



[en] Frame and narrative structure analysis combined. A novel methodological proposal applied to the *Via Catalana*

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Abstract. The present article describes a methodology that combines frame analysis and narrative structure analysis in research into the journalistic handling of information. To determine the validity of this combined methodology, we examined media coverage of the Catalan independence rally of 11 September 2013 by six Spanish newspapers. The results indicate that this combined methodology brought to light findings that would not have been obtained by each technique used in isolation. This approach—to our knowledge, novel—contributed to a deeper and multidisciplinary analysis that shed light on patterns reflecting relationship between frames and narrative structures.

Keywords: Journalism; framing; narrative semiotics; independence; Catalonia.

Combinación de frames y estructuras narrativas: una nueva propuesta metodológica aplicada a la *Vía Catalana* 2013

Resumen. Este artículo constituye una propuesta metodológica que combina el análisis de frames y el análisis de estructuras narrativas en una misma investigación sobre tratamiento informativo. Para determinar la validez e interés de dicha combinación se ha realizado un test sobre la cobertura mediática que seis periódicos españoles hicieron de la manifestación celebrada el 11 de septiembre del año 2013 en Catalunya para reclamar la independencia. Los resultados obtenidos indican que la combinación de técnicas utilizada permite extraer unas conclusiones que no se podrían conseguir por separado, ya que el cruce de ambas técnicas aporta información nueva. Así, contribuye a conseguir un análisis más profundo y pluridisciplinar y constata un patrón de relación entre frames y estructuras narrativas.

Palabras clave: Periodismo; *framing*; semiótica narrativa; independencia; Cataluña.

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1. Introduction

Our main objective with this research was to test frame analysis and narrative structure analysis in the same research. In order to test the methodological validity of this combination of techniques, we used, as a case study, the handling of the Catalan 11 September 2013 independence rally —referred to as the *Via Catalana*— by six Spanish newspapers.

In relation to this main objective, we pose three hypotheses: (1) that the joint use of frame analysis and narrative structure analysis paints a broader and deeper picture of the object of study than would be achieved using just one of these approaches; (2) that the complementarity of these two approaches is not only conceptual but also has practical applications; and (3) that the comparison of the results for each approach will generate novel findings regarding the analysed texts.

Narrative structure analysis is performed via narrative semiotics. It provides insights to the narrative configuration of discourse from the most superficial figurative levels to the deepest abstract levels (Greimas and Courtes, 1982). Frame analysis, meanwhile, is conducted in the context of framing theory, which has become a benchmark for communication theorists in terms of accessing the meanings of reality (Entman, 1993; Schefeule, 1999; Reese, 2007).

Our exploration of this combined methodological approach derives from our use of both techniques in isolation and reflection on the possibility of applying the two techniques jointly to the same object of study in order to achieve more meaningful results. On the basis of a pre-test that yielded interesting conclusions (Gili and Pont (2014), it was decided to further explore the combined use of these techniques. In a similar vein, Penalva and Mateo (2000) combined semiotic analysis and content analysis but without focusing on frames or the narrative elements, as we have done in the research we describe in this article.

The emergence of a new political project inspired by public opinion typically results in a diversity of positions in the media. This is precisely what happened with the *Via Catalana* and, more broadly, with the Catalan independence movement, of which this demonstration was just one manifestation. The *Via Catalana* consisted of a human chain more than 400 kilometres long that was formed from northern to southern Catalonia. The Catalan independence movement —which claims the right of Catalonia to freely decide its future— is a project that has been fostered by the people of Catalonia and the Catalan political class since 2006 (López, 2011).

Over and above the main objective of this research —methodological in nature— three aims regarding the case study are as follows: (1) to examine journalistic handling of the *Via Catalana*; (2) to identify which newspapers legitimize and delegitimize the *Via Catalana* and, consequently, the independence

movement; and (3) to determine key factors defining particular stances regarding the independence movement.

This research focuses, therefore, not only on the role of the media in determining which political issues are at the centre of public attention, but also their role in defining a matter of public interest through the use of specific frames and narrative structures. As McCombs (2006) pointed out, the media not only have a bearing on what to think but also on how to think about an issue.

Furthermore, referring to legitimization and delegitimization means acknowledging that the media have an impact on public opinion, as has been widely demonstrated by the theory of agenda setting (McCombs, 2006). In our case, 'legitimacy' is understood from a sociological perspective as deriving from a perspective that considers that reality is a social construction (Berger and Luckmann, 2011) and that the media play a privileged role in the social construction and objectification of meaning (Castells, 2009; Engel and Lang, 1983; Habermas, 1989).

2. Methodology

2.1. Sample and units of analysis

The research sample consisted of the six most widely distributed newspapers⁴—at the time of the Via Catalana—in both of the sociopolitical communities affected by the independence movement, namely, Spain and Catalonia. These newspapers were *El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, as national newspapers published in Madrid, and *La Vanguardia*, *El Periódico (de Cataluña)* and *El Punt Avui*, as three regional newspapers published in Barcelona. Five days corresponding to each newspaper were analysed: the day before the rally, the day of the event itself and the following three days.

The analysis was limited to the first reading level (headline, lead/subhead, deck, sidebars/boxes and images), as this is where the journalist summarizes the main themes of a story seeking. Moreover, the first reading level is a synthetic narrative structure (López and Franco, 2011).

The sample included informative-interpretative items and editorials reflecting the opinion of owners. The analysis included the entire text of the editorials, given that these are items of particular interest that are not necessarily absorbed in an initial reading level.

To assign categories, the analysis was limited to items whose main headline included a reference to the Via Catalana and which offered a broad initial reading. After 72 items were excluded (20.4% of the universe), we were left with 280 items for analysis, each considered a single unit of analysis.

⁴ Circulation data for 2013 from the Oficina de Justificación de la Difusión.

2.2. Narrative structure analysis

Since a culture operates symbolically, an analysis of its texts allow conclusions to be drawn, regarding the underlying social and political values that are to be found within the narrative structure of the texts. The fact that journalism is also a narrative—in this case an informative narrative (Bell, 1999; Bird and Dardenne, 1990)—means that journalistic texts also incorporate a value system by means of which reality is constructed. Mass communication researchers have become aware of the importance of cultural patterns in the development and reception of informative content (Carey, 1992; Fiske and Taylor, 1991; Tuchman, 1983).

The strategy of analysing narrative structures focuses on three elements in texts that make it possible to perceive their ideological underpinnings: (1) the allocation of narrative roles, that is, ‘actants’; (2) the objectives pursued and the actions of the characters who play these narrative roles; and (3) the stage at which each analysed unit of the narrative is located.

Actants reflect the roles played within a story by the characters. According to the actantial model, the number of these roles is limited. In this analysis, we use the classification of narrative roles from narrative semiotics as developed by Greimas (1987) and Courtés (1980) and as subsequently adapted by Ruiz Collantes (2010) and Ruiz Collantes et al (2011) to include some more general roles:

- **Proposer:** The subject who proposes a contract or mission to another in order to achieve a certain goal.
- **Proposee:** The character whom the proposer entrusts with a contract or mission. The character will be an **accepting proposee** if s/he agrees to the mission and a **renouncing proposee** if s/he rejects the mission. It may also be that we do not know whether the character accepts or rejects the mission.
- **Action subject:** This is the protagonist of the action, to whom the contract proposer offers performance of the main action in the narrative. This is the same role as the proposee, with the difference being that the action subject has already accepted and is performing the action.
- **State subject:** This is the character for whom the action is unfolding. S/he is the character who is benefited or prejudiced by the intervention of the action subject.
- **Helper:** This character or circumstance facilitates the performance of the contract or mission of the action subject.
- **Opponent:** This character or circumstance hinders the contract or mission of the action subject and achievement of the corresponding goal.
- **Rival:** This character or circumstance has a contract or mission that is the direct opposite of that of the action subject. If the contract or mission of one is fulfilled, that of the other logically cannot be fulfilled.
- **Sanctioner:** This is the character who, at the end of the plot, evaluates the action subject according to the contract or mission goal, the action performed or the result obtained. S/he is considered to be a **criticizing sanctioner** if s/he disqualifies the protagonist and an **approving sanctioner** if s/he praises or justifies the protagonist.

–**Sanctionee:** This is the character who is sanctioned at the end of the plot. S/he is considered to be a **criticized sanctionee** if disqualified and an **approved sanctionee** if praised or justified.

The characters who take on these narrative roles set objectives and perform actions to achieve a particular goal. Following the conceptual categories proposed by Ruiz Collantes (2010), these are defined as:

–**Action:** The action of a character inspired by an intention or purpose.

–**Objective:** That state, situation or object that the character aims for through the action, whether for him/herself or for another person.

Finally, referring to the stage of the narrative in which each newspaper is located, we use the four phases described in the canonical narrative schema (Courtés 1997; Greimas 1970; Greimas and Courtés 1982). The goal is to detect the predominant stage for each analysed newspaper. These stages are as follows:

–**Contract** (also called **manipulation**): This is the stage in which the proposee offers a contract or mission to him/herself or to another as the proposee.

–**Performance:** This is the stage of actual implementation of the contract or mission entrusted to the action subject. In performance the action subject may have a rival, may be hampered by an opponent and/or may be assisted by a helper.

–**Competence:** This is the stage in which the action subject acquires the skills or expertise necessary to perform the task entrusted to him/her. This character will be competent if they wish to or must perform and if they have the knowledge and power to do so.

–**Sanction:** In this stage the sanctioner positively or negatively evaluates the results of the mission entrusted to the action subject, who now assumes the role of sanctionee.

On the basis of narrative structure analysis, we established prototypical narratives for each newspaper. A prototypical narrative is a generic narrative framework formed of the common characteristics of a set of similar narratives making up a homogeneous group (Ruiz Collantes et al (2011)). Although the concept of the prototypical narrative has been applied in narrative semiotics, in our research it was extended and broadened to include framing, as will be seen in the results section.

2.3. Frame analysis

Our research was done from a communicative conception of framing, in line with the approach of Entman (1993), Druckman (2001) and Tankard et al. (1991). Framing is a process of selection and emphasis of certain aspects of reality in a text, in such a way that a proposal can be made, regarding a specific problem, that embraces a precise definition, a causal interpretation, a moral evaluation and/or a recommendation for its handling (Entman, 1993).

Frame analysis in our research was deductive and based on the classification of political frames by Neuman, Just and Crigler (1992) and Iyengar and Simon

(1993), as subsequently adopted by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). This typology consists of five frames:

- **Conflict frame:** Conflict between individuals, groups or institutions is emphasized in the news item.
- **Human interest frame:** The human or emotional perspective is emphasized, reflecting a personalization and dramatizations of the news.
- **Economic consequences frame:** The economic consequences for an individual, group, institution, region or country is the main focus of the news item.
- **Morality frame:** Ethical, moral or religious aspects are emphasized in the news item, with prescriptions on how to act according to a specific code of conduct.
- **Responsibility frame:** An issue or problem is presented in the news item in such a way as to attribute responsibility for a cause or solution to an individual, group, institution or government.

Frames were identified using the 20 questions drawn up by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Each frame was attributed with a nuance (or slant), based on an evaluation as follows: (1) positive, if positive aspects of the event described are emphasized; (2) negative, if negative aspects of the event described are emphasized; and (3) neutral or ambiguous, if an accurate description of the facts is transmitted or if the slant is unclear.

Our frame analysis aims to detect only the predominant frame. Our allocation of predominant frames was done at two different levels: (1) the framing applied to the *Via Catalana*, that is, the main frame in each analysed newspaper item; and (2) the framing applied to the characters who play a role in the main narrative, as previously detected via narrative semiotics.

3. Results

The 280 analysed units were distributed unevenly among the six newspapers in the sample. *El Punt Avui* paid most attention to the *Via Catalana* (25.7% of the units), followed by *La Vanguardia* (17.5%), *ABC* (17.5%), *El Periódico* (15.4%), *El Mundo* (13.9%) and, finally, *El País* (10%). Nonetheless, this rally was clearly a hot topic in all of the newspapers.

3.1. Narrative structure results

3.1.1. Narrative roles

The key narrative roles in the first reading level of the analysed newspapers were those reflecting the stages of performance, competence and contract. However, a slightly different pattern was evident in newspapers published in Madrid and in Barcelona (Table 1).

Table 1. Narrative roles in six newspapers (%). In grey, the three most representative roles in each newspaper. Source: Authors

	<i>El País</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>	<i>ABC</i>	<i>La Vanguardia</i>	<i>El Periódico</i>	<i>El Punt Avui</i>
Proposer	26.2	22.4	16.7	16.3	22.5	14.4
Proposee	24.6	9.2	14.2	15.2	16.3	9.6
Action subject	9.2	15.8	11.7	26.1	25	28.8
State subject	16.9	17.1	10	21.7	7.5	8.8
Helper	4.6	1.3	0	2.2	0	3.2
Opponent	0	1.3	0	6.5	1.3	0
Rival	3.1	0	3.3	3.3	3.8	3.2
Criticizing sanctioner	6.2	13.2	15.8	2.2	2.5	12
Criticized sanctionee	6.2	17.1	23.3	2.2	2.5	12
Approving sanctioner	1.5	1.3	2.5	2.2	8.8	4
Approved sanctionee	1.5	1.3	2.5	2.2	10	4
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

In the Barcelona media, the first position was occupied by the action subject, with a presence in the three newspapers of not less than 25%. In contrast, in the Madrid media, the percentage for this role never surpassed 16%; instead, the most prominent narrative role was proposer, ranked first (around 25%) in *El País* and *El Mundo* and second in *ABC*. The narrative role of proposer also played a prominent role in the Barcelona media, although it never achieved the first position.

Indeed, the high presence in all newspapers of the proposer role and also, although to a lesser extent, of the proposee role, points clearly to the negotiation of the terms of an agreement (contract). The negotiation of political agreement, however, was portrayed differently in the Madrid and Barcelona newspapers.

In the Barcelona media, the proposers were mostly in favour of independence (57% in *La Vanguardia*, 61% in *El Punt Avui* and 67% in *El Periódico*, with characters like the demonstrators or Artur Mas —head of the Catalan government— as proposers). Those against independence predominated in the Madrid media (53% *El País*, 55% *ABC* and 76% *El Mundo*, with characters like the Spanish government or the Spanish President Mariano Rajoy as proposers). Where the newspapers did coincide —although the percentages in the Barcelona newspapers tended to be lower— was regarding the proposee role, as the characters who assumed this role were mostly against independence (primarily the Spanish government and Mariano Rajoy).

We now look at the action subject, the most predominant role in the Barcelona media and the second most predominant role in the Madrid newspapers. One difference was that the characters who played the role of action subject in the Barcelona newspapers were mainly separatists —at over 70% in the three Barcelona newspapers (reflecting demonstrators and the Catalan government as characters)— whereas in the Madrid newspapers this percentage never surpassed 50%.

The role of state subject in the Barcelona newspapers was mostly played by separatists, although not to the same extent as the action subject. In contrast, in the

Madrid newspapers, the separatists and non-separatists were more equally represented in the role of state subject.

Other roles that were notably present in the analysed newspapers were those of the criticizing sanctioner and criticized sanctionee, reflected in *El Punt Avui* (12% for both) and *El Mundo* (13.2% and 17.1%, respectively), but most especially in *ABC* (15.8% and 23.3%). The pattern in these three newspapers were similar but opposite, depending on the place of publication. Thus, in *El Mundo* and *ABC*, most criticizing sanctioners were non-separatists and most criticized sanctionees were separatists. The reverse happened in *El Punt Avui*: most criticizing sanctioners were separatists and most criticized sanctionees were non-separatists, that is to say, separatists were critical of non-separatists.

As for the remaining narrative roles, notable was the paucity of approving sanctioners and approved sanctionees, for whom percentages did not surpass 4% in most cases. Very minor roles were also played by helpers, opponents and rivals, which again rarely surpassed 4%.

Apart from the narrative roles analysed above, five characters in particular were featured highly⁵. Most of these characters appeared in the main storyline of each newspaper, i.e., they assumed a narrative role, independently of which particular other role they assumed.

Table 2. The five main characters in each newspaper who played a narrative role (%). In grey, characters who appear in at least four of the analysed newspapers. Source: Authors.

	<i>El País</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>	<i>ABC</i>	<i>La Vanguardia</i>	<i>El Periódico</i>	<i>El Punt Avui</i>
1	Rajoy (18.5)	Mas (17.1)	Mas (15)	Mas (16.5)	Demonstrators (21.3)	Demonstrators (21.6)
2	Mas (18.5)	Rajoy (7.9)	Spanish govt. (11.7)	Demonstrators (14.3)	Mas (13.8)	Catalonia (6.4)
3	Demonstrators (15.4)	Nationalists/ Separatists (6.6)	Nationalists/ separatists (6.7)	Catalan govt. (12.1)	Rajoy (7.5)	Mas (3.2)
4	Spanish govt. (7.7)	García Margallo (5.3)	Rajoy (5.8)	Rajoy (6.6)	Spanish govt. (5)	Spain (3.2)
5	Catalonia (4.6)	Catalonia (3.9)	Spain (4.2)	Spanish govt. (6.6)	CiU (political party) (5)	Catalan parties/ politicians (3.2)

The data in Table 2 allow us to make three observations: (1) the newspapers in which characters were most repeated were *El País* and *La Vanguardia* (four of the five characters), while *El Mundo* and *El Punt Avui* were at the other extreme (just two of the five characters); (2) four characters were featured in at least four of the analysed newspapers: Artur Mas, Mariano Rajoy, the demonstrators and the Spanish government; and (3) bearing in mind that the main protagonists of the Via Catalana were the demonstrators themselves, in the Barcelona newspapers, these

⁵ Since the newspapers use different concepts to refer to the same character, to facilitate the drawing of conclusions, we grouped different but closely related concepts under a single character, e.g., the demonstrators group also includes concepts such as the Via Catalana and 'human chain'.

were the most prominent (*El Periódico* and *El Punt Avui*) or second most prominent (*La Vanguardia*) character, whereas they hardly featured in the Madrid newspapers, only appearing in *El País* (and only in third position) and not at all in *El Mundo* or *ABC*.

3.1.2. Narrative objectives and actions

We focused on the objectives and actions of the five characters who recurred in all the analysed newspapers, namely, Artur Mas, Mariano Rajoy, the demonstrators, the Spanish government and Catalonia (Table 3). We also report complementary results for the other characters, given their hierarchical importance and their appearances on some front pages. Results are reported regarding the most important narrative role — in quantitative terms — for these characters in each newspaper.

The first conclusion is that, with few exceptions, all the characters assumed the same narrative role in the six analysed newspapers. The same pattern was therefore repeated for all of them. One important exception was *ABC*, in which two characters (Artur Mas and the demonstrators) assumed roles different from those assumed in other newspapers. The same happened with *El Punt Avui* except in regard to the Spanish government. Hence, in order to detect differences, we need to examine in detail the actions and objectives of the characters in each newspaper.

Table 3. Objectives and actions of the five main characters in the analysed newspapers.

	<i>El País</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>	<i>ABC</i>	<i>La Vanguardia</i>	<i>El Periódico</i>	<i>El Punt Avui</i>
Mas	Proposer	Proposer	Criticized sanctionee	Proposer	Proposer	Proposer
Action	Encourages Catalans to participate in rally	Proposes 2014 referendum	Labelled as 'lying', 'threatening', etc.	Calls for harmonious progress towards referendum	Calls for steady progress towards referendum	Calls on Catalans to have firmness of purpose
Objective	To pressurize Rajoy into accepting referendum	To hold referendum in 2014	To denounce Mas's political actions	To persuade Spanish government to agree to referendum	To persuade Spanish government to agree to referendum	To hold referendum and create Catalan state
Rajoy	Proposee	Proposee	Proposee	Proposee	Proposee	Proposee
Action	Rejects referendum proposed by Mas and offers funding dialogue	Rejects referendum proposed by Mas. Called on by other characters not to negotiate with Catalonia/to better accommodate Catalonia within Spain	Rejects referendum proposed by Mas	Rejects referendum proposed by Mas and offers funding dialogue. Called on by other characters to better accommodate Catalonia within Spain	Rejects referendum proposed by Mas and offers funding dialogue. Called on by other characters to bring conflict under control	Rejects referendum called for from Catalonia.

Objective	To reduce political tension between Spanish and Catalan governments	To underline referendum unconstitutionality	Not indicated.	Not indicated	To accommodate Catalonia within Spain	Not indicated
Demonstrators	Action subject	Action subject	Proposer	Action subject	Action subject	Action subject
Action	Pressurize Rajoy into accepting/Mas into calling referendum	Corner Mas into calling referendum for 2014	Challenge Spain regarding referendum	Demonstrators rally	Demonstrators rally and prepare for referendum	Demonstrators rally and show way forward to Mas and Catalan politicians
Objective	To hold referendum in 2014	To hold referendum in 2014	Not indicated	To attract the world's attention and achieve Catalan independence	To hold referendum in 2014	To attract the world's attention and achieve Catalan independence
Spanish govt	Proposee	Proposee	Proposee	Proposee	Proposee	Criticized sanctionee
Action	<i>El País</i> asks that Catalonia be better accommodated within Spain	Rejects the referendum proposed by Mas	<i>ABC</i> calls for Catalan movement to be curtailed and for no negotiation Other characters ask that Catalonia be better accommodated within Spain	Mas asks that referendum be allowed Other characters ask that Catalonia be better accommodated within Spain	Rejects referendum proposed by Mas and offers limited funding dialogue	<i>El Punt Avui</i> critical regarding how demonstration impact is downplayed
Objective	To resolve Catalonia-Spain conflict	Not indicated	Not indicated	To call referendum and resolve Catalonia-Spain conflict	To accommodate Catalonia within Spain	Not indicated
Catalonia	State subject	State subject	State subject	State subject		State subject
Action	Different characters ask for political solution for Catalonia	Catalonia 'shackled' by Catalan nationalism and separatism	Catalonia receives more money from Spain than other regions (Madrid and Valencia)	Demonstrators rally	Catalonia not featured in first reading level of <i>El Periódico</i>	Catalonia 'unshackled' by the successful independence rally
Objective	To accommodate Catalonia better within Spain	Not indicated	Not indicated	To obtain Catalan independence		To obtain Catalan independence
Other	President Constitutional Court — Criticizing sanctioner	M. Vargas Llosa — Criticizing sanctioner	M. Vargas Llosa — Criticizing sanctioner	World — State subject		World — State subject

Action	Francisco Pérez de los Cobos denounces that Catalans have been 'taught to despise Spanish culture'	Criticizes nationalism as a 'return to tribalism' and 'regressive'	Criticizes nationalism as a 'return to tribalism' and 'regressive'	Demonstrators rally	No minor character of note	Catalan rally publicized to the world
Objective	Not indicated	To combat/eliminate nationalism	To combat/eliminate nationalism	To call the world's attention		To obtain international support for referendum

First we focus on Artur Mas, as all newspapers, except *ABC*, preponderantly assigned him the role of proposer. The narrative construction in *La Vanguardia* and *El Periódico* was very similar. Mas calls for 'harmonious progress' so that the Spanish government will agree to the referendum. *El Punt Avui* shuns this harmonious approach and focuses on the 'firmness of purpose' that Mas asks of Catalans for Catalonia to achieve independence. According to *El País* Mas is using Catalans as a means of pressurizing Rajoy to agree to a referendum. *El Mundo* adopts a neutral approach regarding the referendum proposed by Mas for 2014. Finally, *ABC*, mostly depicting Mas as a criticized sanctionee, denounces his political actions.

As for Mariano Rajoy, all the newspapers depict him as the proposee and unanimously reject the contract proposed by Mas and the demonstrators for a referendum. From this point on, there were some differences: *ABC* y *El Punt Avui* merely indicate that they reject the referendum. *El País*, *La Vanguardia* and *El Periódico* share a similar view: they reject the referendum but also call on Rajoy to discuss improved funding arrangements for Catalonia. As for *El Mundo*, it corroborates Rajoy in stating that a referendum would be unconstitutional.

The Spanish government's attitude was similar to that of Rajoy: according to all the newspapers, it is a proposee, with objectives and actions similar to those of Rajoy. Exceptionally, *El Punt Avui*, which depicts the Spanish government as a criticized sanctionee, censures it for downplaying the impact of the demonstration.

We now look at the demonstrators, who assumed the role of action subject in all the newspapers with the exception of *ABC*. *El País* and *El Mundo* consider the demonstrators to be acting in an intimidating manner and use them to achieve a goal: in *El País* pressure is put on Rajoy to allow a referendum to be called, whereas in *El Mundo* a tougher stance is adopted, it being insisted that the rally 'shackles' Mas to a referendum in 2014. Both cases are acts of aggression against someone. In contrast, *La Vanguardia* and, even more so, *El Punt Avui*, construct a narrative in which demonstrators take to the streets with three goals: to attract the world's attention, to lay the groundwork for the referendum and to achieve Catalan independence. *El Periódico*, meanwhile, limits the demonstrators to the single goal: to hold a referendum for 2014. As for *ABC*, it depicts the demonstrators in the role of contract proposer in that they 'challenge' Spain in their insistence on a referendum, a negative perspective also shared by *El País* and *El Mundo*.

The sanction stage was important in many of the newspapers (between 20% and 40%), with criticizing sanctioners predominating over approving sanctioners. The fact that the competence stage was hardly represented —except in *La Vanguardia*— is only to be expected, as a first reading rarely reflects the complex narrative schemata usually required for this stage.

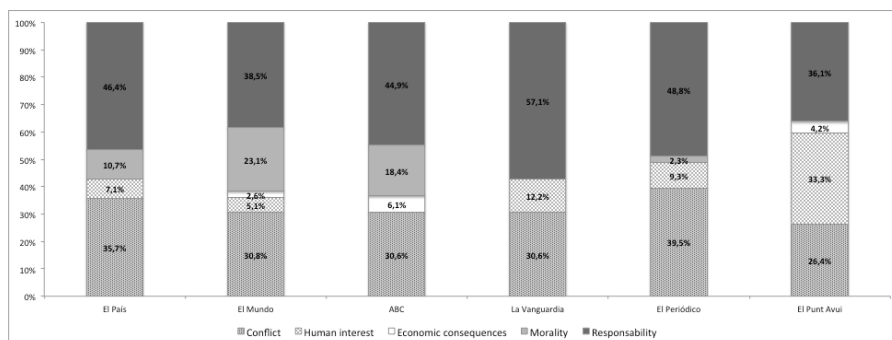
Three other noteworthy elements in specific newspapers were as follows: (1) *El País* had, by far, the most units in the contract stage (53.6%), while the rest of newspapers had similar percentages (around 30%-35%), although *El Punt Avui* fell below 25%; (2) *El País* and *La Vanguardia* had the lowest number of units in the sanction stage; and (3) although the performance stage was predominant in the three Barcelona newspapers, *El Punt Avui* had the highest percentage (45.8%).

3.2. Frame analysis results

3.2.1. Predominant frames for the *Via Catalana*

First we describe the predominant frame assigned to the *Via Catalana* by each newspaper (Figure 1). The responsibility frame featured most frequently in all the newspapers (a minimum of 36.1% in *El Punt Avui* to a maximum of 57.1% in *La Vanguardia*). In five of the six newspapers the conflict frame came a close second (a minimum of 30.6% in *ABC* and *La Vanguardia* to a maximum of 39.5% in *El Periódico*). The exception was *El Punt Avui*, where the second position was occupied by the human interest frame (33.3%), although the conflict frame also featured highly (26.4%).

Figure 1. Predominant frames for the *Via Catalana* in the analysed newspapers. Percentage of the total units of analysis for each newspaper. Each column adds up to 100. Source: Authors.



The preponderance of the responsibility frame is explained by the fact that there were many actions for which a character performed one of the following actions: propose solutions to hold the referendum or to accommodate Catalonia within Spain; demand urgent action from another character; or indicate that an institution,

political party, individual or country was responsible for the situation between Catalonia and Spain.

Moreover, the strong presence of the conflict frame shows that disagreements and recriminations abounded in journalistic handling of the *Via Catalana*. The predominance of this frame corroborates results for other research with political objects of study (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000).

At the level of individual newspapers, two aspects demonstrate divergent handling by the Madrid and Barcelona newspapers. Madrid newspapers were the only ones that significantly featured the morality frame, applied especially to Catalan nationalism and separatism, with *El Mundo* (23.1%) and *ABC* (18.4%) as noteworthy examples. The Barcelona newspapers tended to feature more the human interest frame, as evidenced by *El Punt Avui* (33.3%), followed by *La Vanguardia* (12.2%) and *El Periódico* (9.3%) with significantly lower figures. This reflects an emotional perspective on the demonstration.

Evident was the very limited presence of the economic consequences frame in all the newspapers. Given that economic issues were a key argument in Catalonia's claim for independence, this would indicate an absence of contextualization. In none of the papers did this frame surpass 7%.

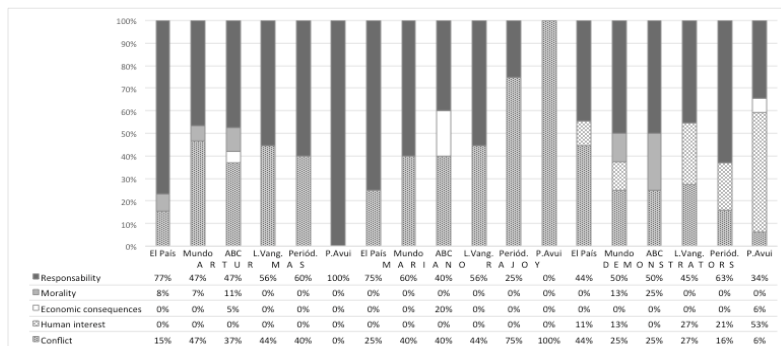
Regarding the nuances, or slant, of the frames, we focus first on *El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Vanguardia* and *El Periódico*, in which a similar pattern recurs. The predominant slant was neutral/ambiguous, although there was a difference between newspapers published in Madrid (around 50%) and in Barcelona (around 75%). Similar divergence was also reflected in the second kind of nuance most often used by the same four newspapers, negative in the Madrid media but positive in the Barcelona media. *ABC* and *El Punt Avui* reflected a different but simultaneously antagonistic pattern: *ABC* transmitted a very predominant negative nuance (65.3%) and a very secondary positive nuance (4.1%), while *El Punt Avui* transmitted similar nuances in the opposite direction, that is, mostly positive (40.3%) and to a significantly lesser degree, negative (26.4%).

3.2.2. Predominant frames for the characters

In regard to the frames used for the characters, we report results for three of the main characters for comparative purposes (Figure 2). These were the characters who most featured in each newspaper playing a narrative role, namely, Artur Mas, Mariano Rajoy and the demonstrators.

The overall results reflect the general framing detected for the *Via Catalana*, that is, preponderant responsibility and conflict frames. Referring to Artur Mas, the main frame in all the newspapers was that of responsibility, as he was considered to be responsible for the situation and/or had the means to resolve it. This frame was overwhelmingly predominant in *El País* (77%) but most especially in *El Punt Avui* (100%). Four of the newspapers —*El Mundo*, *ABC*, *La Vanguardia* and *El Periódico*— featured the conflict frame (around 40%), reflecting disagreements and recriminations regarding Mas. The human interest and economic consequences frames were residually important and the morality frame was only marginally present in the Madrid media with a clearly negative nuance.

Figure 2. Predominant frames for Artur Mas, Mariano Rajoy and the demonstrators. Percentage of times each character has a role in the main storyline of each newspaper. The columns for each newspaper add up to 100. Source: Authors.



The pattern for Mariano Rajoy was similar to that for Artur Mas: the responsibility frame predominated in *El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC* and *La Vanguardia*, whereas the conflict frame predominated in *El Periódico* and *El Punt Avui*. In fact, the conflict frame was reflected significantly in all the media. The other three frames were hardly or not at all represented.

As for the demonstrators, the responsibility frame was also prominent in most of the newspapers —with the exception of *El Punt Avui*— followed by the conflict frame. Note, however, that: (1) the Barcelona newspapers featured more the human interest frame (reflecting the general framing detected for the *Via Catalana*), with this frame, in fact, occupying first position in *El Punt Avui* (53%); and (2) the morality frame only appears in Madrid newspapers, most particularly in *El Mundo* and *ABC*, which both transmit a negative slant.

Regarding nuance, we report results for each newspaper for Artur Mas, Mariano Rajoy and the demonstrators. In the case of Artur Mas, the nuance was predominantly neutral/ambiguous, except in *El Mundo* and *ABC*, where a negative nuance predominated (over 50% in both media). A positive slant was residually important in all the media.

As for Mariano Rajoy, the nuance was also predominantly neutral/ambiguous (usually above 75%). A negative slant occupied second place in all the newspapers (around 25%, but 50% in *El Mundo*), and, as happened with Artur Mas, a positive slant was practically non-existent in all the newspapers.

Finally, regarding the demonstrators, a divergent pattern was again evident for newspapers in Madrid and in Barcelona. A neutral/ambiguous nuance was predominant in the Madrid media and, to a lesser degree, also in the Barcelona media. The main difference between the two publication centres was that the positive slant ranked highly in all three Barcelona newspapers —first in both *La Vanguardia* (55%) and *El Punt Avui* (84%) and second in *El Periódico* (26%)— but was only present to a significant degree in a single Madrid newspaper, namely, *El País* (33%). A negative slant was almost entirely absent in the Barcelona media, but featured significantly in the Madrid media (at around 25%).

3.3. Prototypical narratives

Examining the prototypical narratives —constructed from the results obtained from the narrative structure and frame analyses— *El Punt Avui* supported the independence movement with a prototypical narrative focused on performance: the demonstrators are already showing the way towards independence, sweeping Artur Mas along with them. The success of the rally is interpreted as a democratic mandate that has ‘unshackled’ Catalonia. It is taken for granted that progress towards independence is already underway. Framing is in human interest terms, with the emotions associated the Via Catalana underlined in a markedly positive way.

At the other extreme are *El Mundo* and *ABC*, both located in the criticizing sanction stage in their delegitimization of the separatist movement. In *El Mundo* the protagonists are not the demonstrators but Artur Mas and Catalonia. Mas is depicted as ‘shackled’ to the demonstrators and Catalonia as ‘shackled’ to nationalism. Neither character has any control over their future. A similar scenario is painted by *ABC*, where the main protagonist, again Artur Mas, is ‘losing control of the situation’. The action of the demonstrators in ‘challenging’ Spain is viewed negatively. A negative morality frame is mostly used in *El Mundo* and *ABC*.

In an intermediate position are *El País*, *El Periódico* and *La Vanguardia*, but with some subtle distinctions. Editorially these newspapers do not support Catalan independence, but, unlike *El Mundo* and *ABC*, their prototypical narratives call for dialogue and a negotiated agreement. Thus, according to *El País*, the demonstrators are putting pressure on Rajoy to agree to, and on Mas to call, a referendum. In this context, dialogue and agreement are actions assigned to various characters —namely, Rajoy and the Spanish and Catalan governments— with a view to accommodating Catalonia within Spain. *El País*, in fact, is the newspaper which most featured the contract stage, symbolic of an exchange of proposals.

El Periódico reflected a prototypical narrative that was very similar to that of *El País*, although it underlined the demonstrators’ role as sweeping ahead towards a referendum. Likewise with *La Vanguardia*, which, however, goes even further, depicting demonstrators as openly demanding independence and ensuring that the world becomes aware of the Catalan separatist movement. In these three newspapers, the responsibility frame predominated —indicating a willing to discuss causes and solutions— along with a neutral/ambiguous nuance.

4. Discussion and conclusions

4.1. Methodological scope

Our results demonstrate that the proposed methodology —a combination of narrative structure analysis and frame analysis— produces satisfactory results. The analysis also confirms the three hypotheses posed for the combined methodology. Thus, regarding the first hypothesis —that the use of both techniques would depict the object of study in greater breadth and depth— the findings are more extensive and multidisciplinary than would be achieved by either of the techniques used in isolation. Regarding the second hypothesis, the two techniques have not only been

demonstrated to be conceptually complementary but also lend themselves to combined application in practice. In relation to our case study, the narrative approach, in providing a systematic overview of narrative plots and the roles, objectives and actions of the various characters, identified confrontations, sources of assistance and criticisms. The framing approach, meanwhile, provided insights into how journalists framed the narrative plots.

The joint methodological application of the two these techniques highlighted different aspects of the newspaper items, which, when contrasted, shed new light on their characteristics. This confirms the third hypothesis that that the comparison of the results for each approach would generate novel findings regarding the analysed texts.

In relation to our set of newspaper items, the frame analysis detected a significant presence of responsibility, conflict and, to a lesser extent, human interest frames. Nonetheless, each of these frames can be linked up with any of the narrative stages (contract, performance, competence and sanction) and with any of the narrative roles. Analysis of the narrative structure, therefore, pinpointed specific associations between elements that reflected responsibilities, conflicts and human interest angles. More specifically, we detected the following links between frames and narrative structures in the newspaper items:

- The responsibility frame mainly featured in the contract stage and was closely associated with contract proposer and proposee roles. This would indicate the existence of multiple proposals aimed at —somehow— channelling the Catalan independence movement, as well as efforts to identify those responsible for the problem and for finding a solution.
- The conflict frame featured in the contract stage but also in the sanction stage. In the contract stage it was linked to the renouncing proposee role. Since this role reflects the rejection of proposals, the evidence points to a high level of dissent. In the sanction stage conflict was closely associated with the role of criticizing sanctioner. This would underline opprobrium and friction (reflecting the conflict frame), mainly regarding negotiations of some possible solution for Catalonia. Conflict was much less evident in the performance stage, as evidenced by the paucity of opponent and rival roles.
- The human interest frame was detected predominantly in the performance stage and linked especially to the demonstrators as action subject.

4.2. Case study

The satisfactory results yielded by the combined methodologies helped detect the stance of particular newspapers regarding the Catalan independence movement. Thus, *El Punt Avui* fully supported the independence project, *ABC* and *El Mundo* were fully against it and *El País*, *La Vanguardia* and *El Periódico* adopted an intermediate position: while opposed to the notion of the independence, they strongly advocated meaningful dialogue. As for the key factor in determining the stance of each newspaper regarding the Catalan conflict, although territorial origin —Barcelona or Madrid— certainly was a factor, it was not the only one. Neither did the left-right axis seem to be a determining factor, as the ideologically similar *La Vanguardia* and *El Mundo* adopted different stances regarding separatism. We

hypothesize that a third factor to be taken into account is associated with the editorial line of each newspaper.

Finally, regarding the prototypical narrative of each newspaper, it is interesting to note the differences between the Barcelona and Madrid newspapers, as they recount divergent versions of the Catalan independence movement. Broadly speaking, the Madrid newspapers focused on two institutional characters —Artur Mas and Mariano Rajoy— located them in the contract stage and related a narrative coloured by a certain negativity. In contrast, the Barcelona newspapers configured a positive narrative that mainly focused on the demonstrators in a central performing role. The human interest angle was also more evident in the more emotional Barcelona reports, whereas the reports from Madrid had more moralistic undertones.

The fact that Madrid newspapers focused more on the contract stage would suggest the following narrative: as long as Spanish institutions do not admit the possibility of a referendum and will never accept independence, the performance of the separatist mission is reprehensible and lacks legitimacy will inevitably be viewed negatively. In contrast, the Barcelona media focused more on the performance stage in a narrative that does not imply that independence is being achieved, but rather that the groundwork is being laid to achieve it. In other words, the corresponding narrative gives the separatist movement substance and makes it seem like a realizable goal.

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