Keys to the Game: An Analysis on the Occurrence of Political Blame Games in the Netherlands as a Result of Safety Board Investigations

Master Thesis

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I. Abstract

This thesis investigates which conditions contribute to the occurrence of political blame games in the Netherlands, after the publication of Safety Board investigation reports. The Dutch Safety Board investigates incidents in highly technological and complex sectors in the Netherlands, such as aviation, shipping, and defense. Some of its investigation reports have led to political blame games in the (local) political arena, while others have flown under the radar. The literature on political blame games has offered little coverage on incident investigation, creating a compelling avenue to study. The literature review and theoretical framework offered an account of current scholarship on accidents, causal stories, and blame games. Three hypotheses were constructed based on the literature, presenting three conditions that need to be present for political blame games to occur. The three conditions were 'bodily harm and/or loss of life', 'Organizational Function Logic', and 'public space'. Assuming multiple conjunctural causation, the hypothesized conditions were tested using Qualitative Comparative Analysis. The case selection included nine Safety Board investigation reports from the past ten years, of which six resulted in political blame games and three did not. The results indicated that the conditions of 'Organizational Function Logic' and 'public space' were key in the cases where political blame games occurred. 'Public space' fulfilled the role of a necessary and sufficient condition, since its presence in a given case always resulted in the presence of a political blame game. The results offered compelling insights on how and when political accountability can manifest in a given case. It also provided evidence that challenges the assumption that delegation is an effective method of risk avoidance by politicians. Overall, the research addressed a gap in the literature on political blame games and provided empirical backing of novel ideas in the field.

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III. List of abbreviations

BHLL	Bodily harm and/or loss of life
DIZ	Divisie Individuele Zaken (Individual Affairs Division)
FPA	Forensisch Psychiatrische Afdeling (Forensic Psychiatric Ward)
HCJL	Havarikommissionen for Civil Luftfart og Jernbane (Danish Accident Investigation Board)
INUS	Insufficient but Non-redundant parts of a condition which is itself Unnecessary but Sufficient for the occurrence of the effect
IBL	Individual Blame Logic
OFL	Organizational Function Logic
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

On October 2nd, 2017, the Dutch Safety Board published the investigation report 'Mortar accident Mali'. The reason for this investigation was an accident with a mortar that took place during a training exercise of the Dutch military at the United Nations mission in Mali. Two soldiers lost their lives and one was gravely injured. The investigation report featured damning comments, focusing on the lacking safety structures across all levels of the Defense organization. One day after the publication of the report, a debate was organized in the Dutch House of Representatives. Multiple parties blamed the Minister of Defense for the lack of safety structures and inadequate safety culture within the Defense organization. In response to the debate, the Minister of Defense announced her resignation and offered her apologies. In contrast, four months earlier the Dutch Safety Board had published an investigation report on the death of a crew member of a container ship, who got crushed between two containers in the port of Moerdijk. This investigation report did not lead to any Ministers or other senior public officials stepping down. In fact, it did not even feature in a national or regional political debate. This sparked the question: 'What determines the occurrence of a political blame game?'

1.2. The Dutch Safety Board

The Dutch Safety Board is an independent governing body that investigates incidents in a wide range of sectors. It is funded by the Ministry of Justice and Security but is wholly independent in its decisions to conduct investigations. The Safety Board mainly investigates incidents that occur in highly technological and complex sectors, such as aviation, shipping, and the construction industry. Most investigations cover incidents with small aircrafts and ships. The Moerdijk incident is a prime example of such a case. The Safety Board has also conducted investigations into incidents that received a lot of media attention, such as the fatal accident with the Stint in 2018 and the Scheveningen bonfires in 2019. The Safety Board can be requested by the Cabinet to conduct an investigation, but generally, it makes its own decisions on whether to conduct an investigation or not. This enables it to investigate government departments and organizations as well, as occurred in the Mali investigation.

The mandate of the Safety Board is to uncover the strings of causal factors that contributed to the occurrence of an incident. The Safety Board does not have the legal capacity to attribute blame. It cannot appoint individuals or organizations as the cause of an

incident. After the investigation is concluded, the Safety Board publishes its investigation report. The contents of an investigation report assume multiple conjunctural causation. This entails that the cause of the incident is seen as complex, consisting of multiple factors that interact with one another. The reports do, however, link causes to departments or organizations that are responsible for ensuring the safety and/or safety precautions in that particular area. The investigation reports can therefore be used by other actors as factual and scientific evidence in order to back up claims about responsibility and blame.

1.3. Political blame games

More precisely, the investigation reports by the Safety Board have been used in the political arena by political actors to attribute blame to other politicians. These so-called political 'blame games' form around the question of 'Who is to blame for this incident?'. The investigation reports are used to back up claims of blame, as they include facts to present a causal narrative that is considered to be objective by all actors involved. They become part of a 'blame game', in which the 'blamers' and the 'blamees' shift responsibility around based on their perspective of the incident and their own self-interest. However, as mentioned before, not all investigation reports lead to these political blame games. Most investigation reports fly underneath the 'political radar' and do not pop up in the political arena. While much has been written about blame games and blame risk faced by politicians, there has yet to be a clear distinction as to why some investigation reports can result in political blame games, such as the Mali report, and why some investigations do not feature in the political arena at all, such as the Moerdijk report.

1.4. Research question

In this research, I aim to answer the question: Which conditions contribute to the emergence of political blame games after Safety Board investigation report publications? The outcome of interest in this research is the presence or absence of political blame games.

1.5. Scope of the research

This research will only take into account Safety Board investigations. Accident and incident investigation is often solely covered by the Safety Board. The Safety Board has incorporated all other Dutch incident investigation boards in 2005, including the Rail Accident Board, the Aviation Council, the Inland Waterways Disaster Act Committee, and the Marine Council. This research will further address only the Safety Board investigation

reports that center around a singular incident, rather than a broader societal trend. Investigations that cover a broader societal trend often do not result in blame games similar to the ones that incident investigations can result in. These investigations are also structured and analyzed differently compared to incident investigations, which makes comparison difficult and potentially problematic. Additionally, this research acknowledges that political blame games can also occur based on investigations into policy failure and organizational functioning. A recent example of this is the childcare allowance affair at the Dutch Tax Authority. However, the scope of this research is limited to accident and incident investigations. These are often covered solely in the investigations done by the Dutch Safety Board.

The research will focus on relatively recent investigation reports, of which the incidents all occurred in the past decade (2010-2020). This time frame was chosen to ensure comparability of the cases, as the more recent investigation reports by the Safety Board all follow a similar structure. Through the method of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), I will compare the cases from my case selection in order to determine whether a certain condition, or conditions, remain constant across all cases in which political blame games occurred. The analysis will feature an assessment on whether the hypothesized conditions can fulfill the roles of 'necessary', 'sufficient', or '**I**nsufficient but **N**on-redundant parts of a condition which is itself **U**nnecessary but **S**ufficient' (INUS) conditions in order for a political blame game to occur as a result of a Safety Board investigation.

1.6. Relevance

This thesis is academically relevant as it fulfills a gap in the academic literature on political blame games. There has been little inquiry into whether certain conditions contribute to the occurrence of political blame games. This research will provide a first step into which factors could potentially cause the occurrence of political blame games in this research context. Furthermore, by using QCA to analyze the hypotheses, this research includes the notion of multiple conjunctural causation, similarly to how Safety Board investigations do. Both the method of QCA and the multiple conjunctural causation approach has seen little use in relation to this topic. This enables the research to find new and thought-provoking insights.

This thesis is socially relevant as it addresses topics related to political accountability and responsibility in the public domain. The investigation reports cover incidents and accidents, of which some can be considered grave. Based on ethical and legal considerations, it is a key feature of rule of law that the government obeys the law and performs its duties

properly. The investigation reports contribute to this by checking and testing the government's performance, thereby providing legitimacy. Furthermore, this research unveils how the Safety Board investigation reports can come to feature in the political debate and how they can become a part of the political accountability that politicians and public officials face. Based on political considerations, the results of this research are relevant to politicians. Politicians actively engage in blame avoidance (Hood, 2002). The research results could provide relevant insights for politicians on whether they can expect blame to come their way and why. Admittedly, the intricacies of this research might not be of interest to the general public. However, this research does highlight responsibility structures surrounding the government and its responsibilities. The general public can gain more awareness into these structures and the government as a whole through this research. More awareness contributes to a more informed general public regarding the politics and the ruling of the country, allowing them to make more informed choices during elections. An engaged and informed citizenry strengthens democracy, and to a certain extent, this research contributes to that.

1.7. Structure

The structure of this thesis contributes to the ability to appropriately address and answer the research question. The second chapter will consist of a literature review. The literature review provides an account of the scholarly context of this research. It narrows down the academic scope of the research by focusing on accidents, causal stories, the primacy of science, and political blame games. Based on the literature review, a theoretical framework will be constructed from which three hypotheses are derived for the analysis. The fourth chapter will present the methodology of this thesis and reflect on its strengths and limitations. Then, the results of the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) will be presented and explained. The sixth chapter will feature a discussion of the results, reflecting on the theoretical contributions of the results and the limitations. Finally, the conclusion will provide a reflection on the research and answer the research question.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In order to determine which conditions could be relevant in determining whether a Safety Board investigation leads to political blame games, it is necessary to review the existing academic literature and theory. This literature review seeks to narrow down the scope of the research by delving into the established theory and scholarship surrounding causal stories, expert authority, and political blame games. By providing an account of the most prominent theories and arguments, and critically assessing them, the conceptual and academic context of the research will become more defined. The literature review also aids in narrowing down the relevant theories that will constitute the theoretical framework and the subsequent hypotheses that will be derived from the theoretical framework.

Safety Board investigation reports cover incidents and accidents, often occurring in high-risk sectors. First, a closer look will be taken at how accidents manifest themselves in the high risk technological society. Safety Board investigation reports give an account of how the accident could have occurred, providing a causal narrative. In this context, Stone's (1989) theory on causal stories is particularly relevant. Stone (1989) offers an argument on how accidents are dragged out of the realm of chance and into the realm of human (in)action. As causal stories can conflict between different parties, it is necessary to delve into the authority of Safety Board investigation reports. To assess the authority of the Safety Board investigation reports, the primacy of science in politics will be examined. The primacy of science refers to the authority of scientific research in politics and political debates. Causal stories, such as the one established in an investigation report by the Safety Board, can aid in allotting responsibility to political actors. Causal stories are used in political blame games. Political blame games serve to place blame or responsibility on a political figure for a particular failure or incident. As the outcome of interest in this research is the occurrence of political blame games, it is vital to examine and narrow down the theory on political blame games in this literature review.

2.2. Accidents

The 20th and 21st century have given way to the emergence of increasingly technologically complex societies. Perrow (1984) paved the initial steps on what is now a distinct discipline itself, that of risk management. Perrow (1984) also coined the normal accidents theory, which centers on the inevitability of accidents and failures occurring in

"high risk systems" (p. 5). The accidents that occur in these complex systems are themselves technologically intricate (Perrow, 1984). While the "scientization of society" has caused risk to become "omnipresent", certain employment sectors are more prone to grave incidents than others (Habernas, 1971, as cited in Ekberg, 2007, p. 346). These sectors are often scientifically and technologically complex, such as aviation, shipping, (nuclear) energy, and agriculture. In the literature on the risk society, Beck (1992) makes the distinction between natural and technological risks. Technological risks are seen in sectors that concern man-made technologies, such as aviation. Risk in these sectors, according to Beck (1992) and Ekberg (2007) is not natural, but also man-made. The consequences or the accidents that stem from the risks of these technologically complex environments thus have a human component that caused it.

Perrow (1984) also introduces the human component in his work *Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies.* He puts strong emphasis on the responsibilities of organizations and organizational management in relation to how risks are dealt with, but also in the prevention and causation of accidents. Much of his work is reiterated and expanded upon by Clearfield and Tilcsik (2018), who also argue that the risks of today's complex society get exacerbated when there is a lack of slack provided by the organization. Birkland (1998) harkens back to Beck (1992) in his research on accidents as "focusing events", whereby the suddenness and the impact of the accident can attribute to policy change (p. 53). In his research he examines both earthquakes and natural disasters, as well as nuclear power plant failures and oil spills. The first two events are considered natural, while the last two events are considered man-made. Birkland (1998) argues that it is harder to attribute organizational responsibility in the first two events, as they are the consequences of natural risks. In contrast, nuclear power plant failures and oil spills occur in highly technical and complex man-made sectors, whose risks and consequences are also man-made. Perrow (1984) argues that the causes of risks and failures are man-made, however not by the actions of a single worker or a machine malfunction. but by the action or in-action "rooted in the structure of organizations" and its management (Sagan, 2004, p. 17).

This distinction can be found in the literature as Individual Blame Logic and Organizational Function Logic. Individual Blame Logic (IBL) seeks to identify guilty individuals and is primarily rooted in the discipline of criminal law (Avery and Ivancevich, 1980). Organizational Function Logic (OFL) is directed at causal factors and the strings between them that were present within the organization, and which led to the incident occurring (Catino, 2008). Eastman (1910) argued that, if accident investigations reveal that

the accident occurred "because workmen are fools", then there is no trigger for other actors in society to seek to prevent such an accident from occurring in the future (p. 5). This logic corresponds to IBL. IBL is primarily accusatory, as it points the finger at the individual that is responsible for the accident (Catino, 2008). Within IBL, fixing the problem does not go further than "taking out the bad apple", resulting in the workman either being fired or prosecuted (Catino, 2008, p. 55). Reason (1997) argued that IBL is the most satisfying blame logic, since it assumes that the responsibility for an accident lies with an individual, which is convenient for the causal narrative and the satisfaction of people's sense of justice (Catino, 2008). IBL is also convenient for the organizations in which the accident occurred. If the individual that 'pressed the wrong button' is the only actor that is blamed, the organization as a whole will not face scrutiny. IBL does not create incentive for organizations to take on responsibility and reform, as Eastman (1910) argued.

In contrast, Eastman (1910) further argued that, if accident investigations show that the accident in question is a singular occurrence in a wider trend of an organization neglecting the safety of its workers, "social interference in some form is justified" (p. 5). This logic corresponds to Organizational Function Logic (OFL). Within OFL, accidents are still caused by the mistakes of individuals, but they are the product of the social and systemic environment in which the individual operates (Vaughan, 1996). Regarding the individual making the mistake, OFL does not have the punitive character that IBL has. Reason (1997) distinguishes between 'active errors' and 'latent factors', whereby active errors were committed by the individual. Latent factors refer to the organizational structures and dynamics that serve as an undercurrent to the situation in which an active error was made (Reason, 1997). OFL therefore discards the notion of causality being linear (Catino, 2008). OFL is less convenient to organizations compared to IBL, as solutions under an OFL constitute organizational structures being changed (Catino, 2018). This process is more costly and time consuming. OFL is considered to have a higher normative value than IBL, however, as OFL ideally leads to organizational learning and fostering a better future (Catino, 2008).

2.3. Causal stories

Accident investigations are often conducted to uncover the causal factors that led to the accident or disaster that took place. A narrative that strings together the causal factors that caused the accident is referred to by Stone as a "causal story" (1989). Stone's (1989) theory on causal stories has gained significant traction in the fields of crisis management (Keeler, 1993; Birkland and Nath, 2000), agenda setting (Wolfe et al., 2013; Birkland, 2017), policy

formation and change (Birkland, 1998; Shanahan et al., 2011), and discourse analysis (Hanson, 2018; Wesselink et al., 2013; Shanahan et al., 2014). The literature on the "Politics of Disaster", which views "disasters as political occasions", and political blame games pays specific attention to the construction of causal stories as being politically charged and relevant to the political process (Olson, 2000, p. 265; Hood, 2002; Hood, 2011).

Causal stories are relevant because they depict the causes of an incident or a problem, providing, at the same time, implicit or explicit notions on who is responsible for the incident and for providing the solutions (Birkland, 2007; Stone, 1989). As discussed previously, accidents and failures are no longer seen as caused by nature or fate, the realm over which humans have no control (Perrow, 1984; Stone, 1989). Causal stories therefore contain a normative component, as they serve to attribute harm done to a certain subset of people as being caused by another subset of people (Stone, 1989). Causal stories thus attribute responsibility. Blame attribution occurs in part through the causal story determining the 'space' in which the incident occurred. The causal story determines who held " responsibility and oversight" in the context or 'space' in which the incident occurred (Savas, 2000, p. 2; Stone, 1989). A division is often made between public 'ownership' of a space and private 'ownership' of a space. In this research, the terms 'public space' and 'private space' are employed, but these concepts often overlap with various meanings and other concepts, such as 'public domain' and 'private domain' (Savas, 2000). The causal story determines, either explicitly or implicitly, whether an incident took place in either one domain or the other. If an incident occurred on a public parking lot, the causal story will likely tread towards the municipality, as it is the 'owner' of the public space. In contrast, the causal story of an incident that took place within a factory will likely involve the company that owns that space. The ownership of the space is linked to responsibility and blame in relation to incidents, which actors seek to avoid. The determination by the causal story of the space the incident took place in is therefore not a neutral endeavor.

Stone (1989) developed a typology of causal stories, in which accidents can be construed as caused by either unguided or purposeful actions, resulting in either intended or unintended consequences (see Stone, 1989, p. 285; Burgwyn, 2013). These aspects result into four possible configurations. When the action was unguided and the consequences unintended, one speaks of an accidental cause (Stone, 1989). The accidental cause comes closest to what Perrow (1984) referred to as an act of God or nature. Accidental causes concern machine failures and natural accidents (Stone, 1989). The inadvertent cause is the one of unforeseen side effects, caused by carelessness, and omission (Stone, 1989). The action was purposeful,

but the consequences of the action were unintended (Stone, 1989). Accidental causes and inadvertent causes thus do not contain the element of human 'bad will'. Accidental causes are rarely seen as being caused by someone's actions. While inadvertent causes do contain a human element, responsibility in these incidents is often suspended (Shanahan et al., 2014).

The incidents that result in more severe blame attribution are those incidents whose causal stories contain elements of bad will, or were caused by "purposeful actions" of humans (Stone, 1989, p. 284). Stone (1989) identifies two causal stories in which bad will play a significant part. The first is mechanical causes, in which an actor commits purposeful actions and the consequences are what was initially intended, but "the action is unguided and carried out through other people, machines, or routinized procedures," (Shanahan et al., 2014, p. 72). The actor itself is thus not directly related to the outcome of their actions, although the outcome is what they initially intended it to be. The second causal story in which bad will plays a role, is intentional causes. This causal story is particularly strong, as it includes actors purposefully and directly committing actions that result in the intended severe consequences (Stone, 1989). Intentional causal stories contain a clear villain, as there is no separation between intent, actions, and consequences (Shanahan et al., 2014). Each causal story contains villains, victims, and heroes. Oppressors versus the oppressed. It assigns the roles of villains and victims, and forms a base for accountability mechanisms and compensation (Stone, 1989). The causal stories that are most relevant to the political debate depends on whose side an actor is on. Accused parties will often favor accidental and inadvertent causal stories, while the accusing parties favor causal stories containing intent, such as mechanical causal stories and intentional causal stories (Stone, 1989; Shanahan et al., 2014). The construction of a causal story is therefore politically charged.

The different political sides will create their own causal stories surrounding the incident, in which their side is pictured in the most favorable manner (Shanahan et al., 2014). The causal stories that are constructed by the competing sides do "not always facilitate a truth-finding dialogue or learning process in the wake of a crisis," as the debate can be centered around political wins and losses (Kuipers and Brändström, 2019, p. 2). In this political debate, consisting of discursive tactics and blame games, finding the truth and the chain of events that led up to the incident becomes subordinate to minimizing or maximizing political damage (Kuipers and Brändström, 2019; Wesselink et al., 2013). In order to prevent the politicization of an incident or to depoliticize it after politicization has already taken place, institutions can 'externalize' the creation of the causal story to outside actors, such as consultants, think tanks, and committees (Craft and Howlett, 2013).

2.4. Primacy of expertise

As previously discussed, the creation of causal stories is not a neutral endeavour (Stone, 1989). Wesselink et al. (2013) argue that the inclusion of expertise delineates the "space of discussion" (p. 3). Expert authority can be used in the political arena to depoliticize an incident. A causal story that is constructed by experts and which appeals to facts will likely depoliticize the issue at hand and cast out other causal narratives if they are not based on similar or superior scientific research (Wesselink et al., 2013). Expertise can become a "depoliticizing force", which is key in disaster and incident investigations (Wesselink et al., 2013, p. 3). Experts are granted thus primacy, whereby the product of their investigation becomes the 'final say' over the causal story of an incident.

This phenomenon occurs in what Craft and Howlett (2013) refer to as an 'externalization' trend in public administration, whereby actors from outside the government have increasing influence on shaping the agenda and the debate. They identify two sets of actors that are relevant to this study, as they are both functions that are fulfilled by the Safety Board. The "knowledge producers" are those that are based in research and science, who provide the government with the data to back up policy decisions (Craft and Howlett, 2013, p. 188). The knowledge producers are often dedicated to a single (policy) field and possess expertise that civil servants and politicians do not have (Boswell, 2009). They are also well-versed in scientific and technological methods, being able to obtain knowledge and data from sources that are not accessible to civil servants and politicians (Boswell, 2009). The second set of actors that Craft and Howlett (2013) identify are the "knowledge brokers", serving "as intermediaries between the knowledge generators and proximate decision makers, and who repackage data and information into usable form" (p. 188). The knowledge brokers have the ability to interpret the rough data that is produced by the knowledge producers, and to translate it into packaged information for civil servants and politicians. While knowledge producers are mostly located outside of the government, knowledge brokers can be a permanent part of the civil service or they are located in relation to the government in, for example, independent governing bodies.

External knowledge producers also receive primacy because they offer legitimacy to the organizations and the decisions that are present in the political arena (Craft and Howlett, 2013; Wesselink et al., 2013; Boswell, 2009). Peters and Savoie (2000) argue that, parallel to Perrow (1984), today's society has become increasingly complicated. This has given way to an increasing number of so-called 'wicked' policy problems (Peters and Savoie, 2000). The

issues that the civil service has to contend with in the modern society are considered to be too complex, and requiring the expertise of external knowledge producers and knowledge brokers (Craft and Howlett, 2013). By including external actors in this process, organizations increase their external legitimacy, as they can "demonstrate that [the organization's] norms, structure and actions conform to expectations about what constitutes appropriate behavior for the organization" (Boswell, 2009, p. 43). As the civil service is often considered to be largely invisible to the public, the inclusion of outside actors into the policy-making process can make an organization seem more legitimate (Boswell, 2009).

External knowledge producers can furthermore receive primacy because they break up the "advisory monopoly" of the civil service (Craft and Howlett, 2013, p. 190). This trend, in which external knowledge producers and knowledge brokers are actively chosen over the 'own' civil service, has been steadily increasing in many Western governments (Craft and Howlett, 2013).The perceived scientific neutrality of the expertise of external actors is considered more objective than the knowledge created within the civil service. Boswell (2009) argues that the perceived quality and weight of the argument is increased when the argument is based on expert knowledge. This results in that investigation reports by external governing bodies or committees will therefore be more likely to be the leading report in political debates (Craft and Howlett, 2013).

The academic debate does, however, feature a counterargument. Stone (1989) argues that causal stories that are backed by science are not readily accepted as truth into the political debate or by politicians. Either the production of the expertise is pulled into question, or the narrative presented by the experts is considered too complex, as politics often prefers simplified notions of causality (Stone, 1989). The argument set forth by Stone (1989) has empirical backing. The legitimacy of expert influence and the use of expertise has been gaining more attention, both in the media and in the academic literature (Wesselink et al., 2013). Expert influence has been getting more politicized, especially in relation to salient topics, such as the environment. However, a discussion on the legitimacy of expertise and expert involvement in the policy process is beyond the scope of this research. Moreover, the context of this research does not feature such discussions, as the authority of the Safety Board is accepted by all actors. Research points out that when the relations between the expert authority and the other actors is cooperative, rather than hostile, the inclusion of expertise will remain to have a depoliticizing effect (Pellizzoni, 2011).

2.5. Blame games

As mentioned previously, causal stories are employed in order to blame an individual or a subset of people for the occurrence of an incident. Within politics, there is an inherent tension between the government and the opposition. A government facing blame for an incident can bring about consequences that could endanger the positions of politicians and senior officials. The practice of allocating responsibility to and across various levels of government constitutes itself into a blame game. The term blame game is a metaphor that has been defined in multiple ways (Hansson, 2018). The word 'game' implies that those involved in it are considered players (Hansson, 2018). Hood (2011) identifies "blame risk" as a key source of insecurity for politicians, senior civil servants, and other officeholders in modern government (p. 5). Political blame games and the blame risk faced by politicians and other top government officials has gained traction in the academic fields of risk and crisis management, policy analysis, and discourse analysis (Hood, 2011; Hansson, 2018).

Hood (1989) refers to "blame makers" and "blame takers" as a separation of the different players in the blame game (p. 7). In government contexts, the ruling politicians and ruling parties are often featured as the "blame takers" and the opposition as the "blame makers" (Hansson, 2018). Blame games involve a narrative, such as the causal stories that were discussed previously (Stone, 1989). The blame game uses causal stories to assign the roles of villains, heroes, and victims to the players (Shanahan et al., 2014). Even if the dominant causal story shows a complex causal narrative, blame makers seek to simplify this causal story for the sake of politics, which seeks "immediate and simple causes" (Stone, 1989, p. 289). The ultimate goal is to place responsibility on a limited number of clearly identifiable actors, so that political accountability measures can be demanded and retribution can occur (Stone, 1989; Bekkers and Moody, 2014).

In order to be able to recognize when a blame game is occurring, it is necessary to recognize the various elements that are present in blame games. The analysis of how blame games manifest takes place largely in the academic field of discourse analysis (Hansson, 2018). The context model provided by Wodak (2011) includes a multi-level analysis model. Wodak (2011) proposes that blame game analysis should include micro-level and meso-level analysis, as well as socio-historical analysis. At the micro-level, the analysis focuses on the language that is used in blame games. Discourse analysis is most often focused on this level, as it seeks to identify speech patterns and structures that are prominent in blame games (Hansson, 2018). At the meso-level, analysis gears towards the institutional context of the blame game. It looks at which institutions are involved in the conflict and what the

institutional structures and underlying dynamics between the organizations are (Hansson, 2018; Wodak, 2011). The socio-historical level places the overall analysis in a wider context, accounting for societal and historical developments, such as political and financial crises (Hansson, 2018). Since this study focuses on a variety of case studies, a micro-level approach will be predominantly employed in order to detect whether blame games occur in each case. To ascertain whether political blame games are occurring, Hansson (2018) provides several discursive tactics that can be detected in blame games.

Firstly, Hansson (2018) poses that arguing is present in blame games, as "discursive strategies of arguing involve using argumentation schemes and warrants that lead to the conclusion that someone should be blamed or not" (p. 554). Blame makers will present an argument that the blame taker should be held responsible for their (in)action. Secondly, blame makers will make use of sources of authority, normative arguments, rationalization, and myths in order to legitimize their argument (Hansson, 2018). Expert opinion is amongst the sources of authority that blame makers use. Thirdly, blame makers will make use of framing (Hansson, 2018; Stone, 1989). This harkens back to Shanahan et al. (2014), who pose that blame games include assigning roles of victims, villains, and heroes to the parties involved in the conflict. The concept of framing has warranted numerous studies and is particularly prominent in Stone's book *The Policy Paradox* (2012). Blame makers use devices such as numbers, symbols, and metaphors to strengthen their arguments (Stone, 2012). Finally, Hood (1998) argues that the frame that blame makers choose to adopt depends also on their own world view or "cultural bias" (p. 24). Due to these differing worldviews, Hood (1998) furthermore argues that blame games are an inevitable and indispensable part of political life, as "failure proof" and therefore "blame-proof" governing is impossible (Hansson, 2018, p. 558).

2.6. Gap in the literature

Blame game literature focuses predominantly on how blame games manifest (Stone, 1989; Stone, 2012; Hood, 2002; Hood, 2010; Shanahan et al., 2014). There is, however, little inquiry done into *what* determines the occurrence of blame games. Focusing events, such as accidents and disasters often kick-start the blame game process (Birkland, 1998). However, not all accidents lead to political blame games. The literature on blame games that discusses accidents often cover severe accidents, in which lives were lost (Birkland, 1998). The Dutch Safety Board conducts investigations into accidents that often involve loss of human life. However, not all Safety Board investigations become politicized and feature in political

blame games. A severe accident is not enough for a Safety Board investigation to lead to political blame games. The existing academic literature does not go into detail on which variables determine whether political blame games occur, nor does it feature a focus on accident investigation reports. This research aims to uncover this question, to seek whether generalizations can be made on which conditions need to be present in an investigation report in order for political blame games to occur.

The next chapter will establish a theoretical framework from which the hypotheses are derived.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

3.1. Introduction

As there is little academic research done into which factors contribute to the emergence of political blame games, this theoretical framework serves to identify the conditions that are relevant to determine which investigation reports are likely to incite political blame games and which are not. First, I will present the underlying assumptions of this theoretical framework that were derived from the literature review. Then, I will identify the conditions that determine whether or not political blame games will occur as a result of an investigation report by the Safety Board. These conditions will be based on the literature that was discussed in the literature review, as well as from other academic disciplines. Subsequently, hypotheses will be derived from the theoretical arguments that will be provided.

3.2. Assumptions based on the literature review

The literature review discussed that the causal stories constructed by external knowledge brokers receive primacy within the political debate (Craft and Howlett, 2013). The Dutch Safety Board is an independent governing body. It can therefore be considered an external knowledge broker. It conducts highly technical investigations and employs experts on various policy fields and topics. This leads me into my first assumption: *While there might be multiple investigation reports into the incident, the investigation report by the Dutch Safety Board takes precedence in the political debate.*

Furthermore, the Dutch Safety Board does not have the legal capacity to assign blame. Based on the typology of causal stories by Stone (1989), I argue that the causal stories the Safety Board constructs through its investigations will therefore not feature intentional causal stories or mechanical causal stories. The Dutch Safety Board furthermore does not operate under the beliefs that an accident is caused by fate. I argue that the causal stories the Safety Board constructs through its investigations will therefore also not feature accidental causal stories. The investigations by the Safety Board do take the human factor into account when they construct causal stories, as they define causes as: "acts, omissions, events, circumstances, or a combination thereof that led to the incident" ('Rijkswet Onderzoeksraad voor Veiligheid', 2010). It doesn't, however, speculate on the intent of the actors that were involved in the causes of the incident. This corresponds closest to the inadvertent causal story, in which the action was purposeful, but due to omission, negligence, or ignorance, unforeseen side effects occurred (Stone, 1989). This leads me to my second assumption: *The*

causal stories present in the investigation reports by the Dutch Safety Board involve inadvertent causal stories.

3.3. Degree of harm

Going back to the argument from Perrow (1984), technological complexity has increased the chance of accidents in our modern society. Some sectors are more technology oriented and are therefore more prone to accidents than others. Examples of these are aviation, shipping, and energy. However, not all accidents are equally harmful. Accidents occur often in these sectors, as machines break and mistakes are made. It is only rarely that an accident is grave enough to warrant an investigation by the Safety Board. Most investigations done by the Safety Board are concerned with specific cases of machine failure, with varying degrees of harm.

Stone (2011) has created a typology of harms, ranked in order of legitimacy in the political debate. Physical harm, or bodily harm, is squarely at the top. Physical harm is considered to hold more political weight than economic or material harm (Stone, 2011). It can be argued that once a human being is harmed, the accident is considered to be more grave than when the accident only involved a machine breaking down, resulting in economic or material harm. The primacy of bodily harm over economic or material harm is also present in the legal discipline. Cases involving bodily harm often result in more severe punishments for the defendant than cases involving economic or material harm (Herring, 2012). Due to bodily harm being considered the most grave form of harm, attributing responsibility and allocating blame will therefore be more important, as the consequences of the committed or omitted action are considered significant (Stone, 1989). Investigations on minor accidents, in which only material or economic losses were suffered, are likely to fly underneath the political radar. For example, a politician that faces blame for the death of an individual will be subject to more political and media scrutiny compared to a politician that faces blame for a machine in a factory breaking down. This leads into the first hypothesis:

H1: Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when the incidents that are covered resulted in severe bodily harm and/or loss of life.

3.4. Blame logic

The literature review touched upon Individual Blame Logic (IBL) and Organizational Function Logic (OFL). The causal stories in the investigations by the Safety Board contain both IBL and OFL narratives. In order for an accident to 'reach' to the political debate, however, I argue that the investigation report must contain a blame logic that lies more closely to Organizational Function Logic. IBL keeps the responsibility for the accident solely contained within the actions of the single individual at the 'frontline'. It does not have the reach to bring the accident upwards to the political debate. In IBL, a politician cannot be blamed for a factory worker pressing the wrong button. Politicians, ministers and mayors in particular, are responsible for an organization beneath them. If an investigation report points out structural deficiencies in the organization that they are responsible for, it is more likely that political blame games will occur. This leads to the second hypothesis:

H2: Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when Organizational Function Logic is present in the causal story.

3.5. Public space

The occurrence of political blame games after the publication of an investigation report also depends on the space in which the accident occurred. A distinction can be made between the concepts of public space and private space. These concepts are widely used across many disciplines and in daily life, creating multiple and fuzzy definitions that can overlap one another (Lefebvre, 1991; Drummond, 2000; Low and Smith, 2006). In this research, the focus lies particularly on the 'ownership' and the organization of the space, and, by extension, the responsibility regarding safety and security in this space. Private space is organized by private actors, such as corporations, whereas public space is organized by sublevels of the government. If a lamp detaches from the ceiling of a factory, this is predominantly a safety matter for the management of the corporation that owns the factory. If a lamp detaches from a streetlight on a busy shopping street, this is predominantly a safety matter for the municipality. This distinction, while present, can become fuzzy. The management of the corporation can show its lamps are installed in accordance with the legislation created by the municipality, shifting the blame for the detaching of the lamp onto the municipality. The space in which the accident occurs can therefore be contested and used to shift blame around. It thus becomes part of the causal story.

Accidents that occur in a space that is considered to be public, in which the ownership and the responsibility for the safety within the space lies with the government, are more likely to be politicized. In Rousseau's (1762) book *The Social Contract* the concept of the social contract was introduced, which posits that individuals sacrificed some of their freedoms towards the government, granting the government authority and responsibility over the safety of the citizens. The government partially receives legitimacy from its ability to fulfill these tasks, to ensure that the citizens over which the government rules are protected from various harms (Locke, 1689, cited in Gaba, 2007). If a government fails to do so, this could lead to a diminishing legitimacy of the government. Accidents that occur in the public space, over which the government is ultimately responsible for ensuring safety, are therefore more likely to become politically salient. Compared to accidents that occur in the private space, accidents that take place in the public space are more likely to become the subject of political blame games. The establishment of the causal story, which determines the space in which the accident took place, is therefore key in whether an accident becomes politicized or not.

The Safety Board conducts investigations into accidents that have occurred in both private and public spaces. In the causal narratives it constructs, the responsibility for the accident does not always remain in the space the accident occurred in. Accidents have occurred in private spaces, but the subsequent investigation report have assigned responsibility to a sublevel of the government. This entails that the accident is argued to also have happened in a certain domain of public space. As mentioned before, determining which space an accident occurred in can have significant influence on the political response to the accident. If the accident is determined to have occurred in a private space, assigning the responsibility to a private actor, it is unlikely that the accident will result in political blame games. However, if the causal story determines that the accident took place in the public space, assigning the responsibility to (a sublevel of) the government, it is more likely that the accident will result in political blame games. This leads to the third hypothesis:

H3: Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when the causal story places the occurrence of the incident in the public space.

The next chapter will feature the methodology and the research design which will aid in testing the hypotheses that were set up in this theoretical framework.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the methodology for this research will be set up. The research method of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) will aid in discerning which conditions determine whether Safety Board investigations lead to political blame games. The specific method that was used is crisp set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (csQCA). This chapter will first briefly explain the advantages of the method of csQCA in addressing the research question, as well as provide some limitations of this method. Then, I will present the case selection procedure and provide a brief overview of the nine cases that were chosen for the analysis. Thirdly, I will provide the conditions that were selected for the analysis based on the hypotheses. Lastly, the conditions will be operationalized and visualized for each case within the data matrix.

4.2. Qualitative Comparative Analysis

The method of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is particularly useful to compare a small or intermediate number of cases and to gain insight into complex causal relationships (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). There are three techniques used in QCA, namely: crisp set QCA, fuzzy set QCA, and multivariate QCA. This research employs crisp set QCA, which means conditions can take on only two values. These values are expressed in binary 0 and 1, indicating 'yes' [1] or 'no' [0]. For example, an investigation report can incorporate 'Organizational Function Logic' [1] or not [0]. QCA addresses complex causality by assuming equifinality, which accepts that outcomes can be reached through multiple 'paths' (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). QCA further includes conjunctural causation and asymmetry (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). Its main assumption is that different processes can determine an outcome (Toshkov, 2016). This is beneficial to the research question of this thesis, which inquires after the conditions that determine whether a Safety Board investigation leads to political blame games. This research does not presume to identify all conditions, nor does it assume that the conditions that are identified must be present across all cases. By assuming equifinality and conjunctural causation, QCA supports the assumption that there are multiple ways in which Safety Board investigations can spark up political blame games. While QCA incorporates and allows for conjunctural causation, it does allow for findings to be generalized to some extent (Ragin, 1994). Unlike quantitative analysis, which generally seeks wide generalization to a large number of cases, generalization within QCA is limited to the

"domain of investigation" (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009, p. 20). In this research, the domain of investigation is the published reports of Safety Board investigations. By employing QCA, moderate generalization of the conditions that cause Safety Board reports to lead to political blame games will be sought after.

To achieve moderate generalization of the conditions, while also accounting for conjunctural causation, QCA often employs the language of necessary and sufficient conditions. By assigning the roles of necessary, sufficient, or INUS (**i**nsufficient but **n**on-redundant parts of a condition which is itself **u**nnecessary but **s**ufficient for the outcome), QCA can identify the role that conditions can take on in causing a certain outcome (Toshkov, 2016). The presence of one condition can be necessary in causing the outcome, but not sufficient. A condition can also be sufficient for an outcome, yet not necessary (equifinality). To identify the roles of the conditions, the cases, conditions, and the values for each condition are put into a truth table. Boolean minimization of the truth table will allow for the conditions to be identified according to the language of necessary, sufficient, and INUS conditions. In order to do this, QCA requires variation in the case selection, resulting in a case selection that holds variation in the outcome, as well as in the conditions (Toshkov, 2016).

4.3. Limitations of QCA

The method of QCA has some limitations. I will first discuss two limitations that are related to the loss of information. Firstly, in crisp sets, narrowing down the cases into binary conditions leads to the loss of information (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). Dichotomizing complex conditions into a binary is furthermore based on interpretation. The researcher sets a threshold value, determining the value of the conditions based on its position 'above' or 'below' the threshold value (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). This can have a strong impact on the results of the research (Goldthorpe, 1997). Rihoux and Ragin (2009) acknowledge that reducing conditions into a binary leads to a loss of complexity, but also argue that it is a strength of QCA. Additionally, threshold values are not merely made up by the researcher. Threshold values are derived from empirical knowledge and theory, offering a justified base to the threshold values. The second limitation related to loss of information, is referred to as "the curse of dimensionality" (Toshkov, 2016, p. 275). Adding more conditions leads to exponential growth of the truth table, doubling the possible combinations across all conditions (Toshkov, 2016). The more possible combinations, the more research is required. Based on feasibility and time constraints, it is vital that the number of conditions remains small. This, however, leads to loss of information. By keeping the conditions few in number,

less aspects of the cases will be involved in the research. Similarly to dichotomization, a small number of conditions also belongs to the strengths of QCA. By keeping the combinations simple, the strongest causal factors can be identified. The discovery of necessary, sufficient, and INUS conditions is not only useful in itself, but also strengthens existing theory and builds new theory.

Toshkov (2016) highlights some limitations related to QCA that occur after the processes of dichotomization and the construction of a truth table. Firstly, the problem of logical remainders occurs when combinations of conditions are missing amongst the cases (Toshkov, 2016; Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). Some combinations might not be present in any of the cases that are observed. This is referred to as "limited diversity", as the combinations that are observed are fewer in number than they ought to be (Toshkov, 2016, p. 275). Both Toshkov (2016) and Rihoux and Ragin (2009) propose that logical remainders can be dealt with by using theoretical reasoning to suppose what happens in the missing cases. Logical remainders can also be incorporated by the software that is used to analyze the truth table. Toshkov (2016) warns that these assumptions could lead to wrong 'observations'. Markoff (1990) argues such assumptions to be "dangerous" (p. 179).

QCA, however, allows for the existence of logical remainders *and* incorporates them into the data. Rihoux and Ragin (2009) argue in favor of using logical remainders in the analysis, either through assumptions or the software. They state that the inclusion of logical remainders is necessary for the research to contain inference, rather than merely description (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). "Limited diversity," they pose, "enables one to conduct a quasi-experimental research design in many social science disciplines" (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009, p. 154). They conclude that assumptions are used across all research designs, constituting a vital part of scientific research (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). The inclusion of logical remainders also provides more parsimonious minimal formulas when conducting Boolean minimization (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). It is vital, however, to remain transparent. Rihoux and Ragin (2009) therefore argue that four minimization procedures must be run. The first set of minimization procedures looks at [1] configurations, firstly without and secondly with logical remainders. The second set of minimization procedures looks at [0] configurations, firstly without and secondly with logical remainders. Despite this transparency, there is ongoing debate about the inclusion of logical remainders (Ragin and Rihoux, 2009; Toshkov, 2016; Ragin and Sonnett, 2004).

The second limitation highlighted by Toshkov (2016) is inconsistency. Cases can provide contradictory combinations of conditions regarding the relationship proposed in the

hypotheses. In quantitative and statistical research, such cases are likely to be considered "an error" (Musheno et al. 1991, p. 753). Musheno et al. (1991) and Rihoux and Ragin (2009) recognize that inconsistency occurs, but highlight the difference between a quantitative and QCA approach to these occurrences. QCA considers a phenomenon that does not correspond to the hypothesized relationship as "a hitherto unsuspected phenomenon that deserves and will get its own category" (Becker, 1998, p. 193). Musheno et al. (1991) poses that QCA allows for so-called 'outliers' because it acknowledges that outcomes can be explained in multiple ways. These allowances are not common within quantitative research. This outlook signifies that, although QCA has included aspects of quantitative methods, it remains predominantly a qualitative research method.

QCA offers multiple ways to tackle contradictory configurations. Rihoux and Ragin (2009) cover eight 'good practices' to resolve the presence of contradictory configurations. I will not summarize each practice in this chapter. The eight tips pertain to three parts of the research design that can be adjusted when one encounters contradictory configurations. One can opt for adding or removing one or more condition(s). This, however, cannot be done *ad infinitum* as the values will grow exponentially with each added condition. Adding a condition can further complicate the research, as well. One can adjust or change the outcome variable, which is particularly attractive when the outcome is defined too broadly. One can also reexamine the conditions based on the operationalization. Adjusting the threshold value could provide the contradictory configurations to be resolved, while still maintaining the dichotomized values. Adjusting threshold requires more extensive case research on those cases that make up the contradictory configuration. This benefits the research, as it provides more detailed insight on the cases and requires careful consideration of the operationalization. Regardless of which strategy is used, it is key that the chosen strategy is "justified on [...] case based knowledge and/or theoretical grounds", rather than opting for what appears to be the 'easiest way out'.

4.4. Research design limitations

The general limitations of a QCA research design also provide challenges for this research design. While dichotomization can be considered a strength, as it adds clarity and highlights similarities between cases, it is vulnerable to bias. In this research, I determine the threshold value as to whether a political blame game is present or not. Since the outcome 'political blame game' is not quantitative, it is difficult to determine whether it is present or not. This creates a 'window' filled with empirical data, such as newspaper articles and debate

transcripts, based on which I determine the political blame game to be present or absent. Despite careful conceptualization and operationalization of political blame games, the process of determining whether it is present or absent remains a subjective endeavor. It is therefore more vulnerable to bias, particularly in comparison to research that involves quantitative data. However, by establishing the threshold value myself and providing what empirical sources I am using, dichotomization also fosters transparency in the research design (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009).

A second limitation of this research design presents itself in the limited information that one can process when using QCA. The cases that were selected are incredibly diverse, involving various actors and levels of government. It is possible that, by narrowing the conditions for political blame games to occur down to three, some nuance is lost based on the institutional and political context in which the case occurred in. This is a logical consequence when one opts to employ a research design based on QCA. It is, however, necessary to take these limitations into account when analyzing the data.

A third limitation of this research design comes into play when determining whether political blame games are present or absent. As I can only use publicly available sources, such as newspaper articles, interviews with politicians, and transcripts of debates, it is possible that some aspects of the cases remain hidden. Politics does not only play out in the media and in the public debate, but also in private spaces, such as party meetings and Cabinet working groups. While blame games most often manifest itself in the public arenas, it is possible that in some cases, it remains behind doors. In those cases, I will determine that there was no political blame game occurring, as it cannot be detected in publicly available sources, even though the blaming did occur, but only in private. This, too, is a general limitation one encounters when conducting research based on publicly available sources. However, once an issue is truly politicized and a blame game occurs, it is often moved and can be detected in the news and the public debates, as actors seek to assign the roles of 'villains' and 'victims' to other actors. It remains true that in some cases the blaming might stay hidden, but since blame *games* often need the public political arena to properly manifest, the usage of only publicly available sources to determine the presence or absence of blame games remains appropriate.

As mentioned by Toshkov (2016), the limitations of logical remainders and inconsistency occur after the construction of the truth table. These limitations will therefore be discussed more extensively in the Results chapter.

4.5. Case selection

The cases selected for this research can be found in Table 1. All cases originate from the same "area of homogeneity" (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009, p. 20). This indicates "a domain of investigation" that is delineated by boundaries (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009, p. 20). The domain of investigation for this research is the published (i.e. finished) investigation reports by the Dutch Safety Board. The cases all occurred in the 2010s, as well as the report publication. This period was chosen in order to ensure comparability between the reports. Older reports by the Safety Board do not always follow the same structure or include similar components. The investigation reports that were selected differ in length and elaboration, but all follow the same structure. This allows for proper comparison based on the content. All reports are related to an incident and feature a causal story, which allows for comparison based on the conditions proposed in the hypotheses. Case selection also occurred based on the hypothesized outcome of political blame games [1] or no political blame games [0]. Brief investigation into government and media sources relating to the political outcomes of the reports allowed for a case variation based on the outcome. This ensures that heterogeneity is achieved, preventing the analysis from merely focusing on 'positive' or 'negative' cases. By employing a MSDO design (Most Similar, Different Outcome), this research aims to "narrow down the conditions of occurrence" to identify the conditions that can be key in causing a certain outcome to occur (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009, p. 22).

Table 4.1: Overview of selected cases

Label	**Full report title**	**Year**
Dalfsen	Collision between a passenger train and an aerial platform in Dalfsen	2016
Esso	Fire at Esso	2017
Eindhoven	Building constructive safety: lessons from collapse parking building Eindhoven Airport	2017

Haaksbergen	Monster truck accident Haaksbergen: between verifying and licensing	2014
Mali	Mortar accident Mali	2016
Moerdijk	Fatal accident due to entrapment between two containers	2016
Scheveningen	Flying fire on Scheveningen	2019
Den Dolder	Forensic care and safety, lessons from the case of Michael P.	2017
Zaandam	Accident Den Uyl bridge, Zaandam: more than the sum of its parts	2015

4.6. Conceptualization

The literature review and the theoretical framework introduced the hypotheses for this research. This section serves to specify the meanings and definitions of the conditions/concepts that are referred to and used. The three main hypotheses incorporate three concepts that require additional explanation: (risk of) severe bodily harm/loss of life, organizational blame logic, and public space. The outcome is based on the presence or absence of political blame games. The concept of political blame games will also be more clearly defined.

H1: Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when the incidents that are covered resulted in ***(the risk of) severe bodily harm and/or loss of life.***

Bodily harm is primarily a legal term. It is often defined within statutory and criminal law. Section 2 of the Canadian Criminal Code defines bodily harm as: “any hurt or injury to a person that interferes with the health or comfort of the person and that is more than merely

transient or trifling in nature" (Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c C-46). By referring to the harm not being transient and trifling in nature, the law indicates that the harm is not minor or insignificant. Loss of life, meaning death of a human being, also refers to the accidental nature of the cause. The term of phrase is rarely used when referring to deaths as caused by sickness. The Merriam-Webster dictionary and Macmillan dictionary both refer to the accidental aspect in their definitions of the term.

H2: Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when ***Organizational Function Logic*** *is present in the causal story.*

Organizational Function Logic "acknowledges that accidents are the result of mistakes made by individuals, but these mistakes, however, are socially organized and systematically produced" (Catino, 2008, p. 55). OFL seeks to uncover the underlying organizational deficiencies that were present in the lead-up to the accident. It is contrasted with Individual Blame Logic, whereby the individual is seen as the sole causal factor. OFL assumes complex causality. Causal stories that follow OFL will therefore also be more complex and incorporate multiple causal factors. OFL does not place blame on individuals, but does acknowledge their role in the occurrence of an accident. If IBL only highlights the person 'pressing the wrong button', OFL highlights the latent organizational factors that led to the person pressing the wrong button.

H3: Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when the causal story places the occurrence of the accident in a ***public space****.*

In this research, space is defined as being related to the 'ownership' and the responsibility over the space. Public space is 'owned' and organized by the (local) government. The government is responsible for the safety and security of the people in the public space. The safety of the public space falls under the management of the government. The government can ensure safety in the public space through the allotment or denial of permits and licenses; regulation; outsourcing; and, by extension, the police and the military. Responsibility for accidents in the public space can often be traced back through the causal story as belonging to a certain competence of the government. It is contrasted with private space, in which the space is owned and organized by a private actor. Safety and security of the people within the private space is predominantly the responsibility of the private actor.

Political blame games

The outcome of this research is the presence or absence of political blame games. Hood (2011) considers blaming: "the act of attributing something considered to be bad or wrong to some person or entity" (p. 6). Blame games are defined as: "interactions between two sets of actors — blamers and blamed" (Hood, 2002, p. 17). Political blame games occur within the political arena. Within Dutch politics, the coalition parties (at national and local levels of government) are responsible for the governing and the management of the public space, whereas the opposition serves to scrutinize and examine the coalition. Political blame games therefore often take shape in (part of) the coalition being blamed, with the opposition doing the blaming (Hansson, 2018). Political blame games play out according to Individual Blame Logic, "an accusatory type of approach which tries to identify the guilty individuals" (Catino, 2008, p. 53). When blaming occurs, it is often done in plenary sessions, debates, and through the media. While the Safety Board reports might feature Organizational Function Logic within its causal story by presenting a complex network of causal factors that led to the incident, political blame games can transform this narrative. Stone (1989) points out that: "complex causal explanations are not very useful in politics, precisely because they do not offer a single locus of control, a plausible candidate to take responsibility for a problem" (p. 289). Political blame games therefore seek to create a 'funnel of responsibility', bringing the responsibility for the organizational deficits back to the politician in charge of the organization.

4.7. Operationalization

In order to be able to detect the presence or absence of the conditions n the hypotheses, it is vital that they not only are properly defined, but also operationalized. Operationalization enables the determination of a certain condition to be present [1] or absent [0]. In this research, the conditions of 'bodily harm/loss of life', 'Organizational Function Logic', and 'public space' cannot be detected via a quantifiable measurement. This is also the case with the outcome, the presence or absence of political blame games. The conditions are more abstract and indirect, which makes operationalization more tricky (Toshkov, 2016). The operationalization of the conditions in this research could therefore be properly suited to this specific research, but might not be applicable in other research. As conceptualization is dependent on the research task at hand, so is operationalization.

The conditions of ‘bodily harm/loss of life’, ‘Organizational Function Logic’, and ‘public space’ are all determined to be present or absent within the Safety Board reports of the cases that were selected. The operationalization of these conditions will therefore focus on the reports, and how the presence or absence of these conditions can be determined within the text. The outcome of political blame games is not present in the Safety Board reports, as the political blame game is assumed to occur after the publication, based on the presence or absence of the conditions in the reports. The operationalization of political blame games will therefore focus on other sources, such as transcripts of debates, interviews, and news articles.

(Risk of) Bodily harm/loss of life

The presence or absence of bodily harm and/or loss of life can often be determined in the introduction or the motivation of the investigation report. These chapters summarise the events that led up to the decision of the Safety Board to start an investigation. There are also cases in which there was no bodily harm and/or loss of life, but there was a risk of bodily harm and/or loss of life. In these cases, it is complicated to discern what degree of risk counts for it as being absent or present. As the investigation reports often deal with risky domains, such as aviation, mechanics, and shipping, a certain degree of risk might be a given. To determine the presence and absence of risk of bodily harm and/or loss of life, the overall tone and message of the report will be used as context. In these cases, determining risk of bodily harm and/or loss of life will be more geared towards whether the Safety Board considered the risks to be excessive. Excessive risks will often be present in cases where extreme (environmental) circumstances, lack of safeguarding, and neglection of rules were present. These aspects will be either be found in dedicated chapters or in the conclusions and recommendations.

Organizational Function Logic

Organizational Function Logic can be detected in the conclusions and the recommendations. Organizational Function Logic identifies latent factors within organizations that contributed to the incident, of which a summation is often present in the conclusions. Organizational Function Logic also supposes organizational learning, which can be present in the recommendations of the report. Organizational Function Logic assumes complex causality. It will therefore go into different aspects of the organizational context of the accident, not presenting merely a linear causal story. Accidents that do not assume Organizational Function Logic will feature a more linear causal story, whereby an actor did X

which caused Y. The recommendations in reports that do not assume Organizational Function Logic will likely be more limited, as it does not assume organizational learning.

Public space

Safety Board investigations do not assign blame, but they do determine the space in which the accident occurred and who holds the responsibility over that space. Safety Board investigations refer to the space the accident occurred in, as well as the actors that were involved. Investigation reports that place the accident in the public space will refer to (aspects of) the (local) government as being responsible. In these reports, the functioning of various levels of government in relation to the accident will be analyzed. Depending on the level of government that is primarily involved, the reports can refer to ministries and ministers, as well as mayors and municipalities. Investigation reports that place the accident in the private space will refer to the businesses that own the space in which the accident occurred, or to the businesses responsible for ensuring the safety within the space.

Political blame games

As political blame games are the outcome, they will not be able to be detected in the reports. To determine the presence or absence of political blame games, sources such as the news, interviews, and debate transcripts will be used. The absence of political blame games can be determined by a lack of engagement with an investigation report. If a report is hardly mentioned in the news or does not feature in any political debates, effectively flying under the radar of politicians and the media, one can conclude that the report does not lead to political blame games. The presence of political blame games is more complex. Hood (2002) defined blame games as "interactions between two sets of actors — blamers and blamed" (p. 17). In their model on politicization, Dolezal et al. (2016) use the presence of actor-actor sentences in the media and the political debate to measure politicization. Actor-actor sentences consist of the expression of a relationship between two actors, whereby one actor positions themselves towards the other actor (Dolezal et al., 2016). The presence of blame games will be determined by the presence of actor-actor sentences that thematically refer to the investigation report in sources such as the news, interviews, and debate transcripts. Some investigation reports become so highly politicized, resulting in a politician or a mayor stepping down from their position. In these cases, the blame game was 'successful' in the eyes of the blamers. If the publication of a report and the subsequent politicization results in a politician or a public official stepping down from their position, one can conclude that the

report led to political blame games. Some investigation reports become highly politicized, but do not lead to a politician or a public official stepping down. In these cases, particular weight will be given to the presence of actor-actor sentences in order to determine whether a political blame game is present.

4.8. Method of analysis

Based on the operationalization of the conditions, the cases will be examined. Based on the presence of the conditions and the outcome across the cases, a truth table will be constructed. The analysis of the data within the truth table will be done by employing the QCA software tool Tosmana Version 1.61 (Cronqvist, 2019). The analysis will address whether contradictory configurations and/or logical remainders are present and resolve them, when needed. After the minimization process of the configurations, the minimal formulas will be interpreted through the cases and existing theory.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will provide the results of the QCA calculations that have been done for each case. First, the dichotomized data will be presented in a table. For each case, the conditions of 'bodily harm and/or loss of life', 'Organizational Function Logic' (OFL), and 'public space' were analyzed to be either present [1] or absent [0]. The outcome 'political blame games' was also assessed to be either present [1] or absent [0] for each case. The dichotomized data will provide some preliminary insights into each case and how the conditions correspond with the outcome; the presence or absence of political blame games.

Then, the truth table will be presented. The truth table groups together the cases that have the same configurations, which are "a given combination of conditions associated with a given outcome", i.e. the same values across the conditions and the outcome (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009, p. 44). The truth table and a corresponding figure provide a visualization of the configurations. The visualization serves to show the contradictory configurations and the logical remainders in the data; configurations of conditions that were not observed in the case selection.

The final two sections will address the limitations of contradictory configurations and limited diversity, as discussed previously in the methodology chapter. Firstly, the contradictory configurations will be discussed and resolved. Then, the exclusion and inclusion of logical remainders in the process of Boolean minimization will be discussed. Finally, Boolean minimization will be conducted and briefly explained. The results of the Boolean minimization will then be interpreted and discussed more in depth in the next chapter.

5.2. Dichotomized data

After analyzing the investigation reports of and the news coverage of all nine cases, the conditions of 'bodily harm and/or loss of life', 'OFL', and 'public space', and the outcome 'political blame games' were dichotomized as being either present [1] or absent [0]. Based on the decisions laid out in the methodology, the results of the dichotomization are visualized in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Dichotomized data[1]

CASEID	BHLL	OFL	PS	Blame Game
Dalfsen	1	0	0	0
Eindhoven	0	0	1	1
Esso	0	1	0	0
Haaksbergen	1	1	1	1
Mali	1	1	1	1
Moerdijk	1	1	0	0
Scheveningen	0	1	1	1
Den Dolder	1	1	0	1
Zaandam	1	1	1	1

There are some preliminary insights to be gleaned from the dichotomization of the data in Table 5.1. There are multiple cases in which all conditions were determined to be present. These cases all led to the presence of a political blame game. The cases in which both all conditions and the outcome were present are: Haaksbergen, Mali, and Zaandam. This does not tell anything about which condition(s) is/are the one(s) that 'drove' the cases towards political blame games. It does confirm the underlying assumptions of the hypotheses, that the conditions are likely to be present in the cases. Not one condition is absent across the board, ensuring that all hypotheses remain relevant for the continuation of the research.

There is also a contradictory configuration present amongst the cases. The cases of Moerdijk and Den Dolder possess the same values for the conditions, namely the presence of 'bodily harm and/or loss of life', the presence of 'OFL', and the absence of 'public space'. They diverge, however, on the outcome. The case of Den Dolder did result in the outcome of a political blame game, but the case of Moerdijk did not. This means that the configuration provides an explanation for the outcome being both present in one case, and absent in another. This is problematic, since it means that the hypotheses do not accurately explain the outcomes of these two cases. The contradictory configuration will be discussed more

[1] Labels for conditions:
CASAID: Case Identification
BHLL: Bodily Harm/Loss of Life
OFL: Organizational Function Logic
PS: Public Space

extensively in a later paragraph, as it is one of the limitations of QCA previously mentioned in the methodology chapter (Toshkov, 2016). As for the other cases, the picture remains more complex. In order to analyze the data more closely, a truth table must first be created.

5.3. Truth table

The truth table serves to synthesize the data, to group the data together based on a combination of conditions and the outcome. Table 5.2 shows the truth table for this research. The dichotomization of the nine cases has created six different configurations, all differing from one another based on the presence and absence of the conditions and the outcome.

Table 5.2: Truth table

CASEID	BHLL	OFL	PS	Blame game
Eindhoven	0	0	1	1
Esso	0	1	0	0
Scheveningen	0	1	1	1
Dalfsen	1	0	0	0
Moerdijk [0], Den Dolder [1]	1	1	0	C
Haaksbergen, Mali, Zaandam	1	1	1	1

Three configurations determine the outcome of political blame games to be present. As observed in the bottom row of Table 5.1, Haaksbergen, Mali, and Zaandam are grouped together into one configuration. In this configuration, all three conditions along with the outcome are determined to be present [1]. The case of Eindhoven, in which only the condition of ‘public space’ is determined to be present, also resulted in the outcome [1]. The case of Scheveningen, in which both ‘OFL’ and ‘public space’ are determined to be present, also resulted in the outcome [1]. The truth table also displays the contradictory configuration with the cases of Moerdijk and Den Dolder, indicated by the ‘C’ in the last column. This means that the three hypothesized conditions do not account for the outcome in two out of nine cases. This is visualized in Figure 5.1 below.

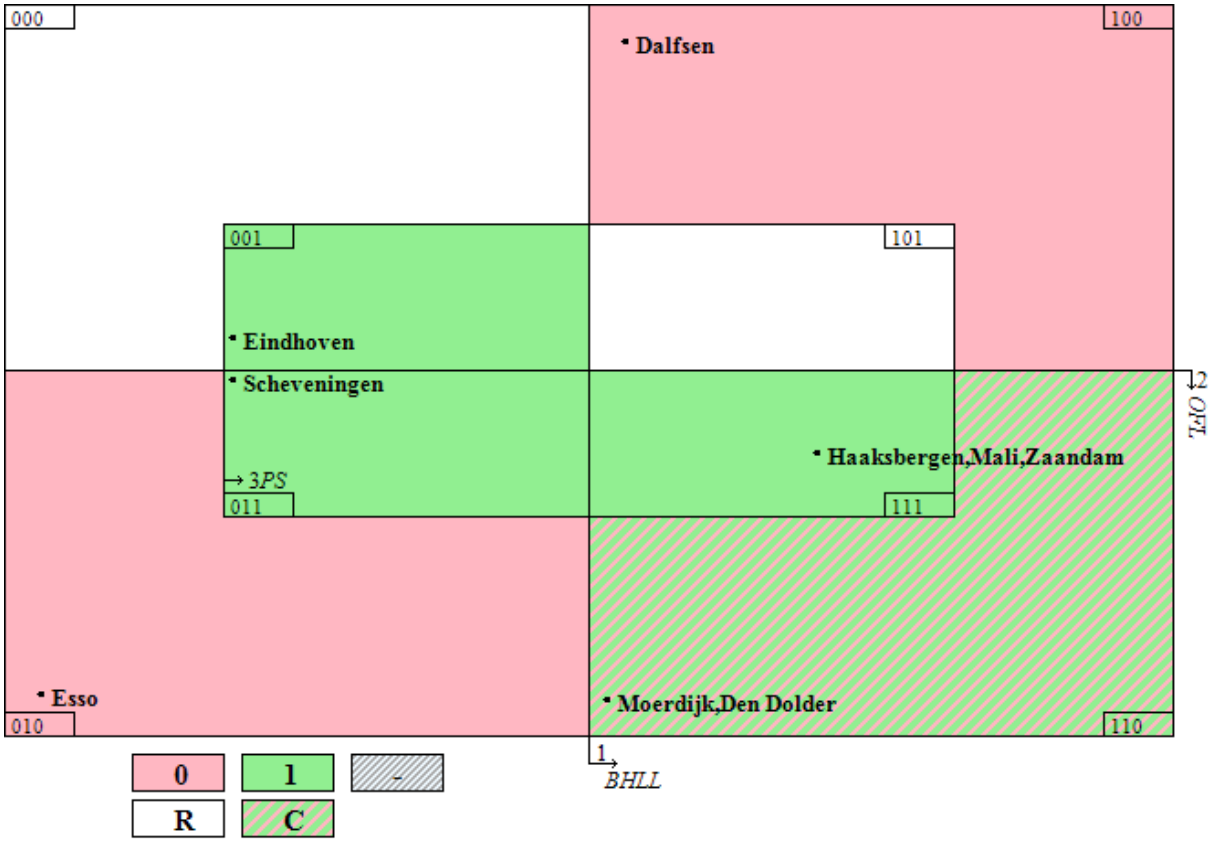

Figure 5.1: Venn diagram corresponding to Table 5.2

Figure 5.1 displays the two limitations discussed by Toshkov (2016) and previously mentioned in the methodology chapter. Firstly, the cases of Moerdijk and Den Dolder are an example whereby the same configuration of the conditions provides both an absent [0] and a present [1] outcome. The green stripes represent the presence of the outcome of a political blame game in the case of Den Dolder, while the red stripes represent the absence of the outcome of a political blame game in the case of Moerdijk. Secondly, the white spaces indicate the configurations of conditions that were not present in the case selection of this research. They are the unobserved cases, referred to as the 'logical remainders' in the QCA method. In the nine cases that were selected, there was no 'perfect absence' case, in which all conditions were absent [000]. Additionally, there was no case in which the condition of 'bodily harm/loss of life was present', 'OFL' was absent, and 'public space' was present [101]. Before Boolean minimization will be conducted based on the data, the two limitations will be discussed and resolved.

5.3. Resolving the contradictory configuration

Toshkov (2016) and Rihoux and Ragin (2009) both refer to contradictory configurations as a limitation of the QCA research design. This research also features a contradictory configuration. The contradictory configuration in question is the one pertaining to the cases of Den Dolder and Moerdijk. In both cases, the values for the conditions were the same (110), with the outcome as the difference between the two. In the case of Den Dolder, a political blame game was present after the Safety Board published its investigation. In the case of Moerdijk, a political blame game was absent after the Safety Board published its investigation. The two cases differ significantly. The Moerdijk investigation took place after a crew member of the MS Alma was crushed between two containers during the unloading of the ship. The Den Dolder investigation took place after a resident of a forensic psychiatric ward (FPA Den Dolder) raped and killed a young Dutch woman during a leave of absence that was irresponsibly given. The report, however, is not focused on solely this incident. It addresses a more general theme on forensic care and accompanying safety risks for the surroundings of these facilities. Both cases were initially deemed to have not taken place in the public space, as both Alma C.V. and the FPA Den Dolder are (part of) private companies. The contradiction needs to be resolved, as it negates the explanatory nature of two of the hypothesized conditions. If two cases are exactly the same on the conditions, yet differ in the outcome, it means that the conditions are not able to explain the outcome. This is problematic for the hypotheses and the research overall. Resolving them is a key part of the QCA method, as the iterative (i.e. repeating) process of the method often manages to resolve the contradictory explanations (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009).

The methodology chapter briefly touched upon the strategies that are available when one encounters a contradictory configuration during the research process. Based on the different contexts the incidents occurred in, as well as the various institutional links between the FPA Den Dolder and the government, I opted to reexamine the threshold of dichotomization for the condition ‘public space’. Based on extensive research into the Moerdijk and Den Dolder cases, I can determine that the investigation report of the Moerdijk case did not determine the incident to have taken place in the public space. For this condition, the value remains 0. In contrast, the Den Dolder investigation report contains many linkages to the Ministry of Justice and Security and the Minister of Legal Protection. Forensic care in the Netherlands is a complicated web of consisting of various private and hybrid organizations and institutions. While the FPA Den Dolder is owned by Fivoor, a private company specialized in forensic care, the sentence execution and granting leave remains the responsibility of the director of

the prison the patient initially belonged to. The prison director is responsible to the selection officer of the Individual Affairs Division (DIZ), who, in turn, is responsible to the Minister of Legal Protection. The investigation report mentions the Ministry of Security and Justice sixty times in the report, as well as referring to the Minister of Legal Protection fourteen times.

Based on these strings of responsibility that, although delegated and diffused, continue to be present across the network of forensic care and link responsibility to the Ministry of Security and Justice, I determine that the case Den Dolder *did* take place in the public space. For this condition, the value changes to 1. Table 5.3 displays the new truth table, corresponding with the visualization in Figure 5.2. With the contradictory configuration resolved, the case of Den Dolder has joined the configuration on the final row of Table 5.3. The number of configurations remains the same at six, with Moerdijk now providing a single configuration. Figure 5.2 visualizes that the contradictory configuration has been resolved by showing only red (outcome [0]), green (outcome [1]), and white sections (logical remainder), with no more overlap.

Table 5.3: Truth table after resolving contradictory configuration

CASEID	BHLL	OFL	PS	Blame Game
Eindhoven	0	0	1	1
Esso	0	1	0	0
Scheveningen	0	1	1	1
Dalfsen	1	0	0	0
Moerdijk	1	1	0	0
Haaksbergen, Mali, Den Dolder, Zaandam	1	1	1	1

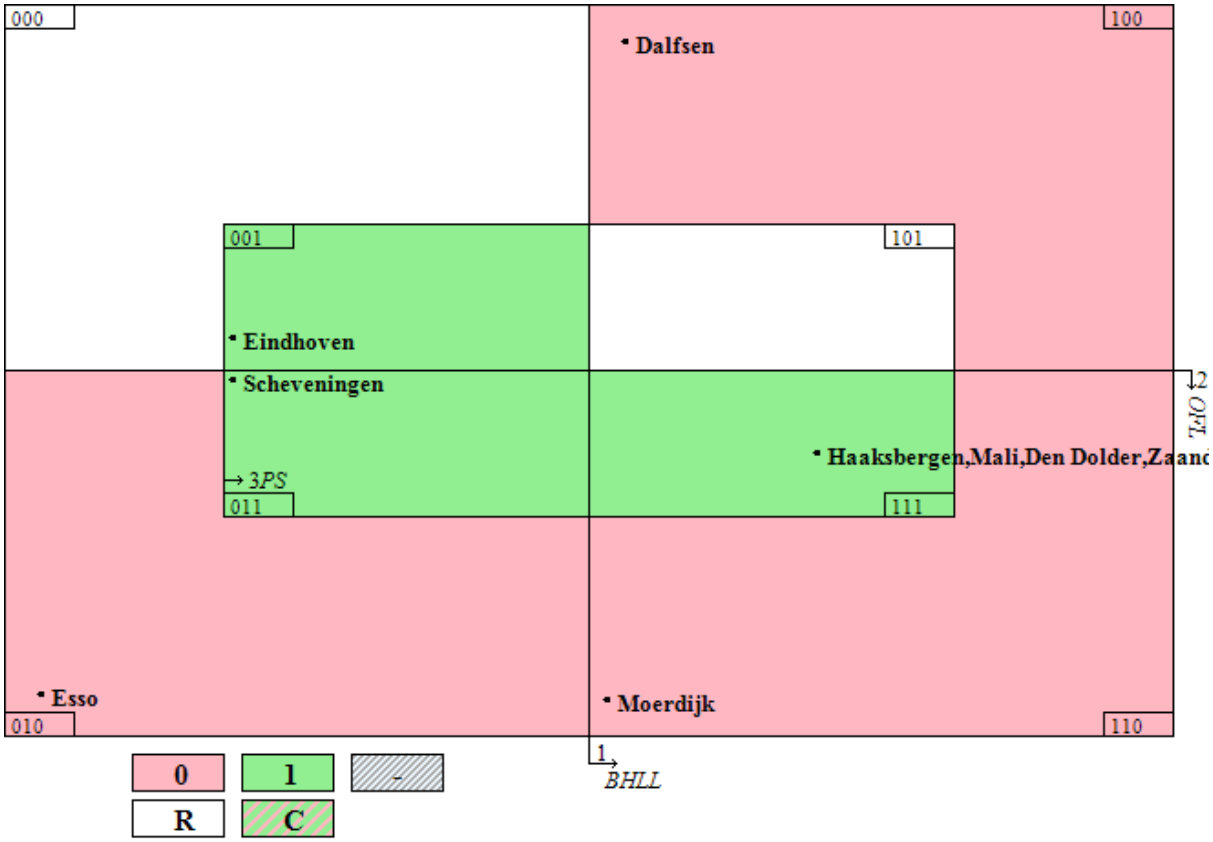

Figure 5.2: Visualization of the truth table after resolving contradictory configuration

5.4. Addressing the logical remainders

Toshkov (2016) and Rihoux and Ragin (2009) also referred to unobserved cases, i.e. logical remainders, as a limitation of the QCA research design. Based on the three conditions, there are eight possible configurations that can occur. The nine cases that were used for this research only covered six of these possible configurations. The two configurations that were not covered by the cases that were selected are logical remainders. Figure 5.2 shows that the configuration of [000], a 'perfect absence case' is absent. The configuration of [101] is also absent. As mentioned before, in many quantitative research designs including the logical remainders into the research is not a common practice, and is generally frowned upon (Toshkov, 2016). QCA, however, allows for the existence *and* the inclusion of logical remainders. The inclusion of logical remainders allows for more parsimony. It also allows for the research results to be generalized to the overall population the cases have been drawn from. By allowing logical remainders to be included, this research can subsequently assess whether a condition is a 'necessary', 'sufficient', or an 'INUS' condition. It is key, however, to follow the QCA method and conduct a four-step Boolean minimization procedure in which

both outcomes are covered, including the presence and absence of logical remainders into the calculation.

Step 1: Minimization of the [1] configurations (no logical remainders included)

First, the options on the software were modified to minimize all configurations in which the outcome was political blame games [1]. Here, minimization is derived from Boolean algebra, meaning the procurement of the smallest formula that represents a configuration from the truth table. By minimizing the configurations into a formula the complexity of the truth table and the configurations is reduced. Boolean minimization without logical remainders means that this step does not include the non-observed cases. The formula is derived from the nine cases that were selected. The software provides the following minimal formula (*Formula 1)*:

BHLL [0] * PS [1] **+** **OFL [1] * PS [1]**
(Eindhoven + Scheveningen) (Haaksbergen, Mali, Den Dolder, Zaandam + Scheveningen)

The minimal formula consists of two terms, of which the first term corresponds to two cases; Eindhoven and Scheveningen. The second term corresponds to five cases; Haaksbergen, Mali, Den Dolder, Zaandam, and Scheveningen. The case of Scheveningen corresponds to both terms. This conflict can be resolved after the four-step Boolean minimization procedure has been completed. The insights gleaned from each step will aid in deducing which term will likely be the key explanation for the case of Scheveningen. The formula can be read as follows:

The [1] outcome (political blame games) is observed:

when Safety Board investigations determine that the incident included no bodily harm or loss of life [BHLL] *AND* took place in the public space [PS]

OR

when Safety Board investigations incorporate Organizational Function Logic [OFL] *AND* determine that the incident took place in the public space [PS]

This first procedure of Boolean minimization without the inclusion of logical remainders already provides some insight into which conditions are causally important for the outcome [1] to occur. In both terms of Formula 1, the determination of the investigation that the incident took place in the public space seems to be a necessary condition in order for the outcome [1] to occur. The same steps will be undertaken in the following paragraph, focusing on the outcome [0].

Step 2: Minimization of the [0] configurations (no logical remainders included)

The options on the software were modified to minimize all configurations in which there were no political blame games as a result of the Safety Board investigations; outcome [0]. This step also excludes the logical remainders, calculating solely based on the nine observed cases. The software provides the following minimal formula (*Formula 2)*:

BHLL [1] * PS [0]	**+**	**OFL [1] * PS [0]**
(Dalfsen + Moerdijk)		(Esso + Moerdijk)

The formula once again consists of two terms, of which the first term corresponds to two cases; Dalfsen and Moerdijk. The second term also corresponds to two cases; Esso and Moerdijk. The case of Moerdijk corresponds to both terms. Similarly to the case of Scheveningen, two terms provide a possible explanation as to why the case of Moerdijk did not lead to political blame games. After the process of Boolean minimization, these two cases will be reassessed and the most likely explanatory term will be picked. The formula can be read as follows:

The [0] outcome (no political blame games) is observed:

when Safety Board investigations determine that the incident included bodily harm of loss of life [BHLL] *AND* did not take place in the public space [PS]

OR

when Safety Board investigations incorporate Organizational Function Logic [OFL] *AND* determine the incident did not take place in the public space [PS]

This second procedure of Boolean minimization without the inclusion of logical remainders added on to the findings of the first procedure. Both terms of the formula include that the investigation reports did not determine the incident to have taken place in the public space (public space [0]). This shows that on the outcome of [1] and [0], 'public space' is the logical complement of one another (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). This means that the outcome does not occur if the condition 'public space' is absent, and the outcome will occur if the condition of 'public space' is present. It highlights the importance of the condition 'public space' in relation to the outcome. Without logical remainders, it can already be deduced that 'public space' is a key condition in order for the outcome to occur. However, the role of the other conditions remains more fuzzy. As of yet, there are no conclusive assignments possible for the conditions, regarding whether they are 'necessary', 'sufficient', or 'INUS' conditions. In order to do so, the logical remainders must be included. The following two steps conducted the same procedures, but added logical remainders into the calculations.

Step 3: Minimization of the [1] configurations (logical remainders included)

The second part of this Boolean minimization procedure included the unobserved cases, the logical remainders. The options on the software were modified to minimize all configurations in which there were political blame games as a result of the Safety Board investigations. The software provided the following formula (*Formula 3):*

PS [1]
(Eindhoven + Haaksbergen + Mali + Den Dolder + Zaandam + Scheveningen)

The minimal formula consists only of one term, containing only one condition. The presence of the condition 'public space' in an investigation report will correspond with the presence of the outcome. The formula accounts for all the cases in which political blame games were observed after the publication of a Safety Board investigation report. The cases are: Eindhoven, Haaksbergen, Mali, Den Dolder, Zaandam, and Scheveningen. The formula can be read as follows:

The [1] outcome (political blame games) is observed:

when Safety Board investigations determine that the incident took place in the public space [PS].

The Boolean minimization with logical remainders included confirms that 'public space' is a key condition relating to the outcome of political blame games. By including the logical remainders, the resulting formula has become smaller and simpler than Formula 1. Parsimony has been achieved. The same steps were repeated for the final formula, which minimized the configurations related to the [0] outcome, with logical remainders included.

Step 4: Minimization of the [0] configurations (logical remainders included)

The options on the software were modified to minimize all configurations in which there were no political blame games as a result of the Safety Board investigations; outcome [0]. The software provided the following formula (*Formula 4*):

PS [0]
(Dalfsen + Esso + Moerdijk)

The minimal formula consists only of one term, containing only one condition. The absence of the condition 'public space' in an investigation report will correspond with the absence of the outcome. It accounts for all the cases in which there were no political blame games observed after the publication of an investigation report by the Safety Board. The cases are: Dalfsen, Esso, and Moerdijk. The formula can be read as follows:

The [0] outcome (no political blame games) is observed:

when Safety Board investigations determine that the incident did not take place in the public space [PS].

This final step of Boolean minimization once again highlights that whether or not political blame games occur after the publication of an investigation report is closely linked to whether the investigation report determines the incident to have taken place in the public space or not.

5.5. Conclusion

The assessment of the results through the truth table and the process of Boolean minimization has provided some insights based on which conditions are causally relevant for

the outcome of political blame games to occur. Table 5.4 shows a basic table that summarizes the four steps of the Boolean minimization procedure.

Table 5.4: Summary of the Boolean minimization procedure

Inclusion of logical remainders	Political blame games	Conditions
No	Present	BHLL [0], OFL [1], PS [1]
No	Absent	BHLL [1], OFL [1], PS [0]
Yes	Present	PS [1]
Yes	Absent	PS [0]

The determination that the incident occurred in the public space appears to be a necessary condition in order for the outcome to occur. In the next chapter, the three hypotheses will be assessed based on the results. The 'concurrent' explanations for the cases of Scheveningen and Moerdijk in the minimization process without logical remainders will be discussed. Additionally, the importance of the determination of 'public space' in an investigation report will be examined. All conditions will be given a closer look and will be assessed based on whether they are 'necessary', 'sufficient', or 'INUS' conditions.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the findings from the Results chapter will be more extensively analyzed and discussed. First, the theoretical contributions and the research implications will be discussed. All three conditions will be assessed based on whether they fulfill the roles of 'necessary' conditions, 'sufficient' conditions, 'necessary and sufficient' conditions, or INUS conditions. This section will contain a reflection on the importance of the condition 'public space'. The concurrent explanations for the cases of Scheveningen and Moerdijk will be tackled and discussed. Secondly, the limitations of this research will be discussed. This section will contain a linkage between the research results and broader academic scholarship and possible future research.

6.2. Theoretical contributions and research implications

Conditions

The results of the Boolean minimization procedures provided the ability to assess the three hypotheses that were set up. The three hypotheses pertained to the three conditions of 'bodily harm and/or loss of life', 'Organizational Function Logic', and 'public space'. Each condition was hypothesized to be causally relevant in order for political blame games to occur. The hypotheses and the corresponding conditions can now be assessed based on whether they can fulfill roles, such as 'necessary' conditions, 'sufficient' conditions, 'necessary and sufficient' conditions, or INUS conditions.

H1: Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when the incidents that are covered resulted in severe bodily harm and/or loss of life.

The condition belonging to the first hypothesis is 'bodily harm and/or loss of life'. Based on the typology of harms by Stone (2011) and legal scholarship, bodily harm and/or loss of life are considered the gravest harms that can happen to an individual. The assignment of the responsibility and the blame for the harm is therefore severe and likely to create political repercussions. The results did not indicate that the condition of 'bodily harm and/or loss of life' is causally important when considering the presence of political blame games that occur after investigation reports get published. Formula 1 shows that the cases of Scheveningen and

Eindhoven both did not feature bodily harm and/or loss of life, yet their investigation reports did result in political blame games. Additionally, Formula 2 shows that the cases of Dalfsen and Moerdijk both featured loss of life but their investigation reports did not result in political blame games. A possible explanation for this could be the high-risk sectors that the incidents occurred in. As argued by Perrow (1987), accidents in high-risk and technologically advanced sectors can become 'normal accidents', considered to be part of the job. In-depth case research into the political blame games that did occur after investigation reports were published does indicate that bodily harm and/or loss of life was used by politicians in their blame game rhetoric. However, the condition 'bodily harm and/or loss of life' is not indicated to fulfill an 'assigned' role. It is not necessary for the outcome to occur, nor is it sufficient. Based on the evidence, the first hypothesis does not offer an explanation as to why a Safety Board investigation can result in a political blame game.

H2: Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when Organizational Function Logic is present in the causal story.

The condition belonging to the second hypothesis is 'Organizational Function Logic'. Based on the theory, the presence of 'OFL' in the causal story of an investigation report will ensure that the incident can be 'brought upwards' to the politicians and public officials that are in charge of the organization. If the incident reaches the political arena, political blame games are likely to occur. The results display an interesting relationship between 'OFL' and 'public space' in Formula 1 and Formula 2. In Formula 1, the second term (OFL [1] * PS [1]) shows that, out of six reports that led to political blame games, five reports featured 'OFL' alongside the designation of 'public space'. This shows a certain conjunction between the two conditions. However, in Formula 2, the second term (OFL [1] * PS [0]) shows that 'OFL' can be determined present in the investigation report, but the report did not lead to political blame games. The two reports that featured 'OFL' but did not lead to political blame games were Esso and Moerdijk, two incidents that were determined in the report not to have taken place in the public space.

The results show that OFL is closely linked to the determination whether the incident occurred in the public space or not. In the investigation report of Mali, conducted in response to an accident that occurred during a military training exercise with a mortar, 'OFL' and 'public space' were determined to be present. Political blame games occurred when the report was published. Several opposition parties concluded that the Ministry of Defense was

responsible for the lack of safety of the soldiers going out on missions to foreign nations (PS [1]), as well as the Minister of Defense to have failed in ensuring a culture of safety within the organization (OFL [1]). In the case of Esso, the organization of Esso was determined to have failed in ensuring the proper safety measures for its employees (OFL [1]) . The incident did not occur in the public space, however, as it occurred at an ExxonMobil refinery in Rotterdam (PS [0]). The investigation report did not lead to political blame games, as there was no linkage made to government responsibility. The 'OFL' present in the investigation report merely pertained to the private company of Esso.

On its own, 'OFL' is neither a sufficient condition nor a necessary condition to cause the outcome of political blame games. When only including the observed cases, i.e. the formulas that do not account for logical remainders, the second term of Formula 1 (OFL [1] * PS [0]) shows that 'OFL' can be determined as an INUS condition. The determination of 'OFL' is an insufficient (it does not cause political blame games by itself) but non-redundant (the political blame game would not have occurred without 'OFL') part of a condition which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the occurrence of the effect. 'OFL' can therefore be considered an INUS condition in the formulas that do not account for logical remainders (Formula 1 and 2). When including the logical remainders, 'OFL' disappears from the minimal formulas, leaving only 'public space'. Without the inclusion of logical remainders, the consistency of 'OFL' is 0.83, as it occurs in five out of six cases that resulted in political blame games.

It is essential to note, however, that 'OFL' went hand in hand with 'public space' in the configuration. 'OFL' is not capable of causing political blame games by itself or in combination with the other condition of 'bodily harm and/or loss of life'. Taking multiple conjunctural causation in mind, political blame games can occur if 'OFL' is determined to be present in the investigation report alongside 'public space'. In five out of six observed cases, this was the case. The case of Esso shows that 'OFL' is dependent on 'public space' to be present in order to contribute to the occurrence of a political blame game. On its own, it cannot lead to political blame games. The hypothesis, as it is right now, does not hold, since the connection to the condition of 'public space' is essential.

H3: Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when the causal story places the occurrence of the incident in the public space.

The Boolean minimization procedures indicated that the condition of 'public space' is causally important when considering the politicization of a Safety Board investigation report.

Public space indicates the responsibility of (a level of) the government over the safety in a given space. Hypothesis 3 is supported by the data and in the formulas provided through the Boolean minimization procedures. In both Boolean minimization procedures, including and excluding the logical remainders, the outcome of political blame games did not occur if the investigation report did not determine the incident to have taken place in the public space. In contrast, the outcome of political blame games always occurred when the investigation report determined the incident to have taken place in the public space. In the minimal formula provided by the inclusion of the logical remainders, 'public space' is the key independent variable. Its presence or absence determines the outcome. This ensures that 'public space' can be considered both a necessary condition (as the outcome does not occur without it) and a sufficient condition (as it can cause the outcome by itself). This means that political blame games will occur if the space in which the incident took place is seen as belonging to the responsibility of (a level of) the government.

This does not mean the investigation report blames the government for the incident that occurred. The blaming aspect comes into play during the political blame games. Blaming the government for the occurrence of an incident becomes logically sound when it is determined that the government primarily oversees the space in which the incident occurred. As mentioned before, in five out of six observed cases that resulted in political blame games, 'OFL' was present in the investigation report. This further aids the blame game, as OFL enables that the incident is considered to be partially caused by the organizational structure, which is the responsibility of the top levels of the organization. The cases of Scheveningen, Haaksbergen, and Mali resulted in two mayors and the Minister of Defense stepping down from their jobs. The cases of Den Dolder and Zaandam resulted in blame games that targeted a minister and a mayor. Ministers and mayors are the public and functional heads of government organizations, and will therefore will be the main person blamed during the blame games.

This finding is not only useful for the academic debate surrounding political blame games, but also fits into the broader fields of risk management and blame avoidance. It provides insight into how far the responsibility of the individual at the top can reach, once it is determined that an incident occurred in a public space. It adds onto the explanations into why causal stories are important in the political debate. If the 'accepted' causal story places an incident in the public space, public figures and politicians can start to brace themselves for the political ramifications of this incident. The finding of OFL in five out of six cases in which political blame games occurs is also interesting. Hood (2011) has written extensively

on blame avoidance in politics. One of his arguments is that politicians "deflect or limit blame by creative allocation of formal responsibility, competency, or jurisdiction among different units and individuals" (Hood, 2011, p. 67). However, the cases have shown that the determination of 'public space' (often in combination with 'OFL'), 'splices' through the different departments and units and manages to bring the blame straight to the politician at the top. The finding of this research therefore poses a thought-provoking challenge to the successfulness of delegation as a blame avoidance technique.

Concurrent explanations

Scheveningen and Moerdijk both have concurrent explanations. This means that both terms of the formula correspond with the conditions present in the cases. Through case knowledge and interpretation of the formulas, one term will appear to apply better as an explanation for the observed outcome (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). The concurrent explanations occur in Formula 1 and Formula 2. These formulas do not include logical remainders and are geared towards a different outcome. In Formula 1, both terms are possible explanations as to why the case of Scheveningen led to political blame games. In Formula 2, both terms are possible explanations as to why the case of Moerdijk did not lead to political blame games. In order to assess which term offers the most likely explanation, both cases were re-examined. The minimal formulas with the inclusion of logical remainders emphasized the key role for the condition of public space. This insight was also taken along in the reassessment of the two cases.

In the case of Scheveningen, the two concurrent explanations are as follows : BHLL [0] * PS [1] + OFL [1] * PS [1]. The detected outcome of political blame games in the case of Scheveningen was either caused by the incident involving no bodily harm and/or loss of life and the investigation report determining that the incident took place in the public space. Or, by the investigation report including an OFL and determining that the incident took place in the public space. The second term seems to be the most likely explanation. There are four more cases, out of six, that correspond to this explanation. It also highlights the importance of the determination of 'public space'. The first term provides an explanation for a present outcome by 'demanding' an absent condition (BHLL). Based on the hypotheses, that assume a condition needs to be present in order to account for the outcome occurring, it is counterintuitive to suppose that an absent condition could cause the outcome to be present. In this term, it is more likely that the presence of the condition 'public space' is what causes the outcome. For the case of Scheveningen, the presence of the 'OFL' in the investigation

report and the determination that the incident took place in the public space is a more likely explanation.

In the case of Moerdijk, the two concurrent explanations are as follows: BHLL [1] * PS [0] + OFL [1] * PS [0]. The investigation report based on the incident in Moerdijk did not result in political blame games. Unlike the Scheveningen case, it is more difficult to determine which term provides the most likely explanation for the Moerdijk case. However, the general assumption that absent conditions cannot explain present outcomes still remains significant here. In this case, present conditions cannot explain absent outcomes. The key insight here is the absence of the 'public space' condition. In the case of Moerdijk, one individual lost their life (BHLL [1]), and the investigation report highlighted structural safety deficits in the organization (OFL [1]) of Alma C.V. (PS [0]). Given what the results have shown on the condition of public space and its key role in causing the presence or the absence of the outcome, the PS [0] in both terms is what is likely to be the key reason why the investigation report of Moerdijk did not result in political blame games.

6.3. Limitations and future research

In this section, I will discuss the limitations of this research. This discussion will primarily focus on the results of the research, as the design limitations have been discussed previously in the Methodology chapter. After the limitations of the research are deliberated on, the possibilities for future research on this topic will be examined.

The first limitation of this research result is that there can be no permanent causal relationship drawn from the results. This is vital to keep in mind, as the method of QCA does not assume causality in the way that most large-N and statistical techniques do. While most statistical techniques rely on all other factors to remain equal (ceteris paribus), QCA does not by allowing for multiple conjunctural causation. This weakens the causality claim that one can draw from research with a QCA method. QCA seeks to "achieve some form of 'short' (parsimonious) explanation of a certain phenomenon of interest", while still assuming that the phenomenon itself and the causal relationships surrounding it are complex (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009, p. 10). Even when the condition of 'public space' seems to be a key factor in investigation reports that lead to political blame games, I cannot infer that the condition of 'public space' is what causes a political blame game to occur after the publication of a Safety Board investigation report.

This further results in that the generalization that QCA can achieve is limited to the "initial homogeneity space" the cases were drawn from (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009, p. 12). This

means that the results of this research can be cautiously extrapolated to Safety Board investigations as a whole. A broader class of phenomena in which these results could also hold are accident investigations in other national contexts, such as the Accident Investigation Board Denmark (HCJL). The HCJL is similar to the Dutch Safety Board in that it has also included all separate investigation boards related to aviation and railways into one investigatory body. It also does not have the legal capacity to place blame with individuals or organizations, instead seeking to unveil the causal factors that contributed to the incident in order to prevent similar incidents in the future. The results of this research can be assumed to be relevant to HCJL investigation reports, too. Therefore, while the causal relationship and the generalizability that QCA are generally conceived to be not quite up to the standards of experimental and statistical designs, it does allow for hypothesis testing in a systematic and empirical way (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). The insights that were gleaned from this research therefore remains valuable and can be somewhat generalized.

Secondly, the institutional and social context of the Dutch Safety Board investigation reports is key when analyzing the results. In the context of these cases, the authority of the Dutch Safety Board was undisputed by all actors. The investigations reports were considered a truthful account by all parties involved in the incident. There were hardly any other investigation reports to offer a different causal story, and if there were, the investigation report by the Safety Board received primacy. This context is not a given when incidents involve politicization and political blame games, as venue-shopping and the politicization of expert knowledge can often occur (Gauchat, 2012). Under these circumstances, it remains unclear as to what extent public space remains crucial for an investigation report to become part of a political blame game.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1. Answering the research question

Based on my observation that not all Safety Board investigation reports gained access to the political arena and led to political blame games, I constructed my research question: Which conditions contribute to the emergence of political blame games after Safety Board investigation report publications? The outcome of interest was the presence or absence of political blame games after the publication of a Safety Board investigation.

The literature review reflected on the academic literature surrounding accidents in the modern, technological society, which was linked to the typology of harms by Stone (2011) in the theoretical framework. As physical harm is the gravest degree of harm in this typology, the first hypothesis was: *'Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when the incidents that are covered resulted in severe bodily harm and/or loss of life'.* The second hypothesis was based on the literature on causal stories and blame logic, differentiating between Organizational Function Logic and Individual Blame Logic as narrative types in a causal story. Given that Organizational Function Logic is able to bring the responsibility for an incident 'up' to the higher levels of an organization, despite delegation, the second hypothesis was: '*Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when Organizational Function Logic is present in the causal story'.* Finally, the theoretical framework introduced the distinction between the space the incident occurred in as being either public or private, relating it to the responsibility of the government in a given space. In a private space, a private entity is responsible for the safety structures and for any incidents that occur. In a public space, the government or a sublevel of the government is responsible for the safety of citizens. The space in which the incident occurred in can be contested through a causal story. This led to the third hypothesis: *Safety Board investigations will lead to political blame games when the causal story places the occurrence of the incident in the public space.*

Based on the hypotheses, three conditions were used for the QCA procedure. These conditions were 'bodily harm and/or loss of life', 'OFL', and 'public space'. Through Boolean minimization of the data and a synthesis of the results, the three hypothesized conditions could be assessed.

The condition of 'bodily harm and/or loss of life' did not prove to exert any impact on the outcome. The presence or absence of the condition did not result in a change in the outcome. The condition therefore does not fulfill a role of either a 'necessary' condition, a

'sufficient' condition, or an 'INUS' condition. This is surprising, as it does not correspond with what Stone (2011) argues in her typology of harms; that bodily harm is the most "politically potent" and is most likely to occur in the political arena (p. 113). It requires the presence of other conditions in order to have the outcome occur. The determination of bodily harm and/or loss of life as a result of an incident is not enough for the investigation report to result in political blame games.

The condition of 'Organizational Function Logic' (OFL) proved more promising results. Based on the Boolean minimization that does not include logical remainders, 'OFL' fulfills the role of an INUS condition. It is insufficient to produce the outcome by itself, but it is a non-redundant part of a condition which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the emergence of the outcome. 'OFL' was present in five out of six cases that led to political blame games, but was unable to produce the outcome of political blame games by itself. It corresponds and adds onto the literature on OFL, as the investigation reports did not focus on the individual(s) that caused the incident but rather on the latent factors in the organization as a whole (Catino, 2008). It is also relevant to the literature on blame avoidance tactics that politicians engage in, highlighted in the work by Hood (2011). The results show that, despite delegation and outsourcing, responsibility for an incident can still reach the politicians and public officials at the top of the organization. It can be concluded that the determination of 'OFL' in an investigation report plays a part in the political blame games that result after publication, given that it is always in combination with the determination of 'public space'.

The condition of 'public space' provided the strongest and most exciting results. It was present in all cases that led to political blame games. Regardless of whether logical remainders were included or excluded, the presence of the condition of 'public space' was sufficient to cause the outcome of political blame games. 'Public space' also proved to be a necessary condition, as without 'public space', the outcome would not have occurred across all cases. It proves that the determination of the space in which the incident occurred in, is vital when considering responsibility. It corresponds to classical ideas about the responsibilities of the government to ensure their citizens' safety, as presented in Rousseau's *The Social Contract.* It further emphasizes and offers new insights on causal stories, as the determination of the space happens within these narratives (Stone, 1989). Overall, this finding confirms the hypothesis, that political blame games will occur if the Safety Board investigation determines the incident to have taken place in the public space.

Therefore, as an answer to the research question, I pose that: an investigation report by the Safety Board will result in political blame games if the report contains the determination of 'public space', either in combination with Organizational Function Logic or by itself.

7.2. Reflection and recommendations

QCA proved to be an adequate and unique method to tackle the research question. Despite its limitations and critiques, which are grounded and valid, QCA allowed for the existence of multiple conjunctural causation and the detection of 'sufficient', 'necessary', and 'INUS' conditions in the research results. The insights that QCA provided are useful for building onto the theories surrounding political blame games, political blame risk, and political risk avoidance. The presence of the combination of the conditions of 'OFL' and 'public space' also challenged an established idea by Hood (2011) that delegation is an effective method for politicians to diminish the blame risk that they face. Overall, the method of QCA was effective in answering the research question and also provided exciting insights for future research.

The research finding that the determination of 'public space' was present in all six cases that led to political blame games provides a fruitful starting point for future research. Other avenues to discover in future research concern the presence and effectiveness of blame avoidance strategies by politicians after the determination of public space was present in an investigation report. This will add onto the scholarship done by Hood on blame games and blame avoidance. As discussed previously, the presence of 'OFL' in combination with 'public space' might prove a challenge to the effectiveness of blame avoidance tactics used by politicians and public officials.

Additionally, future research could focus on the causal relationship between the condition of 'public space' and the outcome of political blame games. Both large-N and small-N research could aid in detecting the causal relationships between the conditions of 'OFL' and 'public space' and the outcome of political blame games. Statistical backing could be provided through large-N, quantitative research. Small-N research could take the form of process tracing, adding more in-depth knowledge on the cases that were selected and their contexts. Even if a statistical approach does not back the findings of this research, it could still offer new and exciting insights on this research topic as a whole. Comparative research designs offer exciting possibilities to conduct comparative research with other countries, such as the reports by the Danish Accident Investigation Board. This could lead to a more well-

rounded perspective on investigation reports and the condition of ‘public space’ in a different context.

Finally, the condition of ‘public space’ could use more exploration. Right now, it remains a vague concept with many applications across a variety of fields. Future studies could focus on the condition of ‘public space’ and provide a more narrow definition of the concept within the context of political blame games. Creating a more distinct definition and backing it up with empirical evidence could allow for new research avenues to become visible.

7.3. Contributions

All in all, this research has contributed new insights that are relevant to a wide array of fields. It has shown how political accountability structures can be triggered after incident investigations and how the assignment of responsibility is neither a simple nor an objective endeavor. It can serve as a clarification or a reminder to politicians and public officials of the responsibilities that they carry and that they face blame risk when an incident occurs. Political blame games that ensue Safety Board investigations can negate efforts of responsibility shifting across departments and organizations. For the general public, this research shows how political accountability can manifest in relation to real world cases and which responsibilities are supposed to be fulfilled by the government. In the broader academic context, the literature review in this research exposed that there was a distinct gap in the existing scholarship on what determines political blame games. This research is a first step in addressing this gap. Of the three hypotheses that were constructed based on the literature review and the theoretical framework, two hypotheses held up after the data was gathered and the results were analyzed. This research therefore provides a promising and empirically tested theoretical base to any future research on this topic.

Chapter 8: Bibliography

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