 1974, 21). After Goffman’s initial research, others took up this heritage (Entman 1993; Price, Tewksbury, and Powers 1997; Johnson-Cartee 2005; Contreras 2007, 121-136). Indeed, the work of Robert Entman has considerably enriched framing theory with the ‘cascade model’ in his project article ‘Cascading Activation’, where he examines interactions between United States government foreign policy, elites, media, and the public after the 11 September 2001 attacks (Entman 2003). This ‘cascade model’ draws heavily on individual-level approaches, arguing that information and interpretations spread across large networks in the same way that they spread through an individual’s long-term memory. It attempts to come up with a unified theory of how framing works at the macro level, unlike most of the framing literature, which examines how it affects individuals.

This led Entman to synthesize his definition of the frame: it is ‘the act of selecting and highlighting certain aspects of events or problems, and establishing links between them in order to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and/or solution’. This definition allowed him to identify two classes of frames: substantive (frame as noun), and procedural (frame as verb). The substantive frame manifests itself through events, problems and actors in various ways: by defining effects or conditions as problematic;
identifying causes; conveying moral judgment; and finally, approving remedies or improvements. The procedural frame, on the other hand, suggests evaluations of the legitimacy of the actors according to their technique, their success and their representativeness (Entman 2004).

Consequently, in the analysis of the media coverage of Pope Benedict XVI’s notes, the articles, if my hypothesis is correct, would not have focused on the real content but on particularities, in order to call into question the credibility of the author. As we will see, the procedural framework described by Entman is clearly revealed, since the articles made assessments or interpretations of the author’s legitimacy according to his technique and his representativeness. In the analysis of headlines and opening paragraphs of AFP, AP, Reuters, and all the other newspaper articles that published the essay, they framed it by saying that the Pope Emeritus claims that the sexual revolution was the ultimate cause of clergy abuse, while in fact he highlights the sexual revolution as one aspect of a larger phenomenon, i.e. the exclusion of God from society. However, in their texts these agencies refute Pope Benedict XVI’s thesis with the opinions of certain experts who focus on and call into question the personality, the credibility, the legitimacy, and the technique of the Pope Emeritus in analyzing the question of sexual abuse in the Church. The fact that the headlines and the opening paragraphs focus on the premise of a questionable claim would lead the audience to reject it a priori. This justifies the thesis that the process of framing in newspaper articles is generally focused on the titles and the first paragraphs of the respective articles because it is in this space that the author gives the orientation of his message (Johnson-Cartee 2005).

Then there was the process of reframing applied by the majority of Church-related dailies in their narration of the Pope Emeritus’ notes. By speaking here of reframing, we are referring to the process of changing frame. This is at best difficult, but it is not impossible. According to González Gaitano, who was referring to media coverage of the illness and agony of John Paul II, sometimes these changes have happened spontaneously on their own (Tridente 2009, 10). It can be done as well by applying what Contreras calls ‘rimboschimento culturale’ – cultural reforestation – (Contreras 2007, 131), which consists in understanding, defining, and disclosing frames which reflect the contrary thought, that is to say, reformulating the question or even arousing people’s curiosity to know about the event in question in order to draw their own conclusions.

3.2. Common places (topoi)

This analysis is also based on methodological principles already illustrated by other authors in other contexts relating to the representation of the Catholic Church in the international press (Contreras 2004); events concerning the leaders of the Catholic Church in the press (Tridente 2009); and the relationship of the Catholic Church with public opinion (González Gaitano 2010, 17–21). In deepening this methodology used by the press, we find common places (topoi) in the ‘said’ or the ‘unsaid’ (González Gaitano 2011), which the press uses to give a diversified orientation to the message of the Church in public opinion.
The *topos* is the common place where the author of the article seeks to meet the readers. It concerns ideas that are taken for granted and on which the author and readers generally agree; they serve for the journalist as a premise of reasoning and a basis of argumentation. ‘These *topoi* are classically called ‘common places’ because they apply to all kinds of argument. They are very different from what has become for us commonplace; this is just a banal opinion expressed in a stereotypical way. The *topoi* can be a word, a hyperbola, an expression or a sentence’ (Reboul 1995, 62–65). In the precise context of the media coverage of the Pope’s essay, if you carefully read the articles of the majority of news sources on the notes, you will find stereotypical expressions about the Pope Emeritus, such as ‘conservative’, ‘traditionalist’, ‘belligerent’, and ‘opposing the Pope Francis pontificate’, to name a few. It makes a big difference in the argumentation of the stories and in the direction in which the authors of the articles want to steer the message.

In this analysis, we take into account the ‘allocative force’ which applies for any type of discourse or text in general. Indeed, in journalistic texts, there is a significant difference between what is ‘said’ and what is ‘communicated’. The author of the text may communicate things that are different from those which expressed literally in the words he uses, because behind all the words chosen there is a ‘linguistic act’ (Austin 1975). This communicative mechanism is expressed in the use of key words to nuance the meaning of the message conveyed, in order to censor information or bias the perception of the public. It has often been used to give the majority a false idea about the real solution to the problem that is at stake by seeking at all costs to construct information with stereotypes and common places in order to manipulate public opinion (Perucchietti 2018, 55–103).

4. Media coverage of the English and French international press

4.1. The presence of AFP, AP and Reuters

Surprisingly, the majority of the titles and texts of the articles collected come from three main media sources, which are these three press agencies: *Association France-Presse (AFP)* in France, *Associated Press (AP)* in the United States, and *Reuters* in England. Someone would say this is normal because these three news agencies are the most popular in the world, but the problem is, there is a strange editorial process reflected in their articles. Here we highlight in these three cases, the precise common places or *topoi* that they used in their texts, which then served as the basis for many other newspaper articles worldwide.

4.1.1. The case of AFP

There was a first article published by *AFP*, the title of which, translated from French was, ‘Benedict XVI: pedophilia scandals can be explained by the revolution of the 1960s’ (AFP Staff 2019). It was published without the full text of, or a link to, the essay itself. The first paragraph reads, ‘Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI explains the pedophilia scandals of the clergy by the sexual revolution of the 1960s, new theological ideas, as well as the collapse of faith in the West, in an analysis made public this Thursday, April 11’.
It is important to highlight certain expressions and sentences found in the text of the AFP and in many other newspapers that have embellished them. The editor writes that it is ‘a dense text, a surprising revelation, a rather bitter observation, a strange observation’, written by the Pope Emeritus on the causes of sexual violence against minors in the Catholic Church. It is said of the essay that it is like ‘a shock wave or a small bomb’, it has also been ‘criticized by experts’ because it is ‘an indictment against the reform of the Church’. Pope Benedict’s reflection involves a ‘gigantic step backwards’, because it ‘contrasts or opposes’ all the work that the current Pope is engaged in to resolve this problem. Then, there is a statement by José Andres Murillo, a Chilean victim of abuse by the clergy, which was highlighted: he considers that ‘the theological narcissism’ of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI was ‘part of the problem of the culture of the clergy abuse and silence of the Church’. There is mention of a tweet by American theologian Brian Flanagan, who considers that the connection of sexual abuse in the Church to the 1960s is ‘a false and embarrassing explanation’. Among other things, he says that ‘the Former Pope attributed the pedophile crimes of the clergy to the liberation of morals of 1960’, however in Flanagan’s opinion he should not, because before becoming pope in 2005, ‘Joseph Ratzinger headed the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (heir to the Inquisition)’ where for twenty-four years he hunted down all liturgical and social excesses. He [Benedict XVI] need not feel sorry for the situation of the sexual abuse, because he was responsible as head of the CDF, ‘this Vatican department is responsible for studying cases of clergy sexual abuse reaching the Vatican.’

The same press agency AFP, not satisfied with the first offensive, published another piece written by Catherine Marciano (Marciano Catherine 2019), its correspondent in Rome. The title translated from French: ‘Pedophilia caused by the sexual revolution: Benedict XVI under fire from critics’ (12 April 2019). The first paragraph of this piece states: ‘An analysis of Benedict XVI pointing to the sexual revolution of 1968 as a cause of the pedophilia scandals of the Church, was destroyed Friday by experts recalling that the phenomenon dates back to the first centuries of Christianity’.

As you can see, the title and the first paragraph say a lot about the direction of the message that the editor wanted to convey to readers. Among other things, several frames and stereotypes have emerged. The correspondent wrote that the Pope Emeritus’ notes were ‘under fire from criticism, torpedoed by experts, totally contradicted by all scientific studies’. She says that the ‘surprising reflections of a 92-year-old Pope [are] manipulated by the ultra-conservative cardinals of the Church’, because at that age he does not have all of his faculties to think lucidly. Apart from the questioning of his physical health – ‘92 years’ – his mental health is also mentioned since ‘something does not fit in the pamphlet of Benedict XVI’, Marco Politi asks ‘if is he the author of the essay?’ The German Pope is opposed to Pope Francis, who speaks of ‘clericalism’ – ‘which is hardly mentioned by [Pope Benedict]’ – as being the cause of the abuse. The comments in the text, using certain expressions such as ‘anti-Francis, ultra-conservative, very-traditionalist’ attributed to so-called supporters of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI – and not using the antonyms of these expressions for speakers on the other side – already illustrates editorial ideology. After a shower of comments
against the assertion of the Pope Emeritus, the editor concludes with a tweet from the ‘very traditionalist Guinean cardinal’ Robert Sarah, which supports Benedict XVI’s essay, in order to give the semblance of neutrality to the press agency.

4.1.2. The case of AP
For its part, the Associated Press article written by its correspondent at the Vatican, Nicole Winfield (Winfield Nicole 2019), titled: ‘Retired Pope Benedict wades into clergy sex abuse debate’, (11 April), is published without the full text or a link to the essay itself. This article was widely circulated throughout the mainstream media on all continents. The first paragraph, ‘Pope Benedict XVI has ventured out of retirement to publish an essay blaming the Catholic Church’s sex abuse scandal on the sexual revolution of the 1960s and Church laws that protected priests. His analysis was immediately criticized as ‘catastrophically irresponsible’ – a conflict with efforts by his successor, Pope Francis, to lead the Church out of its crisis’.

The first paragraph of this article of about 900 words on Former Pope Benedict XVI’s notes summarizes in general what the author wants to convey to her readers, that is, the consciously chosen frames intended to orient the message. The text is characterized by quoting only fragments of sentences from the essay, there are also some common places and prejudices about what the Pope Emeritus wrote, describing him as a ‘conservative’, ‘naïve theologian’ and ‘opponent of Pope Francis’ on the issue. A series of statements and critiques by theologians and historians such as Massimo Faggioli, Bellitto Christopher, and David Gibson, were cited. These were severely critical of the essay and challenged Pope Benedict’s point of view. In an attempt to maintain a thin veneer of balance in their coverage, a single voice from the opposing side was cited: Chad Pecknold, who finds the absence of God to be the main message of the notes and indeed the consequence of the crisis in the Church. According to Pecknold, this reflection by the former Pope comes as the ‘voice of a father’ who seeks to remedy the real problems of the Church.

4.1.3. The case of Reuters
The Reuters article, written by Vatican correspondent Philip Pullella (2019), is titled: ‘Ex-Pope says sexual revolution led to abuse crisis, sparking debate’(11 April). This title has been widely disseminated by other media especially in Asia and Oceania. The first paragraph states, ‘Former Pope Benedict has blamed the Catholic Church’s sexual abuse scandal on the effects of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, homosexual cliques in seminaries, and the collapse of morals as being the causes of pedophilia in the Church, however, there is no reference to the absence of God. In the text of around 700 words, almost the same process already described, of framing and common places, or topoi, is repeated. We find phrases and words like ‘conservative’, ‘traditionalist’, ‘opposing Pope Francis’ etc. expressed by various experts. The panel of experts includes Joshue McElwee, Rubio Julie, Brian Flanagan, Doris Wagner Reisinger and Chad Pecknold. All of these experts criticize the Pope’s thinking on the
cause of the crisis of sexual abuse in the Church, with the exception of Pecknold, whose previously mentioned statement of agreement with the Pope Emeritus’s reflections allows the article the appearance of balance.

The fact that the three main sources, AFP, AP, and Reuters, focus on the sexual revolution as the ultimate cause of sexual abuse in the clergy by obscuring the message on the issue of faith, makes Pope’s essay seem like propaganda for all those who do not read it directly. The news from these agencies tries to discredit the thesis of the Pope Emeritus, by publishing only inflammatory statements that obscure what he said. But, as usual, Pope Benedict did not react, as he believes a priori in the honesty of his readers. In the texts published by these main sources, topoi are used to contradict his thesis with the points of view of the experts on the issue, and the former Roman pontiff is called ‘irresponsible’, ‘traditionalist’, ‘conservative’ and ‘opposed to Pope Francis’. You can well imagine the number of times these words or phrases were repeated in media coverage if we take into account the percentage of all news sources that carry articles from these three agencies without changing their content. One author said about the reproaches that certainly, the former Pontiff did not prove with apodictic certainty that the collapse of Catholic moral teaching led to clerical abuses, but that to dismiss his thesis casually, as if it had been tested and rejected, is downright dishonest. (Lawler 2019). Additionally, all responsible investigations in different countries have shown a dizzying increase of sexual abuse in various institutions including the Catholic Church and especially in the clergy after the sexual revolution and its causes described by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in his essay (John Jay College Research Team 2004; Royal Commission for Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2017; Böhm et al. 2014; Thiel 2019, 36-42).

4.2. International media coverage in the French-speaking community

In the media coverage of the notes by the international press in the French-speaking world, reference was made to the titles and texts of the 124 articles examined, which have been published in French. After typing into both the Google and Bing search engines, « Les notes de Benoît XVI sur les abus sexuels du clergé », we proceeded according to the previously specified method. The five (5) main titles that follow appeared regularly on the first ten (10) pages of the search engines, and we researched each separately in order to obtain the corpus of 124 articles, from both mainstream and Church-affiliated news sources.

1. Benoît XVI: les scandales de pédophilie s’expliquent par la révolution des années 60’ [Benedict XVI: pedophilia scandals can be explained by the revolution of the 1960s’] (AFP/fr.news.yahoo, April 11, 2019).
2. Pour l’ancien pape Benoît XVI, les scandales de pédophilie s’expliquent par Mai 68 [For former Pope Benedict XVI, the pedophilia scandals can be explained by May ’68] (Huffington Post.fr/ AFP, April 12, 2019).
3. Benoît XVI lie 1968 à la pédophilie dans l’Eglise [Benedict XVI links 1968 to pedophilia in the Church] (24heures.ch/ AFP, April 12, 2019).
4.  *Pédophilie causée par la révolution sexuelle: Benoît XVI sous le feu des critiques*  
(Pedophilia caused by the sexual revolution: Benedict XVI under fire from critics)  
(*AFP*, April 12, 2019).

5. *Benoît XVI attribue la pédophilie dans l’Eglise à Mai 68 et à « l’absence de Dieu »*  
(Benedict XVI attributes pedophilia in the Church to May 68 and ‘the absence of God’)  
(*Le Monde*, April 11, 2019).

These were the five titles of texts that mostly appear in the search. The first and fourth titles belong to *AFP*, and they are the most dazzling ones. They were undoubtedly to become the basis of the other titles in the French-speaking world, as is evidenced by the similarities found. The two articles from *AFP* contain highly ideological commentary and make no reference to the full text of the notes. These two articles in their entirety have greatly influenced the publications of all French-language newspapers in Europe, in the Americas, and finally on the African continent.

### 4.2.1. Some titles from mainstream newspapers in French

One obvious observation is that the majority of mainstream French-speaking daily titles feed on *AFP*’s manipulated titles and copy them, while at the same time embellishing the critical commentary in their dispatch. One has to imagine that these papers have not even looked at the Pope’s notes, since it seems that in reality all of these headlines go back to the dishonest headline of the French news agency.

Here are some of the titles translated from French: in France, from *Le Monde* – ’Benedict XVI attributes pedophilia in the Church to May ’68 and the absence of God’ (April 11, 2019). The frame of criticism of the sexual revolution emerges in other newspapers such as *Le Parisien, La Provence, 20 Minutes, and Paris Match*. In Belgium, *Le Soir* ‘For Benedict XVI, May ’68 engendered pedophilia in the Church’ (April 11, 2019). The same title framework is reflected in *Le Libre, Le Vif* and *La Capitale*, also in Luxembourg media, the *RTL*. In Switzerland, the *RTS* – ‘The curious analysis of Benedict XVI on pedophile scandals in the Church’ (April 12, 2019). The same reference is also found in *Le Matin, 24Heures*, and *La Tribune de Genève*.

In the Americas: on the Canadian side titles in *Presse Canada, TVA News* and the *Journal de Montreal* corresponded to this frame - ’Pedophilia in the Church: the analysis of Benedict XVI under a shower of criticism’ (April 12, 2019). In the Caribbean, *Loop Haiti* - ‘Benedict XVI: pedophilia scandals can be explained by the revolution of the 1960s’ (April 11, 2019). In Africa, more precisely in Senegal, *Pressafrik* - ‘Benedict XVI attributes pedophilia in the Church to May 68 and the absence of God’ (April 12, 2019). The same process of framing is found on the headline from *AFP*, in the journals, *Ivoire Matin* (Ivory Coast) and *Kongo Times* (Democratic Republic of Congo).

None of these journals published the full text of the notes or added a link to a full translation; all were influenced by (and some linked directly to) the *AFP*’s texts with the frames and common places that we have seen before. However, the exception is the rare secular newspaper headline offering their own analysis of the essay and highlighting the issue of moral crisis and faith in God that forms the core of Pope Benedict XVI’s message.
A few of these articles published with the full text or at least a link to the full text, for example in the *Courrier International*, ‘Vatican. Former Pope Benedict XVI denounces the ‘moral collapse’ of the Church’ (April 11, 2019). In France, *Le Figaro*, ‘The indictment of Benedict XVI on the crisis in the Church’ (April 11, 2019). The same approach was taken in the, *Valeurs Actuelles* and *Atlantico*. Across the Atlantic: *Radio Canada* - ‘Pedophilia, a symptom of a world without God?’ (April 11, 2019). These papers, while not connected to the Church, depart from *AFP*’s narrative, constructing their own headlines and delivering to the public a more authentic message of the notes in their texts.

### 4.2.2. Some titles from newspapers affiliated with the Catholic Church in French

As for the newspaper publications that have a connection with the Church, almost all of them wrote their own articles. An exception is *La Croix*, which published a title that translates from French as: ‘Sexual Abuse, a disturbing text by Benedict XVI’ (April 11, 2019). It included the entire essay and contained remarks that are very hostile to the thoughts of the German Pope. In an interview with theologian Marie-Jo Thiel, author of a vast volume on sexual abuse in the Church (Thiel 2019), the daily published another headline: ‘Sexual Abuse: This Text by Benedict XVI Raises Many Questions’ (April 12, 2019), which strengthens its initial position by ideologically dismantling the thesis put forward on the causes of pedophilia in the Church.

For its part, the Catholic weekly: *Famille Chrétienne (FC)* also published the essay with a title similar to those influenced by *AFP*. Translated from French it is: ‘Benedict XVI links the sexual revolution and sexual abuse in the Church’ (April 11, 2019). Their article, however, comes with a thoughtful reflection on the phenomenon of abuse by the clergy. In addition, *FC* recovered with an interview of a Dominican brother, Jean-Michel Garrigues, in which he gave an informed explanation of the content of the essay. The piece was titled: ‘Benedict XVI is opposed neither to Francis, nor to Vatican II!’ (April 12, 2019). It’s a title that responds to the frames and common places of the mainstream press who want to oppose the two pontificates on the issue.

Apart from these two magazines, all the others have tried to create reframes, to contrast the process of dissolving the message of the notes of the Pope Emeritus. Starting from that of the official organ of the Church: *Vatican News*, which had not published the full text, but prepared a long article titled, ‘Pope emeritus Benedict XVI: Return to God to overcome abuse crisis’, (April 11, 2019). The author followed this with: “Pope emeritus Benedict XVI publishes his reflections on the scandal of sexual abuse in the Church, saying it was made possible by a progressive eclipse of faith in God” (Centofanti 2019). In this article, the salient points of the essay are emphasized while calming the tendency that would like to give the impression that there is opposition between Pope Benedict and Pope Francis on the causes of the sexual abuse perpetrated by the clergy.

The news agency *Centre Catholique de Medias* published ‘Sexual Abuse: Benedict XVI provides diagnosis and offers cures’ (*Cath-Info*, April 11, 2019). The other agencies, *Aleteia.fr*, *Zenith.fr*, and the North American source of religious information in French, *Présence-info Religieuse*, all published the full text of the notes with their original titles and with their texts written by themselves, un-influenced by the texts of the
AFP. The online bulletins of the various Episcopal Conferences offered well developed titles and texts, and published the full translations of the essay, thus making accessible the main message: the crisis of the absence of faith in God in the Church. For example, the French Episcopal Conference published the title: ‘Benedict XVI sheds light on the crisis of the Church’ (France-catholique, April 12, 2019).

4.2.3. The percentage results of all articles analysed in the French-speaking area

By collecting the newspapers according to the established method, 124 articles were collected in the French-speaking environment in total. Looking first at the titles of these articles, 96 (77%) of the sources are mainstream and 28 (23%) have a link with the Church (Table 1). 84 titles out of the total corpus, or 68%, refer to titles disseminated by AFP; out of these, 79 (64%) are secular dailies and 5 (4%) are Catholic-affiliated dailies. These headlines sum up the Pope Emeritus’ reflection as being about the sexual revolution of the Sixties as the cause of sexual abuse in the Church, and they presume he is wrong. 40 (32%) of the articles offered headlines that diverge from the AFP frame, of which 17 (14%) are mainstream newspapers and 23 (19%) are Church-affiliated dailies. These headlines did not follow the pattern of AFP that focuses on criticizing the sexual revolution as one of the causes of clergy sexual abuse; on the contrary, they emphasize the central message, which is the exhortation of the Pope Emeritus to return to God to overcome the crisis of pedophilia in the Church.

Next, turning from the titles to the texts, and keeping in mind that out of the 124 articles chosen 96 (77%) are mainstream and 28 (23%) Church-affiliated, we find that 73 (59%) of the total texts are influenced by AFP (Table 2). Of these 73 (59%), 70 (56%) are mainstream newspapers and 3 (2%) are Catholic newspapers. The articles that refer to the AFP publish texts identical to its texts, or at least highlight the AFP articles as main sources. Some of these texts carry over the AFP texts directly, verbatim and in full, while some do it indirectly by selecting paragraphs or sentences, anecdotes or statements: of these, 59 (48%) refer to the first article and 14 (11%) to the second. Then, the other 51 texts (41%), of which 26 (21%) are mainstream newspapers and 25
(20%) are Catholic newspapers, are produced independently of a common source and have no connection between themselves, nor with the texts of AFP.

Of the 124 articles analysed, it should be noted that only 12 (10%) of them, of which only one (1%) is mainstream and 11 (9%) are Catholic-affiliated, provided a translation of the Pope Emeritus’s essay in full, allowing readers to delve into it for themselves (Table 3). 19 (15%), including 11 (9%) mainstream and 8 (6%) of Catholic affiliation, gave a link to the full translation. Then, 93 (75%), out of which 84 (68%) are mainstream and 9 (7%) are Church-affiliated, provided neither a translation nor a link. The majority are related to the text of the AFP.

### 4.3. International media coverage in the English-speaking world

The media coverage of the notes of the Emeritus Pope in the English-speaking world refers to the titles and texts of the newspapers selected in English according to the same methodology by searching ‘Benedict XVI’s Notes on Sexual Abuse of the Clergy’. The five (5) main headlines that follow appeared regularly on the first ten (10) pages of the search engines, and we did a research on each separately in order to obtain the corpus of 206 articles from both mainstream and Church-affiliated sources.

1. ‘Retired Pope Benedict wades into clergy sex abuse debate’ (AP News, April 11, 2019).
2. ‘Ex-pope says sexual revolution led to abuse crisis, sparking debate’ (Reuters, April 11, 2019).
3. ‘Ex-Pope Benedict Contradicts Pope Francis in Unusual Intervention on Sexual Abuse’ (The Washington Post, April 11, 2019).
4. ‘Benedict says Vatican legal system protected accused clergy’ (abcnews/AP, 11 April 2019).
5. ‘Retired Pope Blames Child Abuse Scandal on the 1960s Sexual Revolution’ (The Wall Street Journal, April 11, 2019).

The original English translation of the notes from the Klerusblatt was published for the first time directly in the CNA, the CdS, and the NC Register. Then, a large part of the mainstream English-language dailies would have written their articles under the influence of texts from two worldwide news agencies: the AP and Reuters. These are headlines and texts that frame Pope Benedict XVI as saying that the sexual revolution was the ultimate cause of pedophilia in the Catholic clergy. These titles and texts

| Press publications in the French-speaking world | Mainstream Newspapers | Catholic affiliated newspapers | S. Total |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| Publications with full text of Pope Benedict’s notes | 1 (1%) | 11 (9%) | 12 (10%) |
| Publications with a link to full translation | 11 (9%) | 8 (6%) | 19 (15%) |
| Publications without any reference to the notes | 84 (68%) | 9 (7%) | 93 (75%) |
| **Total** | **96 (77%)** | **28 (23%)** | **124 (100%)** |

Table 3. This table summarizes the situation in the Francophone community; in it we take stock of the publications of the 124 mainstream and Catholic newspapers analysed with and without the full text or a link to the essay.
already give an ideological orientation to the information they want to reveal to the public, because they include some common places such as ‘conservative’, ‘traditionalist’, ‘belligerent’, and some frames like the interference of Pope Emeritus in the pontificate of Pope Francis, opposition between Pope Benedict and Pope Francis, and accusing the Vatican Legal system that protected abusive clergy. The majority of these articles were published without any link to the full text of the essay, which has the effect of preventing the reader from drawing conclusions based on what Benedict XVI actually said. In fact, these articles obscured the central message of faith in God contained in the essay.

4.3.1. Some titles from mainstream newspapers in English
The majority of Anglo-Saxon dailies tended to frame the news in such a way as to portray former Pope Benedict XVI as blaming the sexual revolution of the 1960s for the sex abuse crisis. In North America for example, The Wall Street Journal in the United States published an article titled ‘Retired Pope Blames Child Abuse Scandal on the 1960s Sexual Revolution’ and followed with ‘Benedict XVI’s words are in striking contrast with the Vatican’s policy under Pope Francis’ (April 11, 2019). This same kind of framing is found in other dailies published in the United States such as USA Today, Fox News, CBS News, The New York Post, and The Washington Times. It was the same in Canada, where CTV News stated: ‘Retired Pope Benedict blames Church abuse scandal on sexual revolution of 1960s’ (April 11, 2019). In South America, the independent news agency, MercoPress, whose headquarters is in Montevideo (Uruguay), published an article titled: ‘Ex Pope Benedict blames clerical abuse on the ‘all out sexual freedom’ of the Sixties’ (April 12, 2019). In the native country of Pope Francis, the Buenos Aires Times proclaimed ‘Ex-Pope Benedict: Church abuse scandal a result of 1960s sexual revolution’ (April 11, 2019). In the Caribbean, the online newspaper St. Lucia Times ran the headline ‘Ex-Pope Blames 1960s Revolution for Sex Abuse’ (April 11, 2019). All of these articles are without the text of the notes or even a link that can direct the reader to Benedict XVI’s 6000-word essay on clerical sexual abuse.

On the European continent, many headlines from newspapers give this same orientation to the message of the German Pope in their articles. The European newspaper based in Lyon (France), Euro News, wrote in a headline ‘Ex-Pope Benedict XVI says ‘all-out sexual freedom’ of 60s to blame for clerical sex abuse’ (April 12, 2019). In England, especially in London, The Telegraph noted in its title, ‘Former Pope blames abuse scandal on the sexual revolution of the swinging 60s’ (April 11, 2019). Other British secular newspapers, such as The Guardian, Sky News, The Daily Mail and the BBC, published articles with the same category of headlines and, once again, without any reference to the full text of the essay. The same goes for The Journal, The Independent and The Irish News in Ireland and The Times of Malta in Malta. In the native country of Benedict XVI, the Deutsche Presse-Agentur released an article, without a link to the notes, titled: ‘Ex-Pope Benedict XVI blames 1968 revolution for pedophilia crisis’ (April 11, 2019). The same with Deutsche Welle. For France, Switzerland and Belgium, the analysis presented above about the French-speaking area has already described the situation that was reproduced identically in the articles written in English.
On the other Continents, Asia, Oceania, and Africa, titles which frame the essay as the Pope Emeritus blaming the sexual revolution of the 1960s are also very frequent. The English-language Asian news network, Channel News Asia transmits this headline: ‘Ex-pope Benedict blames Church sex abuse crisis on Revolution of ‘68’ (April 11, 2019). In the Republic of China, the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) published ‘Ex-Pope blames ’68 for church sex scandals’ (April 12, 2019). The same in Indonesia, where the Jakarta Post published: ‘Ex-Pope Benedict blames Church sex abuse crisis on ‘68’ (April 12, 2019). In Oceania, the Australian community media published the common title: ‘Ex-Pope blames 1960s for abuse crisis’ (The Area News April 11, 2019), which appeared in more than ten mainstream media: Canberra Times, Northern Daily Leader, Western Magazine, The Examiner, The Standard etc., through the source of Reuters without a link to the text of the essay. In New Zealand, the Radio New Zealand (RNZ) reported the title: ‘Ex-Pope Benedict XVI blames 1960s revolution for sex abuse’ (April 12, 2019). In the African continent especially in South Africa: The Times Live headlined, ‘Ex-Pope Benedict blames Church abuse crisis on 1960s sexual revolution’ (April 11, 2019); it is also the same frame in the title by Eye Witness News. In Ghana, the Citi News Room, and the KUBI Live also used this same frame in their titles. The AP and Reuters inspired the texts of all these articles that are published without the full text translation or a link that refers to Benedict XVI’s notes.

Few of the mainstream newspaper headlines do not fit the above logic of the three agencies, which tend to focus on the sexual revolution evoked in the essay. Some titles focus on the promise of Benedict XVI to remain silent after his resignation: for example, Cable News Network (CNN) says that ‘Ex-Pope Benedict XVI breaks silence on Church’s sex abuse crisis and blames the sexual revolution and liberals’ (April 12, 2019). Others point to the contradiction between the arguments of Benedict XVI and Francis on the issue of sexual abuse in the Church, such as The Washington Post, which published the headline, ‘Ex-Pope Benedict contradicts Pope Francis in unusual intervention on sexual abuse’ (April 11, 2019). It is the same dynamic for United Press International, the Voice of America and the Muslim Times Info.

There are also very simple headlines from mainstream articles, which, like the headlines of most Church-affiliated articles, are moderate and have not created frameworks to steer public opinion in a certain direction, but they (the headlines) invite the public to read the essay of the Pope Emeritus. These more moderate titles are from the articles published with the full text itself or at least a link to the text. For example, in Florida (United States), the organization for the rights of the child (Stop Civil Abuse – Activists for Reform and Safety) published on its page: ‘Benedict XVI: The Church and the Scandal of sexual abuse’, (SCAARS.org, April 11, 2019), an article with the same title and a link that sends one to the full translation. The same process in Corporate Dispatch News Agency, and News Book. The Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera is one of the first dailies to publish the notes with its full translation in the title: ‘Benedict XVI: The Church and the Scandal of Sexual Abuse’ (April 10, 2019); it is followed by a very extensive article in Italian.
4.3.2. Some newspaper headlines from Church-affiliated organizations

In the English-speaking world, there are also headlines of newspapers linked to the Church that, like the mainstream newspapers, distort the meaning of the Pope Emeritus’ notes or even create a kind of frame of the problem raised in the text. The *National Catholic Reporter* published this enigmatic title: ‘In new letter, Benedict blames clergy abuse on sexual revolution, Vatican II theology’ (April 11, 2019); there followed a long article containing the link to the essay, in the full text translation provided by CNA. In the United Kingdom, the international Catholic news weekly, *The Tablet* published the headline: ‘Former Pope blames 1960s for clerical sex abuse’ (April 11, 2019), with a link to the full *NC Register* publication. In Australia, the online bulletin of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference was also influenced by the *Reuters* source and published the title: ‘Benedict XVI blames abuse crisis on 1960s’ (*Cath News*, April 12, 2019), without reference, nor even a link to the full text.

The vast majority of Catholic media published their articles with the essay or a link that refers to the two sources that have translated it from the German full text without the frame already mentioned. CNA, after translating it into English, published the title ‘Full text of Benedict XVI essay: “The Church and the scandal of sexual abuse”’ (April 10, 2019). CNA is a reference publication for many other newspapers that have featured news on the notes. Then, the same Catholic press agency wrote an article titled: ‘In new essay, Benedict XVI addresses sex abuse scandal’ (April 10, 2019). There is also the *NC Register*, which ran a long article titled: ‘Benedict XVI Breaks His Silence on the Catholic Church’s Sex-Abuse Crisis’ (April 10, 2019). Both published the essay from the original source of the Klerusblatt full text.

The websites of Catholic dailies, which followed in the footsteps of these two pioneers in the distribution of the full text of the notes or a link, are numerous. There are the *Catholic World Report*, *The Catholic Herald*, *Life Site News*, *Catholic News Service*, *America Magazine*, *The Boston Pilot* and finally *Relevant Radio*. Other Church-affiliated newspapers published very original headlines. There are some that are hostile and others that are in agreement with the thought expressed in the essay by the Pope Emeritus. There are also very ambiguous titles that can take on various connotations. Most of them do not refer to the full text of the notes or link to the original translations. Among them are articles from these online news sources: *Crisis Magazine*, *The Remnant*, and *Catholic Culture*.

Table 4. This table summarizes in the English-speaking community the results of the titles of the 206 mainstream and Catholic-inspired newspapers analysed, noting were or were not influenced by AP and Reuters.

| Press titles in the English-speaking world | Mainstream newspapers | Catholic affiliated newspapers | Total |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Titles from the same or similar source     | 101 (49%)             | 10 (5%)                       | 111 (54%) |
| Titles from different source from the frame| 61 (30%)              | 34 (16%)                      | 95 (46%)  |
| Total                                     | 162 (79%)             | 44 (21%)                      | 206 (100%) |
4.3.3. The percentage results of all articles analysed in the English-speaking area

By collecting newspapers according to the methodology already mentioned, 206 articles in total were gathered in the English-speaking area, including 162 (79%) from the mainstream press and 44 (21%) with Catholic Church affiliation. 111 (54%) of them have similar titles: among which 101 (49%) are mainstream articles and 10 (5%) are Church-affiliated (Table 4). These headlines argue that the Pope Emeritus blamed the sexual revolution of the 1960s for being the cause of sexual abuse in the Church. On the other hand, 95 (46%) of these articles offered various titles independently of the frame of the sexual revolution; of which 61 (30%) are from the secular press and 34 (16%) are in Church-affiliated dailies.

Regarding the texts of 206 articles analysed in the English-speaking world, I note that there were two fundamental texts. First, the text from AP influenced 53 (26%) of the articles; including 47 (23%) that are mainstream and 6 (3%) that are Church-affiliated. Second, the text from Reuters influenced 40 (19%); including 40 (19%) from mainstream and zero (0%) from Catholic-affiliated media (Table 5). There are 93 (45%) texts influenced by the editorial staff of the two main English-language news agencies we have examined. That is, these articles mimic, directly or indirectly, various phrases, anecdotes or statements from these two text sources. There are 113 (55%) articles from various sources, of which 75 (36%) are mainstream and 38 (18%) Catholic-affiliated, that are produced independently of the two sources mentioned. In addition, in 113 (55%) of the various texts of mainstream journals, there is an article from the National Public Radio (April 11, 2019) that was a point of reference for 10 (5%) other newspapers, and another one from the Indo-Asian News Agency that copied the CNN headline was referential for 8 (4%) of the dailies drafted. This brings the effective number to 95 (46%) independent texts that published the notes of the Former

Table 5. This table summarizes in the English-speaking world, the results of the texts of the 206 mainstream and Catholic-affiliated newspapers analysed, noting whether they were influenced or not by the AP and Reuters.

| Texts from the press in the English-speaking world | Mainstream newspapers | Catholic affiliated newspapers | Total |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Texts similar to or influenced by AP                | 47 (23%)              | 6 (3%)                        | 53 (26%) |
| Texts similar to or influenced by Reuters          | 40 (19%)              | 0 (0%)                        | 40 (19%) |
| Texts from different sources of AP & Reuters       | 75 (36%)              | 38 (18%)                      | 113 (55%) |
| Total                                             | 162 (79%)             | 44 (21%)                      | 206 (100%) |

Table 6. This table summarizes in the English-speaking community, the results of the publications of 206 mainstream and Catholic articles analysed, noting how many were published with or without the full text of the essay or a link.

| Press publications in the English-speaking world | Mainstream Newspapers | Catholic-affiliated Newspapers | S. Total |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------|
| Publications with full text of Pope Benedict’s notes | 3 (1%)              | 8 (4%)                        | 11 (5%) |
| Publications with a link to full translation     | 27 (13%)             | 23 (11%)                      | 50 (24%) |
| Publications without any reference to the notes  | 132 (65%)            | 13 (6%)                       | 145 (71%) |
| Total                                            | 162 (79%)            | 44 (21%)                      | 206 (100%) |
Pope without any influence from other texts. These journals have taken pains to write their own articles on the matter.

A large majority of the 206 journals analysed, 145 (71%), published their articles without either with the full text of the essay or a link to one of the full translations, including 132 (65%) from mainstream newspapers and 13 (6%) from Catholic Church affiliated news sources (Table 6). However, 50 (24%) published a link, allowing readers to delve into the notes. Of these, 27 (13%) are mainstream and 23 (11%) are Catholic-affiliated. Then, it should be noted that only 11 (5%) of the newspapers: including 3 (1%) mainstream and 8 (4%) of Catholic affiliation published the entire essay from the translations made either by CNA, CdS and NC Register. These were published with simple titles to avoid any manipulation of the content of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI’s notes, and to encourage readers to read it and draw their own conclusions on the issue.

### 4.4. The results of the coverage of the international press

The overall evaluation of the samples of the 330 articles analysed, which included the titles and texts of 258 mainstream articles and 72 Catholic affiliate articles, found that more than half were influenced by one of three main sources: AFP, AP or Reuters (Table 7). The results show that 195 (59%) of the titles and some first paragraphs came directly or indirectly from the 3 news agencies that connect the sexual revolution and sexual abuse by the clergy, and 135 (41%) from other sources. So, the headlines or first paragraphs of just three editors influenced 59% of public opinion. The texts of these three articles influenced, in one way or another, 50% or 166 out of 330 of these articles. The other half were newspapers that took the time to write their own texts.

The other remarkable fact is that 238 (72%) of the articles are published without a reference to the full text of Benedict XVI’s notes, while 69 (21%) gave a link that takes one to the full text, and finally, only 23 (7%) articles published the full text of the essay of the Pope Emeritus.

**Table 7.** This table broadly summarizes the situation with the three main sources: AFP, AP, and Reuters, taken together for the total of 330 international newspaper articles.

| Titles and texts from the International Press: AFP, AP, and Reuters sources | Mainstream Newspapers | Catholic affiliated newspapers | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total of similar titles or from the source with the same frame | 180 (55%) | 15 (5%) | 195 (59%) |
| Total of diverse titles not from AFP, AP or Reuters | 78 (23%) | 57 (17%) | 135 (41%) |
| **Total** | **258 (78%)** | **72 (22%)** | **330 (100%)** |
| Total of texts similar to or influenced by the three agencies | 157 (47%) | 9 (3%) | 166 (50%) |
| Total of texts that diverge from the three agencies | 101 (31%) | 63 (19%) | 164 (50%) |
| **Total** | **258 (78%)** | **72 (22%)** | **330 (100%)** |
| Total publications with full text of Pope Benedict’s notes | 4 (1%) | 19 (6%) | 23 (7%) |
| Total publications with a link to full translation | 38 (12%) | 31 (9%) | 69 (21%) |
| Total publications without any reference to the notes | 216 (65%) | 22 (7%) | 238 (72%) |
| **Total** | **258 (78%)** | **72 (22%)** | **330 (100%)** |
The media coverage of the notes of the former Pope Benedict XVI is characterized mainly by headlines and first paragraphs (59%) that are drawn from the three main agencies aforementioned and that focus on the framework of the revolution of the 1960s as the ultimate cause of sexual abuse by the Clergy in the Catholic Church, while simultaneously putting aside the aspect of Faith in God underlined by the Pope Emeritus. Their texts or corpus (50%), use *topoi* to contradict his presumed thesis with the points of view of the experts who call the Roman pontiff ‘traditionalist’, ‘conservative’, ‘irresponsible’, and ‘opposed to Pope Francis’. Indeed, people should have the full text to read and make their own judgments, but this was not provided, since (72%) of the articles were published without even a link to the full text of the essay. This could be as a case of ideological censorship (*de facto* censorship) of the international mainstream press towards the thought of Pope Benedict XVI.

The purpose of this process of censorship is to demonstrate that the Pope Emeritus made a misdiagnosis, that it is completely irresponsible to think the revolution of the 1960s could be the cause of this scourge. However, several books, and articles from mainstream and Catholic affiliated newspapers, have already justified the context of the recent history of sexual abuse in the world in the years after the sexual revolution. Two authors (Fleischhauer and Hollersen 2010) reveal in a German newspaper article: “Germany’s left has its own tales of abuse. One of the goals of the German 1968 movement was the sexual liberation of children. For some, this meant overcoming all sexual inhibitions, creating a climate in which even pedophilia was considered progressive”. They also traced the origin of this scourge caused by the disruption of a society that, at the time, did not want to allow any ethical limits on human actions in regard to sexuality, under the pretext of sexual liberation. Regarding this fact, some authors (Ollivry and Guillermet 2004, 36; Fleischhauer and Hollersen 2010; Ambroise-Rendu 2014, 180; Malo 2017, 21-60; Marcovich 2018; Feuerherd & Dearie 2018; Pasquier 2018; Valli 2019a; Sénécat 2019) had already carried out research; I think that we must consult these references before refuting the thesis of Benedict XVI.

4.5. Types of ‘frames’ and ‘reframes’ constructed by the international press

4.5.1. The framing process of international mainstream articles

The main frames that emerge in the articles analysed fall into various categories. There are those who underline the contradiction between the arguments of Benedict XVI and Francis on the question of sexual abuse in the Church, and those who point the finger at the institutional system of the Church in dealing with sexual abuse. Still others put forward the figure of Benedict XVI as being ‘opposed to the pontificate of Francis’, in order to be able to discredit his thinking. The most widespread frame, however, is the one that summed up the whole essay as blaming the sexual revolution for sexual abuse. Some articles do not even attempt to put the essay in the context of the environment for which it is written – that is, in the Church, and, even more specifically, in a publication intended for clergy. They use this frame because it creates a conflict of ideas on the issue, even within the Church. In the end, this frame has remained in the memory of many who have not read the full text of the notes, thus exercising a long-lasting impact on public opinion.
Some examples to illustrate our approach. The majority of the article titles focus on the link between sexual abuse and the 1968 revolution, without mentioning the ultimate cause highlighted by the Pope Emeritus in the notes. This constitutes a direct frame created by the articles’ authors to guide their readers. In this context, a direct frame created by *The Vox of America* is this: ‘Retired Pope’s Essay on Sex Abuse Raises Eyebrows, Contradicts Pope Francis’ (April 12, 2019); while an indirect frame created by *The Muslim Times Info* is contained in the headline: ‘Pope Benedict Versus Pope Francis on Catholic Church’s Sex Abuse’ (April 11, 2019). The frame is the opposition or the contradiction between the Pope Emeritus and the current Pope on the issue of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. Other direct or indirect frames created by headlines of the articles are those that highlight the interference of Pope Benedict XVI in the pontificate of Pope Francis, because, after his resignation, he had promised to remain silent. For example, *NPR (National Public Radio)* ‘Pope Benedict Breaks 6-Year Silence to Comment on Clergy Sex Abuse Scandal’ (April 11, 2019). Another one is the *New York Times* piece entitled ‘With Letter on Sexual Abuse, Pope Benedict Returns to Public Eye’, with the subtitle ‘In his retirement, Pope Benedict XVI is apparently tired of hiding’.

Other frames are found in articles that focus directly on the problem of the Church legal system, for example, directly in the *ABC News*: ‘Benedict says Vatican legal system protected accused clergy’ (April 11, 2019), and indirectly the headline from *NBC News* – ‘Retired Pope Benedict blames sexual revolution and church laws for abuse scandal’ (April 11, 2019, updated April 12, 2019). Other titles of articles create a direct frame with the link between pedophilia and homosexuality in the Catholic Church, such as the review *Mediapart* which headlines « *Pédophilie et homosexualité: les errements de l’Eglise* » [Pedophilia and homosexuality: the errors of the Church] – (April 13, 2019). Others present the frame indirectly, for example the French online magazine *Marianne.net* published « *Pédophilie dans l’Eglise: l’ex-pape Benoît XVI pointe 68 et les homos* » [Pedophilia in the Church: ex-Pope Benedict XVI points 68 and homos] (April 11, 2019).

Finally, some headlines claim that Pope Emeritus does not consider the victims (survivors) of abuse. The periodical *Le Point* published an interview with the headline: « *Je suis choqué que Benoît XVI n’ait aucun mot pour les victimes d’abus sexuels* » [I am shocked that Benedict XVI has no words for victims of sexual abuse] (April 12, 2019), while the *CBC* (Canada Broadcasting Cooperation) framed it indirectly with the title

| Direct & Indirect Frames in International mainstream articles | Number of titles using the frame |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| The sexual abuse of the Catholic clergy and the sexual revolution of 1968 on the Notes. | 195 titles |
| The contradiction between Benedict XVI and Francis about the Church sexual abuse on the Notes. | 13 titles |
| The interference of Pope Emeritus in the pontificate of Pope Francis on the Notes. | 31 titles |
| The system of the Church as an institution and its Canon Law on the Notes. | 16 titles |
| Pedophilia in relation to homosexuality in the Church on the Notes. | 10 titles |
| Lack of attention to victims of sexual abuse by the Benedict XVI on the Notes. | 4 titles |
Former pope Benedict’s essay on origins of Catholic Church sex abuse criticized by survivors, theologians (April 11, 2019). For the headlines of articles which underline several frames at the same time, in this case, all the frames were each counted separately in the sorting of the results (Table 8). For example, in the headline from Crux Now, ‘Benedict blames scandals on 68′, says Church law can’t just protect accused (April 11, 2019), there are two frames: one is the link with ‘the revolution of 68’ and the other with the ‘legal system of the Church’.

4.5.2. The process of reframing from Catholic affiliated articles

On the other side, magazines, periodicals, blogs and portals affiliated with the Church did not seek to reproduce the frame of the sexual revolution as the ultimate cause of pedophilia in the Catholic clergy, but created other, positive frames in order to thwart this ideological censorship adopted by the mainstream press (Table 9). They defended the authentic message of faith in God from Benedict XVI’s notes, without creating controversy or raising their voices, following a path outlined by some authors (Ivereigh and Norton 2012, 4–24). For anyone who has read and analysed the six-thousand-word essay, it is easy to see that the real frame is in the full text where the German pontiff answers the question that would serve well as a reframe: ‘Why did pedophilia reach such proportions? Ultimately, the reason is the absence of God’. Reframing in a positive sense means that against the negative frames created by the media, we can use the real meaning to create the opposite frame (reframe) without focusing on the negative frame of the media. This is precisely what Catholic media and Church communicators should be focusing on in order to thwart the process of certain media that want to manipulate the climate of opinion. Indeed, many media, especially those affiliated with the Church, have done this very well, because they suppose that the public has the right to true and honest information while respecting the demands of justice and charity (Vatican Council II 1963, no. 5).

Reference is made here to all the titles of the articles which sought to go against the grain of the antecedent phenomenon (frames of the ‘68 sexual revolution), and which, on the other hand, tried to reveal the true message of the essay and to respond to mainstream newspapers’ attempt to distract from the problem posed by the Pope Emeritus. Some examples of titles that use this reframing process could be the article

| Direct & Indirect Reframes in Newspapers affiliated with the Catholic Church | Number of titles using the reframe |
|---|---|
| - Sexual abuse in the Church links to the problem of faith and morals i.e. problem of belief in God. | 17 titles |
| - Complementarity of points of view in the fight against pedophilia between Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. | 7 titles |
| - The reform and the commitment of Church leaders in the fight against pedophilia. | 5 titles |
| - The Notes are of great help for the problem of pedophilia (diagnosis of Benedict XVI is correct). | 16 titles |
| - Not the problem of God but that of clericalism is at the base of pedophilia in the Clergy (diagnosis of Benedict XVI is in error). | 20 titles |
from Diakonos.be titled: « Joseph Ratzinger sur les abus sexuels dans l’Église: « La raison ultime réside dans l’absence de Dieu » [Joseph Ratzinger on sexual abuse in the Church: ‘The ultimate reason is the absence of God’] (April 11, 2019), and the Vatican News headline ‘Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: Return to God to overcome abuse crisis’ (April 11, 2019). These titles, explicitly or implicitly, create a frame of the authentic problem revealed by the German Pope in his notes: that sexual abuse in the Church links to the problem of faith and morals, i.e. the problem of belief in God. These headlines create a different frame for the problem raised by the essay and give credence to the German Pope’s complaint of an attempt to deviate or manipulate his reflections.

Another process of reframing is found in the second article of Famille Chrétienne: « Benoît XVI ne s’oppose ni à François, ni à Vatican II! » [Benedict XVI is not opposed to either Francis or Vatican II!] (April 12, 2019), or one from American Magazine: ‘Pope Benedict’s letter on sex abuse is not an attack on Francis or (Vatican II)’ (April 11, 2019). These titles create a direct reframe that assumes that Benedict XVI does not oppose Francis. They simply see the problem from two different angles that can complement each other in solving this scourge of pedophilia in the Church. There are headlines in which there are reframes of the efforts in the Church or the remedies proposed by Benedict XVI as a high-ranking person in the Church to fight pedophilia. An example is the title of the article by Cath.ch « Abus sexuels: Benoît XVI apporte son diagnostic et propose ses remèdes » [Sexual abuse: Benedict XVI provides his diagnosis and suggests his remedies] (April 12, 2019). There are titles that suggest clericalism, and not the problem of God, is the basis of the problem of sexual abuse in the Catholic clergy, what one might call a misdiagnosis. For example, the one on the blog of Rene Poujol (renepoujol.fr) is very direct: « Benoît XVI et la crise: erreur de diagnostic » [Benedict XVI and the crisis: misdiagnosis] (April 14, 2019). An example of an indirect title could be that of Oregon Live ‘Retired pope’s theories on sex abuse scandal leave Catholics perplexed, angry’ (Apr 11, 2019), or again that of La Croix - ‘Sexual abuse: This text of Benedict XVI asks a lot of questions’ (April 11, 2019 modified April 12, 2019).

Tables 8 and 9 show that the dailies that have personally written the titles of their articles succeed in better transmitting the meaning of the message of Benedict XVI’s notes. This same phenomenon is also reproduced in the elaboration of their texts, in which there is no pretension of bringing in small phrases, expressions or words chosen on purpose, along with the comments of so-called experts who criticize the notes. In this sense, the majority of the media that have a Catholic Church affiliation, despite being a small percentage of the overall total of news-providers, are better able to scrutinize and transmit the message of the notes to public opinion. Someone can say it is normal because these media are Church-affiliated, but that is not guaranteed. It demonstrates professionalism and scrupulous care in the transmission of the truth on the part of the journalists of these media, because they know that the truth sets them free (John 8:32). This is while most of the mainstream newspapers, which wanted to report small fragments of the full text, statements, and sentences of people who already have their preconceived ideas, fall into the trap of ‘objectivist journalism’ critiqued by some authors (Galdón López 2015, 53-57).
5. Conclusion

Seeing the full percentages of the figures previously relayed, one cannot claim that the Pope Emeritus’ essay was impartially transmitted to public opinion. Certainly, Benedict XVI is well aware of the partiality that sometimes exists in the media, because informing the consciences of individuals and helping to shape their thinking is never a neutral task, but as he says, this must not become a kind of culture for the destruction of the truth. Therefore, the media, whatever their nature, must be not only networks facilitating communication, communion, and cooperation for genuine dialogue, but also protagonists of truth and promoters of peace (Pope Benedict XVI 2006). Thus, by emphasizing in his notes the importance of opposing the whole truth to the half-truths and lies of the devil, Benedict XVI seems to want to dismantle the culture of lies that wants to settle in society and within the Church herself (Valli 2019b, April 12). This false culture is maintained in large part by lazy journalists or those who value the process of a manipulative press to censor the Catholic Church’s message.

This conclusion leads us to look at the overall assessment of all the data collected by focusing on the three main sources of these titles and texts at the international level, namely: AFP, AP, and Reuters. The references other articles make to these three news agencies clearly demonstrate the influence that these three news agencies have on public opinion. Editors of other publications seem have copied and pasted their texts, without documenting the issue themselves. But investigation is a fundamental element and a knowledge-factor for the exercise of true journalism. Was it really out of laziness, or was it in bad faith that they produced such biased coverage? It would be difficult to know the true answer without someone from the media telling us themselves, but given the overwhelming bias in their reporting, it seems likely that the media want to impose a diktat to inform – ‘in-formare’ (give shape to) – public opinion through specific techniques which can be summed up in the term: ‘techniques of social manipulation’ (Perucchietti 2018, 55-103).

What is most surprising is the fact that only three editors, through their stories, have the power to influence the perspective of countless people around the world. That reveals the power of information, and storytelling. In this sense, the actors of information must be aware that the formation of the conscience of the public depends on their impartiality, their credibility, their responsibility, and their professionalism, because their writings hold a strong influence on forming the attitudes of people or groups all over the world. From this perspective, we can avoid the drama of disinformation - what Pope Francis calls ‘fake news’ – which, instead of having a truthful relationship with other sources of information that could positively challenge prejudices and open up a constructive dialogue, risks making us unwitting actors in the dissemination of partisan and unfounded opinions (Pope Francis 2018). The communication professional or organizational leader must be able to see the manipulations of these media in order to reveal them to the public and eradicate them, and thus to promote the culture of a free, loyal and credible press.

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