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Nationality and gender stereotypes in the San Fermín festival: Cross-sectional age differences in the interpretation of TV news

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Abstract

The media employ a shared cultural knowledge between sender and receiver to build media representations effectively. These representations, apparently innocuous, shape the audience's perception and appraisal of the Other, which is constructed as an opposition to the Self. In our research we draw attention to a Spanish television news story that describes the increase of foreign participants at the San Fermín running of the bulls in Pamplona, Spain and also highlights the still minority participation by women. Through data from focus group discussions, we investigate age differences in the interpretation of gender and nationality stereotypes to examine how the media construction of this news story generates an intersectional othering. In our investigation, this othering process places women and foreigners outside the norm of this social identity built around the running of the bulls. Our research also identifies a significant generation gap in audience interpretation of the news story.

Keywords: otherness, intersectionality, women representation, audience interpretation, focus group, San Fermín festival

Introduction

One of the purposes of critical media studies is to highlight discriminatory discourses conveyed by the media on certain collectives or identities (Fuchs 2011; Ott and Mack 2010; Kellner and Share 2005). Under this approach, the analysis tends to focus on the ways in which the media offer stereotyped representations of different collectives or identities and how these representations may contribute to perpetuating this mind-set among the audience. Most of the studies concentrate on uncovering explicit evidence of stereotyping through an analysis of the manifest content in the messages (Collins 2011; Ganahl et al. 2003; Gerding and Signorielli 2014; Riff et al. 2014). However, in our study we start from the assumption that there are other subtle ways of maintaining and conveying modes of social inequality beyond that of the simple stereotyped representation. Our proposal is centred on the ways in which the Spanish media transmit these stereotyped ideologies through a message construction that is based on a shared cultural knowledge between sender and receiver. Thus, the creation of stereotyped meanings produced at reception level may reveal discriminatory discourses that are not always apparent at content level.

Through focus group discussions carried out in Spain, our aim is to develop an audience research approach to find out how the receiver perceives an apparently objective message and constructs stereotyped meanings through shared cultural knowledge.

In our research we draw attention to television news content, as this media space has traditionally been considered the most credible (Golan 2010; Johnson and Kaye 2004), and is still the main source of information in Spain, despite the growing importance of digital media and social networks (APM 2017; Fernández-Planells 2015). Furthermore,

we split the focus groups into young people and middle aged people in order to expose differences between their interpretations, given that previous research points to a possible generation gap in the way in which young people and middle aged people make sense of news content (Fisher et al. 2015; Holt et al. 2013; Livingstone 2013). Additionally, the role played by the theories of Intersectionality and Otherness within the process of identity creation is brought into the discussion (Hills and Kennedy 2009; Lünenborg and Fürsich 2014; Patil and Purkayastha 2015). The creation of meanings over identities implies the need to negotiate the media construction of an own identity (Self) with which the audience might identify (Hogan 2010; Hogg and Reid 2006; Papacharissi 2010), as well as the construction of other identities that constitute an 'Other' (Creutz-Kömpfi 2008; Stenbacka 2011). Likewise, the consistent intersections of different identity elements must also be added to this complex process (Lünenborg and Fürsich 2014). These intersections may help us to understand the ways in which the media systematically contribute to discriminating against certain identity categories, by putting forward simultaneously interactions of stereotypes.

In this research we specifically explore the potential intersections between gender and national origin. In fact, this article derives from previous research in which we explored how specific forms of categorization employed in Spanish news stories were used to induce certain readings or promote certain world-views (Gómez-Puertas et al. 2015; Roca-Cuberes and Ventura 2016; Rodrigo-Alsina et al. 2016; Ventura, 2014). The news story we analysed, which we also used for the focus groups, describes the progressive increase of foreign participants at the San Fermín running of the bulls, and it also highlights the still minority participation by women at this massive event.

The festival of San Fermín and its significance within Spanish cultural heritage

The San Fermín celebration is a popular festival that is deeply rooted in Spanish culture (Muñoz-Molina 2005) and held every year in the city of Pamplona, Spain. It has become notorious around the world, particularly as a result of the attention it received from Ernest Hemingway, winner of Nobel Prize in Literature, and every year now attracts a higher number of foreign participants. In fact, the population of Pamplona during the festival week rises from 190,000 inhabitants to over 1,000,000 people. The best-known activity in the San Fermín festivals is the running of the bulls. This is a traditional bullfighting custom in many areas around Spain, from where it originates, and also in Latin America, during festival weeks. It consists of running in front of a herd of bulls in order to move them to the bullfighting ring where the bullfighting will take place later on.

The festival is strongly associated with Spanish national identity (Brandes 2009; Sánchez Álvarez-Insúa 2006). Many anthropologists have interpreted the running of the bulls as a metaphor of Spanish society whose symbolism has powerful significance in Spanish culture (Jordan 2017; McCormick 2017; Mitchell 1991). Thus, the spectacle reveals close discursive dynamics between two significant cultural categories in Spain: male/female and national/foreign. Zanardi (2012) describes how as bullfighters achieved celebrity status, such heroics were often considered in patriotic terms. Meanwhile, he explains that the bullfighters' bravado exemplified their bodily performance of machismo, and such machismo was regarded by many as an expression of national pride.

Even though traditionally it has been male-only, in recent years women have been permitted to take part. Yet people still stress that this is a male fiesta that embodies the meaning of what it is to be 'male' (Douglass 1999: 10). Thus, it is closely linked to values attributed to masculinity such as virility, control, risk-taking, challenge, strength, coping

with danger and testing one's own capacities and resistance (Muñoz-Molina 2005). Asymmetrical gender relations can still be perceived due to the limited participation by women at the running of the bulls. According to data from the Pamplona City Council, in 2012, there were 20,669 people running, of whom 92 per cent were men (García 2015). Thus, the trend of women runners clearly still remains a minority.

There is also a hierarchy between local people and visitors. On the one hand, in social imaginary the local man is credited with a capacity to perform the bull running that foreigners do not possess. On the other, massive participation by foreigners is seen as an invasion of national cultural traditions. In fact, according to data from the Pamplona City Council, in 2015, of the total number of runners 54% were foreign, specifically 21% American, 7% British, 6% Australians or New Zealanders, 3% French, 3% Latin American and 13% from other countries (García 2015).

The fact that this festival may serve as a legitimizing vehicle for certain ideologies or world-views related to the categories male/female and national/foreign has been greatly heightened due to the long-established national media dissemination of the running of the bulls. RTVE, the Spanish public service broadcaster, has reported on the running of the bulls for over 50 years (Francescutti 2015) and it has been broadcast live for over 30 years.

Media identities: The self and the Other

The significant role played by the media in creating identities has been amply studied by scholars (Castelló 2008; Gauntlett 2008; McKinley et al. 2014; Shohat and Stam 2014). The way in which media represent different social and cultural categories such as gender, race, national origin, class, sexual orientation, religion and other axes of identity interacts

with the audience at different levels. On the one hand, it is involved in the self-identification process of those people who somehow recognize themselves in the portrayed identities (Giampapa 2004; Hogg and Reid 2006). People have the need for positive role models with whom to identify in order to build their self-esteem and psychological well-being confidently (Gomillion and Giuliano 2011; Ward 2004). As social beings, the experience of secondment or membership to a particular social or cultural group is also a need. In this sense, of special note is the role played by the media in the creation of desirable identities, which have much to do with self-identity construction (Schlenker and Weigold 1989; Van Zoonen 2013). On the other hand, the media provide us with representations of ‘the Other’, that is, what is different from ourselves and our own identity. In this case, it helps shape our perception or judgment of outsider persons or groups.

Media, stereotypes and the discourse of subordination

In both cases, the media may reflect stereotyped representations of different social and cultural categories and identities, perpetuating negative or obsolete conceptions of certain groups (Fürsich 2010; Rodrigo-Alsina 1999). These forms of stereotyping have been related to processes of oppression, subordination, disadvantage and discrimination, contributing to social inequality and systematic injustice (Saeed 2007; Chung 2007; Sidanius and Pratto 2001). In addition, media discourses tend to involve multiple identities simultaneously represented. In our research, we draw special attention to news stories, where different actors usually play a role within the storyline. The combination of representations, sometimes apparently separated, may be stereotyped and generate a unified discourse of subordination. This is what feminist scholars have termed *Intersectionality Theory*, which addresses the way different forms of oppression interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the ‘intersection’ of multiple forms of discrimination (Brah and

Phoenix 2013; McCall 2005). They argue that these forms of subordination are interconnected and cannot be examined separately. The theory originates in black feminism, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) as an exploration of the oppression of black women within society. She argued that the experience of being a black woman cannot be understood in terms of being black, or of being a woman, considered independently because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism. Later on, intersectional analysis, initiated as a study of the connection between gender and race, was rapidly expanded and applied to many different intersections of identities or group membership, including gender and foreignness (Parent et al. 2013; Johansson and Śliwa 2014). This intersectional approach has also been applied to media analysis (Barnum and Zajicek 2008; Lünenborg and Fürsich 2014; Rigoni 2012).

The production-reception asymmetry

From a semiotic point of view, the intersectionality we intend to study in news stories is not that emerging from the *utterance* (énoncé)ⁱ itself. An implication of this is that it might not be perceived in a first rapid analysis of the very characters represented in the content of the message, since in many cases the identity categories or group membership are presented separately, with no apparent intersection with each other within the news storyline (for instance, in the news story we analyse, ‘foreigners’ are presented separately from ‘women’). Therefore, it is necessary to employ semiotic theories of the communication process to uncover the intersectionality located in the *subject of enunciation* (énonciation). Greimas and Courtés (1979) explained that this *subject of enunciation* concerns both actant positions of *enunciator* (énonciateur), which is the implicit sender of the message, and *enunciatee* (énonciataire), to whom it is addressed. Additionally, this semiotic structure is placed within an *épistémé* where a certain world-view is assumed, shared

between the *enunciator* and the *enunciatee*, which may contain conceptualizations of oppression, such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, etc. If the communication process is to be successful, it largely depends on the relationship between production and interpretation, linked to a shared sociocultural knowledge (Sharifian and Jamarani 2013). It is precisely the manifestation of this shared ideology that reveals the deeper meaning of the discourse and may show the intersectional content of the message.

The process of 'othering'

In the case of San Fermín, the shared ideology of this Spanish festivity draws on a strong sense of national belonging. Moreover, it is socially taken for granted that the running of the bulls is a male thing (Douglass 1999). Thus, this social ideologization results in an intersection that places the native male as the centrepiece of the festival. This shared knowledge, based on the idea that the native male is the norm, is simultaneously placing 'others' outside the norm. In this connection, Alison Mountz (2009) conceives the term *othering* as the process of creating 'the Other'. Othering is a system of discrimination that plays a fundamental role in the continuance of many forms of oppression. Othering processes of nation and gender have also been traditionally considered from Post-Colonial Studies (Said 1978) and from Women's Studies (De Beauvoir 1949). Mountz also indicates that the process of creating 'others' takes place through the assumption or expectation of a norm. For example, by specifically reporting on foreigners and women participating in the running of the bulls, we may infer that it is not the 'normal' tradition of the San Fermín festival. In this sense, to assume native males as the norm is to *other* foreigners and females. Participants of other countries as well as women may be targets of 'othering' processes by means of ideologies tied up with folk-nation and gender. In this case,

foreign women would suffer a specific kind of discrimination as a result of the intersection between sexism and folk-nationalism.

Reception and sociocultural background

However, in order to understand fully the power wielded by the media to the detriment of these groups or identities, it is necessary to investigate the ways in which social representations of national origin and gender are shaping audience perception/interpretation. Semioticians argue that the figure of *enunciatee* (énonciataire) contains the role of message producer itself, since this is the one that constructs the ultimate meaning of the message (Greimas and Courtés 1979). But the *enunciatee* and the audience are not exactly the same, as the ideology captured within the *enunciatee* may not match that of a heterogeneous audience. Furthermore, *Active Audience Theory* argues that the message is not simply passively accepted by the audience. Instead, meanings are interpreted on the basis of personal sociocultural background (Morley 1993). Differences in attitudes and values may also affect this media perception. These differences have often been discussed in terms of a *generation gap* between youths and adults (Kalmus et al. 2013; Patil 2014). Therefore, in our research we consider age difference as a key factor affecting audience perception/interpretation of the same message. Audience and Reception Studies propose a wide range of methods including both qualitative and quantitative approaches, but the use of focus groups is prevalent in the case of qualitative studies seeking to go deeper into audience interpretation, especially when comparing groups with shared characteristics (Hall 2009; Lunt and Livingstone 1996).

Research purpose and questions

According to the barometer of the Sociological Research Centre, 86.8% of the population says they find out about the news from the television, compared to the press (45%) or the radio (35%) as complementary media (CIS, January–March 2016).

Television news shows are among the most watched programmes during the day and contain descriptions of the issues that most concern Spanish society (from the economic situation, unemployment or political corruption to national identity and multicultural integration) with a global media audience of state channels of over 8.5 million viewers, according to Kantar Media (February 2016). However, there are no significant studies about the reception/interpretation of a television news story, especially on issues related to identity and cultural otherness that would enable us to understand this significant contribution to the construction of shared social knowledge and, therefore, the intercultural coexistence that currently characterizes Spain.

This study is based on a constructivist approach to the constitution of meanings around identity and cultural otherness while examining news stories about intercultural encounters. The research presents the results obtained from audio-visual consumption practices, the public's stance towards the media and the comprehension dynamics through which the audience attribute meaning to the stories told in the news. With a focus on a news story of the San Fermín festival, this study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the interpretation of gender stereotypes within the San Fermín festival?

RQ2. What is the interpretation of nationality stereotypes within the San Fermín festival?

RQ3. Does the interpretation of gender and/or nationality stereotypes vary according to age?

Method

Advantages and disadvantages of focus group research

The choice of the focus group method responds to the need to compile social meanings around a specific topic, identity and otherness, and to understand the role media consumption plays in these social processes. First, unlike the survey, this qualitative reception analysis method enables responses to be obtained that are not conditioned by the questions. Second, and unlike in-depth interviews, it provides for the identifying of a greater variety of perspectives of the research topic and observing firsthand the discussion or explanation of these topics through group interaction, encouraging comprehension beyond that of mere description (Hennink 2014).

In fact, by encouraging interaction between the psychological configuration and the specific social behaviours of group members through a safe environment, the focus group method encourages an appropriate spontaneity and flexibility for exploring the topic, as well as mitigating the interviewer's pressure and rationalization of responses (Madriz 2003). It is through this interaction that the data generated take on a significant value, as they provide for the emergence of reasons and construction modes of cultural meanings while, in parallel, their synergetic nature offers evidence of the degree of consensus and diversity of opinions among participants (Morgan 1997).

The focus group method that uses quota sampling guarantees a substantial representativeness in line with the analytical variables considered important, despite the fact that an analysis of the data collected – which in no way are statistically transferable to the population as a whole, as a main disadvantage – may be more complex as they were generated in the collective dialogue through which the reality is reconstructed. Unlike other meth-

odological approaches, it enables a contextualization of the media and cultural experience, and further development of the interpretation and understanding of the audiences that may give rise to generalizations in which the audience itself participates (Stake 2005).

A news story about the 2012 San Fermín festival was selected based on the variables of gender and nationality. It was used in the focus group sessions as audiovisual material to prompt discussion. The results of the textual analysis of the news story, reported elsewhere (Roca-Cuberes and Ventura 2016), reveal that the presentation of foreigners and women is carried out through several subtle stereotypes without an apparent textual connection to each other. However, through the analysis carried out in this article we explore the intersectionalities that are revealed at the reception level and the generated perception about the stereotypes in relation to the audience's own beliefs.

The news story began by explaining how almost half the participants at the running of the bulls during the San Fermín celebrations were not Spanish, while at the same time showing pictures of specific people with characteristic phenotypic features. After determining that for foreigners the running of the bulls is usually a one-off experience that they are not inclined to repeat, it highlights the level of ignorance or desire for extreme entertainment that lead them to take serious risks. These statements are accompanied by opposing images and statements by drunk foreigners and Spanish healthcare workers. The reporter appears in the image to indicate that most of the foreigners are from the United States, Australia and New Zealand, but that the presence of women is still low. After the image of a woman falling over in front of a bull, the reporter finally draws attention to women's greater prudence and interviews a native female runner who is preparing diligently to enjoy the running of the bulls.

This news story, ‘selected on the basis of typicality, uniqueness, success, and so forth’ (Merriam 2009: 41), is the perfect basis for the interpretation by audiences of gender and nationality stereotypes about Sanfermines. In fact, the selected news story enables the holistic description and explanation of the phenomenon, a contextual interpretation (Cresswell 2007), while also providing an analysis of the interaction of significant factors that characterize the narration of popular Spanish culture.

Research design and sampling

To this end, four focus groups were constituted with participants of Spanish nationality and of both genders, divided according to two significant variables: age and the territory of reference. Thus, two groups of middle aged people (40–60 years) were put together and two groups of young people (20–30 years) were recruited in the two largest Spanish cities: Madrid and Barcelona. The groups contained between six and ten participants, in order to ensure a rich exchange and avoid potential bias in the dynamics of interaction (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Composition and distribution of the focus groups by profiles.

Group	Age	Location	Gender	
			Male	Female
FG1	Young people (20-30)	Barcelona	5	5
FG2	Middle aged people (40-60)	Barcelona	1	5

FG3	Young people (20-30)	Madrid	5	4
FG4	Middle aged people (40-60)	Madrid	5	3

A strong balance was maintained between the occupational status variables (students, employed people, retired and unemployed) and a decision was taken to prioritize a profile of secondary and university educational level, reducing the diversity of occupations to facilitate dialogue among participants. Although the gender variable was not considered in the study, an equal composition between men (16) and women (17) was sought in the focus groups.

To study the participants' interpretation, we used a Spanish news story about San Fermín whose narrative focuses on the participation of foreigners, on the one hand, and on the participation of women, on the other. The selected news story was broadcast in prime time on Spain's public television (La 1), within the news show with the highest ratings (Kantar Media, 2016).

When carrying out the focus group sessions non-directive strategies and a semi-structured discussion guide were deployed. The planned dynamics evolved in two blocks: the first part of the discussion guide contained open questions to encourage discussion among participants after viewing the informative pieces about the San Fermín festivities; the

second part explored in further depth how participants perceived the media's discursive construction of their own and other cultures.

Results

Reception of the news story by the 'young people'

When the 'young' participants were asked to make a spontaneous interpretation of the news story, the first thing they mentioned was that it spotlights the festival's focus on diversity. Unlike the typical approach of news stories presenting the running of the bulls, in this news piece other groups were mentioned such as women and foreigners. Thus, as some participants indicated, it offers a fresh perspective of the festival, a more positive one that talks about participation by people from different countries and by women:

It mentioned a lot of things from the cultural diversity of the people who come to the running of the bulls, from this cultural diversity to those who run and from those who run to women, who are a minority. I think it covered different facets. (Male, FG3)

At least there's no blood in this news story, the typical bull goring, and this time they're presenting an international festival, they're trying to inform people who'll be taking part. I mean, it's like toning down the festival at a time when there are lots of people who want to see an end to this kind of cruelty. It's showing the nice part of it. (Female, FG1)

Analysis of the participants' comments raises an interesting point: a large part of them think the news story is not very informative. In effect, they fundamentally feel information is lacking that would enable them to frame the importance of the news story. Without this information, the news story is seen as incomplete with an absence of a global perspective that would facilitate a better understanding of participation at the festival by both foreigners and women.

‘It doesn’t provide information; a news story should give information: how many people were killed, the probability of accidents, how many women ran’.

(Female, FG1)

‘How many are foreigners, how many are Spanish’. (Male, FG3)

In response to direct questions about the stereotypes present in the news story, most participants identified some stereotypical images of both foreigners and women. Thus, they think it provided a distorted picture of foreigners, who are presented as unaware of the danger and only interested in partying and alcohol:

‘And the stereotype of the foreigner who comes over here and gets drunk’.

(Male, FG3)

‘It’s focusing a bit on the foreigners, tourists who come over, get drunk, go a bit mad, they don’t even take any notice of the questions’. (Female, FG3)

‘Yes there are foreigners, but I think that these foreigners, before going right in front of a bull [...] that in their right minds wouldn’t get involved in a festival like this without knowing what goes on’. (Male, FG3)

Furthermore, certain stereotypes were detected about women participating at the festival, which arise from showing a woman who is running as an exception:

That the man is the strong one, so the one who runs. (Female, FG3).

Nor do they think that the fact that women take part in the running of the bulls is important or that it is as unusual as the news story makes out:

‘They want to report it as a novelty and it probably really isn’t, and there are women who’ve been running with the San Fermín bulls for a long time’. (Male, FG3)

‘I’m sure there are a lot of women who run but they don’t come out on the news to say look I’m running [...]. And they showed one who seemed a bit mad. There she is and she fell over right in front of us’. (Female, FG3)

‘They’re dressing it up as really great, like, look how good we Spanish are that we now let women do things. I don’t see why this should even be part of the news’. (Male, FG1)

A minority of participants among the young people group did not detect stereotypes in the news story. In other words, their own conceptions about foreigners and women are in tune with those presented in the news story. Thus, they express opinions that agree with the image of foreigners as irresponsible, unaware of the risk involved in taking part in the running of the bulls:

I couldn't believe the thing about the survey they gave the foreigners with the question about dying, that they didn't know or didn't answer. Obviously, running in front of a bull I'd say is a pretty risky thing to do. (Female, FG3)

Some participants agreed with the image presented in the news story about the festival being a man's thing. The perception, as expressed by the participants, is that

Traditionally it's the men who run, who mostly touch the bull. (Male, FG3)

Reception of the news story by the 'middle aged people'

When the middle aged participants were asked for a spontaneous interpretation of the news story, the three topics mentioned were participation by tourists at the festival, their unawareness of the inherent dangers of running with the bulls and the male chauvinist nature of the San Fermín festival.

Participants in the middle aged groups were struck by the fact that there were so many people from all over the world at the festival. The words foreigners and tourists were mentioned spontaneously several times after seeing the news piece, in some cases expressing astonishment at their high level of attendance at the festival:

'I was surprised when it said that almost half the people are foreign, right? It amazed me. I had no idea there were so many foreigners. (Male, FG4)

However, what was considered most remarkable was the tourists' lack of awareness of the dangers. The picture they are given from the news story is that foreigners are unin-

formed and unaware of the danger at the San Fermin festival. The festival is also portrayed as one in which there is a huge excess of alcohol and lots of people jumping in front of the bulls with no preparation or awareness at all:

‘It’s fine but one thing is that they come and watch it and another is that they come to take part. It’s already dangerous enough for Spanish people who know all about it, or people from Pamplona [...]’. (Male, FG4)

‘A lot of irresponsible people who start running. (Female, FG2)

Lastly, some of the participants in the groups also highlighted the low participation by women and the male chauvinist nature of the festival.

I get the feeling, I suppose because now it’s changing, but I suppose there must be some kind of rule, because there have always been very few women. Some kind of rule that doesn’t let women run. [...] I think that’s a bit chauvinist. (Female, FG2)

As in the group of young people, a large part of the middle aged participants also think the news story is uninformative. They concluded it was very brief and that it focused on the most typical aspects of the festival such as the bulls, the danger, the foreigners, etc. However, there are many things about the festival that were not explained in the news story:

There are lots of things, lots of festival things that are not reflected here. (Female, FG2)

Unlike the focus group with young people, the stereotyped image of foreigners and women presented in the news story reflected a large part of the middle aged participants' own views. Thus, this representation of both groups in the news story mirrors and reaffirms their own conceptions. They are of the opinion that the tourists who take part are unaware of the dangers and that women do not usually take part because they are more prudent than men and less prone to drinking alcohol:

I think it does require something else apart from running. It's a long-standing tradition and conventionally people who were trained to run would take part. [...] It doesn't seem normal for a foreigner or a woman to be prepared, due to tradition, custom, recognition. (Male, FG4)

Particularly, participation by foreigners at the festival is seen as negative, that it has been publicized incorrectly and brings about adverse consequences. A clear differentiation is made between the local who knows what he is up against, who trains all year and takes part at the festival by tradition, and the tourists, ignorant of the meaning of the San Fermín festival who get drunk and run in front of the bulls totally unaware and with no preparation:

'I think this festival has been publicized as an anything goes, especially abroad. And now even people from Spain are limiting themselves and people from [...] Well, hey, that's the impression I get. And what we call typical tourists think they can do anything'. (Female, FG2)

[Tourists] don't really know what they're coming to. So they encounter complete chaos and they come and run in front of the bulls as they think this is a

“come on, a Spanish bullfighter and let’s run”. If they’re running so will we.

They think it’s a complete free-for-all’. (Male, FG2)

‘It gives you the feeling that these foreigners think that bulls are like pets’. (Female, FG2)

Regarding participation by women, a large number of participants are of the opinion that there are fundamental differences between men and women that explain or justify their lower participation at the festival. The San Fermín festival, they say, is an alcoholic festival, so women are less inclined to see the attraction. It is also said that women are more prudent, aware and have more common sense than men. This, as mentioned during the session, leads to a different level of participation than that by men. Last, some people appealed to tradition to explain the low participation by women at the festival as, they argue, it is a man’s thing:

‘Men are generally more reckless than women’. (Male, FG2).

‘Maybe they do have more common sense, because I wouldn’t stand in front of a 600kg bull’. (Male, FG2)

‘It’s a male custom, going way back, it’s not something that started 10 years ago’. (Female, FG2)

A minority of participants in the sessions alluded to a negative representation of both foreigners and women. Regarding the representation of foreigners, two participants attempted to neutralize these stereotypes by equating them to Spanish people. They said that both the Spanish and foreigners acted without due care. According to this point of view behaviour by both groups is equally reproachable:

‘If they have enough information, it doesn’t matter, if I’m a woman from Madrid or from Italy, if I’ve spent the whole night drinking and I stand there in front of it, it’s my danger; if the Italian woman knows what she’s up against and doesn’t mind, she knows what she’s doing. It’s their own danger, I don’t care if they’re Spanish or foreign’. (Female, FG4)

‘I can’t see the difference between a foreign man and a man from Spain because right now I might be running and it gets me, in the first minute’. (Male, FG4)

Regarding the representation of women, some participants think that women should be able to take part as much as men. Some even state that, gradually, women are participating more at the festival, in the same way as they are being included in the world of sport and the acquisition of habits that up to now were restricted to men. Some of these participants also pointed out the need for women who are taking part in the running with the bulls to be appropriately prepared:

‘I don’t think it’s a bad thing; whoever wants to get in front of a bull should go ahead. It doesn’t matter if it’s a man or a woman’. (Female, FG2)

‘It comes from a tradition, like you said, a male chauvinist tradition doesn’t it? That only men run with bulls. Gradually women have started to be included in the world of sport. For instance more and more are taking part, aren’t they? But it’s been difficult for them to somehow get into competing so women are gradually taking on other habits that let’s say used to be only claimed by men’. (Male, FG2)

Comparison of the reception between age groups

The analysis of the interpretation of the news story in the two age groups (young participants and middle aged participants) reveals interesting differences in the reception between both groups. Thus, a detailed analysis of the news story would demonstrate a complex construction of an extensive variety of stereotypes on foreigners and women and the common-sense recourse to typical predicates associable to both collectives. This recourse, however, is perceived differently by the young and middle aged people in the focus group sessions. The middle aged participants seem mostly to be less aware of the amplifying power of stereotypes by news stories, television and the media in general. In some way, the conventional reflection, stereotyped in the news, is concurrent with some of the middle aged participants' own preconceptions. Meanwhile, the younger participants are largely able to detect diverse conventional images of foreigners and women present in the news story. Furthermore, and this is what is most interesting, they are also able to decouple these conventional images from their own knowledge and social imagery, attributable to their critical, independent sources of meaning construction and perhaps also to a greater intercultural experience and gender expertise.

Discussion

These results describe a type of audience that does not passively accept the message but instead interprets its meaning according to its personal sociocultural background and is able to generate a critical discourse that goes beyond that offered by the media. Furthermore, from the comparison between the interpretations made by the group of middle aged people and the group of young people, a generation gap can be detected. This generation

gap might be defined not only by the generational differences in attitudes and values between both groups but also perhaps by the greater level of media competence held by the Spanish youth compared to adults, as manifested by Masanet et al. (2013). Therefore, these results tender a potential relationship between the generation gap and media literacy, that is, a generational divide in the ways in which audiences interpret, make sense and decode media messages.

Likewise, it is precisely within this active interpretation of the message that we find the intersectionality we intended to study. As alluded to earlier, in order to understand the power wielded by the media to the detriment of foreigners and women, it is necessary to investigate the ways in which media representations shape audience perception/interpretation. In our investigation, we sought to discover how the news story constructs, on the one hand, a patriarchal and nationalist implicit discourse from a Self that is male and owner of a folkloric heritage and, on the other, based on the exclusion of an Other that is underestimated for being female or a non-national. As we suggested, the discriminatory discourse does not emerge from the explicit utterance (*énoncé*) proposed by the medium in the news story, but rather stems from the *épistémé* on which it was chosen to be placed, that is, the assumed world-view shared between the enunciator and the enunciatee. Thus, even though the utterance (*énoncé*) may not contain explicit conceptualizations of oppression, such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, xenophobia, etc., these are in the end revealed in the decoding of the meaning by the receiver, and, therefore, we can state that they are latent in the discourse constructed by the medium itself, that is, at production level.

Lastly, the choice of the *épistémé* on which the news story is built has a different influence on the audience depending on age. On the one hand, as occurs in the case of the group of

middle aged people, it contributes to reaffirming an ethos of oppressive references towards the otherness. In this case, a shared knowledge is assumed that defines the Other as a non-participating and passive subject within the civilizing narrative of the Self. Conversely, as occurs in the group of young people, it questions the pre-acquired values of tolerance and respect under intercultural experience and gender expertise. That is, it forces them to reframe them from a perspective of prejudice towards the Other. After all, it must be remembered that the role of the media in the construction of public knowledge involves all levels of communication, from the most explicit utterance to the most subtle *épistémé*. Meanwhile, we must also bear in mind that one of the scientific community's pledges is to exercise a monitoring role towards the media. This is manifested when holding them to account for their social responsibility when perpetuating, or not, stereotyped images of certain vulnerable groups.

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Note

ⁱ See notes on the translation in Fontanille (2006).