

Religious choice and the Schism of Utrecht

Jaap Geraerts and Demival Vasques Filho

Leibniz Institute of European History

1 Historical background

In 1723, the schism in the Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic was formalized by the election of Cornelis Steenoven as archbishop of Utrecht. From then onward, there were officially two competing Catholic Churches in the Dutch Republic: the Church of Utrecht and the Roman Catholic Church. However, already since the suspension of Petrus Codde, the apostolic vicar (leader) of the Holland Mission in 1702 and his subsequent removal from office in 1704, the Dutch Catholic community had started to fragment as individual believers affiliated themselves to either those loyal to Rome or those who sided with Codde and his allies. Hitherto this schism has been the subject of traditional church histories which viewed it from rather circumscribed theological and juridical perspectives and squarely focused on the clergy. Although such scholarship has unearthed important insights about the internal structure of the Church of Utrecht, the relationships between the two Churches and the secular authorities, and the intellectual programmes of key figures from both camps, the role and experiences of the Catholic laity has been seriously understudied (Jacobs, 1981; Schaik, 1979; Spiertz, 1972; Vorst, 1960).

To be sure, several articles have examined religious choice in relation to the Catholic laity in the context of the schism (Clemens, 1996; Roessingh, 1971; Rogier, 1960; Witkamp, 2006). All these articles make use of the same methodology: on the basis of extant registers of baptisms and marriages the number of times these sacraments were administered in competing churches are simply counted, thereby showing the movement of laypeople between these churches. While this quantitative methodology is effective to some extent, the numbers which are derived from these registers likely were influenced by migration¹. In addition, such a quantitative approach leaves many questions regarding the process of Catholic intra-confessional lay affiliation unanswered. Who actually joined another church, what was that person's position in the local community and his/her socio-economic status? Did family members and friends join the same Church as well?

In order to answer these and related questions, the project that we will be presenting at this conference aims to study religious choice in relation to the schism using a mix-method approach, with the aid of network analysis (Domínguez and Hollstein, 2014).

¹ In the eighteenth century, due to economic stagnation in the Dutch Republic, some cities, including Haarlem and Leiden, lost 'more than a third of their populations' (Mijnhardt, 2014, p. 116). Nevertheless, the registers from Leiden reveal that immigration of Catholics from German areas still occurred.

2 Data and methodology

A dataset has been created which is based on the same serial sources that formed the basis of the aforementioned articles, i.e. the registers of baptisms and marriages, but subjects it to both quantitative and qualitative analyses. This is done by ingesting the data into a graph database, which allows one to chart kinship relations and examine the movement of people between the two Catholic Churches through their participation in events that took place in these Churches. In addition, the role of people (e.g. acting as a parent or godparent at a baptism) are captured as attributes of the edges connecting people to events. This is important, for the role of people was highly significant at these important rites of passage: the leadership of the Church proscribed members of other religious communities to fulfill such roles and there are indications that the laity internalized these rules to some extent². The resulting data model is fairly straightforward, as Fig. 1 shows.

Using a graph database in order to study the process of intra-Catholic affiliation has a number of advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it enables one to trace the movement of individuals between Church while also making the relationships between people queryable. Moreover, it allows one to detect particular patterns in the data quite effectively. On the other hand, dealing with uncertainty proved not to be that straightforward. This dataset is the fruit of intensive and time-consuming genealogical research which, to a varying extent, involved a degree of uncertainty due to spelling variants of names and the frequent use of patronyms, among other factors. However, accounting for uncertainty was not easy, in particular not when displaying data (only one attribute of edges can be shown — as in Fig. 1, so capturing uncertainty as an attribute of edges has clear limitations when trying to visualize the data). In the end, in the case of great uncertainty, the possibility of the existence of additional data in relation to a certain person is stored as an attribute of a node. In this way, the data

² The extent to which this happened varied. An interesting case in point are the so-called mixed marriages (Kaplan, 2005, 2009a,b).

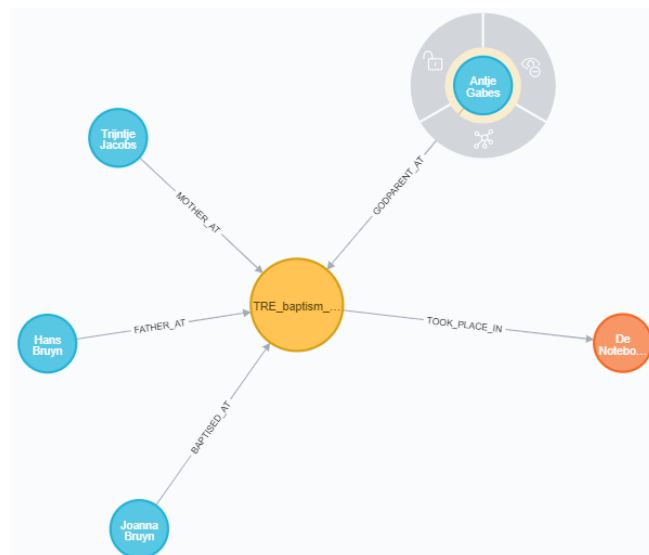


Figure 1: Example extracted from the database where people (blue) participate in a religious event (yellow) in a specific parish (orange).

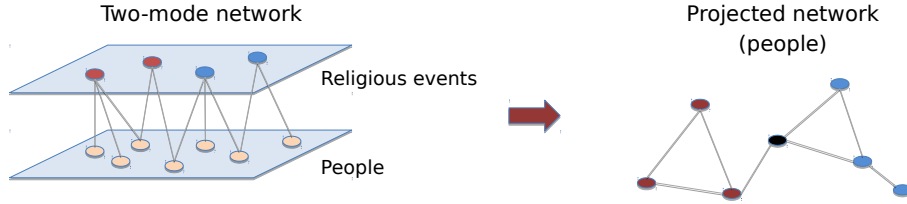


Figure 2: Schematic diagram of the network construction. Node color represents the confession and the node in black shows an individual participating in events of different confessions.

can be retrieved but does not interfere with the results of the main queries used for this project.

Another challenge manifested itself later in the process, when trying to subject this data to network analysis. The graph database does not capture relations between people directly since these can be inferred from the fact that people are connected to particular events with certain roles (hence it is possible to trace, say, all the children of a particular couple). That is, for the network analysis we decided to create two-mode networks, $B = \{U; V; E\}$, where people are represented in one set of nodes (U) with links (E) connecting them to the religious events — the other set of nodes (V). From that, we create one-mode projections onto U connecting individuals that participate together in the same event. The networks built following this reasoning do not connect siblings, unless these have a different role at some point (e.g., a woman being the godmother of her brother’s child), so we add a layer of connections when two individuals have either a father or a mother in common.

The networks are temporal, spanning 100 years, and built to enhance our understanding of how the schism evolved among the Catholic laity in mission stations in the cities of Leiden and Utrecht. Each individual in the network inherits their religious choice according to the confession of the events in which they appear. If an individual participates in an event recorded in the Church of Utrecht and later in an event at a Roman Catholic mission station, this might indicate that a person has changed his or her religious affiliation (Fig. 2).

Finally, we compare the network structure between the two cities and with artificial, random networks. We also track the evolution of the proportion of the confessional affiliations in the whole network and in the direct neighborhood of individuals.

3 Preliminary results

The networks are quite similar in terms of size, density, average degree and diameter (Table 3). However, the largest connected component (LCC) and the global clustering are somewhat different. The probable cause of this difference in the network structure is the number of four-cycles in the two-mode network. Four-cycles are two-mode network patterns that appear when two individuals participate in several events together (Vasques Filho and O’Neale, 2020). A high number of these patterns indicates the presence of some close-knit communities in the network with higher clustering (Vasques Filho and O’Neale, 2020), leading to the appearance of disconnected (isolated) communities (components) (Vasques Filho, 2020). The differences between the

Table 1: Summary of basic characteristics of both networks in Utrecht and Leiden. Utrecht shows a larger number of four-cycles in the two-mode network (i.e., more pairs of individuals participating in more events together), what might result in the lower average degree, lower proportion of the LCC, and higher clustering (Vasques Filho, 2020; Vasques Filho and O’Neale, 2020).

	Utrecht	Leiden
Network size	8,638	8,220
Density	7.8×10^{-4}	8.6×10^{-4}
Average degree	6.8	7.1
LCC	0.81	0.95
Diameter	16	18
Average shortest path length	6.6	7.2
Global clustering	0.51	0.41
Four-cycles (two-mode)	17,533	13,361

two cities probably results from the fact that in Leiden had only one mission station that was part of the Church of Utrecht, whereas in Utrecht there were six. As such, the laity that were part of the Church of Utrecht in the latter city were divided to a larger extent than was the case for Leiden.

Another interesting aspect of the Utrecht and Leiden networks (not captured with the average degree) is the presence of highly connected individuals in Utrecht. We can see these in the longer tail of the degree distribution for Utrecht when compared to Leiden (Fig. 3). These highly connected nodes are the spiritual maidens, unmarried or widowed Catholic women, who took simple vows of chastity and obedience and devoted their lives to the Catholic cause. They schooled children, assisted priests, and gathered Catholics for clandestine religious services. While across the Dutch Republic there were involved in similar activities, the datasets from Utrecht and Leiden show clear differences. Whereas in the former city, spiritual maidens often acted as witnesses at weddings and as godparents at baptisms, this was not the case in the latter city. Why this was the case remains an open question.

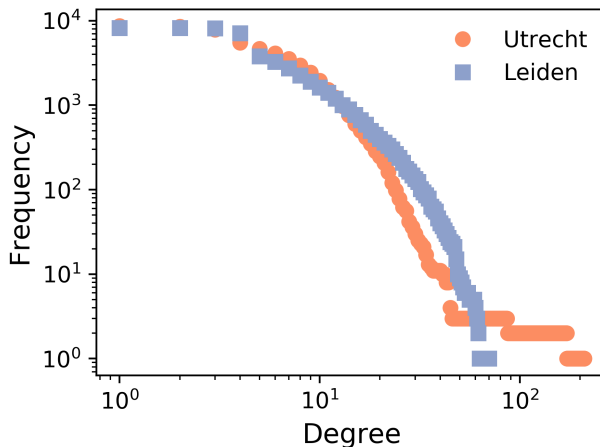


Figure 3: Degree distributions for both networks in Utrecht and Leiden. The heavier tail of the distribution in Utrecht is due to the high presence of spiritual maidens at marriages and baptisms.

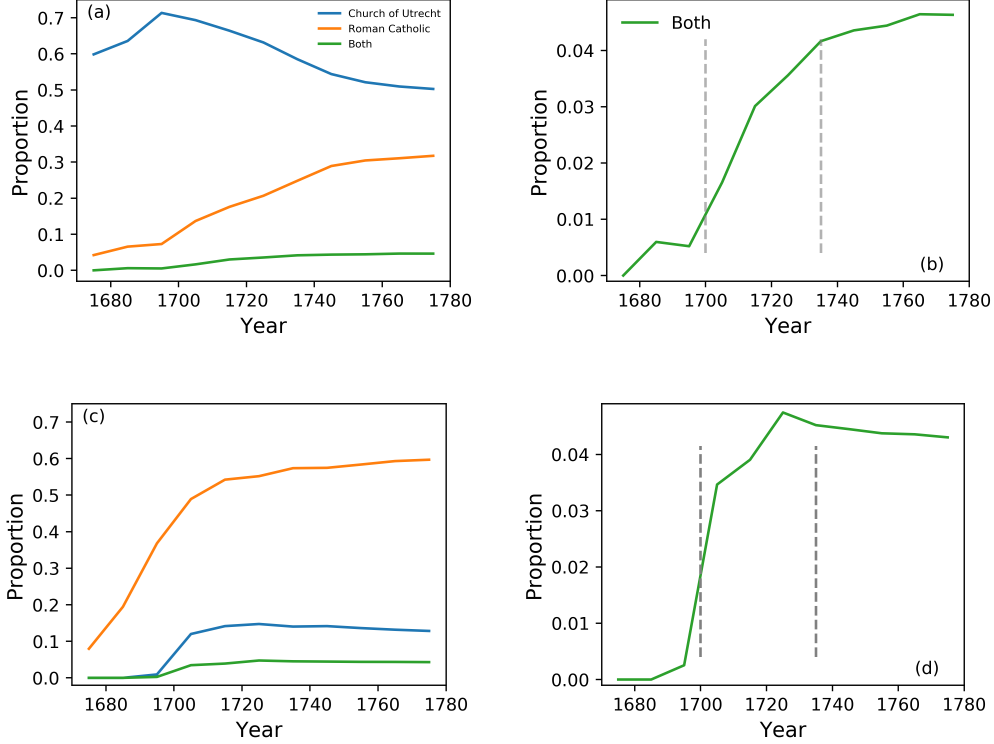


Figure 4: Confessional proportions in the whole network for (a,b) Utrecht and (c,d) Leiden. Although a small proportion of individuals change affiliations, this behavior is more pronounced between 1700 and 1735 as shown in (b) and (d).

That difference might also be related to the proportions of each confession in these cities. While in the network for Utrecht a majority of the people followed the Church of Utrecht (Fig. 4(a)), the opposite happened in Leiden (Fig. 4(c)). Various factors could have caused this difference, one of which is the way in which these networks have been constructed. For example, the events to which the godparents at a baptism were connected, have been included in the dataset as well. If the godparents in one city were connected to more events in the Roman Catholic Church than in the other city, this greatly inflated the number of people connected to events in this Church. Moreover, the Leiden dataset comprises 410 people who were connected to events which took place in both Churches in the period 1702-1775 (5.91%), the Utrecht dataset consists of 432 of such people (5.66%). This small difference probably also contributed to the larger number of people connected to events in the Roman Catholic Church in Leiden.

In any case, when we zoom in on the proportion of individuals that have participated in events of different confessions, we see the sharp rise of this behaviour between 1702 and 1735 (Figs. 4(b) and 4(d)). In this period, apostolic vicar Petrus Codde was first suspended from office (1702) and later removed from it (1704). This created a lot of uncertainty and triggered various conflicts as local Catholic communities started to fragment. After 1704, the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church started to intervene by excommunicating several priests and stating that the sacraments administered by priests who were not loyal to Rome were of no value. This too, contributed to the uncertainty among the Dutch Catholic laity and the need to make a choice for one of the competing Catholic Churches. So at the time when the schism was formalised by

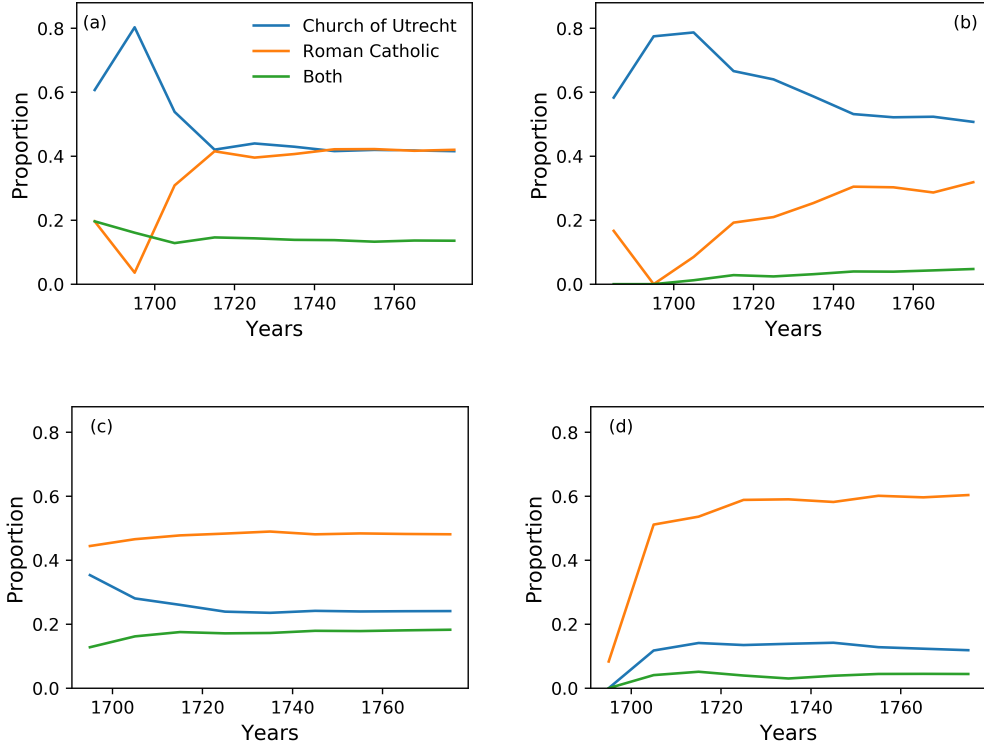


Figure 5: Average proportion of confessions in the neighborhood of individuals for (a) empirical and (b) random networks in Utrecht, and (c) empirical and (d) random network in Leiden.

the establishment of the Church of Utrecht in 1723, many members of the laity had a made up their mind and had affiliated themselves to one of the two Churches. To be sure, after that people moved Churches as well, but to a decreasing extent.

When we look at the composition of the network neighborhood of these individuals with dual affiliation, we see a higher presence of other individuals in the same situation than we would if connections were created at random (Fig. 5). That indicates that people were not participating in events of different confessions alone. However, these proportions are still relatively low indicating that confessional change did not happen as a collective movement, or in large groups, or even involving the extended family. Rather, we believe these changes happened at the level of couples or individual family nuclei. In addition, we have discerned the existence of particular marriage patterns: marriages with a spouse of another faith, the so-called mixed marriages, often prompted a move to the Church of the spouse. In the majority of cases, such mixed marriages resulted in a movement to the Roman Catholic Church, thus contributing to the decreasing number of laypeople affiliated to the Church of Utrecht.

References

- Clemens, T. (1996). Kerkscheuring op lokaal niveau: Petrus van der maes van avenrode en de voorgeschiedenis van het schisma van 1723. *Geloven in het verleden*, 413–430.
- Domínguez, S. and B. Hollstein (2014). Mixed methods social networks research:

- Design and applications, Volume 36. Cambridge University Press.
- Jacobs, J. Y. H. A. (1981). Joan Christiaan van Erckel (1654-1734): pleitbezorger voor een locale kerk. Amsterdam: APA-Holland Universiteits Pers.
- Kaplan, B. J. (2005). “for they will turn away thy sons”: the practice and perils of mixed marriage in the dutch golden age. In *Reformation and the Practice of Toleration*, pp. 298–315. Brill.
- Kaplan, B. J. (2009a). *Integration vs. Segregation: Religiously Mixed Marriage and the “Verzuiling” Model of Dutch Society*. Brill.
- Kaplan, B. J. (2009b). Intimate negotiations: Husbands and wives of opposing faiths in eighteenth-century holland. In *Reformation and the Practice of Toleration*, pp. 336–357. Brill.
- Mijnhardt, W. (2014). A tradition of tolerance. In *Discovering the Dutch*, pp. 121–132. Amsterdam University Press.
- Roessingh, W. (1971). De voormalige oud-katholieke kerk te rijswijk vanaf haar ontstaan tot 1909. *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis/Dutch Review of Church History* 51(2), 209–224.
- Rogier, J. (1960). De betekenis van de terugkeer van de minderbroeders te delft in 1709. *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van de Katholieke Kerk in Nederland*, 169–204.
- Schaik, A. H. v. (1979). *Bataafs en rooms: drie studies over de verhouding van de kath. kerk in de noordelijke nederlanden en rome aan het eind van de 17e en het begin van de 18e eeuw= batave et romain*.
- Spiertz, M. G. (1972). *Ambtelijk onbegrip: kanttekeningen bij de breuk Utrecht-Rome; rede uitgesproken... aan de Katholieke Universiteit te Nijmegen op vrijdag 11 februari 1972*. Dekker & Van de Vegt.
- Vasques Filho, D. (2020). Mechanisms and emergent properties of social structure: the duality of actors and social circles.
- Vasques Filho, D. and D. R. O’Neale (2020). Transitivity and degree assortativity explained: The bipartite structure of social networks. *Physical Review E* 101(5), 052305.
- Vorst, M. (1960). *Holland en de troebelen in de Hollandse zending, 1702-1727*. Ph. D. thesis, Nijmegen: Janssen.
- Witkamp, G. (2006). *Vervreemding. een onderzoek naar de kerkscheuring tussen de cleresie en hun kerkvolk in culemborg in de periode 1680–1750*. *Culemborgse Voetnoten* 34, 2–40.