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Abstract

Relying upon a Critical Discourse Analysis approach to the media, this paper explores the way in which, in a sample of documentaries broadcast on public and commercial television, the minority community of travellers and gypsies is represented. Starting from the premise that what is reported in factual films of this type is always a mediated and interpreted vision of reality, the paper highlights different aspects of the film narrative from the voice of the main narrator who orchestrates the various segments in the films, to the questions asked by the reporter. A brief mention of the images at the opening of the films completes the analysis and indicates that in some cases, rather than divulging information about these barely known groups, journalists produce a film that entertains and/or shocks the viewers.

Key words: Travellers, gypsies, representation, frame, categorization, documentary, voice-over, question

1. Introduction

This paper investigates the portrayal of the minority community of travellers and gypsies in a sample of factual films broadcast on public and commercial television. Like for many other scholars, for Blommaert (2005), who emphasises the importance of contextualisation in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), no text is ideology-free. This is certainly true for such complex texts as television documentaries, which through a combination of narrative and interviews, along with embedded footage and visual images, purport to offer a seemingly balanced and neutral account of some issues, when, in fact, they convey a specific view through an ideological discourse (Piazza 2015). The discussion concentrates on the 'representation' in documentaries, understood as a non-transparent and non-objective 'mediating' process 'whereby an event (...) filtered through interpretive frameworks (...), acquires ideological significance' (Poole 2002: 23). The paper highlights how the linguistic and visual choices in these films create a 'subjective representation' of the reality of these groups, which is offered to the viewers as a set of 'objective beliefs and perceptions' (Bhatia 2015: 1-2).

Following on from previous research (Piazza 2015), this study categorises documentaries as films that are a complex amalgam of three distinct text genres, namely– expository, argumentative and instructive (Hatim and Mason

1990). Most documentaries are hybrids between an expository and an argumentative text; as factual films, they seemingly present and discuss an issue with the clear objective of informing viewers but, as they do so, they develop a 'claim' of a particular kind and express a specific stance. In line with Pollak (2008: 80), the study attempts to answer the following questions by analysing mainly the verbal discourses in the three selected documentaries but with some consideration of the visual level:

What perspective does the documentary endorse and which does it hide or minimise?

What values are upheld in the topics discussed/investigated?

How are the social actors presented, in this case travellers and settled residents?

How is the credibility of the documentary established?

The three documentaries, which were broadcast on British television over a two year period, all report on the disenfranchised and marginal communities of travellers and gypsies. They are as follows: *The Town the Travellers Took Over* was broadcast by the commercial Channel 5 in July 2013, *My Life: Children of the Road* appeared on public BBC One in May 2011 and *Gypsy Eviction: The Fight for Dale Farm* was shown on Channel 4 in September 2011. Given the documentaries' diverse perspectives on the topic, the study is intended as an initial reflection on the ideological aspects of representation of the chosen groups. While they all focus on the same mobile communities, the three documentaries' sub-topics, styles and functions (Corner 2002) are markedly different. *Gypsy Eviction: The Fight for Dale Farm* is a piece of hard-news reportage about the then impending forced closure of Dale Farm, the biggest travellers' site in England; *My Life: Children of the Road* is a piece of social journalism that reflects on the condition of travellers' children in the same site; finally, *The Town the Travellers Took Over* is an example of classic investigative journalism, in this instance focusing on an international scam by a travellers' gang who sold faulty generators across Europe.²

A brief synopsis of the documentaries will make it easier for the reader to understand the analysis. *Gypsy Eviction: The Fight for Dale Farm* follows the demise of the biggest campsite in England where the travellers having bought a piece of green belt land adjoining a legal site, illegally built their homes. The dramatic story ended in the site's violent eviction but the documentary follows the stages prior to that event when the travellers and a massive number of supporters attempted a negotiation with the authorities. *My Life: Children of the Road* explores the life of Dale Farm children, their games, beliefs, traumatic memories, aspirations and through their voices we learn about the travellers' community at large and above all how these young adults are often victims of discrimination by permanent residents. *The Town the Travellers Took Over* starts from the story of Rathkeale, a quiet town in Ireland that has become the Mecca for travellers who are trying, we are told, to purchase all the properties and slowly push out the original residents. The film explains the provenance of the travellers' wealth by tracing a gypsy gang who have set up an international scam selling faulty generators and operating throughout Europe and as far as Australia. Although TV documentaries are often produced by independent film makers and journalists, most of them are specifically commissioned by television networks (Lichtenstein 2015). While

they cannot be taken as directly reflecting the views and values of a specific network, they necessarily take into account its political leanings and, in part, adapt to its style of delivery (with regard, for instance, to film segmentation in view of commercial breaks). This paper, therefore, also reflects on how although they are not the direct product of the network that broadcasts them, the three factual films are relatively in synchrony with the television network's character. More specifically, the films broadcast by the public providers, BBC One and Channel 4, greatly differ from the documentary on Channel 5 which is 'a commercial operation [directed to] a young target audience, and, consequently, tends to adopt a more populist approach' (Gaber, 2016: 638). Finally, the three documentaries are one off, stand-alone films therefore their choice of angle and topic is much more crucial than it is in the case of a series in which different aspects of the gypsy communities can be shown each time (an example being Channel 5's *The Truth about Travellers* and BBC One Scotland's *The Travellers*, cf. Piazza 2015).

The study focuses primarily on the role of the authorial voice of the documentary narrator that overarches and orchestrates the various voices within the film. Following that, the questions posed by the interviewer are considered in detail and reference is made to the concepts of documentary's credibility and authoritativeness interpreted as the means through which television journalists validate the representation they offer of the travellers' communities. Finally, some attention is paid to the visuals in the documentaries' trailers.

2. Context: The Community of Travellers and Gypsies

In the present time of diaspora and mobility, travellers and gypsies are still treated with a great deal of suspicion by settled people (Kabachnik 2009), stigmatised (Powell 2009), exoticised³ or, more generally, excluded or 'othered' (Holloway 2005). Travellers is the generic name for the Irish nomadic community investigated in this study, but it also refers to English, Welsh and Scottish mobile people. Gypsy, often in association with the qualifier Romany, is the other synonymous term that defines such itinerant groups who have no permanent residence as they choose to change location on a fairly continuous basis. In the past, they led a life in tune with nature, selling their trade and services as they moved from place to place. As a consequence of their lifestyle, however, they have fallen behind the times often remaining illiterate, trapped in a patriarchal family structure strongly supported by a communitarian non-capitalist life style in which solidarity among the community members has a major role especially with regard to the raising of children. Nowadays, however, travellers appreciate the value of education for their families. Some also accept to be housed and are happy to live in permanent sites while others choose to remain fully or partially mobile. Ideally, a traveller family would gladly limit travelling to the summer months and be sedentary during school time in their caravan parked in a campsite.

Travellers' relation to a continuously redefined place is crucial to a proper understanding of their group identity (Piazza 2014). Their immediate space is the caravan in which they invest most of their financial resources. Beyond the caravan is the encampment or site; this can be authorised, rent-based and

serviced by the local Councils (that provide gas, electricity, communal toilets and showers), or non-authorised when travellers occupy for short periods parks and other green areas in and around mostly urban centres. Travellers are constantly evicted from these illegal spaces so their relationship with settled society is generally through law enforcement. The problem lies in the shortage of living arrangements for these communities who, according to the 2011 Population Census, totalled 54,895 people in England.

In the UK, Travellers, Gypsies and Roma or Romanies are a threatened community, with ethnic minority status (TGR); most people do not have any substantive contacts with them and generally hold very negative opinions and attitudes towards them, because they are regarded as being anti-social and parasitic in various ways including their untidiness and engagement with illegal activities. The media, therefore, have an important role in the representation of this community as they could potentially increase the knowledge of relatively very large TV audiences concerning these marginal groups. Yet, at least in the case of television, the travellers' community is invariably covered only if some major event or incident makes the news, as in the case of the eviction of Dale Farm, the biggest illegal site in Essex, England. Generally television encourages negative stereotyping by portraying travellers and gypsies as exotic circus creatures good for entertainment (as in the *Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*, Channel 4, famous for its rococo clothes galore), or violent brawlers or crooks (as in *The Travellers' Secret Cash Stash*, Channel 5).

The three documentaries under scrutiny rely on specific 'categorisations' (Sarangi and Candlin 2003) of the traveller and gypsy communities. Categories serve as 'spectacles through which we routinely, albeit largely unconsciously, observe and classify events and experiences' (Sarangi and Candlin 2003:117). In this instance, Irish travellers are categorised as groups engaged in certain kinds of activities and occupations. Another related concept is 'framing' (Goffman, 1986; Tannen 1979 and 1993; Bednarek 2005 among others) that facilitates the way in which film makers and journalists organise knowledge and present reality for the viewers through linguistic and visual means. Such framing activates 'structures of expectations' (Tannen 1979:144) by offering prototypical categorizations of events and people among viewers. As frames tend to be stable (Bednarek 2005: 690), it is crucial to capture the various ways in which this case study documentaries view and understand the travelling community. Such framing and categorising are realised in the film through a verbal and visual discourse that assigns the travellers to a particular category of people.

Being one of the expressions of the 'authoritative voices [...] of the elite groups in society' (Bhatia 2015: 15), in documentaries TV journalists construct a discourse of authoritativeness and credibility by providing evidence of the accounts they offer and speaking from documented experience (Montgomery 1999 and 2001). In various ways, but mainly through interviewing experts and witnesses, as well as speaking from their direct month-long experience within the Irish travellers' community and hence showing 'expertise-based legitimacy' (Bhatia 2015: 14), the reporters in these three films present themselves as authoritative and impartial commentators .

A lexical analysis of words that are frequently used in the narrator's voice-over

reveals the dominant categorisations and frames of these two groups which underpin the documentaries. Reporters' questions similarly tend to reinforce these categorisations and frames. A brief discussion of the images in the films' trailers and how they support the narrative will complete the investigation. Such triangulation, it is hoped, will provide sufficient evidence of how a particular discourse on the Irish community of travellers is constructed in the three films.

3. Theoretical Background: Ideological Discourse and the Documentary Genre

The concept of 'ideology' is closely associated with Marxist theory with a strong emphasis on its role in generating or reinforcing false consciousness and of political praxis in countering this. However, for the purposes of this analysis ideology is understood as a 'system of prejudices, stereotypes, patterns, or ideas' shared by a community (Calzada-Pérez 1998: 41). Standing in a 'complex and often quite indirect' relation with discourse (van Dijk 2006a: 124), ideology is not forcefully imposed from above by dominant groups, rather it is a dynamic phenomenon and the site of power struggles that sustain or vice versa resist dominant forces (Bhatia 2015). Identifying ideology in the discourse of the media and television in particular therefore means to analyse the language that is used, echoing the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, to construct a particular view of the world. It also means, following van Leeuwen's (2008) Foucauldian approach, to identify the semantic constructions of reality by focusing on how a particular event or 'social practice' is 'recontextualised' in discourse, which represents the roles, the settings and the actions of the people involved. Crucially, the relationship between discourse and ideology is not simple and direct and 'we may ask ourselves whether specific discourse features, such as passive sentences or nominalizations are 'intentional' aspects of ideological discourse, or whether such structures are largely automatized and hence hardly consciously controlled' (van Dijk 2006b: 127).

Documentaries are factual, as opposed to fictional, films that promise a degree of truth or at least 'the experience of an attempt at truth' (Routt 1991). Discussing news and television programmes as multimodal texts, Montgomery (2007) believes that it is not unrealistic to assume that the verbal and visual content of factual television to a degree is taken by viewers as being informative and hence credible. Similarly, van Leeuwen (1991) who believes in the supremacy of the verbal plane in television documentaries observes that, especially when it accompanies the voice-over, 'the visual authenticates, particularises and exemplifies the verbal' (p. 113).

However, other scholars focus more on the ideological component of documentaries. Routt (1991), for example, who is preoccupied with the philosophical issue of truth in documentaries, asserts that the very act of selecting the materials to include in a factual film falsifies it. As television narratives, documentaries are subject to the logic of dramatisation that makes any television product appealing but also contributes to the film falsity and precludes an accurate representation (Routt 1991: 65). Bruzzi (2000) and Nichols (2001) also note that the degree of accuracy in presenting information

and the internal narrative coherence of the films often offer a semblance of truth to viewers when, in fact, a particular interpretation of reality is being presented. Through a number of interviews with documentary-makers, Mueller and Crone (2015) emphasize how it is very challenging ‘for a documentary to function as an objective, authentic representation of reality’ (p. 293). The reflectivist and constructivist approaches to documentaries thus emphasise the role of the visual and verbal in the construction of an ideological discourse. In line with these latter studies, this paper considers the truth of documentaries as relative and limited (Routt 1991: 65) and factual films as ideological products; it thus explores the stylistic choices through which a partisan view of the issue in hand is realised in them.

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A television documentary usually presents to viewers the result of its investigation into a particular issue or event. To do so many are the affordances used, the main and canonical one being the voice-over, whether in the form of a reporter speaking to the camera or a narrator’s disembodied voice. Together with the interviews, and accompanied by the witnesses’ and experts’ voices, the voice-over narrates often in a present form and brings together all the various threads in the film. Functioning as a direct address to the viewers, such hetero-diegetic voice-over has attracted scholars’ criticism especially when in the form of an unidentified and disembodied narrator. For many such ‘voice of God’ (Nichols 2001) is synonymous with a patronising, domineering and patriarchal narrative mode (Bruzzi 2000: 42) that assumes the audience needs to be guided through the film with the viewer lacking agency vis-à-vis the images, the interviews and the events being reported. This study, on the other hand, takes a more neutral attitude to the voice-over and shows how this technique by itself cannot be necessarily and acritically associated with ideological representation.

The three documentaries investigated in this study exhibit different voice-over (henceforth VO) modalities. In *The Town the Travellers Took Over* (henceforth *TT*), (Channel 5, July 2013), the male reporter speaks to camera and in voice-over; in *My Life: Children of the Road* (henceforth *Children*), (BBC One, May 2011), an invisible disembodied female narrator ensures the story coherence by speaking over the images and alternating with an equally invisible male reporter who conducts the interviews; *Gypsy Eviction: The Fight for Dale Farm* (henceforth *Eviction*), (Channel 4, September 2011) favours transparency therefore in it the female interviewer is also the voice-over narrator. The focus of this paper is on the narrator’s voice-over that conveys the most crucial part of the film message and undoubtedly the most direct address to the audience; the analysis however will discuss how such a modality interacts with other verbal and visual elements in the documentary,

all contributing to the televisual representation of the Irish travelling community in the UK.

4. Analytical Framework

The analysis of the various voices in the documentaries brings to the fore the representation of the traveller and gypsy communities, highlighting how in the media this is not a 'transparent report' but 'always a decision to interpret and represent [information] in one way rather than another' (Fairclough 1995: 54). As the voice of the narrator whether identifiable (in the case the narrator speaks to the camera, indicated in the excerpts as CAM) or disembodied (indicated simply as VO) is what presents to the viewers the main information, the analysis starts from a semantic deconstruction of this affordance in the films. A lexical analysis of words that are frequently used in the narrator's voice-over (with the help of WordSmith Tools 4, Scott 2004) reveals the dominant categorisations and frames of these two groups which underpin these documentaries. Such focus on frequent words (both such function words as pronouns that immediately refer to the person orchestrating the narrative, and lexical words that suggest particular topics and themes), not only highlights the centrality of particular concepts and ideas in the voice-over but, by presenting the text in which specific words appears, it guarantees an entry point into the discourse of the film and reveals the degree of ideological dominance that various interpretations of the voice-over can realise.

Following the analysis of the narrator's voice, the analysis moves to reporters' questions that similarly tend to reinforce the categorisations and frames encouraged in the documentaries. By examining the questions that are asked to witnesses and experts, the analysis moves from "primary discourse' (the representing or reporting discourse) [to] 'secondary discourse' (the discourse represented or reported)" (Fairclough 1995: 54-5). Such an attention to indirect and direct discourse highlights the frames as ways of seeing the world that are encouraged in the documentaries as well as the proposed categorisations of the participants involved. The combined examination of the documentaries' discourse also reveals how the journalists construct their legitimacy and institutional identity as reporters.

A brief foray into the visuals of the film trailers and a discussion of how they support the narrative completes the investigation. Such triangulation, it is hoped, will provide sufficient evidence of how a particular discourse on the Irish community of travellers is constructed in the three films.

5. Analysis: Inside the Documentaries

A prima facie indication of ideology in the three documentaries is the choice of topic, therefore from this perspective Channel 5 *TT*'s sensationalist, tabloid concentration on a gang of crook travellers does nothing but reinforce a negative stereotype, while *Children* and *Eviction* show a degree of understanding toward the traveller community. However, as anticipated, the following analysis goes in much more depth.

5.1 The reporter's Word in the Documentaries

This section discusses the narrator's voice-over (henceforth VO) in the three films with particular attention being paid to the pronouns used and the lexical preferences. Each film is different with regard to these elements partly because the space that the VO occupies is not the same. In *Eviction*, the VO amounts to 43% of the total word count (ca 6600 words), in *Children* it totals 36% of the total, which are both much lower than the percentage of VO's words in *TT*, 84% (of a total of ca 6600).

5.1.1 The VO's *we*

In Channel 4 *Eviction*, the use of *we* associated with such verbs as *investigate* often refers to the particular documentary series, *Dispatches*, which is reporting on travellers. This is a well-known and widely respected series which reports on a wide range of topics mainly about British society, health, religion, politics, environment, and current affairs. As such, *Dispatches* reporters have a reputation for being part of a hard-hitting and insightful documentary brand as shown in excerpt 1 below.

(1) *Eviction* VO. Tonight on Dispatches *we investigate* the battle between the travelling community, their neighbours and the law. Gypsies and travellers say there are not enough places for them to live. *We investigate* why some people don't want them next door. *We ask* how far these minority groups can keep their culture and still integrate with the wider world.

Within such a civic service-frame, the VO's *we* serves to construct an authoritative narrator who has the moralising duty (Baym 2000) of bringing to the fore the legal anomalies that make travellers' life difficult (e.g. travellers' complaints about lack of permanent sites and their desire to maintain their traditions) as well as the attitudes of mainstream society (viz people rejecting travellers). BBC One *Children* similarly embarks on the moral task of helping us understand the predicament of travellers' children by focusing exclusively on them (with the exception of a few questions put to one child's father). From this angle, the use of *we* indexes the team of reporters who approach the children by name in a neutral but also friendly manner: 'We meet Salina and Francesca out on the site.'/ 'Because we're not allowed into the caravan, Roger brings out some family photos.' By contrast, in Channel 5 *TT*, the journalist glorifies his role as reporter. The VO's 'I' occurs 44 times with verbs attributing visible agency to the reporter (*I learned, I exposed, I'd be conned, I wanted to know, I'd walked away without a scratch, I had a receipt, I then paid a visit, I went undercover, I tracked down, I made my approach, I saw, I was given*). Thus, the reporter portrays himself as a daring investigator of a community of crooks that forces him to use unorthodox measures ('Determined to find out why, I tried again. This time, wearing a hidden camera') (Fig. 1). Later as he summarises the thrust of his search, the journalist stands in a medium shot in front of the viewers against the ruins of an old church, the focus visually on him and his enterprise rather than the travellers' community. While this strategy ensures suspense and entertainment, it acts at the expense of true insight into the nomadic community and categorises the travellers as a threatening group.



Figure 1 TT's reporter and VO using a hidden camera

TT presenter Paul Connolly is Irish (and his documentary is shot in Ireland, while the other two discuss the Irish community of travellers in England). For this reason, he plausibly acquires immediate credibility in the viewers' eyes as an appropriate person to approach travellers. In line with CH5 'infotainment' (Thussu, 2008) spirit, however, Connolly's credibility seems to depend on the construction of his entertaining professional identity as 'heroic' (Smith 2013) and daring because in conjunction with the frame of illegality and the categorization of travellers as dangerous people:

(2) *TT VO*. The deal was done, I had a receipt in my pocket and, *thankfully, I'd walked away without a scratch.*

(3) *TT REP CAM*⁴. Over the course of a six-month investigation, one which unexpectedly led *me* across Europe and home again, *I drilled down to the core* of Rathkeale's many secrets that answered questions which, *for decades now*, cast long dark shadows over the town the travellers plan to one day take over completely.

In conclusion, an attention to pronouns provides a first entry into the role of the reporters which is inextricably linked to the representation of travellers portrayed in each film. In terms of the realisation of the overarching narrative, a disembodied VO is not necessarily and immediately associated with a damning judgement of the Irish community; *Children* for instance which adopts the invisible narrator mode shows an attempt at presenting the travellers' children in a friendly and non-judgemental way at least in terms of the VO.

5.1.2 Lexical choices: Traveller

This section examines how the lexical preferences in the films - revealed again with the use of a concordancer - indicate the ideological stance through the ways in which the reporters refer to travellers as actors, the degree of agency and responsibility they attribute to them and settled residents and, consequently, how they indicate the understanding and respect (or lack of these) towards them.

The very frequent word *traveller/s* is crucial. CH 5 *TT* shows throughout a negative semantic or discourse 'prosody' (Gabrielatos and Baker 2008: 11, also Sinclair 1991) of this word due to the collocates of the node *traveller*

pertaining mostly to a domain of illegality and criminality (*crooked, crime, amassed, monied, con, scam, rival, muscled, do as you please, faulty generators*).

(4) *TT* VO. I had, almost by chance, unearthed links to national and international crime. *Travellers* from within Rathkeale had told me of a vastly profitable criminal network that crisscrossed the globe running scams.

(5) *TT* VO. I was told to be at a Limerick hotel in two days' time, and that a monied *traveller* from Rathkeale would be waiting and willing to talk on camera, provided I protect his identity.

Expectedly, in line with such negative prosody, this documentary favours the term *illegal campsite* in contrast to Channel 4 *Eviction's* preference for the more neutral *unauthorised* site. The frame encouraged by lexical choices in *TT* is once again that of unlawfulness while the categorisation of travellers is that of a group of people sustaining themselves through activities that are banned by mainstream society.

By contrast with *TT*, *Children* and *Eviction* show a less negative attitude when the VO uses the lemma *traveller/s*. In both films, the term is used mainly as a noun rather than a pre-modifier and descriptor, which makes it easier to attach agency to the travellers and present them as actors of a number of processes:

(6) *Eviction* VO. There are neither temporary stopping places nor permanent sites for *travellers* in Bournemouth./Then, late this afternoon, the *travellers* won a last-minute court injunction.

(7) *Children* VO. The council says it'll do whatever it can to provide alternative housing for those that have nowhere else to go, and still hopes the *travellers* will agree to leave Dale Farm.

BBC One *Children* pays tribute to travellers' history: 'Some gypsies can trace their roots right back to northern India, but Irish travellers are different. They originally come from Ireland.' *Children* also recognises the ordeal travellers go through due to restrictive laws and scarcity of space.

(8) *Children* VO. The travellers here are trying to make Dale Farm their permanent home, but the case has been heard in many different courts, and the travellers have now lost. Travellers first began settling here in the 1960s, when permission was granted for 40 families, but over the past few years more and more families have moved to Dale Farm, often having been evicted from elsewhere. They bought land on an old scrap yard, and now live there illegally.

Crucially, BBC One *Children* implicitly attributes blame to mainstream society for children's exclusion at school⁵, which forces travellers' families to resort to home teaching:

(9) *Children* VO. Some parents at Dale Farm say they teach their children at home because they're worried about them being accepted at the local comprehensive.

They go to the local primary school in a nearby village. There are 90 pupils at the school. All but two are *travellers*. The school used to be full of local kids, but as more and more travellers joined, their parents moved them.

Similarly, in CH 4 *Eviction*, *traveller/s* are the actors of a number of processes and they are often commended for their resilience and tenacity: ‘the travellers *haven't given up yet*’ or ‘they *won international support* from religious leaders.’ Also, the programme blames mainstream society’s contradictory laws for the travellers’ dramatic situation:

(10) CH 4 *Eviction* VO. ...there's already a national shortage of several thousand caravan places. Authorities like Leeds are caught between public outrage if they spend money on more sites, and furious reaction when they don't. These gypsy families stay around Leeds, but there's no space on any council or private sites. Wherever they stop, within days bailiffs move them on.

In terms of how travellers as ‘participants of social practices’ (van Leeuwen 2008: 23) are represented, *TT* focuses on the pressures the group puts on the settled community. For example, how ‘the settled community now claim to be under siege, and in this, the town the travellers took over, a cross-cultural tug-of-war has reached boiling point’. And again, ‘[Rathkeale] a once-thriving settled community are now very much in the minority and can lay claim to less than 20% of the town’; how its activities are obscure and damaging to the social environment (‘Often, properties aren't bought to be lived in [...] most of the owners live abroad. [...] properties are deserted, boarded-up.’); and how travellers are involved in straightforward illegality when the journalist reports on being sold faulty generators by a gang of con business men belonging to an international network:

(11) *TT* VO. My investigation into Rathkeale, the town that travellers took over, had unexpectedly led me to Paris in France, where I tracked down and came face-to-face with a crew of traveller con men, all of whom are residents in or have strong links to the Limerick town [Rathkeale]. Posing as a customer, I went undercover to buy one of several hundred faulty generators they were hawking on the streets of Paris for what sources claimed was up to ten times the market value. I then paid a visit to an independent expert, an electrical engineer, who proved beyond a doubt that I'd been conned.

Eviction also reveals that travelling ‘men are five times more likely to be jailed than the national average’. However, this documentary frames the issue of illegality among travellers not so much as a feature of the community but as the inevitable yet not always fair perception that settled society has of these mobile people: ‘Perhaps the most sensitive issue to address is *a view* that gypsies and travellers prey on the vulnerable. *It tarnishes the reputation of their whole community, even though only a few are guilty*’. Travellers’ criminality, therefore, is treated not as the topic or the subject matter of the discussion, but as a ‘topos’ or ‘the common-sense reasoning typical for specific issues’ (van Dijk 2000, 97-98; cf. also Sedlak 2000, Reisigl and Wodak 2001). The mention of the existence of con men among travellers seems to be offered as a concession to an expected mainstream view of the community that the film maker cannot ignore. However, it is not at the core of the documentary narrative.

Finally, it is worth noticing how the three films use various techniques to (de)personalise travellers. In CH 4 *Eviction* and BBC One *Children*, the viewers make the acquaintance of some of the travellers in a direct way through the use of personal identification and personalisation (van Leeuwen

2008: 42). In the former, Mary is portrayed as the fierce fighter for justice ready to sacrifice her life to keep Dale Farm open (*'They better bring body bags and ambulances 'cos we're willing to die for our homes'*); similarly, in the BBC One *Children* documentary, we empathise with young Roger who is still suffering emotionally from the trauma of a previous violent eviction and with Tammy who dreams of a future as a hairdresser but is unable to train as one because of the racism of mainstream society that does not welcome a young traveller girl into a beauty salon. The empathy with the travellers' predicament that the documentary encourages through the use of first names is, on the contrary, totally absent in *TT*, where travellers are portrayed as an anonymous depersonalised entity.

In conclusion, the analysis of the lemma, *traveller/s* grants us entry into the discursive representation offered in the films. While *Children* and *Eviction* categorise travellers as a nomadic group in a dynamic relationship with mainstream society and often attribute blame to the permanent community, *TT* portrays travellers as a group of crooks and con men who take advantage of naïve people and whose investigation can put the journalist himself at risk.

5.1.3 Community and law

Remaining on the plane of semantic choices, it is worth noting that, apart from *traveller/s*, the only words frequently shared by the three VOs are *community* and *law*. Again, a close look at how these terms are used is indicative of the different frames encouraged in the films and the ways in which travellers are categorised.

CH 5 *TT* has a menacing and ominous tone attributing to the travelling *community* a series of negative meanings and presenting the permanent community as being very concerned about it. In the VO's words (excerpts 12 and 13 below), travellers appear as a social threat as they keep buying properties in Rathkeale with the settled residents losing control of the town and slowly becoming the minority.

(12) *TT* REP VO. For the traveller *community*, owning real estate in Rathkeale, their spiritual home, is seen as a status symbol. Often, properties aren't bought to be lived in, but are instead used as holiday homes or simply as a showpiece. As for all but two months of the year, most of the owners live abroad. During that time, properties are deserted boarded-up. Now that practice has spread to Main Street, Rathkeale, where once-booming businesses lie empty and unused.

(13) *TT* REP CAM. There is, however, no escaping the fact that the settled *community* are steadily vanishing from Rathkeale. As they're perfectly entitled to do, Rathkeale's travellers continue to buy up what land and property they can.

Worse still, while a groups of travellers has associations with international crime, the VO claims that, although not involved, the entire travellers' community has been forcefully silenced, which suggests the collusion of the travellers' community at large (excerpt 14).

(14) REP VO. It soon became clear that, in the background, there was someone pulling the strings. The wider *community* had been warned off talking to the media, ordered to stay tight-lipped. I wondered what, if anything, they were hiding and who was giving the orders.

As for *law*, the semantic associations with this term in *TT* are equally negative as many travellers are described as ‘choosing to operate outside the law’:

(15) REP VO. The vast majority of Rathkeale's wealthy travellers have, of course, earned their money legitimately through antiques, property and other concerns. But, according to my sources, some chose to operate *outside the law*. That *dirty money lines some of Rathkeale's streets* is a huge claim, but I soon found *floods of evidence* to support it.

Again, by contrast, Channel 4 *Eviction* offers a relatively neutral use of the two terms *community* and *law* (‘Estimates of numbers for both groups of the travelling community reach 300,000/ The law is clear, half the site is illegal’). BBC One *Children* adopts a more negative categorization (Sarangi and Candlin 2003, Sacks 1992) of the travellers’ children which results in their ‘negative othering’ (Riggins 1997). Travellers’ boys are portrayed as exotic little men doing extraordinary things in a locked up and isolated *community* where illegality and disrespect for norms thrives (excerpts 16 and 17 below).

(16) *Children* REP VO. It's *against the law* not to go to school unless you can show you're being taught at home. Tammy hasn't been to school for two years.

(17) *Children* REP VO. It's *against the law* for children to drive because it's dangerous. They drive here because they're on private land and it's part of the traveller way of life, but if children were to drive on a public road, they would get into serious trouble with the police.

In excerpt 16, the implicature - or ‘information that is communicated to the viewer (reader/listener) implicitly’ (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 273) - that may rise from the VO’s words is that Tammy is breaking the law by missing school. Indeed, the whole narrative concerning these travellers’ children is built around the notion that they are different and do not lead normal lives; it is thus not implausible to think that these children may consider driving outside their encampment on public roads at some point. The fact that later on the documentary explicitly blames mainstream society with charges of racism for preventing these children from attending school does not reduce the impact that the narrator’s ‘discursive group polarization (de/emphasize good/bad things of Us/Them)’ (van Dijk 2006b: 374) produces in the film.

With regard to the treatment of the term *community*, the BBC One *Children* documentary is quite neutral with a much stronger emphasis on the travellers’ predicament and group characteristics (‘They accept a life of family, work, friendship and marriage within the traveller *community*’). In excerpt (18) below, the choice of the verb *squatting* again conjures up associations with illegality; however, the following utterances offer a clear sense of the travellers’ aspirations that even go against their traditions (‘for the sake of their children’) as well as a justification for the travellers’ behaviour and a clear condemnation of mainstream society at least through the community’s eyes (‘they say’).

(18) REP VO. But Britain has changed. There are very few places for them to go. And for the sake of their children, this *community* wants to stay put. They hate *squatting* on the land, but say they have no choice. There are no other sites, there is nowhere else for them to go.

In excerpt (19) from the same film, the female VO's involving comment 'you're expected to get married' points the finger at the travellers' customs of marrying young.

(19) REP VO. The *community* that the travellers have built up is a rather traditional place, where extended families live together, where religion is important for everyone, and where *you're expected to get married*.

In *Eviction*, the term *community* is often associated with the blaming of mainstream society and a seeming understanding of the travellers' hardship (excerpts 20 and 21 below).

(20) REP VO. Every *community* has to have some level of interaction with mainstream society. Otherwise that degree of separation becomes a real problem, when they're just cast apart, and they become fair game. At Dale Farm, almost all *their contact with mainstream society has been unwelcome*.

(21) REP VO. The gypsies and travellers we met said they couldn't be held responsible for the actions of a small minority of their *community*. They know how they're regarded by many people. *That's partly why they choose to stay separate from the mainstream world*.

In conclusion, the ways in which specific words are used in the films encourage particular frames and categorisations for the travellers. Travellers for instance can be portrayed as sleazy crooks (*TT* VO 'To those with inside knowledge, Rathkeale is referred to as the money-laundering capital of Ireland and has, I learned, been the focus of countless investigations by the Criminal Assets Bureau'/In listening to stories of backhanded payments, bribery and fraud, the enormous scale of the wealth in and around this sleepy rural town crashed into sharper focus'); alternatively attention is paid to the way in which the authorities often find themselves in a double bind with regard to the treatment of these communities (*Eviction* VO 'Authorities like Leeds are caught between public outrage if they spend money on more sites, and furious reaction when they don't./ 'The operation will cost Basildon Council £8 million pound, the police another 10 million./ Coventry Council admitted conditions could be improved.')

To sum up, a lexical analysis of the VO's verbal text suggests that while *Eviction* and *Children* offer a more neutral representation, *TT* insists on a categorisation of travellers as outlaws and the frame it conjures up is that of an illegal world onto which the reporter heroically sheds light.

The next section analyses the questions asked by the investigating journalist (different from or same as the narrator) that often function as authentication of the VO. This will provide a wider angle of inspection on the overall language of the three texts under study.

5.2 Beyond the VO: The Power of Questions

Besides the narrator's embodied or disembodied VO, an essential part of documentaries is the interpellation of witnesses, experts and the voices of the average person or Vox Pop. Realised through the voice of the investigating journalist generally following the narrator, questions have the twofold aim of adding more information to what the VO presents and, crucially, ensuring the

VO's credibility by providing the necessary evidence of his/her statements. In the process of eliciting information from different people as a legitimisation device, the interviewers accomplish their institutional identity as reporters (Emmertsen 2007) but also tend to enforce the VO's ideological discourse not differently from what happens with questions in other television contexts/genres, e.g. news interviews (Clayman 1992 and 1993, Heritage and Greatbatch 1991).

Being the result of a scripted dialogue and careful editing, the questions asked by documentary reporters cannot be considered extemporaneous. Rather, they reflect the director's specific stance vis-à-vis the topic. Noticeably, a crucial change in the form of address occurs in the switch from the VO to the reporter's questions. The VO narrative directly addresses the viewers (both verbally and, at times, visually if the VO looks at the camera establishing eye-contact with the viewers). By contrast, questions are only indirectly aimed at them in virtue of the double articulation, or double plane of dialogue between speakers on screen and viewers at home who act as 'over-hearers' (Bubel 2008: 62), which characterises films. Questions also assume a good degree of shared knowledge and thus contribute to creating a common ground with viewers (Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi 2011: 9).

Sarangi (2003) focuses on the interpretive procedures enacted in interview talk. He specifically looks at how interviewers and interviewees accomplish the exchange by focusing on the identity of the questioner and respondent and, more important to the present discussion, he explores the inferences that can be plausibly drawn from the text. This section looks at the type of questions that reporters in documentaries ask a variety of individuals as part of the investigation into the travellers' community reported in the film. The classification according to different question types brings to the fore the attempt to convey neutrality or vice versa the encouragement of a particular view. This is done by questions that, as a result of their syntactic form and their pragmatic force, are open and relatively non-biased, in contraposition to others that are blame-implicative, raise particular implicatures and are ideological.

The grouping of questions under various categories shows they can best be viewed on a continuum from the most neutral to the least objective; as other features in the films, questions suggest the inevitable presence of the film-maker's beliefs and convictions. In all three documentaries, the time devoted to questions occupies less than the VO's. In CH 5 *TT*, where the male questioner is same as the VO, the number of words in the questions is 21,5% of the total, in CH 4 *Eviction* where the questioner and VO are the same female journalist, they are 14% and, in BBC One *Children* where the male questioner is different from the female, it is almost half.

In addition to the type of questions in the three films, it is also necessary to distinguish between questions chastising mainstream society and those criticising travellers; it is through such attribution of responsibility to one group or the other that the documentary's reporter (besides the VO) realises the journalist's moralising duty (Baym 2000) interpreted as the call for addressing issues of a moral nature and advocating justice and fairness.

Open questions

(22) *Eviction* REP. What's it mean to be a gypsy?

Robert. Everything. Live on the land, work the land, take off the land what you want to take off the land, 'cos God said it.

The question put to an adult male traveller, Robert, follows the journalist's reported speech ('Robert doesn't deny his past, but says all gypsies are tarred with the same reputation because people don't understand their culture') and yields an insightful personal and poetic response by the interviewee.

It can be argued of course that a certain degree of bias is inherent to the above question in that it assumes the need to explain what being a mobile individual is. However, in general open questions are very effective (Oxburgh et al. 2010: 46-8) because they do not appear forceful and, in this case, they represent the travellers as individuals in tune with nature and as countryside lovers.

A similarly felicitous open question in BBC One *Children* triggers a narrative of mainstream society's rejection and exclusion of the travellers' community.

(23) *Children* REP. What do people think of you outside of here?

Boy one. I don't know. We never really meet any people outside of here.

Boy two. They don't really chat to us. They don't like us.

Boy three (Roger). They don't really like us. Because we're different.

Boy four. They're probably jealous.

Boy two. They think we're different because we stays in caravans, they stays in houses, but it's really nothing different.

Following this question while the camera is on close up on the boys first as a group and then on each one of them when taking turn at speaking – an endearing technique that brings them closer to the viewers – the reporter's leading query hints at mainstream community racist tendencies (example: *Children* REP. What kind of things do they call you? Boy four. Gypsies and pikeys, stuff like that).

However while the camera is on Tammy in close up (Fig. 2 below), it is this young girl's dramatic narrative that blames settled society most blatantly for its cruel and unjustified Othering of travellers only on the basis of their different accent.



Figure 2. Tammy answers questions in close up

(24) *Children*. Tammy. We used to walk down to the shop, down to the park. We used to walk places for fresh air. Then, when we were walking, everyone keeps looking out at you and stops you from playing. It got kind of hard when everyone is looking at you, so we stopped going everywhere.

REP. You don't look different from anybody else.

Tammy. No...

REP. How do they know?

Tammy. Because we were having a laugh. When we're talking they know. We all have different accents. We come from Ireland. We have different accents from everyone else. As you can see when I'm talking.

REP. Can you think of other examples where people have teased you?

Tammy. Yeah, we were in the cinemas last week. It was my friend's birthday. We were playing and eating pizza, they all moved away. All of the people moved away from us on the tables.

REP. So, people moved away from you in a pizza restaurant?

Tammy. Yeah, they moved away from us.

REP. Why do you think they did that?

Tammy. Because they thought we had germs or something.

Confirmation-aimed, probing and leading questions (including yes/no questions)

Although seemingly neutral, the questions in this broad category are those that Griffiths and Milne (2006 in Oxburgh et al. 2010: 51) define as 'un-productive' in that they do not yield very informative answers because respondents provide preferred responses. Questions of this type generally assume the existence of a problem, for instance that the travellers' children are not being treated fairly (as in excerpt 34 above when Tammy says 'All of the people moved away from us on the tables' and the reporter reiterates 'So, people moved away from you in a pizza restaurant?') or that wishing to expel travellers is a legitimate desire (35 below). Similarly, questions can be leading if due to their syntactic formulation or the presupposition on which they are based, they are meant to elicit a specific reply from the interviewee in agreement with the stance expressed by the questioner as in (36). Questions can also be expressed by statements that in the particular context, need to be confirmed or refuted as in the case of 'Some of the residents will say you're asking to be a special case' which elicited the traveller's reply 'And we agree 100% with them, we have a heart, we do understand where they're coming from.'

(25) *TT* REP. Do you want the travellers out of Rathkeale?

Witness. It'd be nice to see them gone.

(26) *TT* REP. If you buy properties in Rathkeale, you can do what you like. So, in Rathkeale, the same planning laws simply don't apply?

Witness. Not one bit.

Blame-implicative questions

Any of the questions in the three groups described above can express bias and implicate blame against travellers or vice versa the settled society. Such ideological stances can be formulated either as a statement that is expected to be confirmed, as in 'the travellers are trying to *take over* Rathkeale' or contain blame-implicative lexis as in 'How have Rathkeale travellers *amassed* such *enormous wealth*?' (both from CH 5 *TT*). In the latter example, the choice of

the verb *amass* in the sense of ‘to gather or collect (something, such as a large amount of money) especially for yourself’ (Merriam-Webster) and the qualifier *enormous* suggest the individualistic and utilitarian nature of the travellers’ wealth. Similarly, in the following excerpt, the implicature of *take over* is that Rathkeale is a desirable place that travellers aim to appropriate.

(27) *TT* REP. Do you think that the travellers are trying to *take over* Rathkeale?
Witness. From the outside looking in, it looks that way.

Besides the type of questions that can encourage more or less directly and clearly a particular view of travellers, the evaluation they (in)directly express can be in favour or critical of either travellers or the settled society. The reporter’s leading question in (38), for instance, criticises mainstream society for not providing the necessary space for mobile communities; similarly in (39) the accusation of thieving directed to the young travellers offers the opportunity of a critique of the settled community. However, the question in (40), following a witness’ complaint about the discovery of human excreta in the woods, chastises travellers’ unhealthy and anti-social habits by blaming them for not using the toilets in their caravans.

(28) *Eviction* REP. But there’s no space on any of those sites?
Woman traveller. We do not have any... *No, there ’sn’t*. There may be one or two.

(29) *Children* REP. So, why do you think travellers have such a poor reputation?

Young boy. Because some travellers pulls in and people thinks ’ou’re digging up the fields, doing this, but we pulls in, stays a week and goes. *You’an’t get staying anywhere*. ’ou’re probably there for half an hour and no, get out of my place. T’at’s the way it is in life.

(30) *Eviction* REP. Do you not have little toilets in the caravans?
Traveller girl. *We ’on’t use them*. No way. Imagine cooking your dinner and then some’ne’s in the toilet. You wou’dn’t do it, no way.

CH 4 *Eviction* has fewer questions than the other two films⁶ due to its prevalently narrative style while CH 5 *TT* exhibits the highest number. More interesting is to observe the presence of blame-implicative questions. *TT* has the highest number of questions blaming travellers in the category of y/n and open questions for instance, ‘How have so many of the town’s traveller population come to be so incredibly wealthy?’ and ‘Would they intimidate customers into paying?’. BBC One *Children*⁷ shows an equal number of such questions blaming indirectly travellers and settled society. *Eviction* blames travellers four times and settled society twice as many times with such direct questions as ‘Why have councils been so reluctant either to provide council sites or give planning permission for private sites?’

Importantly the REP’s questions fulfil the crucial function of supporting the VO’s views. At times they can provide an opportunity for eliciting on the part of the respondent an outspoken critique of settled society’s discrimination of travellers (41 below) or instead favourable comments as in (42) in which Michael’s answer confirms the VO’s statement and uses a poetic metaphor to describe how travellers are forced into stationary life (both from *Children*).

(31) *Children* VO. It's against the law not to go to school unless you can show you're being taught at home. Tammy hasn't been to school for two years. She dreams of becoming a hairdresser.

REP. Do you think you will become a hairdresser?

Tammy. I don't know. I don't think so. *They really don't employ people like us. 'Cos they really don't like us in hairdressers or salons that much* if we go get our hair done, that's why we does it ourselves. That's how we learned to do it.

(42) *Children* VO. Roger's dad [Michael] agrees to talk to us as long as we don't show his face. He tells us he may not get work locally if people knew he lived in Dale Farm.

Michael. You know we didn't have anyone to tell us where to go - not like now, you know what I mean? *Then it was a fabulous life*, you know.

REP. Did you have a life on the road, were you travelling?

Michael. All my life. *Today, what they want to do is like catching a little wild bird and put it in the cage*, what they're trying to do to the travellers today.

In conclusion, as for the lexical choices in the VO's language, the three documentaries can be differentiated on the grounds of the use of questions. Particularly relevant seems to be the ascription of blame as a form of moral evaluation (Baym 2000). In light of this, once again CH 4 *Eviction* exhibits the most varied questions and ascribes responsibility for the travellers' ill fate to settled society more than the other two films do.

5.3 VO and Visuals

This last section returns to the narrator's voice as that which provides the main entry into the film and briefly discusses the images that illustrate the verbal meaning of the VO's words in the first minute and a few seconds of each documentary's introduction or trailer, which showcases the film content in *Eviction*, *Children* and *TT*.

CH 4 *Eviction* (trailer length 1:29) opens with an image of travellers protesting in Dale Farm barricaded against police and bailiffs. As the VO explains, 'This is the entrance to Britain's biggest traveller site' in which the linguistic intensification (or gradation, Martin and White 2005) contained in the pre-modifier *biggest* emphasises the size of the problem and the consequent protest. Long and medium shots from high and low on the scaffolding at the entrance (Fig. 3) showing protesters ready for the fight stress the travellers' power and tenacity in saving their place and convey the film director's positive social evaluation (Martin and White 2005).



Figure 3 Protesters at Dale Farm

Following this, a series of quick archival references to previous evictions underline the historicity of travellers' problems. Footage is then shown of the British Prime Minister at the time, David Cameron in Parliament speaking against travellers' alleged legal abuses. These archival sequences are interspersed with pictures of traditional horse-driven carriages, a concession to a stereotyped old-fashioned vision of travellers. However, in the subsequent long shot a woman blames the authorities for treating travellers 'like animals' and another recounts how the bailiffs 'shifted' them (in the sense of 'moved') in the morning without respect for their families. Following these travellers' traumatic personal narratives, the subsequent scene seems to redress the balance. As the VO recites, 'we investigate why some people don't want them next door', in a close up shot a man mentions the debris travellers leave behind, while the camera is on a piece of what appears to be toilet paper in the woods.

Significantly, the trailer ends with a visual and verbal reminder of the travellers' unfortunate destiny: the camera is on a close up on Candy Sheridan, a supporter and a traveller herself, who refers to her community as 'vilified, hated, misunderstood'; this is followed by one more shot on the barricaded site and a close up of Mary, the main woman traveller in the documentary (Fig. 4). Both shots introducing some of the characters in the film appear truthful and credible in that the two interviewees do not establish a 'vector' or imaginary line (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996) with the camera, as they are involved in their conversation with the reporter.



Figure 4 Feisty Mary

In short, in the documentary's trailer, the combination of images and VO's words seems to propose an empathetic or at least balanced view of the travellers, portrayed as an endangered and persecuted minority. The camera panning on the travellers' site emphasises its size (and is, therefore, a reminder of the large number of families living there); as it accompanies the VO's words that insist on the travellers' tenacity in resisting the authorities and blame political parties for the situation ("Travellers were encouraged to buy their own land after the Conservatives abolished the duty of councils to provide sites in the mid '90s"), the long shot may invoke the viewers' solidarity with the community of travellers.

BBC One *Children* (trailer length 1:10) opens with a medium shot of a group of joyful boys walking and jumping towards the camera, while the VO recites 'these children are outsiders'. The direct deictic reference to 'these children' links the actors to the desolate context in which they operate (Chapman 2011: 40) and the deictic works as a direct appeal to the viewers. The emphasis on 'these' may signal that these children who are like any others, are actually outsiders or alternatively, that they are outsiders while still behaving like normal children. The surrounding context is grim, with visible scaffolding, puddles on the unpaved road, barbed wire and bent fences possibly suggesting the travelling community's poor conditions and its resistance to the site's enforced enclosure. Next is a close up of a small boy jokingly showing his fists to the camera. The implication is that the youth live in an unhealthy and threatened camp but in spite of this they are still normal children playing in front of the camera.

A panoramic shot of Dale Farm accompanies narrator Rani Price explaining in VO that over 1,000 travellers live on the site, the biggest in Europe; as in the previous documentary, this visual and verbal intensification (Martin and White 2005) suggests the size and severity of the issue. A long shot of young girls with prams follows; the likely implicature is that they are looking after small children or even babies without any adults' supervision although they are children themselves (as the final medium shot on some young girls playing 'Eeny, meeny, miny, moe' confirms).



Figure 5 Young girls and prams in Dale Farm

In short, compared to *Eviction*, this second documentary's trailer visually encourages a categorization of the children's 'normal abnormality', and sets a negative interpretive frame centred on the difference between the greater sense of responsibility of settled society versus the burden that travellers lay on children as guardians of the younger ones. However, as was discussed, in the course of the documentary at the level of discourse (both through the VO's words and the reporter's questions), although this view is not refuted, the reasons behind the travellers' diversity and exclusion are duly explored.

Finally, CH 5 *TT* (trailer length 1:2) opens with gloomy and ominous music on images of a wrought iron gate towering over the viewers from a bottom shot, followed by a yellow flower field, the roof of a house with a bird in the eave, chimney smoke, the front of a blue car, a close up on a one-eyed dog, all aiming to suggest the quiet ordinariness of the town of Rathkeale that the travellers have been violently disrupting. At the same time, the VO narrates: 'Rathkeale, County Limerick, may seem like any other sleepy rural village though it's anything but.' A close-up of an image of Christ on a wall as the VO says that travellers have made Rathkeale 'their spiritual home, their Mecca' is a visual realisation of a metaphor (Mecca as desired place) re-contextualised in a Catholic frame. An extreme close up on an interviewed gangster-looking man with Ray Ban sunglasses visually sets the illegal frame of the film. The image of a broken window (Fig. 6) symbolising lack of upkeep but also violence accompanies the VO's mention of the fact that residents of Rathkeale – as the sign in English and Irish 'Rathkeale/Ráth Caola' appears – feel under siege.



Figure 6 Grim ordinariness in Rathkeale

The images that contrast poor travellers' caravans and wealthy mansions are followed by close up shots of interviewees; as one of them, a Rathkeale resident, says, 'we're going nowhere'. The visual frame encouraged by these visuals is that of a town besieged by unwanted travellers who are dramatically altering the place's original cultural heritage. The trailer concludes with a medium shot of the journalist in a derelict roofless church behind an open gate talking about his investigation on travellers' wealth in Rathkeale. As a strategy that can be frequently observed in news reports, this 'blending of visual images and verbal text in a metaphoric relationship is intended to influence the viewers' comprehension' (Wiggin and Miller 2003: 269; also Piazza and Haarman 2016). In this case, the open gate functions as a visual metaphor for the reporter opening the viewers' eyes to the mystery of the Irish town.

From the above quick foray into the range of images at the opening of the documentaries, once again *Eviction* seems to show empathy with the travellers' fate while *Children* portrays the community occupying a grim and unhealthy space. The opening images of *TT* are relatively cryptic and unappealing; however, what they seem to suggest is the atmosphere of both ordinariness and abandonment mixed with tension in the town of Rathkeale. In terms of the visually encouraged frames, while *Eviction* proposes a 'mental representation' (Bednarek 2005: 689) of the travelling community as threatened also due to mishaps of mainstream society, *Children* immediately encourages a categorization of travellers' children as different and invites an indirect criticism of their adultless community.

6. Conclusion

Treating factual films as documents that reflect their time and as representations of particular contexts of production can contribute to a better understanding of past and present developments and societal forms of expression (Pollak 2008: 77). This paper has identified salient points that both on the visual and verbal plane, both in the words of the narrator and in those of the interviewer, can be plausibly seen as encouraging particular

interpretive frames and categorisations of the Irish travelling community in contemporary Britain.

Although with particular reference to TV news, historically impartiality has been regarded as a token of professionalism and inspired broadcasts' guidelines. However, as 'neutrality is impossible and truth does not lie in the middle', Boudana (2015) invokes 'accuracy' in representation as this is 'better served by fairness than by a delusive position of impartiality' (p. 600). The analysis proposed in this paper confirms the central thesis of this research: documentaries are not impartial nor are they particularly accurate in their depiction of the travellers' community and the truth they offer is only one-sided and 'murky' (Bruzzi, 2000: 3).

Behind a seemingly neutral VO or interviewer's intervention, these films frame a topic in a particular way and encourage a given categorization of the social actors involved. This said, marked differences have been identified between the three films. Focusing entirely on travellers' corruption and illegality, CH5 *TT* sacrifices any serious consideration of travellers' communities to a journalistic style aimed at engaging and entertaining viewers through the ability of the reporter as investigator and the extraordinariness of his account. He then becomes a hero who at the risk of his own life, exposes the malaise within the travelling community thus indirectly justifying the racism to which travellers are subjected by permanent residents in Rathkeale and beyond. In spite of the fact that the reporter is himself Irish, a factor that endows him with immediate credibility, this film most directly feeds into stereotypical views of Irish travellers as outlaws and crooks. Although it deals with the very delicate issue of minors and shows understanding of the complexity of their existence and sheer incredulity at the reasons behind their discrimination, *Children* occasionally gives in to biased views and stereotypes about travellers. Once again partiality is a trend of this documentary although, it may be argued, as a consequence of its attempt to represent travellers with a degree of accuracy. *Eviction* is the most balanced of the three films, showing a degree of empathy with travellers and above all often taking to task settled society for its incoherent and contradictory laws.

Moreover, while CH 4 *Eviction* and BBC One *Children* can be seen as having a social function as 'instruments for the propagation of democratic civics' (Mueller and Crone 2015: 295) by reporting on a disenfranchised and anti-capitalist minority, for *TT* travellers are simply a pretext to report on a sensationalist journalistic inquiry. While documentaries are independent products and cannot be unproblematically associated with the mission statement of a particular broadcaster, they certainly take into consideration the programme/series of which they are part and the style of the network. In the present case, while objectivity reflects the ethos of public television, in the case of commercial providers ideology is realised through a multimodal discourse that sacrifices impartiality and accuracy to sensationalism and entertainment.

Notes

- 1 I am greatly indebted to the two journal reviewers, and especially the first of them, who helped me to improve the clarity of this study. Any mistakes are of course entirely my responsibility.
- 2 The choice of topic is not fortuitous. In my work with Irish travellers in the south of England (Piazza 2014a and b), I noticed how the interviewees repeatedly pointed out that the limited knowledge that settled society has about them specifically comes from television programmes as the excerpt below from one of my interviews attests. ([indicates overlapping talk and @ stands for laughter)
 Interviewer: Do you think they know anything about you, about your community? Do you think they know anything about traveller's lives? [And about who they are?
 Traveller: [Y: no, they didn't, they didn't...but since big fat gypsy weddings
 Interviewer: yes
 Traveller: I think they do now, they understand more 'cos of that programme
 Interviewer: yeah @
 Traveller: I think they learnt a lot from that, even more so than ever
 Interviewer: in a good way or a bad way do you think they learnt by that programme?
 Traveller: both in a good and bad, 'cos everyone's got different opinions haven't they? Everyone's got different opinions about different things so some people would understand it in a good way, some people wouldn't like it.
- 3 As in such films as *Chocolat* 2000 with Juliette Binoche and Johnny Depp as the seductive gypsy. Very different is the case of the autobiography by Mikey Walsh, a painful self-critical representation of Romany gypsy communities offered by an outcast insider.
- 4 In the excerpts REP CAM stands for 'Reporter speaking to camera'
- 5 Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils are very vulnerable in schools where they are victims of severe bullying (DfE 2014 in Equality and Human Right Commission report 2016).
- 6 The questions in the three films are summarised below.

	Confirmation, leading and y/n	Open	Blaming travellers	Blaming mainstream society
<i>Eviction</i>	19	16	4	8
<i>Children</i>	46	37	4	4
<i>TT</i>	33	35	13	0

- 7 Incidentally probably because they are addressed to children, Children's questions are rather simplistic (e.g. REP: How many dogs live on this site, do you reckon?/ REP: Roger, I've seen lots of boys around here driving. Roger: Yeah. REP: Can you drive? Roger: Yeah. REP: How old are you now? Roger: 12) with occasionally more insightful ones aimed at highlighting discrimination (e.g. REP: You learned to do hairdressing because you couldn't get into the hairdresser's?).

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