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Social misfits or victims of exclusion? Contradictory representations of Irish Travellers in the Irish press

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Abstract

One of the most significant current discussions in discourse studies is the media representation of socially disadvantaged groups (KhosraviNik, 2009; Baker et al., 2008; van Dijk, 1991). The aim of this study is to examine the Irish media's attitude towards Irish Travellers who have been pushed to the fringes of society with allegations that their nomadic lifestyle is incompatible with industrialised Irish society (Moore, 2012; van Hout, 2011; McVeigh, 1997). The dataset for this paper is comprised of newspaper texts from *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Independent* and *The Irish Daily Mail* printed between January 2012 and September 2014. Data were gathered through the Nexis UK database. Because the newspaper corpora vary greatly in size, the analysis was carried out in two stages. First, corpus software *AntConc 3.4.3* (Anthony, 2014) was used to obtain high frequency words in the whole corpus to gain an insight into the discourse topics associated with Travellers. Second, journalistic commentaries from three newspapers on the 2014 Oireachtas report were taken into consideration for the analysis of APPRAISAL resources which show evaluative stance of the writers through ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT and GRADUATION categories (Martin and White, 2005). Legitimation strategies which were used to justify evaluative stance were also investigated in this stage. The quantitative analysis shows the dominance of ATTITUDE categories in all corpora. The liberal *Irish Times* positively appraised Travellers and the Oireachtas Report, and justified their support for ethnic recognition through a moral evaluation of previous discrimination policies. The politically right-centre *Independent* and *Daily Mail* had rather negative attitudes, and they legitimized their opposition through moral evaluation and rationalization grounded upon the stereotypical images associated with Travellers.

Key words: Irish Travellers; newspapers; appraisal; legitimation

Introduction

While late modern Western society has been identified with mobility, fluidity and 'liquidity' (Baumann, 2000), these privileges are only granted to specific groups of people whose conduct and financial resources can be orchestrated by the nation states and neoliberal markets (Weber and Bowling, 2008). On the contrary, nomadic groups like Irish Travellers now face restrictions imposed by these power elites. The historic continuity of exclusion and prejudice towards these groups can be explained in terms of nation-states' perception of these groups as a threat to progress and modernisation with their pre-modern ways of life (Kabachnik, 2009; Mac Laughlin, 1999). According to McVeigh (1997), the industrialised nation-states, which rest upon the centralisation and

consolidation of power and surveillance, discriminate against nomadic culture through associations of criminality, backwardness, moral degeneration and poor hygiene.

Irish Travellers, whose media representation is the focus of this study, are an indigenous minority in Ireland, with a long shared history, language, customs, traditions and value system (Gmelch, 1996). According to the 2011 Census, the Irish Traveller population in Irish Republic was 29,573 (accounting for the 0.6% of the whole population). Despite their relatively small size, anti-Traveller sentiment has been very strong in Irish society (Hayes, 2006). With the transition from an agrarian culture to the industrialised 'Celtic Tiger', their condition has only deteriorated. Industrialisation and mechanization triggered the decline of Traveller jobs like horse keeping and tinsmithing, and forced them to depend on welfare benefits (Helleiner, 2003, 2000; McVeigh, 1998). High unemployment rates and reliance on benefits make the rest of society consider them as a superfluous and parasitic underclass that the society would do better without (Bancroft, 2005). In addition, rapid urbanization and restrictions on Travellers' land use with the Housing Act (2002) which made it illegal to trespass on land with caravans has been a constant cause of strife. These all reinforce the dominant group's unfavourable opinion of Irish Travellers as social misfits.

Indisputably, the media have great influence on the reproduction and circulation of images associated with Travellers, given that people rarely have direct contact with this socially invisible and segregated group. In accordance with Fowler (1991, p.9), who argues that 'all news is always reported from some particular angle', ideological differences cause media groups to provide different accounts of the same social events or actors. Diversity in media representation becomes more important when it comes to minorities. While there is an enormous volume of comparative studies on media attitude to socially disadvantaged groups like Muslims (Baker et al., 2013; Richardson, 2004), immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the Western press (KhosraviNik, 2010; van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999; van Dijk, 1991), there are few on the media representation of nomadic groups like Irish Travellers. The preliminary motive of the present paper is to examine the links between the newspapers' ideological standing, their APPRAISAL of Irish Travellers and the legitimation strategies used in this process. I benefit from the Appraisal Theory Framework (Martin and White, 2005), which presents the linguistic basis of different authorial styles and their interaction with audiences as well as the formation and dissemination of covert value and belief systems. Following Hunston and Thompson (2000), who underline the importance of studying evaluative language because taking a stance towards someone or something is signified in socially crucial speech acts like justification and persuasion, I also take advantage of van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimation categories to explore how the authors justify their evaluations.

In line with Entman (1991, p. 6), who stresses the importance of a comparative perspective in textual studies as it 'reveals the critical textual choices that framed the story but would otherwise remain submerged in an undifferentiated text,' I adopt a comparative study of APPRAISAL and legitimation categories by contrasting Travellers' representation in three Irish newspapers. The data was gathered from *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Independent* and *The Irish Daily Mail* between January 2012 and September 2014. While choosing the newspapers, I considered their circulation figures, political stance and accessibility through the Nexis UK database. My research questions are: (1)

Which themes dominate the discourse on Irish Travellers in the whole corpus? (2) In what ways do the authors use APPRAISAL resources to communicate their authorial stance to the status of Irish Travellers? (3) What kinds of legitimation strategies do the authors employ to justify their APPRAISAL of Travellers' status?

This paper has been divided into four parts. The Literature review section deals with major studies on the media representation of itinerant groups. The Methodology section describes the Appraisal Theory Framework and legitimation strategies. In the Data section, data collection and selection methods are explained. The Analysis section is comprised of two stages due to differences in terms of corpus sizes and contents of each newspaper. First, corpus software *AntConc 3.4.3* (Anthony, 2014) is used to obtain the list of high frequency words in the whole newspaper corpus to gain an insight into the discourse themes associated with Travellers. Second, APPRAISAL resources and legitimation strategies in the journalistic commentaries on the Oireachtas Report are analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Finally, I discuss the findings of the study in the Concluding section.

Literature review

Racism, religious discrimination and xenophobia in Western media and political discourse have been extensively analysed by the researchers who aim at uncovering latent ideologies and arguments that (re)produce or challenge inequality (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak, 1996; van Dijk, 1991, 1987). In this section, I will review the major studies that explore the nature of Western media's attitude to itinerant groups like Roma, Gypsies and Irish Travellers.

One of the earliest studies is by Erjavec (2001), who analysed the media attitude towards the Roma people during Slovenia's transition from a former communist country to an emerging democratic nation in the late 1990s. In order to discover how dominant discourse legitimized and naturalized discrimination against the Roma, the author studied the schema and thematic structure of the news reports on a rather scandalous incident in which a Romani family was forced by the local authorities and public to sell their legally bought house. The study reveals that journalistic writing rested upon the assumption that the Roma were different from the rest of the Slovenian society. Three main stereotypes, which stigmatise Roma as criminals, and idle and social deviants, with a different mentality, culture and morality, were found to dominate their representation. Erjavec's findings illustrate the vulnerability of disadvantaged social groups in times of political and financial crises.

In another study on the media representation of Gypsies and Travellers, Kabachnik (2010) investigated local British newspapers. This large scale analysis shows the existence of three dominant tropes (aesthetics, economics and antisocial behaviour) to justify discrimination against the nomadic groups. These tropes were manipulated in the identification of Gypsies and Travellers as potential threats to local territories with their caravan sites. Local British media attempted to legitimize the exclusion of itinerants by representing them as barbaric invaders who would not only ruin British territories with trash heaps and criminal acts but also lower property values in those areas.

In their analysis of British tabloids' coverage of East European migration to the UK in 2004 and 2007, Fox et al. (2012) compared media attitudes towards Hungarians, Romanians and Roma people. The findings reveal that, in comparison to Hungarian and Romanian migrants, the Roma were represented in the most racialized form drawing upon stereotypes of them as epitomizing and embodying cultural backwardness. The fear-inducing rhetoric of tabloids concerning the Roma migrants was grounded upon two discursive frames which are the topoi of 'numbers' and 'threat' (see Wodak 2001, 1997, 1996). While it is a customary practice of British tabloids to reference large quantities of immigrants in the UK as 'hordes, swarms' (see Baker et al., 2008), the effect was coupled for the Roma migrants with associations of 'crime' such as 'gang' and 'thievery'. As a consequence, the supposed racial inferiority of the Roma migrants was insinuated and the accompanying discrimination against them was legitimized.

Finally, a recent study by the Oxford University Migration Observatory Group (2014) analysed the representation of migrants from Bulgaria and Romania in the British press from 1 December 2012 to 1 December 2013. The timeline between these dates was intentionally chosen as it was an important period leading up to the UK's lifting of work restrictions for Romanian and Bulgarians on 1 January 2014. The corpus linguistic analysis of a set of 2.8 million words reveals that both in tabloids and broadsheets Roma and Gypsies were regularly associated with crime and anti-social behaviour (*benefits claiming, stealing, abduction and arrests*) and settlement (*camping, shanty towns, homelessness*). Drawing upon these studies, it is clear that the media tend to have a negative attitude towards itinerant groups, and that the stereotypical images associated with these groups dominate the discourse surrounding them.

Methodology

Appraisal theory

Bell (1999) and Feez et al. (2008) note that journalistic texts are not directly reflecting or replicating the facts, but representing them on the basis of their value judgements and stances. Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics (Bednarek, 2006), Appraisal Theory introduces a fine-grained taxonomy of semantic resources used 'to negotiate emotions, judgements, and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations' (Martin, 2000, p.145). Since this theory provides a detailed framework for analysing authorial stance, it was selected as the theoretical framework of this study. Three main categories are defined: ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT and GRADUATION. ATTITUDE accounts for the semantic resources the speaker/writer uses to communicate their emotional responses, judgements and aesthetic evaluations (Martin & White, 2005, p. 42). While expressing their attitudinal positioning concerning people, objects or processes, the speaker/writer can do so positively or negatively. Figure 1 (adapted from Martin & White, 2005) shows the subcategories of APPRAISAL Theory.

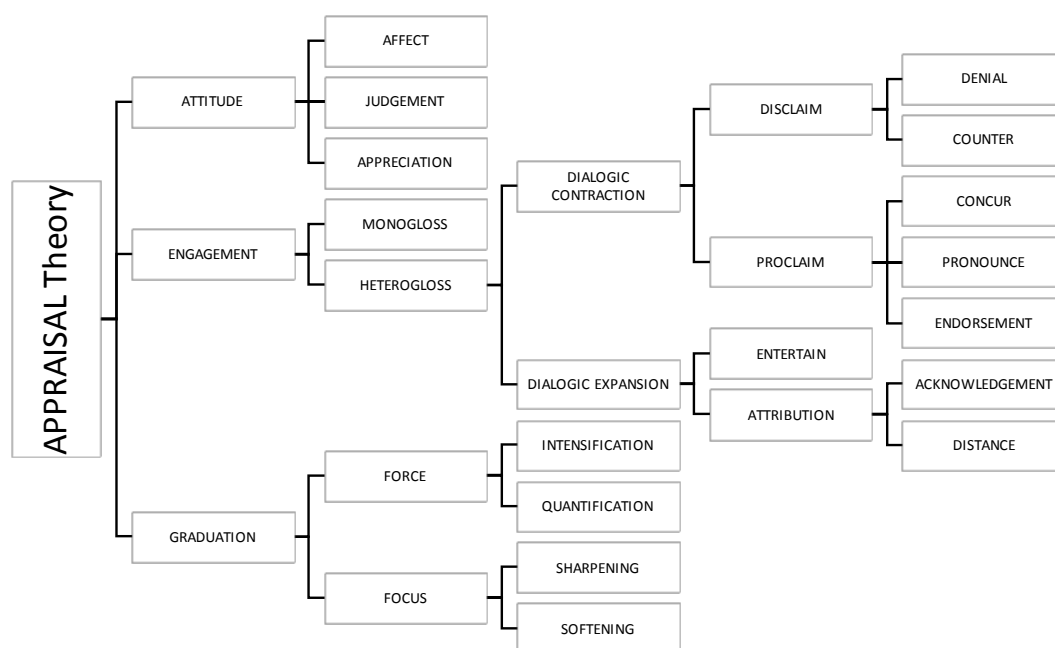


Figure 1: The subcategories of APPRAISAL Theory

ATTITUDE is divided into three subsystems: AFFECT, JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION. AFFECT is the domain of emotional stances toward other people, entities or happenings (ibid, p. 45). It groups emotions into three major sets having to do with UN/HAPPINESS, IN/SECURITY and DIS/SATISFACTION. While coding ATTITUDE categories, [+ve] is used to show positivity whereas and [-ve] is used to show negativity. In (1) below, the fear felt about the Modern Slavery Bill expresses INSECURITY:

(1) Some victims, however, fear [-veSECURITY] coming forward because they could be prosecuted for crimes, such as prostitution, committed while being held captive, or because they could be deported.(*The Irish Times*, 17.12.2013)

The second category (i.e.JUDGEMENT) deals with our evaluations of other people's behaviour with reference to ethics, morality and social standards. Through JUDGEMENT, we can praise, idolize, criticize or blame a person. It includes two subcategories: SOCIAL SANCTION and SOCIAL ESTEEM. The former encompasses three subsets (i.e. NORMALITY, CAPACITY and TENACITY) which correspond to the various dimensions of performance. SOCIAL SANCTION, which is about morality, is divided into two subclasses: VERACITY and PROPRIETY. In (2), the JUDGEMENT of Traveller groups is articulated through negative NORMALITY and PROPRIETY:

(2) Tribal feuds [-ve PROPRIETY /NORMALITY] exist and are resolved in violent [-ve PROPRIETY] conflicts endangering life and causing mayhem [-vePROPRIETY] on the streets. (*The Irish Daily Mail*, 14.04.2014)

The last subdivision of ATTITUDE is APPRECIATION, which is concerned with our assessments regarding things and processes. It is undertaken with reference to our

REACTION, the object's COMPOSITION and VALUATION. In (3), the author makes a positive evaluation of the My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding dressmaker, Thelma Madine's business, through VALUATION:

(3) Her understanding of Traveller culture has enabled her to build a unique and successful [+veVALUATION] business creating bespoke dresses for the Travelling community. (*The Irish Independent*, 31.03.2012)

The second APPRAISAL category is ENGAGEMENT; this involves the writer's or speaker's stance- taking towards other value positions and opinions (Martin and White, 2005, p. 92). The writers/speakers may position themselves as standing with, as standing against or as neutral with respect to other people's value positions. It involves two subcategories which are MONOGLOSS and HETEROGLOSS. The former allots no room for other voices or viewpoints. Example (4) illustrates the way the author rejects any kind of opposition by using the verb 'be' in the simple present tense; the assertion is presented as an irrefutable fact:

(4) Travellers are [MONOGLOSS] disproportionately lawless compared to the general population who fund Pavee Point to promote their human rights. (*The Irish Daily Mail*, 12.04.2014)

Contrary to MONOGLOSS, HETEROGLOSS, with its emphasis on multivocality, gives space to alternative voices and viewpoints through DIALOGIC CONTRACTION and DIALOGIC EXPANSION. The former deals with resources that strive to challenge or constrain the breadth of other voices by DISCLAIM or PROCLAIM (Marín-Arrese and Perucha, 2006). DISCLAIM is concerned with semantic resources through which prior utterances or alternative positions are evoked to be rejected or replaced as unrelated. It has two subcategories which are DENIAL (*not, nothing*) and COUNTER (*but, although, yet*). (5) below is an example of COUNTER and DENIAL. While 'however' counters a prior argument, 'not' positions itself as an answer to a prior claim:

(5) However [COUNTER], it is important that the various groupings are not [DENIAL] simply lumped together. (*The Irish Daily Mail*, 29.01.2014)

Rather than directly rejecting or refuting a contrary argument, PROCLAIM presents a limited scope of alternative perspectives and voices. It has three formulations. CONCUR shows agreement (*of course, naturally*) while PRONOUNCE presents an authorial voice as warrantable (*I contend that...*). Finally, ENDORSEMENT is the means of declaring the speaker/writer's approval of alternative voices (*X has demonstrated that...*) (Bednarek, 2006, p. 34). 'Of course' in (6) shows the author's agreement with a projected dialogic partner:

(6) Nothing to do with the music of course [CONCUR]; the guy's a bloody genius. (*The Irish Independent*, 17.07.2012)

On the other hand, DIALOGIC EXPANSION is concerned with opening up space for other voices by ENTERTAIN or ATTRIBUTION. ENTERTAIN (*perhaps, in my view...*) points to the resources showing epistemic modality, while the latter includes alternative

perspectives by means of direct quotations or textual assimilations. Example (7) shows the category of ENTERTAIN through use of the modal adverb ‘maybe’:

(7) If Travellers want separate status, maybe [ENTERTAIN] it’s time we let them have it. (*The Irish Independent*, 1.04.2014)

While attributing to external resources, the author can either benefit from ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (*say, believe, according to*) or DISTANCE (*claim, rumour*). In (8) this is formed by ACKNOWLEDGEMENT with ‘said’ and the author’s stance to the speaker’s viewpoint is not specified:

(8) These offences came into being two years ago, Mr Power said [ACKNOWLEDGEMENT]. (*The Irish Times*, 12.07.2012)

However, in (9) the author defines his/her stance with DISTANCE by expressing his/her doubts about the reliability of the speaker’s viewpoint with ‘claim’:

(9) The same man claimed [DISTANCE] he had been locked in the boot of a car by James Big Jim Connors. (*The Irish Times*, 12.07.2012)

The final category is GRADUATION, which is concerned with semantic resources that grade the force of the utterance or focus of the semantic categorization (Martin and White, 2005, p.135). GRADUATION is comprised of two sets: FORCE and FOCUS. FORCE is concerned with the degree of intensity (*slightly/ very/ extremely important*) and quantity (*a tiny/ small/ gigantic problem*). In (10) below, ‘extremely’ marks the intensity of racist discourse:

(10) I have often heard decent, enlightened people make extremely [FORCE] racist statements about the Roma. (*The Irish Independent*, 8.02.2012).

FOCUS is concerned with sharpening the membership category (*true friend*) in order to specify prototypicality or soften (*sort of disappointment*) its characterization. In (11), ‘real’ upscales the prototypicality:

(11) This is the real [FOCUS] fabric and glue that hold our community together. (*The Irish Times*, 23.11.2013)

Legitimation theory

While presenting their own accounts of a social event or group, journalists aim at justifying their viewpoints to gain approval from their readers. Therefore, legitimation, which can be identified as ‘a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions’ (Suchman, 1995, p. 574), is important for these purposeful texts. In line with Weber (1964, p. 325), who notes that every power system tries ‘to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy’, it is crucial for journalists to prove the validity of their writings. Van Leeuwen (2007, p. 106) identifies four main categories of legitimation: Authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization and

mythopoesis. Authorization is legitimation by means of an authority figure that has some sort of power to impose on the others. Moral evaluation is legitimation by reference to shared value systems. Van Leeuwen (2007, p. 98) underlines the key role evaluative language plays in this kind of legitimation. Rationalization is legitimation with reference to the goals of institutionalized action which have been widely accepted by the public for their cognitive validity. The last category (i.e. mythopoesis) is legitimation communicated through narratives where the outcomes reward legitimate acts and punish non-legitimate ones. APPRAISAL resources and legitimation strategies are complementary as the former show how the author evaluates a subject and the latter explain how the author justifies their evaluation of it.

Data

My dataset is comprised of newspaper texts concerning Irish Travellers from *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Independent* and *The Irish Daily Mail* printed from January 2012 to September 2014. The timeline between these dates was intentionally selected as Irish Travellers were expected to be more visible in the Irish media due to internationally debated cases about itinerant groups. Firstly, in 2012 the Republic of Ireland lifted work restrictions on Bulgaria and Romania, which are known to have large populations of itinerant people. Secondly, the series *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*, which attracted millions of viewers with its sensational coverage of Traveller and Gypsy communities in the UK, continued airing in 2012 and 2013 with great success. Thirdly, two cases in which the Greek and Irish police took away children from their Roma parents because the children did not look like their parents put the itinerant groups in the limelight of international media. Finally, the 2014 Oireachtas Report, which recommended official recognition of Traveller ethnicity, was considered as a milestone in Irish history.

I have collected data through the Nexis UK database with the search terms 'Irish Traveller' and 'Irish Travellers'. *The Irish Times*, which is a liberal broadsheet, has the largest coverage of Irish Travellers with 80 texts. The total word count is 47,475. *The Irish Independent*, which is a centre-right compact newspaper, has 35 news texts. The word count is 21,028. Finally, *The Irish Daily Mail*, a centre-right tabloid, forms the smallest corpus with 29 texts and 20,291 words (see Table 1).

Table 1: Newspaper corpora size and percentage

	Articles		Words	
	No	% of corpus	No	% of corpus
<i>The Irish Times</i>	80	56%	47,475	53%
<i>The Irish Independent</i>	35	24%	21,028	24%
<i>The Irish Daily Mail</i>	29	20%	20,291	23%
Total	144		88,794	

Figure 2 below illustrates the distribution of the number of news items on Irish Travellers in each newspaper from January 2012 to September 2014. The graph shows the frequencies of news items in three-month periods. Except during the July-September 2013 period, it is evident that *The Irish Times* has a considerably larger coverage of Travellers. There is not a balanced distribution of the news in the newspapers over time.

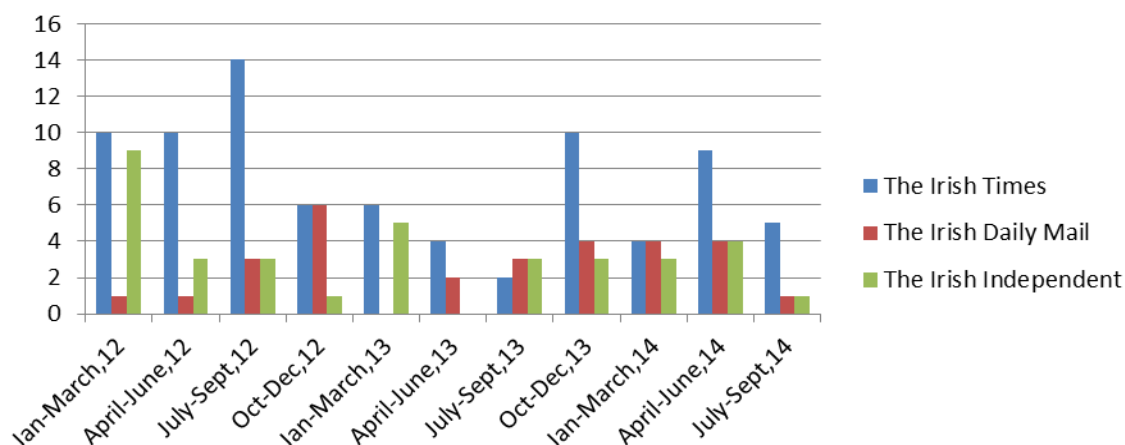


Figure 2: Frequency of news items in each corpus over time

It is not possible to talk about a steady rise or fall in the frequency of the news on Irish Travellers. However, there are several spikes which show unprecedented rises of attention to this group. In order to downsample the data for APPRAISAL and legitimization analysis, which require small amounts of data, the news texts that form these four spikes are taken into consideration. My close reading of the news texts in these periods show the topics on the agenda:

Period 1. January-March, 2012: Schooling problem, Reaction to My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding;

Period 2. July-September, 2012: Traveller linked 'Slavery' case;

Period 3. October-December, 2013: Traveller linked 'Slavery' case in London, Reaction to My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding, Housing Problem, Traveller linked Rhino horn theft;

Period 4. April-June, 2014: The Oireachtas Report, which recommends official recognition of Travellers' ethnic status.

My comparative analysis of the three newspapers during these periods show that the most suitable texts for qualitative analysis are in Period 4 as all the newspapers gave equal coverage to the Oireachtas Report both in their hard news and journalistic commentaries. As the latter proves to contain more evaluative language, I selected three journalistic commentaries from each newspaper on this issue:

- *The Irish Daily Mail*: 'If Travellers want ethnic status, they ought to get rid of those slash hooks and settle' (Power, 8.04.2014);
- *The Irish Independent*: 'Travellers want separate status? Give it to them...' (O'Doherty, 1.04.2014);

- *The Irish Times*: 'Doing away with feeling of shame; Ethnic recognition could realign settled and Traveller communities' (Holland, 18.04.2014).

Analysis

Before starting qualitative analysis, I will present the schema of discourse topics and high frequency words concerning Irish Travellers in the whole corpus. With the help of *AntConc 3.4.3* (Anthony, 2014), the list of the most frequent words in the corpus was obtained. It is observed that high frequency lexis appeared in the discourse fields of accommodation (*housing, caravan sites*), the legal system (*rights, illegality*), crime (*anti-social behaviour*), society's attitude (*discrimination, racism*) and community (*people, family*). Figure 3 illustrates the high frequency lexis and their semantic fields. The arrows showing discursive connection among the key semantic fields were created after a detailed examination of the concordance lines and collocations of the each semantic domain.

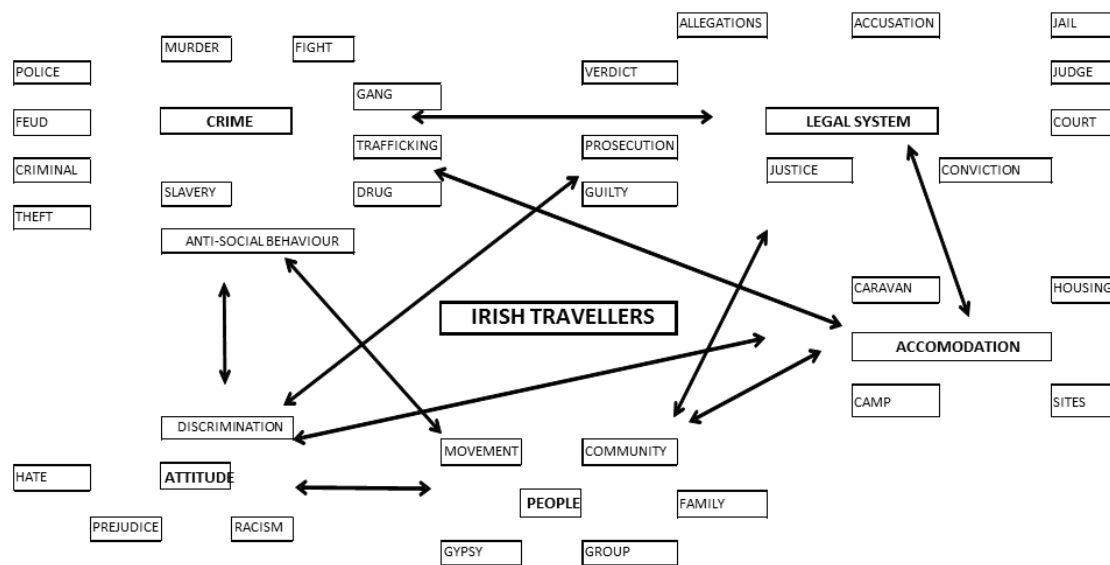


Figure 3: Lexis associated with Irish Travellers

As can be seen above, the lexis dominating newspaper coverage of Travellers is rather negative. The concordance lines of the keyword 'Irish Traveller(s)' also show that the issues surrounding them are generally evaluated in terms of the topos of 'problem', which equates the Travellers' situation to a 'problem to be solved'. The nature of the lexis and discourse topics surrounding Travellers can be seen as an indication of the contradiction between the lifestyles of the settled Irish community and itinerant Irish Travellers.

The rest of this section is allotted to the quantitative and qualitative analysis of APPRAISAL and legitimation in the journalistic commentaries concerning the Oireachtas Report. The quantitative data comes from the coding of each instance of APPRAISAL and legitimation on an Excel spreadsheet. While coding ATTITUDE, data were grouped under three headings: (1) Travellers, (2) settled community and (3) the Oireachtas Report. In order to increase the validity of quantitative analysis, APPRAISAL resources were marked by the author and an independent researcher. The data from two coders were

later calculated by a Kappa test (Cohen, 1960) to understand the scale of consistency between both coders' markings. The statistical calculation showed that the intercoder reliability was substantial with a result of 0.63. In the following section, the analysis of the texts was discussed thoroughly. Due to space limitations, qualitative analysis is restricted to two excerpts from each text.

Analysis of *The Irish Daily Mail* text

This right-centre tabloid, which ranks the fifth in circulation figures in Ireland (National Newspapers of Ireland Circulation Report, 2012, 2013, 2014), provides the lengthiest text with 1,220 words. 211 instances of APPRAISAL resources were coded. As Figure 4 illustrates, ATTITUDE categories form 71% of the corpus. 54% of the ATTITUDE category is constituted by negative resources concerning Travellers. The authorial stance to the Oireachtas Report is entirely negative and 69% of its ATTITUDE to the settled community is negative as well. What is interesting about ENGAGEMENT resources is the dominance of DIALOGIC CONTRACTION with 19%, which indicates an authorial tendency to restrict the scope of alternative voices through *although*, *but*, *however*.

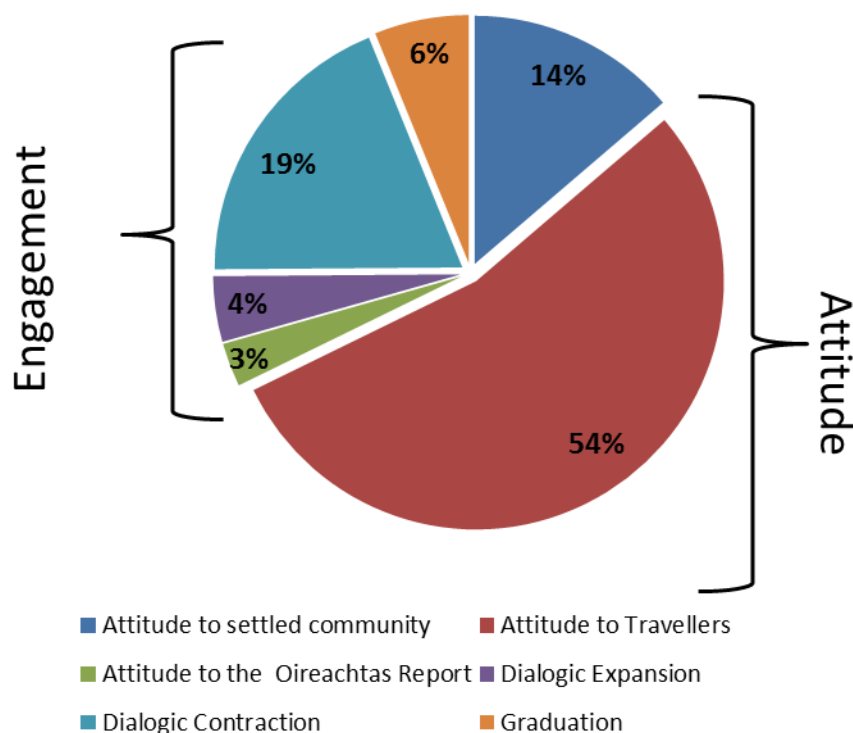


Figure 4: Distribution of APPRAISAL categories in the *The Irish Daily Mail*

The quantitative analysis of legitimation strategies shows that there are 31 instances of legitimation. Over 50% of the instances were identified as moral evaluation of Travellers overlapping with a negative ATTITUDE towards them. Rationalization is the second most frequent category with 12 instances (38%). The author expresses his opposition to Traveller lifestyle and ethnic recognition through logical arguments grounded upon evidence showing incongruity stemming from Travellers. The author also benefits from authorization with references to respectable data sources like

government officials, scholars and statistics. The excerpt below exemplifies the usage of APPRAISAL and legitimation:

(12) If Sinn Féin has its way, Travellers will soon have separate ethnic status, which will effectively [FOCUS] elevate their rights above those of the rest of society [-vePROPRIETY]. (13)As Alan Shatter pointed out [ENDORSEMENT], when recently expressing reluctance [-veSATISFACTION] to legislate for separate Traveller ethnicity [-vePROPRIETY], they already have the same political and civil rights as every other citizen under the Constitution [+veNORMALITY/ PROPRIETY]. (14)But [COUNTER] that's not [DENIAL] good enough - they want special status, at the expense of taxpayers [-vePROPRIETY], to protect and preserve their 'culture'. (*The Irish Daily Mail*, 8.04.2014)

The paragraph starts with an allegation of the political party Sinn Féin as being a collaborator of the Travellers, setting the stage for this polemical report. In (12), the author expresses her opposition through a negatively coded JUDGEMENT category of PROPRIETY which criticizes the ethical aspect of such 'recognition' for it would disturb social harmony and equality. 'Effectively' maximises negativity. Here, the author aims at strongly aligning the reader into her value position through legitimizing her view with the moral evaluation strategy. Her opposition is justified by a universally acclaimed moral value (i.e. 'social equality').

In (13), the author refers to the Minister for Justice and Equality Alan Shatter's viewpoint through the ENGAGEMENT category of ENDORSEMENT with 'As Alan Shatter pointed out'. Here, legitimation is realised through personal authority as his political status makes him a correct, undeniable and warrantable external source. In the same example, 'reluctance' is used to describe the Minister's affectual response within the category of DISSATISFACTION. (13) also includes the positively coded JUDGEMENT categories of NORMALITY and PROPRIETY which praise the current legislation that has already provided for the equal treatment of Travellers. Although the legitimation strategy in (13) is rationalization, which is about cognitively valid argumentations, the author also aims at substantiating the irrationality of ethnic recognition with reference to law.

(14) starts with a formulation of COUNTER with 'but'. The proposition following the coordinator counters the proposition that would have been expected in its place. The Traveller community's struggle for ethnic recognition is presented as a contradiction to the current legal practice which already gives equal status to them. The negative particle 'not' realises the category of DENIAL. It is a means of introducing and acknowledging the alternative positive position, only to reject it (Martin and White, 2005, p.118). This marker is dialogic for it invokes the proposition 'that's good enough'. The final APPRAISAL resource in (14) is a negatively coded PROPRIETY which is a criticism of Traveller morality. Their demand for special status is associated with an extra burden on taxpaying citizens. The author once more justifies her negative viewpoint of ethnic recognition with a moral evaluation strategy which contrasts the non-tax paying Traveller community with taxpaying citizens. The following excerpt also shows

APPRAISAL categories and legitimization strategies the writer used in order to specify her stance towards Irish Travellers:

(15) The statistics for Traveller lifestyles alone ought to [ENTERTAIN] be enough[FORCE] to cause alarm [-veSECURITY] to their supporters. (16) Their standards of health and education, their life expectancies, their women's and children's welfare is [MONOGLOSS] far [FORCE] below the national norm. (17) That's not [DENIAL] the fault[-veCAPACITY] of the so-called [-veREACTION] 'settled community'- that is [MONOGLOSS] a consequence of a lifestyle that facilitates criminality and irresponsibility [-ve PROPRIETY] and is [MONOGLOSS] maintained entirely [FORCE] for the convenience of a group of lazy, violent, drunken, misogynistic and domineering men [-vePROPRIETY] who just don't fancy working for a living [-vePROPRIETY], and who don't give a toss that their wives and children pay the price [-vePROPRIETY]. (*The Irish Daily Mail*, 8.04.2014)

The example starts with reference to the statistics that show the low living standards of Travellers' in comparison to the rest of society. Legitimation is realised through rationalization in which 'the statistics' function as an objective external resource to validate the author's claims. In (15), the affectual category of INSECURITY is realised through the high intensity word 'alarm', which evokes emotions concerned with threat to eco-social well-being. 'Enough' upscales negativity. In a similar way, 'far' in (16) is used to scale the extent of their low living standards. In (17), the negation marker 'not' is used to make the sentence dialogic as it positions itself as an answer to a presumed proposition accusing the settled community; 'so-called' shows the author's negative REACTION to the Travellers' terminology used to define the dominant group; 'entirely' maximises the degree of intensity. The author not only criticizes Traveller men's behaviour in terms of criminality, irresponsibility and financial burden but also legitimates her rejection of ethnic recognition through moral evaluation. The text above also includes several cases of MONOGLOSS through which the author presents these bare assertions as indisputable facts to suppress any alternative viewpoints.

Analysis of *The Irish Independent* text

This right-centre newspaper has the highest circulation from January, 2012 to September, 2014 (National Newspapers of Ireland Circulation Report, 2012, 2013, 2014). The word count of the text is 564 and there are 75 instances of APPRAISAL. Figure 5 shows the distribution of categories in the text. While ATTITUDE accounts for 54% of the whole corpus, the subcategory concerning Travellers, which is entirely composed of negative resources, has the largest share with 28%. Similarly, the subcategory about the report with 15% share is completely loaded with negative evaluations. However, the subcategory for settled community not only has the smallest share but is also formed by positive assessments. Likewise in *The Mail*, the proportion of DIALOGIC CONTRACTION is remarkably larger than DIALOGIC EXPANSION with 28%, which again indicates the authorial tendency to limit alternative viewpoints.

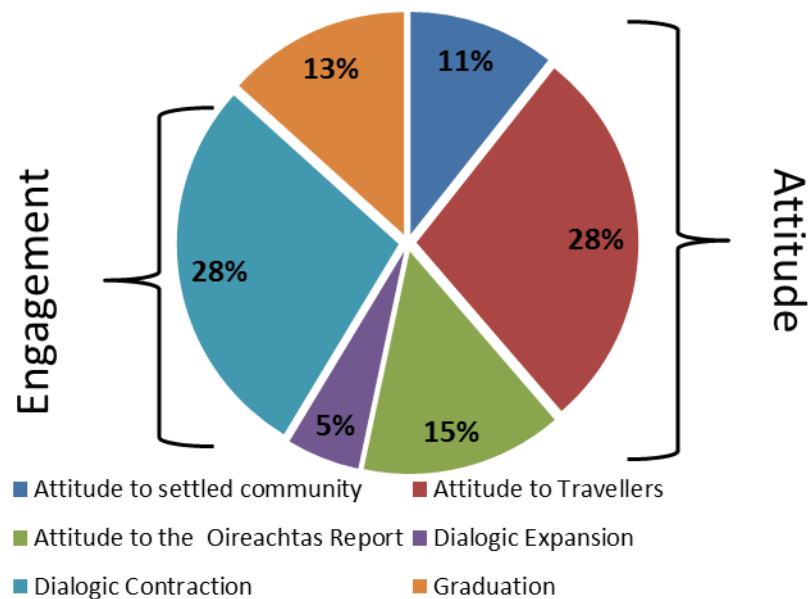


Figure 5: Distribution of APPRAISAL categories in *The Irish Independent*

14 instances of legitimization strategies were found. The author only took advantage of moral evaluation and rationalization to criticize Traveller lifestyle, ethnic recognition and their advocates. Although there are references to pro-Traveller authorities, their statements were quoted only to be refuted as irrational and unfair. The excerpt below exemplifies the usage of APPRAISAL and legitimization in this text:

(18) A draft Oireachtas report on Travellers - sponsored [-ve PROPRIETY] by those ever-willing [FORCE] defenders of the weak and dispossessed [-veTENACITY], the Shinnars - wants to grant them separate ethnic status [-veTENACITY]. (19) It is[MONOGLOSS], of course[CONCUR], complete [FORCE] bunkum [-ve REACTION]. (20) I debated this issue with Martin Collins of Pavee Point a few years ago and he produced a thoroughly [FORCE] jawdropping [-veREACTION] display of chippy resentment against the rest of his fellow countrymen [-vePROPRIETY], accusing non-Travellers [-vePROPRIETY] of being part of the “white, Irish, settled community” who routinely [FORCE] oppressed [-vePROPRIETY] them. (*The Irish Independent*, 1.04.2014)

Just as did the author of the piece in *The Daily Mail*, *The Irish Independent*’s journalist also underlines the role of Sinn Féin (aka ‘the Shinnars’) in this issue. Although ‘defending the rights of the weak and dispossessed’ is a universally praised behaviour, in (18) it is marked with negativity through categories of negative PROPRIETY and TENACITY. The author maximises the intensity of his viewpoint with the adjective ‘ever-willing’ from the higher end of the intensity spectrum. (19) clearly shows the authorial voice’s standpoint in this debate. The verb ‘be’ in the simple present tense is used to communicate his view as an unquestionable fact. Through the use of ‘of course’, the author overtly announces agreement with the proposition which is presented as a

shared value or belief. Here, the author excludes any other dialogically alternative viewpoints and voices from the ongoing colloquy. While ‘bunkum’ shows the author’s negative APPRECIATION of the Oireachtas Report on Traveller ethnicity, the prototypicality is upscaled with ‘complete’. In (20), the author recontextualizes a discussion with a Traveller from Pavee Point, which is a pro-Traveller rights organization. The author appreciates Mr Collins’ statements negatively with a high intensity adjective (i.e. ‘jawdropping’). He maximises the scale of negativity with the adverb ‘thoroughly’. (20) also includes negatively coded realisations of PROPRIETY concerning Mr Collins’ behaviour. His statements about Traveller discrimination are recontextualized within the ‘enemy inside’ frame, which presents him as the real segregationist that not only divides society but also unfairly accuses non-Travellers. The excerpt below also provides insight into the APPRAISAL and legitimation resources in *The Independent*:

(21) Brigid Quilligan of the Irish Traveller Movement also complains [-veDISSATISFACTION] that: ‘If one opens a newspaper or turns on the television, anti-Traveller sentiment is fired at once. As Travellers, we experience this in our daily lives and we try to set about changing that by making people aware of us and by working in partnership with people.’

(22) Has [CONCUR] Quilligan ever considered the fact that far too frequently [FORCE], people become “aware”, as she says [ACKNOWLEDGEMENT], of Travellers, because they have been the victim of antisocial behaviour at the hands of Travellers [-vePROPRIETY] - who then claim some sort of cultural immunity against criticism? [-vePROPRIETY] (*The Irish Independent*, 1.04.2014)

In (21), while referring to a well-known Traveller spokesperson’s statements, the author opts for the value-laden verb ‘complain’ instead of ‘say, explain or state’. In (22), the category of CONCUR is realised with a question for which the author expects no answer. Here, the author makes a show of presenting a well-founded and valid argumentation by means of a rhetorical question equipped with the legitimation strategies of rationalization and moral evaluation. Two negatively coded categories of PROPRIETY point criticism at the Traveller community for displaying anti-social behaviour and hypocrisy. ‘Far too frequently’ is used to maximise the commonality of Traveller-related unethical behaviour towards the settled community.

Analysis of *The Irish Timestext*

The Irish Times is the second largest circulated paper between specified dates (National Newspapers of Ireland Circulation Report, 2012, 2013, 2014). The word count is 578 while the total number of APPRAISAL resources is 55. Figure 6 presents the distribution of APPRAISAL resources. Like the two previous texts, ATTITUDE again has the largest share in the whole corpus with 55%. However, the subcategory concerning Travellers has the smallest share with 11% and the majority of it is marked positively. The subcategory about the Report accounts for 20% of the corpus and it is full of positive evaluations. While the subcategory concerning settled community is the largest one with a percentage of 24%, the majority of it is marked with negativity. Apart from the significant differences in dispersion of ATTITUDE among this figure and the previous

ones, another striking discrepancy is observed in ENGAGEMENT resources. The bigger share of DIALOGIC EXPANSION indicates the authorial preference for opening up space for alternative voices.

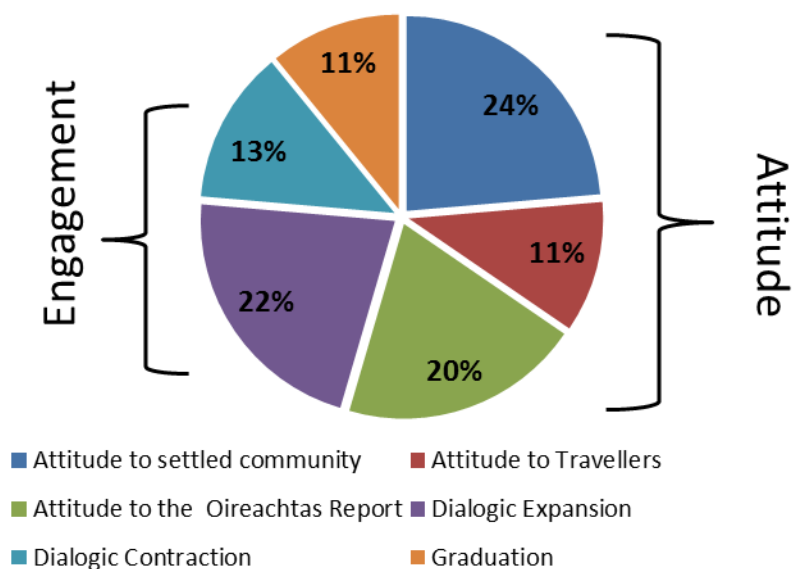


Figure 6: Distribution of APPRAISAL categories in *The Irish Times*

There are only 10 instances of legitimization strategies in this text. The strategy of moral evaluation is the highest category as it accounts for 70% of the corpus. Through this category, the author criticizes settled community for their contentious policies towards Travellers. On the other hand, the report was evaluated positively as a chance to unite a sharply divided society. The second most frequently used strategy (30%) is authorization, which is realised through references to Traveller people. The excerpt below exemplifies the categories of APPRAISAL and legitimization:

(23) It comes after decades of campaigning by Traveller groups and human rights organisations for ethnic recognition [+veTENACITY], given Travellers' shared history, culture, language and preference for nomadism.

(24) It also represents a complete [FORCE] about-turn [+ ve REACTION] since the last cross-party statement on Travellers in 1963, when the Commission on Itinerancy described Travellers as a "problem"[-vePROPRIETY] and proposed that they be absorbed "into the general community"[-vePROPRIETY]. (*The Irish Times*, 18.04.2014)

Through the category of TENACITY in (23), the author praises Travellers' perseverance of in preserving their culture despite the obstacles. The author also substantiates the rationality of the Oireachtas recommendation for official recognition by underlining the distinctiveness of Traveller history, culture, language and lifestyle from that of settled society. By juxtaposing the Oireachtas report with the Commission on Itinerancy Report in 1963, which recommended the assimilation of Travellers, in (24) the author judges the historical continuity of faults towards Travellers with negative PROPRIETY. Yet, (24)

also includes a positive APPRECIATION of the Oireachtas Report, the meaning of which is intensified by means of ‘complete’. Moral evaluation is the legitimization strategy in (24) as the author attacks the indecency of State policies. The following excerpt is another example from the same newspaper to analyse APPRAISAL and legitimization categories:

(25) Minister for Justice Alan Shatter must [ENTERTAIN] consider the recommendation. (26) He has said [ACKNOWLEDGEMENT] he is “seriously considering” recognition of Traveller ethnicity. (27) Such a step would be largely [FORCE] symbolic [-veREACTION], but would represent a hugely [FORCE] significant [+veREACTION] statement of positive [+veREACTION] State recognition of a community that for generations has felt nothing but hostility and contempt [-vePROPRIETY]. (*The Irish Times*, 18.04.2014)

‘Must’ in (25), which traditionally functions in the category of deontic modality, realises the category of ENTERTAIN as the author still expresses a subjective evaluation. Rather than using ‘should’ or ‘ought to’, the author opted for ‘must’, which shows strong necessity to specify her own viewpoint among other viewpoints. (26) includes the neutral reporting verb ‘said’, which does not specify the author’s stance towards Mr Shatter’s proposition. On the other hand, in (27) the authorial stance is explicitly communicated with categories of ATTITUDE and GRADUATION. While the State’s prospective recognition of Traveller ethnicity is defined as a symbolic yet significant step, the authorial viewpoint is maximised with ‘largely’ and ‘hugely’. The negative PROPRIETY category in (27) also advances the writer’s critical attitude to anti-Traveller sentiment systematized by the previous legislations.

Conclusion

Considering Van Dijk’s observations (1991, p.42-43) which underline the undeniable authority of mass media over symbolic resources in shaping the public opinion about ethnic relations, this study explored the media attitude to one of the most discriminated groups in Irish society. Due to huge differences in the sizes of newspaper corpora and special nature of evaluative language, my analysis is two-staged. The first stage which focuses on the list of high frequency words and discourse topics in the whole corpus shows that Travellers are generally represented in fields of criminality, legal systems, accommodation, community and attitude. Regardless of the discrepancies in newspapers’ contextualisation of the discourse topics due to their ideological differences, these discourse fields carry the imprint of negativity. As Fairclough (1989, p. 54) states ‘the effects of media power are cumulative, working through the repetition of particular ways of handling causality and agency, particular ways of positioning the readers, and so forth’, the recurrent discourse themes surrounding Travellers reinforce the image of a ‘problematic’ minority group. The differences in corpora sizes must be seen as an attempt for foregrounding or backgrounding the issue (Richardson, 2004). The liberal *Irish Times* gives the largest coverage to Travellers with a more positive attitude through representations of Travellers as an indispensable component of Irish society with their distinctive culture. On the other hand, *The Irish Independent* and *Daily Mail*, whose corpora sizes are remarkably smaller, have a negative attitude towards Travellers with associations of crime, violence and indecency. Both

newspapers' underreporting of Irish Travellers is an intentional choice to maintain their invisibility in the society. On the other hand, foregrounding negative characteristics of Travellers when they are reported adds to the unfavourable image of Travellers as an antagonistic group that opposes the values of the settled and civilised community.

The second stage of analysis is concerned with APPRAISAL resources and legitimation strategies in journalistic commentaries on the Oireachtas Report. Right wing newspapers' evaluations of the Oireachtas Report, which officially recommends ethnic recognition for Travellers, are loaded with criticism towards Travellers and the report. While justifying their opposition to ethnic recognition, these two newspapers manipulate the prejudice that presents Travellers as 'social dropouts, involved in a culture of crime, and a 'social problem' in need of assimilation, sedentarization, and monitoring' (Kabachnik, 2009, p. 51). On the contrary, *The Irish Times* gives a favourable opinion of the Oireachtas report and blames previous State policies for marginalising Travellers. The attitudinal schism in opinion towards Travellers in the three newspapers can be easily observed in the recontextualization of external resources and ATTITUDE categories. From the available legitimation strategies, moral evaluation and rationalization are the most frequent ones.

The results of this two-staged analysis reveal that media representation of Travellers centres upon the clash between sedentarism and nomadism. Now that settled lifestyle is seen as the norm, the peripatetic lifestyle of Travellers is considered as deviant. Right wing mediators tend to communicate that Travellers are outside the 'we' consensus of Irish society which 'sees its interests as culturally and economically valid, but as threatened by a 'them' comprising a motley crew of antagonistic sectional groups....'(Fowler, 1991, p.53). Morality and rationality are the basis of right wing newspapers' criticism of Traveller culture through associations of Traveller culture with degeneration, barbarism, primitiveness and inferiority. The argumentative schemes of morality and rationality are also used by the liberal *Irish Times* to present its stance towards the Traveller issue. This newspaper defines the settled community's discrimination of Travellers as unethical and irrational. Although this study focuses on a small corpus, the findings of the research provide an understanding of how ideologically opposing newspapers represent one of the most marginalised groups in Ireland.

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