

## COVER SHEET

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## **Abstract**

This article analyzes a television news story using a particular example. In line with the research tradition of the ethnomethodological approach of membership categorization analysis, our main analytical concerns are (1) to understand the logic of practical reasoning and intelligibility involved in the production of the news story; (2) to examine how this intelligibility is generated and what resources – such as commonsense knowledge of the social structures – are used to make the news story communicable; and (3) to explore how specific forms of categorization employed in the news story are used to induce certain readings or to promote certain worldviews. The news story analyzed describes the progressive increase of foreign participants at the San Fermín running of the bulls in Pamplona, Spain. It also highlights the still minority participation by women at this massive event. The results of the analysis show that both ‘foreigners’ and ‘women’ are presented as being in the wrong place. Through association with their typical predicates, both ‘foreigners’ and ‘women’ are construed in the news story as the ‘other’. A final reflection is made on the concept of identity, which is understood as a situated accomplishment.

**Keywords:** Television news story; identity; media; membership categorization analysis; otherness; storytelling

## 1 Introduction

Despite the **breadth of** attention received by television news from many scientific disciplines, not much has been said about the elements that make the news story communicable or intelligible to audiences. Furthermore, a large part of this attention tends to focus on textual elements (for example to identify the structural components of the news story) while ignoring the visual. This study proposes to fill this gap by analyzing a television news story by way of example. Through the research tools developed by the ethnomethodological approach of membership categorization analysis (MCA), **this investigation aims to explore the categorizations employed to make a news story intelligible and communicable.**

In what follows, we first detail ethnomethodology's conception of television news; we then outline our methodological approach and review the ethnomethodological literature on television news; we subsequently analyze a news story; and in the final section we provide some concluding remarks.

## 2 Television news as a media text and narrative

An appropriate starting point when analyzing the television news story is to conceive it as a text and, in particular, a media text. Media texts are 'situated accomplishments of commonsense knowledge' (Francis & Hart 1997: 123). In other words, they are 'specific sorts of practico-epistemic objects. They constitute texts produced *from within* the socio-logic and practical organization of an institutionally organized array of everyday activities' (Jayyusi 2007: 20).

A large part of our social institutions – which obviously include the mass media – makes contact with and shapes the public sphere through various kinds of texts. The

public sphere is the symbolic space in which public – political – debate takes place and, therefore, it not only reflects public opinion but also shapes it. Thus, the public sphere is the forum for deliberating critical social concerns – such as gender issues – and the policies to be implemented as a result of these discussions. Studying texts produced by social institutions, therefore, may not only show how these institutions operate but also reveal ‘the commonsense routine workings of society’ (Fitzgerald et al. 2009: 47).

The television news story, as a media text, possesses certain distinctive properties (Jayyusi 1991a: 171): (1) it is not aimed at one person or collective in particular, but rather to the ‘public at large’ and is therefore constructed through the supposition of an audience with a vast disparity of interests, levels of knowledge, experiences, etc.<sup>1</sup> (2) As a form of asynchronous communication, it is not dialogic.<sup>2</sup> (3) It assumes a reciprocity of perspectives with the public it is addressing according to which there exists an objective and independent world of those who apprehend it.

The ethnomethodological approach to the study of mass media is concerned with the explanation of intelligibility in a media text,

where ‘intelligibility’ is seen as both a feature and an outcome of a set of practices inscribed and evident in, and relied upon, by the text. The textual analysis that is involved is produced as part and parcel of the analysis of cultural and communicative practices more generally. [...] The analysis of a media text can thus investigatively draw on and illuminate a wide range of social organizational concerns, activities, domains of knowledge and communicative practices (Jayyusi 1991a: 166).

The ethnomethodological approach to studying media texts is, in short, a praxiological one in which analysis involves studying the *objective* social order invoked

and presupposed in the television news story, understood as ‘an audio-visual material product endowed with intelligibility structures and devices’ (Dupret 2011: 108).

The analysis of a media text may focus on both what is said (and shown) and what is omitted, as well as examining the way in which the facts are presented to induce certain readings. In this sense, it is especially important to examine the scenic organization of activities, the re-presenting of facticity – i.e., the evidence that backs up the presentation of the facts or the authority and knowledge sources invoked – etc. This examination may reveal other important issues such as professional roles, the structure of the family, ethnic or gender discrimination, etc. In reading a media text, therefore, ‘we are instructed, *through the account*, in the ways to understand, see and know *other* places, *particular* events and their rubric, as well as persons and histories’ (Jayyusi 2007: 20).

Television news may be conceived as a form of storytelling.<sup>3</sup> To a certain extent, the news is a televised narrative. As a manufactured narrative that somehow attempts to reflect a certain aspect of reality, it may be considered a communicative practice and produced account, ‘a narrative that consists in an artful organization of cultural practices and resources’ (Jayyusi 1988: 271). The interest in analyzing news stories, as products that originate within a culture, lies in what these reveal about ‘the formal properties of our culture and our methods of sense production and assembly’ (Jayyusi, 1988: 271).

The main activity in the narrating of stories is that of describing. When we describe something, we do what Sacks called co-selection. In a story,

across its sentences one finds that a lot of the words, particularly those that are ‘carriers of the story’ so to speak, i.e., the nouns, verbs, adjectives, can be said to be co-selected. [...] If you take what I’ll call the ‘descriptors’ in talk, then you find that when people are telling stories, the descriptors are co-selected (Sacks, 1992: 19).

That is, from among the infinite ‘correct’ ways in which we can describe something – an object, person, activity, course of action, etc. – how can we ensure that this description is intelligible, self-explanatory and referentially adequate? According to Sacks, descriptors are co-selected according to category collections or ‘membership categorization devices’ (MCDs). These collections consist of ‘membership categories’, which constitute a type of reference form used to describe persons. Examples of membership categories are for instance ‘politician’, ‘daughter’, or following Sacks’ (1974) example, ‘baby’ or ‘mommy’. Meanwhile, each membership category is to be seen as a part of an MCD such as (in the case of ‘baby’ and ‘mommy’) ‘family’. What provides special intelligibility to the descriptions is the relationship that we imagine exists between membership categories and the activities or predicates commonsensically associated with them. Thus, conventionally we understand that certain activities, rights, obligations, knowledge, attributes, entitlements, etc., are category-bound. The notion of category boundedness thus permits us to relate identities reflexively to their associated activities or predicates. In his ‘apparatus’ Sacks also describes two rules of application, the ‘economy rule’ and the ‘consistency rule’, which operate to facilitate interpretation and understanding of categories in discourse. The economy rule implies that a single category suffices to describe a person (the ‘mommy’, for instance, does not require any further categorizations) and the consistency rule posits that if one person is categorized from an MCD, then a next person may be categorized from the same collection (e.g., mommy is from the same MCD, ‘family’, as baby). As a consequence of these rules of application, Sacks derived the ‘hearer’s maxim’ and the ‘viewer’s maxim’. The hearer’s maxim proposes that ‘if two or more categories are used to categorize two or more members of some population and those categories can be heard as categories from the same collection, then: hear them that way’ (e.g., mommy

and baby are understood as belonging to the *same* family) (Sacks 1992: 221). The viewer's maxim, on the other hand, suggests that 'if a member sees a category-bound activity being done, then, if one sees it being done by a member of a category to which the activity is bound, see it that way' (Sacks 1992: 259). The latter maxim functions on the conventional understanding that (e.g.) picking up crying babies is what mothers do. All the above discursive resources, available to everyone by virtue of our belonging to a culture, are what grant coherence – or a sense of orderliness – to the socially organized activity of storytelling. Precisely these resources will be used below to analyze a television news story.

### **3 Data and method**

The methodology used in this study is the one developed by the ethnomethodological approach of MCA. MCA is a kind of formal analysis that investigates the procedures used by members to give meaning to other people and their activities. In line with ethnomethodology, the practical use of commonsense knowledge by members when they categorize one another is examined. Categorizing is in itself a form of description that comprises a mundane methodical practice whereby members render their ordinary activities observable and accountable. This is surely, in the first instance, how social order is constituted as a moral order; but it also expresses how moral reasoning is practically organized and, at the same time, how practical reasoning – through the variety of ascriptions, attributions, imputations, judgments, etc., that members make when they categorize – is morally organized (Jayyusi 1991b). MCA is particularly appropriate for studying news stories as it enables us to examine how specific forms of categorization employed in news production are used to configure public opinion or promote specific worldviews.

For an in-depth description of MCA's main concepts – some of which have already been described above – the reader is referred to works by Jayyusi (1984), Lepper (2000), Schegloff (2007), Roca-Cuberes (2008), Silverman (2011), Stokoe (2012) and Fitzgerald & Housley (2015). In this investigation, we apply MCA 'self-reflectively' – as opposed to analysis of talk-in-interaction or acquired immersion – which means that we employ our own understandings of a news story as the phenomenon for analysis (Francis & Hester 2004). Further, our MCA of the news story is an analysis of the reporter's MCA of the scenes, actors and actions appearing in the news story.

The news story was studied previously using MCA research tools. **Classic examples are those that can be found in Hester & Eglin (1997) and the collection edited by Jalbert (1999). Also Lee (1984), Jayyusi (1991a), Eglin & Hester (2003), Rapley et al. (2003) or Goodman & Speer (2007) analyzed news stories from newspapers.** MCA has also been employed to analyze television news stories (e.g. Hester 2002, Francis & Hester 2004, Thornborrow & Fitzgerald 2004, Malbois 2007, Stokoe & Attemborough 2015). For instance, Hester (2002) shows how three news stories broadcast by three different television channels about the same event are recipient designed – through topic selection, category usage and location formulation – for three different types of national audience. Thornborrow & Fitzgerald (2004), examining print and television news, suggest that news stories should be approached not as narratives with a linear structure, but as simple stories organized around the elements of category, action, and reason. However, only Malbois (2007) has used MCA to study a television news story as an audio-visual product, extending the analysis beyond the 'text' to also include the image. Malbois (2007) describes how the 'doing' of gender is accomplished in a news story through the presenting of an apparent incompatibility: that of being a 'woman' and a 'farmer' at the same time.

The news story analyzed in this study was broadcast on 12 July 2012 by the Spanish public television channel, TVE 1, in its prime time news program at 9pm. The news story, which lasted 1 minute 38 seconds, takes the form of a mini-report and is recounted by a journalist in voice-over format rather than by the presenter. It is a news story that accompanies the preceding story about the events during the sixth day of the San Fermín<sup>4</sup> festivities and focuses attention on a peculiar aspect of an event with international scope. Briefly, the news story describes the gradual increase of foreign participants at the festivities, as well as in the ‘running of the bulls’ and the dangers to their physical health this involves. The foreigners are presented as a group that is poorly informed about the risks that might be encountered when taking part in the running of the bulls. The second part of the news story highlights the still minority participation by women at the running of the bulls.

To analyze the news story, we followed Malbois’s (2007) example. The news story was broken down into 19 sequences, following the logic of the shot change. The analysis was made on blocks of one or more sequences that make up a narrative unit. The narrative unit is understood as each of the possible sub-themes that make up the news story. Each sequence is numbered in the order in which it appears in the news story and for each sequence there is a description of the image first (in italics), followed by a transcription of the speech (normal font, preceded by ‘VO’ for the comments in voice over, ‘testimony’ for the people who are interviewed in the mini-report or ‘reporter’ for the journalist covering the event). The texts superimposed on the screen are in bold. Some sequences are accompanied by a screen shot for illustrative purposes (Figures 1 to 4 below).

#### 4 Analysis of the news story

*1 [Image] Long shot of people wearing the traditional dress for the San Fermín festivities, singing and celebrating (presumably) the start of the festival*

1 [VO] Although it might seem incredible (0.8) allmost half the people who take part in the running of the bulls

*2 [I] Close-up shot with low angle of a sculpture of a virgin.*

2 [VO] aren't Spanish

The story related in this news report, insofar as it is a narrative about events that have occurred or are occurring, is properly prefaced in sequence 1 with 'Although it might seem incredible (0.8)'. The practical function this preface seems to undertake is that of projecting 'what kind of story this will be'. Thus, 'although it might seem incredible (0.8)' appears to envisage that the approaching story will be extraordinary or unbelievable. The type of story this will be, obviously, provides the perfect rationale for its telling in the context of television news: stories have to be newsworthy and the fact that it is incredible or unusual provides for its newsworthiness. If the reported story were common or ordinary, it would most probably raise suspicions or doubts as to – among other things – the professional competence of the people who had produced it.

Once the preface has announced that what is coming next is extraordinary, in what way is it extraordinary? Its extraordinariness derives from the following: 'allmost half the people who take part in the running of the bulls aren't Spanish'. A great deal of categorial work is being performed in this characterization. Thus, from the activity of participating in the running of the bulls – tied to the possible categories involved in the

MCD ‘participants at the running of the bulls’ – some membership categories occasioned by participation in the event are projected: ‘non-Spanish’ (i.e., ‘foreigners’) and ‘Spanish’. Achieving such a reading of the text, however, requires a certain contextual interpretation afforded by the assumed shared ‘national’ membership between the producers and the recipients (Spain’s ‘public at large’) of the news story. In fact, in this fragment of the news story it never says that there are foreign or Spanish participants. How is it possible, then, to unproblematically, commonsensically derive such a reading? First of all, as it is an event occurring in Spain and is typically Spanish, any person who cannot be categorized as ‘Spanish’ (within the MCD ‘nationality’) must be categorized as a member of another ‘nationality’ or, if not, from a generic category such as ‘foreigner’ that may locally function to encompass a range of nationalities. Secondly, via the consistency rule, we might anticipate that the rest of the participants belong to the category ‘Spanish’. Therefore, we can observe how the producing of the story-thus-far draws on the commonsense knowledge shared by the people who produced it and those that receive it to attribute a sense of orderliness to the events narrated and to convey the newsworthiness of what is being narrated: that a significant section of those taking part in this typically Spanish event are not ‘Spanish’, but ‘foreigners’. In other words, its newsworthiness arises from “the unlikely nature of the actor for the act” (Anderson & Sharrock 1979: 381).<sup>5</sup>

The news story continues in sequences 3 and 4 with the description and presentation of ‘foreigners’ who are taking part in the San Fermín festivities. Some of them also contribute their testimonies as to the reasons that led them to take part or their experiences during the festival. From a sociological perspective, the most interesting part of the news story is how *examples* of people who might be ‘seeable’ as foreigners were selected. In sequences 5 and 6 the image focuses on a group of ‘foreigners’.

5 [I] Long shot of a group of young people, all men, wearing the typical San Fermín dress. Many of them are presumably foreign (Asian features, or Caucasian from northern countries, etc.)

5 [VO] Statistics state that most of

Figure 1 about here

6 [I] Close-up of the group of young foreigners

6 [VO] the foreigners who run with the bulls (0.6) only do it once

Generally speaking, it could be argued that one is an incumbent of the category ‘foreigner’ when s/he is in another country. However, having said that, by being in another country one does not become *automatically*, so to speak, a ‘foreigner’. Membership of the category ‘foreigner’ requires that its potential incumbents are constituted as such in one way or another. Categorical incumbency, a concept intended to account for the procedures that members use to be observably bound by a particular category or identity, is available to members of the same culture (1) to perception — naturally for gender and age bracket, emblematically for occupations such as the police, army, or priesthood identified with and by uniforms, and scenically for other cases; (2) through behavior (talk and action); (3) through first-person avowal; (4) through third-person declaration; and (5) through credential presentation (Jayyusi 1984: 73). In our particular news story, how are the individuals presented on the screen (Figure 1) made incumbents of the category ‘foreigner’? Solving this *problem* could be highly complex for the producers of the news story, if we bear in mind that most Western societies are

now – like the Spanish society – multicultural, and visual *identification* of ‘foreigners’ is no longer such an easy task. In the production of the news story this problem is dealt with through the simple recourse to commonsense and local notions of what ‘foreigners’ look like: through the mapping of the MCD ‘race’ (according to which human beings could be categorized through different physical features; in the story made scenically available to perception, ‘seeable’, through image) onto the category ‘foreigners’ (made available through speech/text). Since foreignness cannot easily be made available on sight – imagine, for instance, an Italian living in Spain – in producing the news they manage to overcome this hurdle through visual reference to the MCD ‘race’, which is used as indexing ‘foreignness’. In other words, the images and speech/text are conflated in such a way as to enable the Spanish viewer to make the *right* categorization of the people shown in the news story: that the people to whom certain facts or experiences are attributed are not Spanish, but foreign. It is interesting to see that the people shown in the sequence (Figure 1) are wearing the typical, local dress of the San Fermín festival. This desire to be seen to be ‘doing’ like a ‘local’ could in theory reduce or limit – in the eyes of the Spanish viewer – incumbency of the category ‘foreigner’ and facilitate other forms of primary membership ascription. However, this cannot happen as the category ‘foreigner’ has been constituted in the production of the story-thus-far as a master category through which we interpret the actions, experiences or projects of the people shown. Thus, for example, one can notice that everyone appearing in the image of Figure 1 is a putative incumbent of the category ‘male’ or the category ‘young’. Therefore, the scene and the people appearing in it could be interpreted in terms of the MCDs ‘gender’ and/or ‘stage-of-life’. However, again, the composition of text and image is intended to foster readings based on the MCDs

‘participants at the running of the bulls’ and ‘nationality’, of whom a significant number are no longer Spanish but ‘foreigners’.

As we see above, the news story highlights that ‘statistics state that most of the foreigners who run with the bulls (0.6) only do it once’. This observation, supposedly corroborated by (scientific) data from statistics, is entirely logical: as the main activity associated with any category of the MCD ‘participants at the running of the bulls’ consists of running in front of bulls weighing around 500 kilos, it seems natural that the dangerous nature of this activity dissuades many from repeating it. In fact, in sequence 7 a ‘foreign’ girl is interviewed – with an apparently North American accent – who contributes her testimony about the dangers (‘very dangerous’) of the running of the bulls. It therefore seems coherent that the activity of ‘only doing it once’ associated with ‘foreigners’ is a result of the assumed danger of taking part in the running of the bulls. Yet it also seems coherent that if one of the predicates commonly associated with ‘foreigners’ is that of ‘probably having come from afar’, which affords it precisely the identification ‘foreigner’, it may be the difficulties associated with distance (financial, availability of time, etc.) or desire to be a tourist in other places that could add to the reasons behind not participating again.

8 [I] *Close-up shot of young people who may be identified as foreigners. In particular, the camera focuses on a young black man*

8 [VO] like her (.) many of them don't know what they're facing

Figure 2 about here

Despite presenting ‘foreigners’ as a category of people who largely do not repeat the running of the bulls experience due to realization of the dangers – as explained by the apparently American girl in sequence 7 – that could embody this participation, in sequence 8 we are told about the ‘foreigners’ that ‘like her (.) many of them don’t know what they’re fa:cing’. Thus, they seem – according to the news story – to not be aware or have the necessary knowledge that would lead them to not take part in the running of the bulls, given its hazards. In this case, obviously, the news story seems to invoke commonsense predicates typically associated with ‘foreigners’ such as ‘lack of awareness of the culture or local traditions’ to accomplish such a description. It is very interesting to observe, again, how the camera *selects* what will become the **center** of attention of the image (Figure 2) as an exemplar of a ‘foreigner’ of the kind that ‘don’t know what they’re fa:cing’. Again, it is the invoking of the MCD ‘race’ that provides a visual shortcut to represent ‘foreignness’. Of particular interest is also *how* we are shown the ‘foreigner’ in figure 2: smiling, informal, joking. The selecting of this image might be used to reinforce, precisely, the lack of awareness or knowledge about something dangerous that characterizes – according to the news story – the ‘foreigners’ that run with the bulls. To give weight and authority to this argument the news story below provides testimony from several ‘professionals’ (a person identified as a Red Cross worker, a girl that conducts a survey and the news journalist herself) who – *a priori* – do have first-hand knowledge about the dangers.

9 [I] *Close-up shot of a Red Cross worker. He explains that most cases requiring medical attention are foreigners.*

**9 [overprint on screen]: José Aldaya CRUZ ROJA**

9 [TESTIMONY 3: RED CROSS worker, presumably, from the medical services] It’s really common tha::t the medical reports contain people from: from: from abroad (0.7)

maybe because they don't know because::: they've spent the night ((smiles)) partying and drinking:

The San Fermín festivities in general and the running of the bulls in particular may be considered a mass event. The running of the bulls, furthermore, has the added danger factor. This makes the festival an event that falls under the jurisdiction of a variety of institutions and, for that matter, of 'professionals'. Thus, as an event that may cause health risks, it takes on importance for paramedics, nurses, doctors, etc. As a massive public event, it will attract the attention of the mass media – as confirmed by the fact that this story *is* news – and also become a matter of social policy. This makes the presence of politicians, social researchers, reporters, etc., important. The potential appearance of these kinds of agents in the news story would not be determined by their membership in categories associated with the MCD 'participants at the running of the bulls', but rather by their membership (occasioned by the context) in categories associated with an MCD such as 'important professions in the San Fermín festival' – which would exclude, for example, a category such as 'astronaut'. For all these professional categories, voicing an opinion about the circumstances of the San Fermín festivities is an identifiable predicate.

With all probability, it is by virtue of belonging to a category ('Red Cross employee') associated with the MCD 'important professions in the San Fermín festivities' that the man in sequence 9 is called to provide his testimony. The testimony of this 'Red Cross employee' serves, precisely, to corroborate the line followed in the story-thus-far. However, it adds something further. By virtue of belonging to a professional category whose mission is that of treating people who have had accidents, among other things, he provides knowledge, expertise and experience from this profession to state that: a

number of people who suffer accidents (who appear ‘in the medical records’) are ‘foreigners’, a predicate of whom is that ‘they don’t know’ about local tradition. Also, one of the reasons why foreigners have accidents at the running of the bulls is that they are very young. In fact, ‘spending the night ((smiles)) partying and drinking’ is predicated upon being ‘young’, a category within the collection ‘stage-of-life’. Thus, through the handling of categories and their expected predicates or the invoking of predicates conventionally associated with certain categories, the ‘Red Cross employee’ contributes a testimony that constitutes an intelligible, rational, coherent explanation of: actors and their actions; within a context or circumstance; for an audience with its interests and purposes (Stetson 1999: 85). This explanation tells us that a group of people probably (‘maybe because they don’t know maybe because:: they’ve spent the night ((smiles)) partying and drinking’) due to the fact that they are ‘foreigners’ and ‘young’, a combination that projects an image of ignorance and unawareness, have accidents during the running of the bulls at the San Fermín festival. The ‘perhaps’ of the ‘Red Cross employee’ is, in this case, vitally important. It may well be the case that the viewer’s maxim is not commonsensically applicable in this case: it is possible that it is not completely reasonable to associate the predicates and activities of unawareness, ignorance and having accidents with the categories ‘young’ and ‘foreigners’.

*10 [I] Aerial view of a girl, wearing some kind of official uniform, collecting information in what appears to be a survey.*

10 [VO] To warn of the risks (0.9) these surveys

*11[I] The camera follows the girl conducting the survey, who is walking around among the crowd looking for people to answer the questionnaire.*

11 [VO] right before the running of the bulls

12 [I] *High close-up shot that shows the questionnaire the public is answering. The camera then shows a close-up front view of the face of the researcher doing the survey.*

12 [TESTIMONY 4: researcher] The last question is whether they could die (0.8) an:::d there are a lot of people who say of course they know it's one of the risks; (0.9) and others say ar: I'm not going to answer that as if it were:: that >it'll bring bad luck< ((smiles))

As indicated above, San Fermín and its running of the bulls, insofar as it is a mass event, obligates involvement from a number of institutions and professional categories. From the institutions that deal with public health (the 'Red Cross employee'), it seems there is the suspicion that accidents involving 'foreigners' at the running of the bulls are a result of their unawareness, ignorance and youth. From other institutions that may generate *scientific* data, *certainties* might be reached that would provide for appropriate administrative and social planning of the event. It is by virtue of these facts that, precisely, the contribution of the testimony of the person who collects these scientific data can be considered important: the 'researcher', whose main activity is to collect information from 'these surveys right before the running of the bulls'. In particular, the fragment of the researcher's testimony shown in the news story refers to a specific topic in the questionnaire: knowledge or awareness of an activity ('death', example of extreme accident at the running of the bulls) applicable to all categories of the MCD 'participants at the running of the bulls' and that therefore is also applicable to all respondents of the MCD. The information the 'researcher' provides in the news story, obtained first-hand from impressions of members of categories in the MCD

‘participants at the running of the bulls’ and not of non-incumbents in this MCD, is that ‘there are a lot of people who say that of course they know that is one of the risks:’.

Nevertheless, according to the ‘researcher’, there are a number of other respondents who choose not to answer the question<sup>6</sup> about potentially dying in the running of the bulls, which is interpreted by her ‘as if it were:: that >it’ll bring bad luck< ((smiles))’.

This attitude by some people, with the understanding – due to the discourse theme followed in the story-thus-far – that it is referring to ‘foreigners’, of not wanting to face up to or trying to ignore reality (possible death that may embody their participation at the running of the bulls) is predicated upon a certain degree of ‘unawareness’.

Therefore, the contribution made by *science*, by the ‘researcher’, from information provided by the incumbents (it is understood) of the category ‘foreigner’ within the collection ‘participants at the running of the bulls’, is as follows: a characterization of ‘foreigners’ as a group of people who – to a certain extent – expose themselves to accidents, even death, as a result of their tenuous awareness about what could happen if they take part in the running of the bulls. This and other readings are obtained, certainly, from the commonsense notions implicit in the descriptions made by the different actors appearing in the news story.

*13 [I] Frontal close-up shot of the reporter covering the news story. She is dressed in the typical San Fermín festival dress. Behind her are people dressed the same. She talks into the camera.*

**13 [overprint on screen]: TD Nadia Kolotúshkina**

13 [REPORTER] The United States, Australia and New Zealand are the countries from which most runners decide to participate at the running of the bulls (0.7) seeing a girl among them (0.5) is still a pretty unco:mmon image

It is quite obvious that anyone can be categorized in many ways, and, therefore, be seen as an incumbent of a whole variety of categories. Thus, for example, the participants at the running of the bulls have been in the story-thus-far (through the invoking of the MCD ‘nationality’) *divided into* ‘Spanish’ and ‘foreigners’. Among the latter, according to the reporter in sequence 13, participation by ‘Americans’, ‘Australians’ and ‘New Zealanders’ appears significant. This same population of participants in the running of the bulls could be *classified*, as indicated in the description by the reporter, by virtue of the MCD ‘gender’. In fact, according to the reporter, among the people taking part in the running of the bulls, it is ‘pretty unco:mmon’ to find people – of whom ‘a girl’ would be a kind – categorizable as ‘woman’. Again, through the consistency rule, we could commonsensically infer that: (1) the other category regarding which ‘women’ represent a minority – due to their ‘pretty unco:mmon’ presence – must be ‘men’; (2) participation by ‘men’ must be majority.

*14 [I] Low angle long shot showing a bull run. People can be seen running in front and among the bulls in the street. The camera focuses on a young woman falling over.*

14 [VO] This girl fell over in the running of the bulls today (.) right in front of our camera (0.6) but she knew how to react properly

Figure 3 about here

If participation by ‘women’ at the running of the bulls is minority, according to the news story, this fragment provides us with details or examples of this participation.

What is really interesting in the production of this sequence, as in all the previous ones,

is the selection of the images and their audiovisual composition with the narration.

Thus, we can see that both the narrator and the *camera person* do a considerable amount of categorial work. According to the reporter, the presence of women at the running of the bulls is still minority (compared to men); this is illustrated by the images in which just one woman can be seen among a multitude of men. The reporter refers us to the images – ‘right in front of our camera’ – of the sequence itself to point out that a woman has fallen over during the running of the bulls; thus, text and image, reflexively, jointly, work to provide an orderly and coherent story. However, the image selected (Figure 3) provides us with additional information: among all the participants we can see, all but one incumbents of the category ‘male’, the only incumbent of the category ‘female’, in the exerting of physical activity required for ‘doing’ the ‘running of the bulls’, has failed: she has fallen over. From among those predicates – e.g., strength and physical skills, courage, etc. – conventionally associable to ‘participants at the running of the bulls’, there is one – strength and physical skills– in which the person selected (through speech and image) does not appear sufficiently competent. Since gender has been made the *master* MCD (again, through speech and image) through which the sequence 14 scene is made interpretable, it appears inevitable to make a reading of this sequence in which the category ‘woman’ is associated with one of its typical predicates, namely ‘limited strength and physical skills’. Summing up: to make the scene of sequence 14 intelligible, the resource used in the production of this part of the news story consisted of mapping the MCD ‘gender’ onto the MCD ‘participants at the running of the bulls’.

Thus, *a priori*, notions such as participation by women being still minority or the falling over of a woman during the running can be made interpretable. In the process of making this message communicable, however, other messages are also conveyed: for example, that membership of the category ‘woman’ (with its commonly associated predicates like

‘limited strength and physical skills’) diminishes incumbency, even legitimacy, of being a participant at the running of the bulls, some of whose necessary predicates are precisely ‘complete strength and physical skills’. Despite all this, the woman in Figure 3 ‘knew how to react pro:perly’ and – as a result – did not come to any harm.

*15 [I] High angle long shot showing a group of people running next to the bulls. The shot follows the group of bulls along the street.*

15 [VO] Experts say (.) that even though they are a minority (0.5) .h the women who dare to take part (.) are more pru:dent

In this fragment of the news story, as we can see, ‘experts’ are called upon to supposedly grant authority and legitimacy to certain arguments: that ‘women’ (1) are a minority; (2) that those that do take part must also be daring and; (3) ‘are more pru:dent’. The intelligibility of what is communicated is based again on commonsense reasoning, conventional women’s predicates, according to which women are less courageous or more prudent. Note also that the intelligibility of this description is based on a comparison: a ‘minority’ is such as compared to a majority and, in order to be ‘more pru:dent’, there must be another subject whose actions set the benchmark of prudence. With whom are the ‘women’ compared? The consistency rule is, surely, what makes the category ‘men’ available as subject/object of this comparison. Therefore, according to the news story, the MCD gender does not only occasion a distinctive membership of being ‘participants at the running of the bulls’, but that one of the two possible categories of the collection gender (‘men’) sets the standards of such membership.

16 [I] *Close-up shot of a young woman, wearing the typical San Fermín dress, performing warm-up exercises.*

16 [VO] Carolina is a habitual bull-runner (.)

Figure 4 about here

17 [I] *Close-up long angle shot of the girl's shadow while she warms up*

17 [VO] thi:s year is her first year (0.6) at the Pamplona runs

18 [I] *Frontal close-up shot of the girl as she explains her experience in participating in running with the bulls*

**18 [overprint on screen]: Carolina Delgado RECORTADORA<sup>7</sup>**

18 [TESTIMONY 5: runner/'recortadora' talking about her experience in the running of the bulls] Enjoying (0.7) really enjoying that moment o::f >having the feeling of having the bull behind you< and that you're ri:sking it

19 [I] *Low angle shot that again shows the girl runner/'recortadora' doing warm up exercises*

19 [VO] She's quite su:re (0.7) she'll do it again

In this fragment of the news story, sequences 16-19, a new testimony is included to illustrate the discourse referring to women participating in the running of the bulls. This discourse, produced through multiple categorizations made through filmic construction, combining speech and image, shows that 'women': (1) participate in the running of the bulls in the minority; (2) due to their membership in the collection 'gender', *qua*

‘women’ – and their associated predicates – they have less legitimacy to be incumbents of ‘participants at the running of the bulls’; (3) are more prudent; (4) must, in order to participate, be courageous. This whole discourse has been constructed through comparing the category ‘women’ with the other category available in the MCD ‘gender’, i.e., ‘men’. What Carolina’s testimony contributes to illustrating is, therefore, intelligible by virtue of the way her speech/actions are foregrounded against the discursive background set up by the preceding gender categorizations made in the news story. In producing the news story, however, Carolina is further categorized and described before her testimony in sequence 18. She is described in sequence 16 as ‘a habitual bull runner (.)’ , even though this is the first time she has participated in the running of the bulls with regard to this news story (sequence 17). From this categorization (‘habitual bull runner’) certain predicates are given off: for example, by being a ‘habitual’ runner, she does not *count* as an appropriate member of the ‘minority’ of women that take part in the running of the bulls; probably if there were more habitual runners like her women would not be a minority or an exception. In the filmic construction, however, an interesting categorization exercise is also carried out by highlighting in the image certain category-bound activities. Carolina is shown (Figure 4) doing warm up exercises in sequence 16 and, continuously – the image focuses on her shadow projected on the ground while she exercises – in 17. This activity, of warming up, is predicated upon being a ‘participant in the running of the bulls’, which perceives her participation with responsibility and prudence to avoid accidents. Carolina is also presented with the screen overprint as an incumbent of the category ‘recortadora’. Predicates such as ‘skill and physical form’, as well as ‘courage’, should be conventionally associated with the category ‘recortadora’. All these predicates are also invoked by Carolina herself in her testimony in sequence 18. In fact, ‘enjoying

(0.7) really enjoying that moment of having the feeling of having the bull behind you and that you're risking it' requires not only being in good shape but also having a lot of courage.

Generally, in this second part of the news story, it is interesting to observe how incumbency of 'participants at the running of the bulls' is *measured* in terms of the MCD gender, in which the category 'men' is seen as setting the standards of such membership. The category 'women', the subject of comparison, is portrayed in terms of insufficiency or excess with respect to the category object of the comparison, 'men'. Despite the fact that 'women', according to this comparison, seem to be less legitimized to be 'participants at the running of the bulls', the reporter says that Carolina 'has no doubt: (0.7) she'll do it again'. This affirmation is not surprising: Carolina seems to have the legitimacy granted by holding the qualities – predicates like being in good physical shape, being courageous, although she is also more prudent – potentially associable with 'men' who are 'participants at the running of the bulls'. This is also the outcome or the lesson we can learn from the story told.

## **5 Concluding remarks**

In this investigation we have analyzed, by way of example, a media text in the form of a television news story. Our primary interest, in accordance with the research **tradition** of the ethnomethodological approach of MCA, was to understand the logic of practical reasoning and intelligibility involved in producing the news story. In particular, we were interested in exploring how this intelligibility, sense or cognizability were generated and what resources – social and communicative practices, commonsense knowledge of the social structures, ways of social organization, etc. – were used in the

production of the news story precisely to make it communicable. Although it is true that the news story analyzed does not have any further interest beyond what might be revealed about the *objective* social order that has made it possible, it is also true that this social order called upon in the news can be extrapolated to (and therefore shared by) the ‘public at large’ who become the recipient of this news story. The social order, in the natural attitude of everyday life, is made up of practical reasoning and commonsense knowledge in which the journalists, camera people, editors, etc. who produced the news story are also *specialists*. It is commonsense knowledge that has dictated, for example, that both ‘foreigners’ and ‘women’, in the running of the bulls, are in some way in the wrong place. This reasoning was reached from commonsense notions, or predicates, typically associated with ‘foreigners’ (e.g. ‘ignorance of local tradition’ or ‘unawareness’ linked to their youth) or ‘women’ (e.g. ‘limited strength and physical skills’, ‘lack of courage’, etc.). Thus, both foreigners and women have been constructed in the news story as the ‘other’. This concept, which is so much in fashion in current social scientific enquiry,<sup>8</sup> is used here as a device to explain the apparent – commonsensical, logical, *natural* – incompatibility between certain memberships such as ‘foreigner’ or ‘women’ and being ‘a participant at the running of the bulls’ and that may lead to consideration of some social categories in certain circumstances as outsiders.

We also hope to have shown, albeit indirectly, that what we call identity is merely a discursive characterization of someone that has nothing to do with objective facts. What it is for someone to have a particular identity – or, in other words, a person being incumbent of a category – is a discursive construction directly related to the actions that reflexively constitute this particular identity. The key word here is, precisely, incumbency. This concept shows that identity is not a fixed attribute of people. On the

contrary, identity is an action-oriented, situated accomplishment, ascribed through different procedures and for a variety of purposes. We can highlight, therefore, the performative character of identities. Thus, gender or nationality categories are not to be seen as objective or rigid characterizations of self and others, but as discursive constructs tied up to the specific contexts of their production.

The analysis of category or identity ascription through MCA also shows the normative or moral character of categorizing as social action. For any kind of category there is a set of expectations, in the form of predicates, which are associated. These predicates are not only commonsensically expectable; **they are so, also normatively and morally**. If the category-predicate relationship remained stable in time, it would mean the practical impossibility of social change. In the example of our news story, will the time come when participation in the running of the bulls by ‘foreigners’ and ‘women’ is seen as ordinary?

The important problems of social change, I would take it anyway, would involve laying out such things as the sets of categories, how they're used, what's known about any member, and beginning to play with shifts in the rules for application of a category and with shifts in the properties of any category (Sacks, 1979: 14). It is clear that any social change, as Sacks indicates, requires a shift in categories. This first of all demands a certain resistance to culturally embedded forms of perceiving specific category-bound activities and predicates. Afterwards, as in any social shift, changes would be required in the way in which the incumbents of certain categories view themselves. This could in the end lead to shifts in how the incumbents of other categories see the incumbents of the transformed category. **Only this way**, for example, could we overcome andronormative conceptions of gender such as those exhibited in

the news story, according to which – paraphrasing Protagoras – ‘man is (literally) the measure of all things’.

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Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

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<sup>1</sup> The fact that a media text is addressed to a 'public at large' does not mean that it is not 'recipient designed', as Francis and Hart (1997) point out. Rather, it is 'produced for anyone' and presumed to be impersonal.

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<sup>2</sup> Nekvapil and Leudar (2006) use the term ‘dialogical network’ to contest this statement. Dialogical networks are ‘communications’ which typically occur in mass media and their most important characteristics are that contributions by individual actors are distributed in time and space and are possibly duplicated’ (Nekvapil & Leudar 2006:42).

<sup>3</sup> For a good description of the structure of storytelling in conversation, see Goodwin & Heritage (1990). For an in-depth discussion of the structure of news stories, see Bell (1991).

<sup>4</sup> The *San Fermín* festival is a celebration that takes place every year in the Spanish city Pamplona. It lasts a week. The most famous activity of this festival is the running of the bulls, which consists of a 849 meter route run in front of bulls to end up at the bull ring.

<sup>5</sup> For an interesting outline of what constitutes ‘news values’ (or newsworthiness) see Bell (1991: 156-8).

<sup>6</sup> In this study we do not go into an analysis of the implications of not responding to a question. Conversation analysis has shown how in natural conversation the absence of an answer to a question might become an accountable matter. For an excellent study of the interactive character of questions and answers in standardized survey interviews, see Schaeffer & Maynard (2005).

<sup>7</sup> A *recortador/a* is a kind of bullfighter who by just using his/her body or a simple device such as a stick used like a pole vault, dances around the oncoming bull or heifer by running at it, leaping over it or side swerving it.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that both classic (e.g. De Beauvoir 1949; Fanon 1967) and contemporary (e.g. Taussig 1993; Spivak 1999; Guillaume & Baudrillard 1994) theorising on ‘otherness’ or ‘alterity’ conceptualize identity as a set of fixed traits of members.