

On membership categorization: 'us', 'them' and 'doing violence' in political discourse



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ABSTRACT. This article concerns the attacks on New York and Washington in September 2001. We use Membership Categorization Analysis to establish how the key figures involved in the conflict represented these events and the participants in them. We analyse public addresses made soon after the attacks by the US President George W. Bush, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Osama bin Laden of Al Qaeda. Each speaker distinguished 'us' from 'them' and formulated this distinction so as to justify past violent actions and to prepare grounds for future ones. Bush and Blair both distinguished 'us' from 'them' in social, political and moral terms, whereas bin Laden did so in religious terms. The categorizations were not done in isolation from each other, but were instead networked. We discuss the relation between membership categorizations, presentations of happenings and violent actions, prior and subsequent and we extend our concept of a dialogical network.

KEY WORDS: *dialogical networks, membership categorization analysis, violence*

Introduction

The point of this article is to investigate public presentations of violence and of participants in the violence. We analyse presentations of the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and Pentagon in Washington on 11 September 2001 and the materials we shall use are threefold. The first source is two addresses by President Bush to the nation, which were available in transcript form on White House website.¹ The second is a statement to the British House of Commons by Tony Blair and the ensuing parliamentary debate on the event, which took place on 14 September 2001.² The third source is two statements by Osama bin Laden, broadcast on Al Jazeera television in Qatar.³ We are interested in not only how these presentations of the happenings vary, but also how they are coordinated in arguments by the participants separated in time and space. To this end we make

use of the 'dialogical network' (e.g. Nekvapil and Leudar, 2002) and in doing this we further develop this concept. Our analysis will reveal that the presentations of events provide moral accounts of past actions and prepare the ground for the future violence – presentations and actions are closely related.

The materials are analysed using Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) originally formulated by Sacks in the 1960s (see Sacks, 1992, and specifically lecture 6 in part I, lectures 7, 8 in part II and lectures 1, 2 in part III) and subsequently developed and extended by Jarrysi (1984), Hester and Eglin (1997), Watson (1994, 1997), Hausendorf (2000) and Leudar and Nekvapil (2000). MCA is a formal analysis of the procedures people employ to make sense of other people and their activities.

Sacks (1992) and those after him have suggested that everyday knowledge about people is organized in membership categorization devices. These consist of membership categories, which are constituted by category-bound activities, together with the rules for their application. MCA is, however, not formal semantics – it stresses situated aspects of categorizing, and focuses on how it is done in talk in activities (cf. Watson, 1997). MCA studies situated common-sense knowledge about people as it is locally invoked and reproduced; it stresses that categorizing is normally done to accomplish something other than just categorizing (Hausendorf, 2000). Our previous work, for example, used MCA to clarify how political and ethnic identities are established and how they change in TV debates. In a study of Roma in central Europe, we observed that Czechs typically placed the membership category 'Roma' in a collection that included criminals, extremists and other marginal groups. Roma, by contrast, saw themselves as one nation among many. The activities bound to the category 'Roma' by Czechs were negations of what they (the Czechs) took to be most positive about themselves. Roma, however, saw themselves as having valid culture and characteristics. These contrary presentations were not just representations but used in specific circumstances to accomplish rejections or to protest against the rejections.

This is one of our concerns here also – not only to show that there are alternative representations of what happened in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 (this is obvious and does not need demonstrating), but also how these alternatives are mutually aligned, and how they justify past happenings or prepare the ground for the future ones. MCA, as we practice it, has a strong pragmatic component – it orients to practical action. We shall see that much of the categorizing in our materials consisted in delimiting one's own moral, social and religious characteristics as well as those of the opponents, and in doing so accomplishing rejections, recruiting allies and setting the ground for future violence (while, of course, not necessarily presenting it in this manner).

Much of the original work in MCA has concerned personal membership categories that are relatively fixed (e.g. mother, child, teenager, adult, doctor, patient), but the technique has a wider application. It has been used to investigate institutions such as the army, the state and the family (Hester and Eglin, 1997), and even abstract objects such as laws (Nekvapil and Leudar, 2002). Our study

concerns the making of the enemy, and the way in which the implicit division between 'us' and 'them' is accomplished by the parties in a conflict.

We analyse 'us' and 'them' as membership categories. These are the most general categories that members have at their disposal while doing everyday sociology. We start with the assumption that the two categories are a 'standardized relational pair' – using one part of the pair in interaction invokes the other. Moreover, a standardized relational pair is defined not simply in terms of typical expectations that incumbents of one category have of incumbents of the other, but also in moral terms – a standardized relational pair 'constitutes a locus for a set of rights and obligations' (Sacks, 1972: 37). Analysing 'us' and 'them' as membership categories is not common in MCA. There these are usually analysed as *pro-terms*, which are used in interactions to accomplish various tasks, for example to hedge requests, without, however, doing category work (Watson, 1987).

The presentation of violence in the media has been studied previously using MCA, notably by Eglin and Hester (1999) in their analysis of the 1989 'Montreal Massacre'. Their analysis demonstrates that membership categorizations of victims and perpetrators are typically not done for their own sake, but as part of 'locally ordered practical actions'; in other words, categorizing is situated. This approach is a welcome move away from theorizing about a global social function of violence or from stories that evolutionary psychologists tell about its biological origins, to a detailed inspection of concrete violent social interactions and their reports. The materials we analyse here are not simply presentations of violence, they are violence too.

Our materials are public domain media texts which are *not* independent of each other, or related to each other merely by the virtue of referring to the same event (here what happened in New York and Washington in September 2001). Media texts can be coordinated in a 'dialogical network', a term introduced by Leudar and Nekvapil (Leudar, 1998; Leudar and Nekvapil, 1998). Nekvapil and Leudar (2002, in press a) have demonstrated that media events, such as television and radio programmes, press conferences and newspaper articles are networked: connected interactively, thematically and argumentatively. The contributions of individual actors using media are distributed in time and space (a politician can, for instance, react in the media to what another politician expressed publicly elsewhere) and they are often multiplied (for instance, what is said in a TV studio may be reproduced in several newspapers). Employing the concept of dialogical network, we are able to treat what was said in the White House, the House of Commons and somewhere in Afghanistan not as separate events, but as linked ones. In our previous work we analysed dialogical networks emerging within boundaries of one nation, whereas in this study we demonstrate that the concept of dialogical network can be used to capture even aspects of world-wide communication.⁴ Here we demonstrate that even the talk of the enemies is intricately networked.

Analysis

GEORGE W. BUSH, THE WHITE HOUSE

The attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon took place on 11 September 2001. America's President Bush made one statement on that day and another on 12 September. His very first sentence contains three pronouns 'our' and this implies that there is somebody else, 'them'. Our concern is the basis on which Bush distinguishes 'us' from 'them'. Note, however, that the use of a pronoun in the text does not automatically mean that speakers are engaged in category work. Pronouns can fulfil a pure textual (co-referential) function.⁵

(1) Bush statement 11/9/01

- 1 THE PRESIDENT: Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our
- 2 very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The
- 3 victims were in airplanes, or in their offices; secretaries, businessmen and women,
- 4 military and federal workers; moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives
- 5 were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror.

In his first sentence Bush presents the events as an 'attack' and as 'deliberate and deadly terrorist acts' and later as 'evil, despicable acts of terror' (l. 5). Such attacks have both victims and perpetrators but who was actually attacked? President Bush lists those who died or were injured (ll. 3 – 4), but note that he addresses his 'fellow citizens', and argues first that what was attacked was 'our way of life' and 'our very freedom'. He speaks as a president and so it is clear that it is the nation that has been attacked, not just those in the World Trade Centre. Moreover, the classes of physical victims he lists in effect represent the nation. The actual term he uses to gloss the list is 'victims' and so 'those attacked' then subsumes both these victims and the other 'fellow citizens' of the USA. This extends the incumbency of the category 'those attacked' significantly and the question is, what does this extension afford? 'Acts of terror', of course, do not have just victims, but necessarily also perpetrators, so who are they? Their identity is at this point implicit in their actions – they are those who carried out these 'deadly', 'evil', 'despicable' 'acts of terror' (see Sacks, 1992 on the possibility of recognizing a category via its category-bound activities). The attacks were, however, not carried out for their own sake, but to attack 'freedom' and 'our way of life' (ll. 1–2), so the incumbency of the category 'attacker' is also likely to be wider than just the terrorists who carried out the attacks.

Our analysis so far indicates that two category pairs operate in Bush's statement. One pair is 'attacker'/'attacked', the other is 'us'/'them'. Note that this is not just our understanding of the text – both category pairs are implicit in the words Bush used ('our' and 'attack'). The relationship between these pairs is, however, not yet determinate. The two pairs are not necessarily identical – for instance, some of 'us' might not have been attacked and some of 'them' might not be 'perpetrators'. But the pairs may be identical in particular use and depending on how each contrast is drawn. This is one empirical problem we address in this

article. So far, we can say that the ‘us’/‘them’ distinction is drawn in terms of ‘our way of life’, ‘freedom’ and their implied enemies, and those who carried out the attacks count as ‘them’ – but who else does?

Up to now, President Bush implicitly constituted the attackers in terms of their actions and, in Extract 2, he elaborates on their nature.

(2) *Bush statement 11/9/01*

6 The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures
 7 collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding
 8 anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and
 9 retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong.
 10 A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake
 11 the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of
 12 America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American
 13 resolve.

Bush here describes the attacks (‘acts of mass murder’, and ‘terrorist attacks’ (ll. 8, 10) and their consequences. Those that are physical he presents in their full magnitude, but not the psychological and moral consequences. He accepts the scale of the devastation (ll. 6–7) but asserts that the attackers have failed ‘to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat’ (ll. 9–10); the consequences are instead ‘disbelief’, ‘sadness’ and anger’. We suggested earlier that the category ‘attacked’ was a collection of categories, which included both physical and moral victims. But, is one a victim of an attack if that attack did not succeed? President Bush maintains that the attack did not succeed as an assault on American way of life – this implies that Bush’s category, ‘those attacked’, consists of ‘physical victims’ and ‘*intended* moral victims’. The incumbency of that category may imply a weakness relative to the attacker. In asserting that the psychological aim of the attacks failed, Bush, however, returns them to the position of strength – moreover they are ‘great people’ and a ‘great nation’.

In Extract 3 Bush provides reasons for the attack and uses these to develop the ‘us’/‘them’ distinction.

(3) *Bush statement 11/9/01*

14 America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and
 15 opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.
 16 Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature. And we responded with
 17 the best of America – with the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for
 18 strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could.

The ‘us’/‘them’ and ‘attacked’/‘attacker’ category pairs are conjoined in that the incumbents of the categories ‘us’ and ‘those attacked’ are the same. America is associated with ‘freedom’ and ‘opportunity’ (ll. 14–15), and it is because of this that it is the intended victim of the attacks. The implication is that ‘they’ are the enemies of freedom and opportunity. The attackers, however, also exemplify ‘evil,

the very worst of human nature' but we the victims are 'caring' (l. 17). The 'us'/'them' distinction is then a moral, social and political one.

This means that the attackers are presented as terrorists who are enemies of freedom – not other men's freedom fighters. These presentations set up grounds for a reaction. As Bush puts it, 'a great people has been moved *to defend* a great nation' (l. 10). Whatever may follow will be in response to violence and the enemy presented in this way. The presentations of violent events and of the participants in them are not for their own sake; they are grounds for actions – some of which happened already, and some which are yet to come (Extract 4).

(4) *Bush statement 11/9/01*

19 Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government's emergency
20 response plans. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. Our emergency teams are
21 working in New York City and Washington, D.C. to help with local rescue efforts.
22 Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured, and to take every
23 precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks.

The coupling of presentation and action here is twofold. Descriptions of the physical consequences of the attack are coupled with the reference to the rescue efforts. And categorizations of the attackers prepared grounds for the warning that 'our military is powerful, and it's prepared' (l. 20) and will protect 'our citizens' (l. 23). Military action is then imminent, linked to the attacks and in direct response to them. Note the orderliness of Bush's address – the representations which set the ground for the action come first in the text, and the action proposal follows more or less immediately.

Bush has so far described 'them' in terms of contrastive characteristics closely related to the actual attacks on September 11. Those who carried out those attacks are, however, dead, and cannot be brought to justice. Who then is to be the target of the military response? The answer is, as we have seen already, that the actual perpetrators are not the only incumbents of the category 'them' (Extract 5, ll. 28–31).

(5) *Bush Sstatement 11/9/01 (four lines omitted)*

28 The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I've directed the full
29 resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those
30 responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the
31 terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.

The physical victims were not the only victims, and the actual attackers were not the only perpetrators. There are those 'behind the evil acts' (l. 28), who are hidden and need to be found, 'those [who are] responsible' (ll. 29–30), and 'those who harbour them' (l. 31). 'They', the enemy, are a collection of categories, loosely structured along the mundane analysis of how one may participate in a collective act – those who motivate it, plan it, carry it out, etc. All of these are culpable and so subject to retribution. For Bush, the enemy includes not only

those who carried out the attacks, but also all those who align themselves with them and support them. This formulation of violence inevitably broadens the conflict. It is also the means whereby the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and ‘victims’ and ‘attackers’ is further fused – ‘they’ are now the ‘attackers’.

In Extract 5, Bush not only elaborates on the nature of ‘them’, he also specifies the actions that will be taken – ‘finding those responsible’ and ‘bringing them to justice’ (l. 30). Saying this shifts ‘our’ status from being ‘victims’ to being enforcers of justice. His membership category work has a temporal dimension in the flow of talk, which is essential to understanding it.

An important aspect of the ‘us’/‘them’ category pair is that the membership is open (see Extract 6).

(6) *Bush statement 11/9/01*

32 I appreciate so very much the members of Congress who have joined me in strongly
 33 condemning these attacks. And on behalf of the American people, I thank the many
 34 world leaders who have called to offer their condolences and assistance.
 35 America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in
 36 the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism.
 ...

We have already seen that the category ‘us’ is a collection of categories but it is not a closed collection. In Extract 6 this includes those ‘who want peace and security in the world’ (ll. 35–36). Bush in effect extends the membership of the category beyond the US – anybody who ‘want[s] peace and security’ can be a member. (The problem is of course who decides whether this membership criterion is satisfied or not.) Housley and Fitzgerald (2002) noted that ‘collection openness’ in radio phone-ins is accomplished by the use of the ‘etc. corollary’ and it provides a place for new listeners in a category. What happens here is similar – the criterion can be thought of as an ‘etc. corollary’ and the resulting openness makes it possible to react to Bush’s speech in one of two ways – to accept or reject his indirect invitation to join the category. In this way, it can work as an impulse for further development of the dialogical network.

The categories ‘us’ and ‘them’ are then both families of sub-categories, each of which holds a distinct identity that does not dissolve by being included in either ‘us’ or ‘them’. These families are distinguished in moral, social and political terms, and the membership of either is not, at this point closed. The pragmatic *raison d’être* of the collectivities managed by ‘we’ and ‘they’ is to provide grounds for the retaliation – here to wage the ‘war against terrorism’ (l. 36). This is the point of the collectivity that President Bush aims for.

On 12 September, the day after the attacks, President Bush addressed the nation again. Extract 7 shows that there is both continuity and change in how Bush represented the attacks, ‘us’, and ‘them’.

(7) *Bush statement 12/9/01*

1 THE PRESIDENT: I have just completed a meeting with my national security

- 2 team, and we have received the latest intelligence updates.
 3 The deliberate and deadly attacks which were carried out yesterday against our
 4 country were more than acts of terror. They were acts of war.
 5 This will require our country to unite in steadfast determination and
 6 resolve. Freedom and democracy are under attack.

Bush uses similar language as in his first address, characterizing the events as 'deliberate and deadly' (compare Extract 1, l. 2 and Extract 7, l. 3). His formulation of the events, however, is more extreme. He describes the attacks as 'more than acts of terror' – now they are 'acts of war' (l. 4), and this suggests reprisals on a different scale. What has also changed is Bush's characterization of what has been attacked. On 11 September it was 'freedom and opportunity' (Extract 3, ll. 14–15), now it is 'freedom and *democracy*' (Extract 7, l. 6). As on the previous day, Bush characterizes the attackers by their lack of humanity (cf. Extract 3, l. 16). This is, however, amplified on this occasion.

(8) *Bush statement 12/9/01*

- 7 The American people need to know that we're facing a different enemy
 8 than we have ever faced. This enemy hides in shadows, and has no regard
 9 for human life. This is an enemy who preys on innocent and unsuspecting
 10 people, then runs for cover. But it won't be able to run for cover forever.
 11 This is an enemy that tries to hide. But it won't be able to hide forever. This is an
 12 enemy that thinks its harbors are safe. But they won't be safe forever.

It is at this point that Bush explicitly introduces the category 'enemy'. The enemy is both cowardly (he 'runs for cover' and 'tries to hide') and inhuman ('he has no regard for human life and preys on innocents'). The inhumanity is made very obvious in selecting the verb 'prey' to represent the attacks and the pronoun 'it' (not 'he') to refer to the enemy (ll. 10–11) – the incumbents of 'them' are now the 'enemy'. This presentation is coupled in the text with an implied threat (l. 12). The distinction between 'us' and 'them' then continues to be drawn in social, political, and moral terms with the lack of human qualities in the attackers stressed. Later in the article we resolve whether those who align themselves with Bush see the 'enemy' in same way. The 'enemy', as we shall see, certainly draws the distinction between 'us' and 'them' in a very different way.

Up until this point in his second address Bush has categorized the actions of the attackers and the attackers themselves – next he focuses on those 'attacked'.

(9) *Bush statement – 12/9/01*

- 13 This enemy attacked not just our people, but all freedom-loving people
 14 everywhere in the world. The United States of America will use all our
 15 resources to conquer this enemy. We will rally the world. We will be patient, we
 16 will be focused, and we will be steadfast in our determination.
 17 This battle will take time and resolve. But make no mistake about it: we will win.

In his first address those attacked were the US citizens, now they are 'freedom-

loving people' worldwide (l. 13). Is this characteristic, however, enough to qualify one as being one of 'us'? Waging 'the war against terrorism' was an activity bound to the category 'us' in the first speech (cf. Extract 6, l. 36), and not all 'freedom-loving people' are likely to join this campaign. There is then an inherent contradiction in the category 'us' which has to be resolved. The USA has a central role in any such war – others will be rallied. The category 'us' remains open.

Extending the category 'us' has a purpose – it prepares the ground for retaliation against the attackers. Such retaliation could be by the US military on behalf of victims in the USA. Now, with the category extended, it can be arguably on behalf of victims worldwide. The category work done by President Bush can be understood as a step towards securing allies for a lengthy campaign (Extract 10, l. 29, and the uptake by Blair in Extract 11).

(10) *Bush statement – 12/9/01*

29 The freedom-loving nations of the world stand by our side.

30 This will be a monumental struggle of good versus evil. But good will prevail.

31 Thank you very much.

Bush's addresses have the subtle characteristics of a network. His first statement was broadcast all over the world and probably translated into many languages, as was the case, for example, in the Czech Republic, where the whole translation was published in a newspaper *Lidové noviny* (13/9/2001, p. 11) – in our terms, it was multiplied. In addition, Bush expresses thanks for condolences and offers of assistance, and indirectly invites others elsewhere to react to his speech, be it verbally or in some other way, and in particular to join the war on terrorism. We shall see whether his allies accept the incumbency offered on these terms.

The ways in which Bush constitutes the 'us' and 'them' category pair can be summarized in general terms as follows. The categories are contrastive, and distinguished from each other intentionally, in terms of meaning polarities, as well as in terms of their respective incumbencies. 'Us' and 'them' is each a collection of given membership categories joined by their relationship to both values, and perhaps more importantly, to dispositions to act in particular ways (both in the past and in the future). These categories are changed by 'tuning up' predicates bound to them as well as by changing the incumbency. The way categories are formulated is clearly related to action – categories are presented as naturally following from past happenings and they clearly prepare grounds for the next step in the conflict. Is this manner of category work a function of the particular domain of discourse we are analysing? This question we shall leave for the general discussion.

TONY BLAIR, THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The British Parliament was recalled on 14 September to hear Prime Minister Blair's statement on the events in New York, and to debate it.⁶ Our particular interest is in how their presentations of these events relate to those by Bush. First,

what does it mean for Blair to be one of 'us', rather than one of 'them', and what qualities are bound to such incumbency?

(11) *Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604. International Terrorism and Attacks in the USA (9.37 a.m.)*

1 The Prime Minister (Mr. Tony Blair): I am grateful, Mr. Speaker, that you agreed to the
2 recall of Parliament to debate the hideous and foul events in New York, Washington
3 and Pennsylvania that took place on Tuesday 11 September.
4 I thought it particularly important in view of the fact that these attacks were not just
5 attacks upon people and buildings; nor even merely upon the United States of America;
6 these were attacks on the basic democratic values in which we all believe so
7 passionately and on the civilized world. It is therefore right that Parliament, the fount of
8 our own democracy, makes its democratic voice heard.

There is continuity between how Bush and Blair present the events. The attacks are again not just physical attacks, located in the USA. They are worldwide attacks on democracy (Extract 11, ll. 4–7, cf. Extract 7, l. 6). As Bush did, Blair distinguishes two types of victim – those attacked directly (l. 5) and the victims of an attack on democratic values (l. 6). Blair, however, does not simply repeat what Bush had said. He sets out the topic of his statement using an extreme-case formulation – the events in the USA are 'hideous and foul' (l. 2). (Remember that Bush started by calling the same events 'deliberate and deadly terrorist acts' – Extract 1, l. 2). Bush categorized the events in America as attacks on freedom and democracy (Extract 7, l. 6) and Blair takes this one step further – they are attacks on 'the civilized world'.⁷ Both of these are *assessment amplifications* that demonstrate Blair's feelings about the attacks. Bush referred to 'our friends and allies' (Extract 6, l. 35) and called 'the freedom loving nations' to stand by America's side (Extract 10, l. 29) – by doing the assessments as he does, Blair heeds the call (Extract 11, ll. 6–7). What Blair is saying then has two points – it specifies his position in the conflict (it establishes the alliance in public) and, at the same time, distinguishes 'us' from 'them'. The implication for the 'us'/'them' distinction is, of course, clear – 'we' are civilized, 'they' are not. Using terms from Leudar and Nekvapil (in press a, in press b), Blair and Bush's statements are thematically, argumentatively and dialogically connected – there is the beginning of a dialogical network.

Blair is speaking in the House of Commons, but in saying 'we', he does not refer simply to the Members of the House, but instead to 'the British' (l. 17).

(12) *Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604*

15 Let us unite too, with the vast majority of decent people throughout the world in
16 sending our condolences to the Government and people of America. They are our
17 friends and allies, and we the British are a people who stand by their friends in times of
18 need, tragedy and trial, and we do so without hesitation now.

The category 'us' now unites 'the vast majority of decent people throughout the

world', the British people, as well as the government and people of America. As in Bush's formulation, that category is a structured collection of categories, which, although joined here for a purpose, retain their autonomy.

The sending of condolences is expected between allies (l. 16). In Extract 6 (l. 34) Bush thanked the world leaders for doing so. Blair was presumably one, and here he duplicates the act publicly, and on behalf of the British. So the condolences are duplicated, with one of the duplicates coming *after* others of them have been acknowledged already. Bush and Blair's statements are again dialogically networked.

Note that Bush does not send the British Minister condolences, even though the category 'us' has been extended to contain 'freedom-loving people'. This is not surprising because one point of the extended category is to provide for the future retaliation. This is precisely what Blair attends to next in his speech.

(13) *Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604*

30 Because the World Trade Centre was the home of many big financial firms, and
 31 because many of their employees are British, whoever committed these acts of
 32 terrorism will have murdered at least a hundred British citizens, maybe many more.
 33 Murder of British people in New York is no different in nature from their murder here
 34 in the heart of Britain itself. In the most direct sense, therefore, we have not merely an
 35 interest, but an obligation to bring those responsible to account.

Blair presents the attacks as 'acts of terrorism', and the British victims as victims of a murder (ll. 31–33). Casualties of war are not usually represented as victims of murder, nor are soldiers represented as murderers. This formulation then implies that the retaliation will not be a conventional war, and indeed Blair continues to say that there is an 'obligation to bring those responsible to account' (l. 35). Moreover, even though he speaks as a Prime Minister, he stresses that all those subsumed under 'we' or who aspire to it have this obligation. The call for unity (Extract 14, ll. 72–74), however, indicates Blair's concern that the category 'us' is not secure in this respect.

(14) *Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604*

72 Secondly, this is a moment when every difference between nations, every divergence
 73 of interest, every irritant in our relations, should be put to one side in one common
 74 endeavour. The world should stand together against this outrage.
 75 NATO has already, for the first time since it was founded in 1949, invoked article 5
 76 and determined that this attack in America will be considered as an attack against the
 77 alliance as a whole. The UN Security Council on Wednesday passed a resolution
 78 which set out its readiness to take all necessary steps to combat terrorism. From
 79 Russia, China, the EU, from Arab states, Asia and the Americas, from every continent
 80 of the world, has come united condemnation. This solidarity must be maintained and
 81 translated into support for action.

Blair acknowledges possible differences (ll. 72–73) but these must be set aside to enable united action. This is explicit in Blair's call for 'solidarity' to be 'translated

into support for action' (ll. 80–81). Achieving cohesiveness and preparing the ground for retaliation go hand in hand.

So far we have argued that the 'us'/'them' categorizations are done in such a way as to warrant retaliation; in Extract 15 there is a complementary phenomenon. Blair represents 'the terrorists' in a way that highlights the possibility of an even more serious future attacks by the terrorists (ll. 112–116). This again warrants action against the enemy, but this time as a defence against future attacks.

(15) *Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604*

110 Let us make this reflection too. A week ago, anyone suggesting that terrorists would
111 kill thousands of innocent people in downtown New York would have been
112 dismissed as alarmist, yet it happened. We know that these groups are fanatics,
113 capable of killing without discrimination. The limits on the numbers that they kill and
114 their methods of killing are not governed by any sense of morality. The limits are
115 only practical and technical. We know, that they would, if they could, go further and
116 use chemical, biological, or even nuclear weapons of mass destruction. We know,
117 also, that there are groups or people, occasionally states, who will trade the
118 technology and capability of such weapons.

Note that Blair refers to the attackers as fanatics (ll. 112–113). This categorization develops the 'us'/'them' contrast further, as is also obvious in Extract 16.

(16) *Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604*

124 Terrorism has taken on a new and frightening aspect. The people perpetrating it wear
125 the ultimate badge of the fanatic: they are prepared to commit suicide in pursuit of
126 their beliefs. Our beliefs are the very opposite of theirs. We believe in reason,
127 democracy and tolerance. These beliefs are the foundation of our civilised world.
128 They are enduring, they have served us well, and as history has shown, we have been
129 prepared to fight, when necessary, to defend them. The fanatics should know that we
130 hold our beliefs every bit as strongly as they hold theirs, and now is the time to
131 show it.

What is opposed to fanaticism (religious or otherwise)? Acting reasonably and with moderation. The suicides of the attackers are presented not as matters of personal courage, but as stemming from unreason and the lack of tolerance. The distinction between 'us' and 'them' is again extended – it now includes a contrast between reason and the lack of it (ll. 126–127).

Blair's reference to 'fanaticism' and the lack of tolerance could, however, be interpreted to mean that the 'us'/'them' distinction is in religious terms. Blair tries to forestall this hearing in Extract 17.

(17) *Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604*

82 We do not yet know the exact origin of this evil. But if, as appears likely, it is so called
83 Islamic fundamentalists, we know that they do not speak or act for the vast majority
84 of decent law-abiding Muslims throughout the world.

85 I say to our Arab and Muslim friends: 'Neither you nor Islam is responsible for this;
 86 on the contrary, we know you share our shock at this terrorism,
 87 and we ask you as friends to make common cause
 88 with us in defeating this barbarism that is totally foreign to the true
 89 spirit and teachings of Islam.'

Blair anticipates that religion will be cited as the motivation for the attacks. He argues that 'the vast majority' of Muslims are not associated with the 'Islamic fundamentalists', who probably carried out the attacks (ll. 82–83). He splits the category 'Muslims' into 'Muslim fundamentalists' and 'decent law-abiding Muslims'. The former are the enemy, the latter belong with 'us'. Now how is this distinction received in the House of Commons?

The interactions in the House are standardized. On an occasion such as the one we are analysing, the Prime Minister makes a statement, the MPs comment and raise questions in response to that statement and finally the Prime Minister responds to these. The point about the position of Muslims in the unfolding tragedy was taken up by the MP Khalid Mahmood.

(18) *Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604*

364 Mr. Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Prime Minister accept
 365 my unreserved condemnation of the atrocities carried out in the United States? Will
 366 he also accept that that terrible act of terrorism claimed the lives of many people of
 367 many faiths, including Muslims? In addition, will he assure the House that it would
 368 be quite wrong for British Muslims to be tarred with the same brush following that
 369 dreadful act of terrorism?

There are two important points to note about Mahmood's intervention. One is its sequentiality – he first clarifies his own position in the conflict. He condemns the attacks on the US, and his representation of the events chimes with Blair's (l. 365). Only after having done this, does he ask for the reassurance from the Prime Minister that he does not hold Muslims *in general* to be responsible, pointing out that many of them were victims of the attack. He condemns the attacks as if the sincerity of his condemnation was open to doubt because of who he is, and acknowledging the likelihood that some may blame all the Muslims for the attacks.

Mahmood, however, does not say that the attacks had nothing whatsoever to do with Islam. His strategy is instead to dissociate 'British Muslims' from the attacks – they should not be 'tarred with the same brush' (l. 368). Mahmood then does not reject the implication that the motivation behind the attacks comes from Islam. Like Blair, he has instead split the category 'Muslim'. The way the category is split in each case is, however, not exactly the same.

In his reply, Blair takes up and develops Mahmood's representation of Muslims.

(19) *Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604*

370 The Prime Minister: I thank my Hon. Friend for his words. He speaks on behalf of
 371 many Muslims in this country when he says that they share the shock and horror at

372 this outrage. The fact that the Muslim Council of Britain issued a statement of such
 373 strength and so quickly indicates what we know to be true: that those who truly
 374 follow the religion of Islam are decent, peaceful and law-abiding people. Like us,
 375 they have often been victims of terrorism and, like us, they want it stamped out.

Blair recognizes Mahmood's unique position in the House – 'he speaks on behalf of many Muslims'.⁸ He thus accepts the understanding of the events Mahmood voices not as his own only, but also as that of others of his faith. Blair describes these as 'decent, peaceful and law-abiding people' and allies in the war on terrorism. Blair in effect uses Mahmood's intervention (and the statement of the Muslim council of Britain) as evidence for his claim that those who *truly* follow the faith of Islam could not have carried out the attacks (ll. 373–375). Blair and Mahmood both acknowledge that the attackers have a link with Islam, but both explicitly distance the majority of Muslims from them (Extracts 17–19) and thereby try to take the religious dimension out of the conflict. Mahmood does this for British Muslims, Blair for Muslims in general. The category 'Muslims' is therefore heterogeneous and distributed between 'us' and 'them'.

We have seen, therefore, that Blair's category formulation is coordinated with Bush's in a network. He does not, however, simply echo what Bush had said. He amplifies some of the assessments. President Bush did not deal with the religious dimension of the attacks. Blair did and this was contingent on the situation in Britain at the time, and in particular on the presence of a substantial Muslim community in the UK. Blair acknowledges that there might be reasons for the attacks, Bush does not.

The strategies of category formulation in the House of Commons debate are, however, very like those used by George Bush in his speeches. One addition is the splitting of a given membership category, which is of interest to us as it documents how given resources of language are used in situ. Mahmood and Blair both split the membership category 'Muslim', and allocate the products of the division in the 'us'/'them' minimal category pair. Each of them, however, splits the category differently, depending on his specific aims at that point in the conflict (these aims being respectively to pre-empt the backlash against British Muslims and to recruit allies in the Arab world). Both of them, however, rely on a given membership category, 'Muslim'. The formulation of the 'us'/'them' category pair then consists in situated deployment of available resources. We return to this point in our general discussion.

OSAMA BIN LADEN, AL JAZEERA

The following statement was issued by Osama bin Laden on 25 September on Al Jazeera television. It was translated for the BBC, and this translation is available on their website.⁹ Our interest is again in how the attacks on America are presented, in how bin Laden distinguishes 'us' from 'them' and in what actions his presentations justify and afford.

(20) Bin Laden, Al Jazeera, 25/9/01

- 1 To our Muslim brothers in Pakistan, peace be upon you.
- 2 I have received with great sadness the news that some of our Muslim brothers have
- 3 been killed in Karachi while expressing their denouncement of the forces of the
- 4 American crusade and their allies in the Muslim lands of Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- 5 We ask God to receive them as martyrs and may they become like the prophets, the
- 6 believers and good people who were chosen to become God's companions, and may
- 7 God grant their relatives patience and solace and bless their sons with good fortune
- 8 and reward them greatly for their faith in Islam.
- 9 And for those martyrs who left behind children, those children will be mine and I
- 10 will be their guardian with the blessing of God.

From the beginning bin Laden builds the 'us'/'them' distinction in religious terms. He addresses Muslims, singling out 'our Muslim brothers in Pakistan'. He contrast 'Muslim brothers' and the 'forces of American crusade and their allies'; the former are the victims, the latter are the aggressors (ll. 2–5). The victims then become 'martyrs' (l. 5) and this strengthens the religious character of the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. Bush and Blair's 'us'/'them' contrast was built in moral and sociopolitical terms; bin Laden's is a religious one. This does not mean that there are no religious overtones in Bush's speeches.¹⁰ His first statement, for instance, concluded with an appeal to pray. The point is, however, that he does not use religion to distinguish 'us' from 'them'.

Bin Laden's focus on religion is consistent – the conflict is presented in religious terms too. In Extract 21 he describes the action taken by his 'Muslim brothers' as being 'in defence of Islam', and the conflict is a 'glorious Islamic battle'. The 'Jewish crusader campaign' 'led by the chief crusader Bush' is a threat to Islam, and Muslims are defending themselves.

(21) Bin Laden, Al Jazeera, 25/9/01

- 11 It is not surprising for the Islamic nation to rise up in Pakistan in defence of Islam.
- 12 Pakistan is considered to be the first line of the defence of Islam in the region as was
- 13 the case with Afghanistan in defending itself and Pakistan against the Russian
- 14 invasion more than 20 years ago. And
- 15 we would hope that these brothers will be among the first martyrs in the battle of
- 16 Islam in this era against the new Jewish crusader campaign that is led by the chief
- 17 crusader Bush under the banner of the cross.
- 18 This battle is considered one of the glorious Islamic battles.

The position from which bin Laden speaks is subtle and obscured. He speaks to his 'Muslim brothers' and not just for himself as his use of pronouns 'ours' and 'we' documents (Extract 20, ll. 1–2, Extract 21, ll. 14–15). He, however, also uses the first-person singular (Extract 20, l. 2) presenting himself as a person to whom news about Islamic struggles is channelled. In other words, he speaks for a collectivity in which he is prominent. This position is asserted forcefully when he publicly adopts the children of the 'martyrs' (Extract 20, ll. 9–10).

We have seen that Bush and Blair's formulations of the violent events and of

'us' and 'them' justified future actions. Both presented 'them' in a coordinated way as terrorists, murderers and enemies of democracy and civilization, and this justified 'bringing them to justice' (Bush, Extract 5, l. 30) and 'to account' (Blair, Extract 13, l. 35). What do bin Laden's formulations justify for him?

(22) *Bin Laden, Al Jazeera, 25/9/01*

19 We incite our Muslim brothers in Pakistan to strive with all they possess and all they
20 are able to against the American crusading forces to prevent them invading Pakistan
21 and Afghanistan.

22 The prophet – peace be upon him – said: "Let him who does not invade or provide an
23 invader or look after the family of an invader – God will curse him before Judgement
24 Day" – this was witnessed by Abu Daoud.

Presenting the conflict as a religious one and the enemies as 'crusaders' allows bin Laden to call on 'Muslim brothers' to fight the invasion to come (ll. 19–21).

It is curious that in his first statement after September 11, bin Laden never once referred to the attacks. On what grounds do we, the analysts, take his statement to be relevant here? The first reason is that the BBC journalists set up the relevance by relating his broadcast to the attacks. The second, and related reason is who he is – the leader of Al Qaeda, which is seen to be responsible for past terrorist attacks. The third reason is the temporal proximity of his broadcast to the attacks and to the public statements which we analysed previously. Note also that bin Laden may speak of the 'American crusade' because Bush and Blair already declared their reaction to the attacks on the USA ('the war on terrorism' that is). Both bin Laden and Bush (Extract 21, l. 18; Extract 9, l. 17) use the same word 'battle' (if we can trust the translation).

The analysis so far shows a fair degree of symmetry between Bush and Blair's statements, on the one hand, and bin Laden's, on the other hand. In bin Laden's statement, Bush and Blair's aggressors become the victims and vice versa. Instead of explaining and justifying the attacks on New York, bin Laden refers to happenings in which the 'Muslim brothers' were the victims. For bin Laden the conflict is grounded in religion and actions are taken for the sake of God, whereas for Bush and Blair the conflict is between social political and moral systems. His 'us'/'them' contrast is then in religious terms, which were ignored by Bush, and explicitly set aside by Blair. In each case the distinction is coupled to securing allies.

Bin Laden's second statement was broadcast on 7/10/2001, again on Al Jazeera television. Bin Laden now explicitly refers to the attacks on New York and Pentagon.

(23) *Bin Laden, Al Jazeera, 7/10/01*

9 God Almighty hit the United States at its most vulnerable spot. He destroyed its
10 greatest buildings.
11 Praise be to God.

12 Here is the United States. It was filled with terror from its north to its south and from
 13 its east to its west.
 14 Praise be to God.

The statement is again framed as a religious address. Bin Laden presents God as being the agent of the attacks on the United States (l. 9). Is this a hyperbola? Not necessarily from a standpoint of somebody who is fundamentally religious. Bin Laden supports the attacks (l. 11) but in his formulation he is neither their planner nor their executor. He represents the attacks in terms of their consequences, using an extreme-case formulation – they ‘destroyed’ America’s ‘greatest buildings’ and the country was ‘filled with terror’. So, he accepts the attacks (they are after all God’s work), he amplifies their effects, but he positions himself as not personally responsible.

Bin Laden elaborates his view of the agency of the events in New York later in the interview.

(24) *Bin Laden, Al Jazeera, 7/10/01*

21 When Almighty God rendered successful a convoy of Muslims, the vanguards of
 22 Islam, He allowed them to destroy the United States.
 23 I ask God Almighty to elevate their status and grant them Paradise. He is the one
 24 who is capable to do so.
 25 When these defended their oppressed sons, brothers, and sisters in Palestine and in
 26 many Islamic countries, the world at large shouted. The infidels shouted, followed by
 27 the hypocrites.

He continues to suggest that God was responsible for the attacks, but now it is specifically for their success (ll. 21–22). The attacks were carried out by a ‘convoy of Muslims’ but it was God who allowed them to succeed (l. 22).

Bin Laden compares these consequences of the attacks with what has been done to ‘us’ by ‘them’.

(25) *Bin Laden, Al Jazeera, 7/10/01*

15 What the United States tastes today is a very small thing compared to what we have
 16 tasted for tens of years.
 17 Our nation has been tasting this humiliation and contempt for more than 80 years.
 18 Its sons are being killed, its blood is being shed, its holy places are being attacked,
 19 and it is not being ruled according to what God has decreed.
 20 Despite this, nobody cares.

The suffering of Muslims is for him incomparably greater than that of the Americans – even though this is not negligible (he says that Americans are tasting today what ‘we have tasted’). The time-scale of Muslim suffering is, however, incomparably longer – the attacks on New York and Washington took place on one day, whereas those against the Muslims has been going on for ‘more than 80 years’. Bin Laden therefore amplifies the outcome of the attacks and implicitly

accepts that Americans are victims too, but the way he compares these minimises 'their' suffering as compared to 'ours'.

Bin Laden presents the attacks as being in defence of 'oppressed sons, brothers, and sisters' (Extract 24, l. 25) in Palestine and other Islamic countries, and as justified by that oppression. He portrays the criticism of these actions by the 'infidels' and the 'hypocrites' as unjustified.

Bin Laden's 'us' and 'them' are then each a collection of categories (as they were in Bush's and Blair's speeches). Taking his two speeches together, the category 'them' includes the 'infidels' and 'hypocrites' (Extract 24, ll. 26–27), 'Jewish crusaders' (Extract 21, ll. 16–17), Americans, their allies (Extract 20, l. 4) and Israelis (Extract 26, l. 32). The category 'us' subsumes 'Muslim brothers' in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Extract 20, ll. 1–4), 'Iraqi children' (Extract 26, l. 28), and 'sons, brothers, and sisters in Palestine and in many Islamic countries' (Extract 24, ll. 25–26). Not all Muslims, however, belong into this collection. Those excluded are the 'hypocrites' and the Muslim rulers in particular:

(26) *Bin Laden, Al Jazeera, 7/10/01*

28 One million Iraqi children have thus far died in Iraq although they did not do
29 anything wrong.
30 Despite this, we heard no denunciation by anyone in the world or a fatwa by the
31 rulers' ulema.¹¹
32 Israeli tanks and tracked vehicles also enter to wreak havoc in Palestine, in Jenin,
33 Ramallah, Rafah, Beit Jala, and other Islamic areas and we hear no voices raised or
34 moves made.

Bin Laden notes that the 'rulers' ulema' did not condemn the attacks on Iraq or Palestine. Some collectivities are excluded from the 'us' collection, and this is because they either do not support our actions or condemn theirs. Notice that, like Blair and Mahmood, bin Laden splits the category 'Muslim' – depending on their attitude to his cause and conflict as he sees it.

So far, bin Laden's contrast between 'us' and 'them' has focused on Muslims as the victims in history and on Americans and their allies as aggressors. He now defines 'them' in terms of their character.

(27) *Bin Laden, Al Jazeera, 7/10/01*

35 But if the sword falls on the United States after 80 years, hypocrisy raises its head
36 lamenting the deaths of these killers who tampered with the blood, honour, and holy
37 places of the Muslims.
38 The least that one can describe these people is that they are morally depraved.
39 They champion falsehood, support the butcher against the victim, the oppressor
40 against the innocent child.
41 May God mete them the punishment they deserve.
42 I say that the matter is clear and explicit.

The victims of the attacks are described as killers who violate that which is sacred to Muslims (ll. 35–37). This description of the thousands of physical victims of

the attacks on the USA as killers cannot be literally correct but, precisely for this reason, it is intriguing and significant. How can they be killers – by proxy? Bush and Blair extended the incumbency of the category victim, but maintained the distinction between the physical and moral victims. In bin Laden’s statement, where the victims became the aggressors, there is no explicit distinction between direct aggressors and indirect ones – all are killers, collectively responsible for ‘our’ suffering, and deserving of punishment (l. 41). This presentation of the victims justifies the attacks on America on religious grounds, presenting them as defence and the victims as aggressors.

The important point to note is that bin Laden’s category work does not happen in isolation. So far, he had made no explicit reference to what Bush or Blair said in their statements but it is clear that he took note of public reactions to the attacks, and how others presented them. This was already clear in Extracts 24 and 25, and implicit in Extract 27. In each of these, bin Laden compared protests against the attacks on the US and the lack of protests against the attacks elsewhere, on ‘us’. In Extract 28 bin Laden does refer to Bush’s statements.

(28) *Bin Laden, Al Jazeera, 7/10/01*

43 In the aftermath of this event and now that senior US officials have spoken,
 44 beginning with Bush, the head of the world’s infidels, and whoever supports him,
 45 every Muslim should rush to defend his religion.
 46 They came out in arrogance with their men and horses and instigated even those
 47 countries that belong to Islam against us.
 48 They came out to fight this group of people who declared their faith in God and
 49 refused to abandon their religion.
 50 They came out to fight Islam in the name of terrorism.

He does not report what Bush actually said. He understands the statements as matters of securing allies for the conflict to come and does the same – he attempts to make ‘every Muslim’ come to his side. This involves him implicitly in contesting the Bush’s presentation of the conflict as ‘war against terrorism’. That ‘war’ is really against Islam, led by ‘Bush, the head of the world’s infidels’.

In fact, at the end of his broadcast, bin Laden addresses the people of the US directly, setting out the causes of violence as he sees it.

(29) *Bin Laden, Al Jazeera, 7/10/01*

61 The winds of faith and change have blown to remove falsehood from the [Arabian]
 62 peninsula of Prophet Mohammed, may God’s prayers be upon him.
 63 As for the United States, I tell it and its people these few words: I swear by Almighty
 64 God who raised the heavens without pillars that neither the United States nor he who
 65 lives in the United States will enjoy security before we can see it as a reality in
 66 Palestine and before all the infidel armies leave the land of Mohammed, may God’s
 67 peace and blessing be upon him.
 68 God is great and glory to Islam.
 69 May God’s peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you.

Note that Bush is included among those who are addressed by bin Laden here.

Concluding remarks

The discourse of the main parties to this conflict was networked dialogically, but the networking was most apparent in the coordination of the participants' category work (and not just that of the allies). The dialogical connections at this stage of the conflict were almost entirely restricted to sending condolences and acknowledging them, and to threats and counter-threats. (This was not so in other networks we investigated: see Leudar and Nekvapil, 1998; Nekvapil and Leudar, 2002.) The main finding of this study is that the cohesion of dialogical networks can be partly accomplished by the coordination of the participants' category work (in addition to making a use of sequential structures, argumentative resources, and lexical means).

In formal terms the category work is very similar in all the speeches we analysed in this article, even though the 'us'/'them' category pairs are different in the Bush/Blair and bin Laden formulations. Does this mean that there are two *independent* pairs of categories, glossable respectively as 'defenders of civilization'/'terrorists' and 'defenders of Islam'/'infidels'? Not in our view. The two pairs are coordinated through incumbency. Any participant in the conflict (and remember there is no middle ground) has a double, contrastive identity. Bin Laden, for instance, is an incumbent of the category 'us' as he formulates it (defenders of Islam). He is also an incumbent of 'them' as it is formulated by his enemy (terrorists). The same is the case for his enemy: President Bush is one of 'us' (we who defend freedom and democracy) and he is one of 'them' (crusaders attacking Islam). The category pairs are united in an opposition by the way in which the conflict is framed – as a religious war, on the one hand, and a war between civilization and barbarism, on the other hand.

One of our ongoing interests is in how new categories are formulated and given categories change (cf. e.g. Leudar and Sharrock, 2002a, 2002b; Nekvapil, 2002; Sharrock and Leudar, 2002). In this particular study we investigated how the enemies, locked in the conflict of which the attacks on the USA in September 2001 were a part, publicly presented each other's identity and deeds. This work parallels our other empirical studies – one of how the identity of a new political party and its actions were presented in Czech media (Leudar and Nekvapil, 1998), and another of how Roma were represented by participants in Czech TV debates (Leudar and Nekvapil, 2000). In these studies we observed certain commonalities in category work.

Membership categories seem to be formulated and changed in three related ways – by changing the predicates normatively bound to a category (personal characteristics, dispositions to act in a particular way etc.), by respecifying the incumbency of the category and, finally, by changing a collection into which the category is allocated. These three are not independent – for instance, adding a new member to a category may necessitate changing the predicates bound to that category; conversely, changing the category-bound predicates may change the incumbency. In each study we found, however, that membership categories were

not representations for representation's sake, but related to actions. The way individuals and their activities are presented prepares grounds for activities, or it may justify/reject the past acts – the membership representations and proposed actions are typically coupled in texts as if the former entailed the latter. This relationship should not be thought of as external to representing and acting, as actions are constitutive of *membership* categories. This is acknowledged in MCA, in that categories are said to be constituted by category-bound activities.¹² This means that actions for which categorizations prepare ground reproduce and may change that membership category. As a consequence, categorizing is a practical and contingent matter. Category work then should not be thought of in abstract terms – it is closely tied to actions and serves to justify what has happened in the past, and prepare the ground for future actions. In some cases, the cohesion of categories is maintained by joint commitment to future actions. Neither is categorizing an individual matter – we have seen that it is coordinated, not just between allies but also between enemies. How categories develop is contingent on the situation, but it also draws on given cultural resources, which are provided by language (Nekvapil, 2002).

Think of the three ways in which categories are changed (by managing predicates bound to a category, by managing the category incumbency directly and by managing collections of categories) as *instructions* (cf. Garfinkel, 2002). We removed these from very different practical activities, and treated them as detachable products. But if I instruct you, ‘These are (some ways) you can change a membership category!’, then to use these instructions much knowledge and skill will be needed, is inevitably specific to what is to be formulated or changed (cf. Leudar and Antaki, 1996; Leudar and Costall, 1996). Being able to detach ‘products’ from activities, and finding that some are similar, does not warrant concluding that these have a common ontological identity, in addition to that which they have in situ.

NOTES

1. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html> and <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010912-4.html>
2. This is publicly available as the *Official Record*, the Hansard, www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhansard.htm
3. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/south_asia/newsid_1562000/1562344.stm and http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/south_asia/newsid_1585000/1585636.stm
4. Michel Barthélémy (2003) also made use of the concept ‘dialogical network’ in his analysis of media coverage of the crisis between Austria and the rest of the EU in 2000, showing that the concept helped to understand Europe wide conflict.
5. Our analytic strategy here resonates with the following idea of Watson (1987: 282): ‘Indeed, one might even suggest that the use of a pronoun as “we” may signal an activity of both exclusion and inclusion, a constituent feature of this activity being an analysis as to who is included and excluded’.

6. The transcript of the statement and the debate is available in Hansard on the Internet: www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200102/cmhansrd/vo010914/debtext/10914-01.htm
7. A collectivity may of course be civilised without being an elective democracy or stressing individual freedoms.
8. At the time, Mahmood was the only Muslim MP in the House of Commons.
9. It certainly would have been better to analyse the original version of bin Laden's speech in Arabic (with a help of a native Arabic speaker, of course). We have consulted the broadcast of this speech by Al Jazeera TV. This was accompanied by a simultaneous translation into English, which masked much of the Arabic original. We therefore used translation provided by the BBC. This is not the same, word for word, as the simultaneous translation, but the BBC version has become the official English version of the text and thus socially relevant. Note also that in communicative exchanges between English- and Arabic-speaking public figures, translations both into Arabic and English must have played an important role.
10. Some journalists in fact argued that Bush's personal understanding of conflict was religious, for instance:

'I think, in [Bush's] frame, this is what God has asked him to do,' a close acquaintance told the *New York Times*. 'It offers him enormous clarity.' According to this acquaintance, Bush believes 'he has encountered his reason for being, a conviction informed and shaped by the president's own strain of Christianity,' the *Times* reported. [*New York Times*, Sept. 22, 2001]
11. 'Ulema' means a body of Muslim scholars.
12. In some versions of the MCA, categories are said to be constituted by category bound *predicates*, which subsume characteristics other than actions – e.g. dispositions to act, aims, beliefs or values.

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