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The intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' in the Republic of Ireland

A Critical Discourse Analysis

Silvia Brandi

April 2013

A thesis submitted to the School of Applied Social Studies, National University of Ireland, Cork, for the award of PhD

Head of School: Prof. Fred Powell
Supervisors: Dr. Orla O'Donovan and Rosie Meade
School of Applied Social Studies
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Ad Elena,

che per prima mi ha insegnato a dubitare del senso comune e ad interrogare la mia identità,
grazie e ancora scusa.
Che questo foglio bianco accolga quella riconciliazione che la vita ci negò…

Contents

Declaration 6

Abstract 7

Acknowledgements 8

Chapter One: Introduction
1.1. A new perspective on the debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' 9
1.2. Contextualisation of the debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' 10
1.3. Heterogeneity of Travellers' positions on 'Traveller ethnicity' 12
1.4. Previous academic scholarship on 'Traveller ethnicity' 15
1.5. Aims, rationale and methodological framework 18
1.6. Outline of dissertation's structure and contents 21

Chapter Two: General assessment of the notion of ethnicity
2.1. Introduction 25
2.2. Increasing salience of ethnicity in the social sciences 26
2.3. Popular and academic uses of ethnicity 27
2.4. Ethnicity, 'race', culture and nation 28
2.4.1. Ethnicity and 'race' 28
2.4.2. Ethnicisation or racialisation without 'race' 29
2.4.3. Ethnicity and culture 30
2.4.4. Ethnicity and nation 32
2.5. Theoretical foundations of the subjective dimensions of ethnicity 34
2.6. Towards a definition of ethnicity 36
2.7. Processual and political dimensions of ethnicity 37
2.8. The problematisation of 'group' 40
2.9. Challenges to modern societies by the politics of recognition 41
2.10. Human rights discourse's impact on definitions of ethnicity 45
2.11. Strengths and perils of identity politics 46
2.12. Insights from feminist and black politics 51
2.13. Conclusion 56

Chapter Three: Hegemonic and subaltern constructions of Irishness
3.1. Introduction 58
3.2. Positive essentialist Irishness versus negative racialised Irishness 59
3.3. Double-edged nature of Irish nationalism 60
3.4. Irish Travellers' marginalisation and exclusion 63
3.5. Irish Travellers 66
3.5.1. Difficulties in reconstructing Irish Travellers' origins 66

3.5.2. Theories on Irish Travellers' origins 68
3.5.3. Irish Travellers' cultural specificities 70
3.6. Heterogeneous mobile population in early twentieth century Ireland 71
3.7. Material and structural factors in the marginalisation of Travellers 74
3.8. Modernisation's impact on rural Ireland 74
3.9. Irish State policing of public space and citizens' behaviour 76
3.10. Rise of social welfare, public housing and spatial planning 77
3.11. Irish Travellers' relegation to the assistance of the voluntary sector 78
3.12. Conclusion 80

Chapter Four: Traveller politics and policies
4.1. Introduction 82
4.2. The Irish State and the emergence of the 'itinerant problem' 82
4.3. Outset of Traveller mobilisation and activism 84
4.4. Affirmation of a charitable reformatory approach to Travellers 86
4.5. The 1980s and the start of a new phase in Traveller politics 89
4.6. Changeover in national Traveller representative organisations 93
4.7. New challenges to the three main national Traveller organisations 99
4.8. Outline of main Traveller policies 101
4.9. Conclusion 106

Chapter Five: Critical Discourse Analysis as a methodology and method
5.1. Introduction 107
5.2. Critical theory as the theoretical perspective underpinning this study 107
5.3. Specificities of critical social research 109
5.4. Key role of discourses in the social world 111
5.5. Adherence to the Critical Discourse Analytical perspective 114
5.6. My operationalisation of CDA: an eight-stage method 117
5.7. Further specifications on textual analysis 123
5.8. Criteria of data selection 124
5.9. Overview of primary data 126
5.10. Limitations of this study 129
5.11. Ethical considerations 131
5.12. Conclusion 132

Chapter Six: Traveller NGOs' discourses for 'Traveller ethnicity'
6.1. Introduction 134
6.2. Contextualisation of the five data 134
6.3. The *ITM*'s Traveller ethnicity campaign 136
6.3.1. Analysis of D1 136
6.3.2. Analysis of D2 145
6.3.3. Analysis of D3 151
6.3.4. Analysis of D4 172
6.4. *Minceirs Whiden*'s construction of 'Traveller ethnicity' 176
6.4.1.Analysis of D5 176
6.5. Comparative analysis of the examined data 192

Chapter Seven: Intra-Traveller problematisation of 'Traveller ethnicity'
7.1. Introduction 197
7.2. Contextualisation of Traveller questioning of 'Traveller ethnicity' 197
7.3. Analysis of D6 201
7.4. Martin Ward's stances on 'Traveller ethnicity' 212
7.4.1. Analysis of D7 212
7.4.2. Analysis of D8 219
7.4.3. Analysis of D9 233
7.5. Comparison between questionings of 'Traveller ethnicity' 245

Chapter Eight: Conclusion
8.1. Key insights from this study 248
8.1.1. Attribution of different meanings to ethnicity 248
8.1.2. 'Traveller ethnicity' questioned as a political strategy 254
8.1.3. Broader power struggles behind this contest 255
8.1.4. Contest as reflective of different approaches to Travellers 256
8.1.5. Significance of Irishness for Travellers 257
8.2. CDA's contribution to the interpretation of this debate 259
8.3. Location of this study vis-à-vis dominant trends in research 261
8.4. An Irish exemplification of identity politics' dilemmas 264
8.5. 'Traveller ethnicity' as a matter of Travellers' self-determination 265

Bibliography 268

Appendices 285
9.1. Brief outline of main national Traveller NGOs 285
9.2. Analysed texts 289

DECLARATION

I certify that all of this work is my own. Where I have used the work of others, it is acknowledged/referenced accordingly. Furthermore this work has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere.

Signed: ……
(Silvia Brandi)

Dated: …….

Abstract

This dissertation assesses from an under-explored angle the enduring contention over Travellers' ethnic recognition in the Republic of Ireland, particularly over the last decade. The novelty of this study concerns not only its specific focus on and engagement with the debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' among Traveller activists. It also pertains to the examination of Travellers' arguments for and against ethnicity in light of critical theorisations as well as insights from identity politics. Furthermore, the adoption of a Critical Discourse Analytical framework offers new perspectives to this controversy and its potential implications. Finally, this thesis' relevance extends beyond the contention on 'Traveller ethnicity' in itself. It also draws attention to the complex dynamics of colonisation and appropriation between the global and the local. Particularly, it points to the interplay between international human rights discourses and the local ones, formulated by NGOs struggling for equality. In this way it sheds light on more general issues such as the dialectical potential of human rights discourses: the benefits and pitfalls of framing recognition claims in the legalistic terms of human rights.

In this study it is argued that the contention on 'Traveller ethnicity' defies a simplistic polarisation between Irish Travellers and the Irish State since it has been simultaneously played out within the Travelling community. Specifically, this study explores how 'Traveller ethnicity' has been introduced, embraced, promoted and contested within Traveller politics to the point of becoming a hotly debated and divisive issue among Traveller activists and at the heart of the community itself. Putting Traveller activists centre-stage, their discourses for and against 'Traveller ethnicity' are examined and assessed against one another and their potential implications for Traveller politics, policies and identities are pointed out. Contending discourses are historically contextualised as the product of specific structural, material and discursive configurations of power and socio-economic relations within Irish society.

Discourses for and against 'Traveller ethnicity' are assessed as being significant beyond the representational level. They are regarded as contributing to dialectically constitute Travellers' ways of being, representing and acting. Furthermore these discourses are considered as sites and means of power struggles, whose stakes are not only words, but relate to issues of power and leadership within the Travelling community; adjudications over material resources; the adoption of certain policy approaches over others; and, finally, the consolidation of certain subject positions over others for Travellers to draw upon and relate to mainstream society. This study highlights an ongoing ideological struggle for the naturalisation of 'Traveller ethnicity' as a self-evident 'fact', which involves no active choice by Travellers themselves.

Overall, 'Traveller ethnicity' appears to constitute an enduring source of dilemmas for the Travelling community. These revolve around the contradictory potential of ethnicity claims-making —both its perils and advantages— and its status as a potent political strategic resource that can both challenge and reinforce existing power relations, policies and identities.

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If I managed to complete my study it is also by virtue of the support I received from many people. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors, Orla O'Donovan and Rosie Meade, who have accompanied me during this long journey with their invaluable expertise, human and academic support and appreciation. Working with you has been a pleasure and a source of intellectual growth and academic refinement for me. I also thank Fiona Dukelow for her thorough commentary on the first full draft of this thesis. Moreover, I am grateful to the School of Applied Social Studies by which I was awarded the William Thompson Scholarship for the first three years of my Ph.D. research.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. A new perspective on the debate on 'Traveller ethnicity'

This dissertation assesses from an under-explored angle the ongoing contention over Travellers' ethnic recognition in the Republic of Ireland particularly over the last decade. The novelty of my study concerns not only its specific focus on and engagement with the debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' among Traveller activists. It also pertains to the examination of Travellers' arguments for and against ethnicity in the light of critical theorisations as well as the insights gained by identity politics from similar dilemmas faced by other identity-based groups struggling for equality. Furthermore, the adoption of Critical Discourse Analysis as a methodological approach and as an analytical tool offers new perspectives on this controversy and its potential implications.

The dispute over 'Traveller ethnicity' has been usually constructed as if occurring between two compact and discrete contenders: the Irish State on one side and the Travelling community on the opposing one (e.g. Crowley, 1992, 88-90). Travellers are often represented as united and uniform in demanding official ethnic recognition through the advocacy of their national Traveller NGOs (see O'Connell, 1994; McVeigh, 2007).

Nonetheless, as this study argues, this contention defies a simplistic polarisation between Irish Travellers and the Irish State. With the use of the expression "intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity'" I intend to draw attention on the fact that this controversy has been simultaneously played out within the Travelling community: 'Traveller ethnicity' has not been embraced, pursued and demanded unanimously by Irish Travellers but represents an internally contended issue. While this controversy has been more prominent in recent years, disagreements over 'Traveller ethnicity' relate to the introduction of this idea within Irish Traveller politics (see Chapter Four). Newspapers' archival research dates its origin to the early 1980s. It constituted one of the primary sites of internal disagreement within the National Council for the Travelling People throughout the 1980s and contributed significantly to its dissolution in 1990 (see Chapter Four, Sections 4.5 and 4.6).

For nearly two decades Irish Travellers' political struggle for ethnic recognition seems to have been mostly confined to circles of committed activists, organisational politics, academic scholarship, institutional sites and national and international human

rights arenas. More recently, especially since the launch of the Irish Traveller Movement's ethnicity campaign in 2008, consistent efforts have been put into actively promoting 'Traveller ethnicity' within the broader community and Irish society.

My research explores how 'Traveller ethnicity' has been introduced, embraced, promoted and contested within Traveller politics to the point of becoming a hotly debated and divisive issue among Traveller activists and at the heart of the community itself. In this light, 'Traveller ethnicity' appears to constitute an enduring source of dilemmas for the Travelling community. These revolve around the contradictory potential of ethnicity claims-making —both its perils and advantages— and its status as a potent political strategic resource that can both challenge and reinforce existing power relations (Bulmer and Solomos, 1998, 826).

1.2. Contextualisation of the debate on 'Traveller ethnicity'

In the census of 2011 (the latest at the time of writing) 29,495 people self-identified as Irish Travellers responding to the question on their "ethnic or cultural background" (Central Statistics Office, 2012, 37). This represents an increase of 31.9 % by comparison to the 22,369 Irish Travellers enumerated within the previous census. Yet, despite this acknowledgment within the census' classification system, Travellers still do not constitute an ethnic group in an 'official' sense within the national territory, in contrast with the neighbouring British jurisdiction, where they have been accorded ethnic status. In the Republic of Ireland for a number of years their official ethnic recognition has been an object of contention between the Irish State and national Traveller NGOs that extends beyond the Irish borders to European and international human rights arenas.

Since the 1980s, national Traveller and human rights NGOs have emphasised the centrality of 'Traveller ethnicity', when asserting legal rights and protections for Travellers and as a foundational basis for their equality claims. The national Traveller organisations *Pavee Point*, the *Irish Traveller Movement*, the *National Traveller Women's Forum*, and more recently, *Minceirs Whiden*, have been to the forefront in this regard and their demands are supported by various national, international and European human rights legislation, bodies and NGOs. These include the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD), the European Committee of Ministers' Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Irish Human Rights Commission, the Equality Authority and Amnesty

International. These national Traveller organisations' demands have intensified since 10 December 2008. This symbolic date, marking the sixtieth anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights (2008), was chosen by the *Irish Traveller Movement* for the official launch of its Traveller ethnicity campaign. Furthermore, Traveller advocates from *Pavee Point* and other Traveller NGOs contributed significantly to the recently published All Ireland Traveller Health Study *Our Geels* (2010) in which the centrality of ethnicity for Travellers was once again strongly asserted.

In contrast, the Irish government has consistently resisted conferring formal ethnic recognition to Travellers vis-à-vis various United Nations fora[1], in apparent contradiction of the State's social policies which have *de facto* treated Travellers as an ethnic group, emphasising their cultural distinctiveness and, over all, articulating an essentialist view of Traveller culture. In 2010 there was a brief opening towards Traveller organisations' demands for recognition by the former Minister of State for Equality, Mary White, who commissioned "a document on the practical implications of recognising Travellers as an ethnic group"[2]. Nonetheless, the change of government in 2011 (when the Fianna Fáil/Green Party coalition was replaced by a Fine Gael and Labour administration) appears to have stalled the document's advancement. Once again, in March 2012 the Irish government declined to accept the United Nations recommendation on the recognition of ethnic status for Travellers that was made within the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process[3].

This controversy between the national Traveller NGOs and the Irish State occurs in a political and social context which has reached heated moments of tension in the last few years, such as on the occasion of the Nally case[4] (*The Irish Times,* 2006, 10).

[1] Against the UNCERD (United Nations Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination) Committee's reminder of the relevance of the self-identification principle in matters of ethnicity, this position was maintained three times in Irish government reports to the UNCERD Committee, first in 2004, then in 2009, and, more recently, in March 2012 within the publication of its Combined Third and Fourth Report in response to its recommendations made with the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process (see Equality Authority, 2006, 35-40 and Office of Minister for Integration, 2009, 5).

[2] For more details see Michael Parsons, *The Irish Times*, 16/08/2010.

[3] See O'Brien, 2012, 'Ireland rejects UN call to end schools discriminating on religious grounds', *The Irish Times*.

[4] In 2004 Padraig Nally, a Mayo farmer, killed John Ward, an Irish Traveller. According to Nally's own recollection of the event, he had first shot the Traveller, then beaten him with a stick twenty times and eventually fatally shot him in the back as he was fleeing from his property. Initially convicted for manslaughter, he was subsequently released as a result of his successful appeal in December 2006.

Violence and intimidation against Travellers, which have continued for decades, have been aggravated by the new phenomenon of internet racism[5] (*Changing Ireland*, 2010).

A growing polarisation of public attitudes towards Irish Travellers has been indicated by contemporary sociological research (Mc Gréil, 2009). Over 18% of respondents to his survey affirmed that they would deny Travellers Irish citizenship and over 79% would be reluctant to buy a house next door to a Traveller. On the other hand, 73% of respondents agreed that Travellers should be "facilitated to live their own way of life decently". A wealth of other academic studies also documents the many instances of institutional, media and popular racism against Travellers (e.g. Garner, 2004; Hayes, 2006; Helleiner, 1997 and 2000; Lentin and McVeigh, 2002 and 2006; O'Connell, 2002; McDonagh, 2002; and so forth). Moreover, some recent legislative and policy developments have indicated a partial withdrawal by the State from the partnership approach that informed its relationships with national Traveller organisations beginning in the early 1990s (see Chapter Four, Section 4.7).

In light of these trends it has been convincingly argued that the Irish State's denial of 'Traveller ethnicity' (Lentin and McVeigh 2006; McVeigh, 2007) is an essential element within a broader project of denial of its historical complicity in the exclusion, victimisation and cultural genocide of Travellers. Moreover, the Equality Authority (2006) and researchers such as McVeigh (2007) have exposed the inconsistencies with the Irish State's stated positions on the ethnicity issue. These inconsistencies point to a simultaneous official denial and practical acceptance of 'Traveller ethnicity' in its policy measures. This situation is exacerbated by the aforementioned divergence in policies towards recognition with the neighbouring jurisdictions of Northern Ireland and England where Irish Travellers have been accorded the statuses of "racial group" and "ethnic group" respectively under the 1976 Race Relations Act.

1.3. Heterogeneity of Travellers' positions on 'Traveller ethnicity'

Developments that have been documented within the last decade and beyond suggest that there is a number of Travellers who are still not informed about, understand or want 'Traveller ethnicity'. Heterogeneity of positions among Irish Travellers exists

[5]A few *Facebook* sites inciting physical violence against Travellers became very popular. Membership was heterogeneous across age, class and geographical divides and included school and college students. Thanks to community activism three of these websites were forced to close down in Summer 2010 and Gardaí confirmed that files were prepared for the Director of Public Prosecution under the Incitement to Hatred Act.

on this topic, varying from full support and active campaigning to unawareness, indifference, doubt and, at the other extreme, opposition. Various Travellers, whether in favour, undecided or against ethnic status, have lamented the consistent lack of information, consultation and debate within the Traveller community over this important and controversial issue.

For instance, in March 2009 Traveller Winnie McDonagh, who declared herself to be "sitting on the fence" in relation to this issue, expressed her criticism of "the severe shortage of consultation" (*The Irish Times*, 2009, 17). In August 2010 Patrick Nevin, a pro ethnicity campaigner, member of the *Irish Traveller Movement* and of the Equality group within the Green Party, was reported in *The Irish Times* (Parsons, 2010, 2) as saying that even his own siblings disagreed with him on the "ethnic question". In his opinion, "the debate has to take place within the Traveller community" since "there is a limited understanding of the concept of ethnicity". Meanwhile, the champion of Traveller opposition to ethnic recognition is Tuam's Martin Ward: an activist prominent on the national scene, who has repeatedly challenged the arguments being advanced by pro ethnicity advocates in the Irish media and within institutional fora[6] (*Voice of the Traveller,* 2008, 15; *The Irish Times*, 2009, 17; *Tuam Herald*, 2010). Tuam's *Western Traveller and Intercultural Association*[7] posted a *Facebook* comment at the end of May 2011, subsequent to the broadcasting of the TV documentary *The Blood of the Travellers,* stating that they did "not support ethnicity as a Group". During the same year the national Traveller organisation *Involve* (former *National Association of Traveller/Training Centres*) planned to establish an alternative forum for Travellers to voice their views independently and democratically on the ethnic dilemma (see Chapter Seven, Analysis of D9).

Perhaps the event that best encapsulates the uncharted uncertainty among many Travellers on the issue of 'Traveller ethnicity' is the withdrawal of the all-Traveller referendum on a Traveller flag/logo in 2005 (Loftus, 2005), even though it did not receive much coverage in the Irish media (the British owned newspaper *The Sunday Times* covered this story, unlike *The Irish Times*). At an initial meeting of *Minceirs Whiden* the plan to create a Traveller flag/logo was conceived. It was then endorsed and facilitated by the main national Traveller organisations. *Minceirs Whiden* set 15

[6]See also TV3's *Tonight with Vincent Browne* show on Travellers' culture, discrimination against Travellers and problems in the Traveller community (18/05/2010); Pat Kenny's *Frontline* on Travellers (RTE1, 28/06/2010); *Newstalk'* s morning show (Part 4, 11/01/2011).

[7] This comment was posted on 30/05/2011 at http://en-gb.facebook.com/pages/Bru-Bride-Westtrav/212714488763310?sk=wall#!.

September 2005 as the date for this first official and democratic vote among Travellers at a national level for/against the adoption of a flag and/or logo. The poll was to be overseen by the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation in Wicklow. Over thirty thousand voting cards were printed and sent to local Traveller support groups that were charged with hosting the polling stations throughout Ireland (and in Essex, UK). The *Sunday Times'* article (May 2005) connected this plan with the quest for recognition of ethnicity for Travellers: "the proposals are part of a move by some Travellers for recognition as an ethnic group, which they currently have under British and European Union legislation but not in Irish legislation".

Despite the best intentions of the organisers, the initiative allegedly met with contrasting responses from Travellers: some were supportive while others saw it as an attack on their Irishness. This development was acknowledged in *The Western People* (03/08/2005), a local newspaper, six weeks before the planned date for the vote. It identified difficulties encountered in gaining acceptance for the initiative among Travellers themselves. For example, Mayo Traveller Bernard Sweeney, who was interviewed for the article, while insisting on the widespread support within the Travelling community, seemed skeptical about its success: "Maybe Travellers are not ready for it yet". In his opinion, Travellers' opposition was due to fear that is ultimately rooted in years of oppression: "it is fear of identifying ourselves at all due to racism and discrimination". He noted fears of diluting their Irishness and attributed them to scaremongering while rebutting allegations of "settled influence" on this planned referendum.

While neither of the aforementioned newspapers offered a follow-up on the vote a later article in *Changing Ireland* (Meagher, 2009, 7) stated that the referendum never took place. It explained that the vote was called off due to the lack of a register of Traveller-only electors and of an established referendum system. However, it should be noted that this problem did not emerge until August and that the article makes no mention of efforts to overcome this organisational problem. It is possible that other factors may have influenced the withdrawal of the referendum, such as, for example, a consideration of the potential drawbacks for Travellers' ethnic recognition in the event of a negative vote. Failure to secure a majority vote among Travellers could have constituted a major blow to the campaign for official recognition of the ethnic status. For example, Allen Meagher, author of the *Changing Ireland'*s piece, noted that in *Minceirs Whiden*'s final report "it was agreed that the issue of the flag would have been

put on hold for five years after which time, if it was still an issue, it would be reviewed". This suggests that the proposal of the Traveller flag was itself at issue. Indeed, throughout the article, this flag affair was presented as "one of the most interesting -and divisive- issues among Travellers in recent years". It was also acknowledged that "some Travellers are totally against it -they say their flag is the Irish flag, full stop", while "others see it as fitting and appropriate to their ethnic status". Meagher, concluded the article with the comment: "It is still an issue and with only a year to go, you can expect to hear more about the pros and cons of a Traveller flag". At the time of writing of this thesis a vote on the Traveller flag/logo does not appear to have been rescheduled.

This episode deserves particular attention since a flag is a highly symbolic marker of national/group belonging and collective identification. Before that, another event charged with high symbolism was the carrying of the Irish flag by the Irish Traveller and Olympic boxer Francis Barrett at the opening ceremony of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Having being excluded from Irish boxing clubs as a Traveller, the young athlete had pursued his physical preparation with determination in a trailer on his Galway campsite. His carrying (and hence reclaiming) of the national flag as a Traveller and as an Irish citizen, indeed as an Irish Traveller, represented a symbolic act of double significance. It constituted a public statement that not only he belonged to Ireland as much as the other Irish athletes but also that Ireland equally belonged to him and to Irish Travellers alike. On the one hand, he affirmed his pride as a legitimate member of the Irish political, social, economic and cultural community, despite the latter's attempts to exclude him. On the other hand, he also reclaimed the national community and symbol as equally belonging to the Irish Travellers (see Parekh, 2008, 97 for an analysis of similar events in UK).

1.4. Previous academic scholarship on 'Traveller ethnicity'

The majority of Irish scholarship on 'Traveller ethnicity' provides theoretical arguments in favour of Travellers' official ethnic recognition. Such endorsement of Travellers' ethnic demands is animated by a commitment to support national Traveller organisations' struggle for equality. This position constitutes a legitimate defence of Travellers' rights to emancipation, rooted in the recognition of their NGOs' progressive aims.

Conversely, comparatively little attention has been devoted to examining diverse attitudes or divergent understandings of ethnicity within the Travelling community. Even though some researchers have identified perceived gaps between "Traveller elites"/"self-appointed organisational leaders" and the "inactive Traveller masses" and have pointed to the need for a greater involvement of more Travellers in the political mobilisation around ethnicity (e.g. Kruckenberg, 2010), the analysis has not been pushed further. The rare academic acknowledgment (Kruckenberg, 2010; see also McLoughlin, 1994; and Kenny, 1997) that many Travellers may lack information or be indifferent towards, uncertain about or disagree with the pursuit of 'Traveller ethnicity' does not seem to have been accompanied with an attempt to further investigate diverse opinions and understandings among Travellers. Researchers have not critically engaged with this uncertainty and dissent or attempted to interpret them in light of contemporary critical theorising on ethnicity and identity politics.

Traveller dissenters and unaligned academics have been mostly ignored or criticised. Within this trend is located the dismissal by Kenny (1997), the Equality Authority (2006) and McVeigh (2007) of the objections posed in the early 1990s by the Irish historian McLoughlin [8] (1994), who questioned the effectiveness and appropriateness of Travellers' pursuit of equality through demands for official ethnic recognition. At a Dublin conference recently organised by the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee on "Ethnicity and Travellers: An Exploration" (27/09/12) two academics presented theoretical perspectives on ethnicity that highlighted its dialectical potential, drawing on insights from previous studies on other minority groups. Marian Cadogan's paper "Ethnic identity as a double-edged sword" pointed to the significance of ethnic struggle for oppressed minorities, alongside the potential drawbacks of such a strategy. Similarly, Andrew Finlay's speech on "The political economy of ethnic identity" recognised the political and strategic significance of ethnic mobilisation while identifying its limits, such as the adoption of "the language of the bosses". Both papers were interrupted before their end. Pro ethnicity activists

[8]For instance, Kenny (1997, 39) dismisses McLoughlin's arguments as "conceptually flawed". Similarly, the Equality Authority (2006, 58), adopting Ní Shúinéar's position on Travellers' ethnicity, regards McLoughlin's points as not constituting "a convincing challenge to the wider body of anthropological and other academic work discussed above that supports the argument for recognising Travellers as an ethnic group". While I agree with these sources that some of her arguments could have been expressed more coherently or accurately, McLoughlin does make some relevant points that resonate with sociological and anthropological worries at the convergence between 'race/racism' and ethnicity, the increasing longing for cultural homogeneity and finally their articulation of essentialist understanding of culture/s as static entities rather than exchange fields (E.g. Gilroy, 1993; Bulmer and Solomos, 1998; Goldberg and Solomos, 2003).

appeared to prevail at this event. Martin Ward, the only Traveller speaker who questioned the ethnic status, was contested and interrupted by the public. If Travellers' participation at this conference really reflects Travellers' general position, the pro ethnicity advocates might now have an overwhelming majority on this matter.

Entering this debate, I benefit from the insightful contributions of previous scholarship on this subject and recognise its commitment to Travellers' emancipation and equality. However, I am also concerned at the closing down of studies anchored in critical investigations of ethnicity and at the tendency towards the ideological naturalisation of 'Traveller ethnicity' as a self-evident, natural and objective fact within Traveller activists and organisations' discourses. Researcher and activist Robbie McVeigh (2007, 16) states that the "stricter legalistic definitions of *Mandla v Lee* remains the 'acid test' for Traveller ethnicity". In contrast with critical understandings (Bulmer and Solomos, 1999; Gilroy, 1998; Hall, 1992, 1996; and Jenkins, 1997, 2003), he notes that within academic circles Irish Traveller ethnicity is "so *self-evident* that it does not require more detailed discussion" and, therefore, "most academic commentators tend to accept Irish Traveller ethnicity fairly *unproblematically*. (…) These commentators all broadly agree with Ní Shúinéar, that, 'we are dealing with a group that fulfils all the *objective scientific criteria* to qualify as an ethnic group'" (McVeigh, 2007, 15-16) [emphasis added].

On the other hand, I am preoccupied with the political sensitivity of my study, given that it interfaces with the political context to a considerable extent. My worries regard both its reception and the uses to which it might be put. With reference to the first concern, I have in mind the possible reactions of Travellers, their national and local NGOs, human rights organisations/bodies as well as academics committed to the Travellers' cause. I am afraid that my contribution and its constructive critical observations are at risk of being misunderstood as misrecognition of Traveller organisations' daily commitment to Travellers. With regards to the second issue, I am conscious of the high stakes of this controversy and aware of the possible misuses of this study. Academic work is often used to justify policy decisions/legislation, both for progressive and regressive objectives[9]. Unfortunately, there are politicians, journalists,

[9] For example, an academic controversy on the issue of Traveller ethnicity between two Irish researchers, Ní Shúinéar and McLoughlin, first published in 1994 and then referred to in Tovey and Share's *Sociology of Ireland* (2002), was used by the Irish government to justify its refusal of public recognition of the ethnic status to the Irish Travellers. See in this regard the Equality Authority's *Traveller Ethnicity* (2006, 37-39). In addition, another previous anthropological research conducted by Patricia McCarthy in the 1960s had been at the basis of the devaluation of Travellers' culture as a culture of poverty.

members of organisations and individuals within civil society who misuse their access to public discourse and power to reproduce and mount anti-Travellerism and to promote or prevent specific policy measures. Therefore, I openly assert that within this study I do not intend to take a position on the controversy over 'Traveller ethnicity', since it is ultimately a matter of self-determination to be decided by Travellers themselves. Moreover, none of my findings aims at discrediting national Traveller NGOs' enormous contribution and crucial empowering role for the advancement of Travellers' rights and their sense of pride and self-esteem, alongside their provision of invaluable welfare, expertise and services.

1.5. Aims, rationale, theoretical and methodological framework

My research seeks to address a significant gap in the existing academic literature about 'Traveller ethnicity' by exploring the internal debate within the Traveller community as it has unfolded in recent years, particularly between 2007 and 2010. Its central focus concerns the notion of "Traveller ethnicity", how it is variously constructed by Traveller activists and organisations, which either advocate for or challenge its official recognition. Furthermore, it considers the potential implications of this debate for Traveller politics, policies and identities.

Theoretically, this study interrogates the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' with reference to critical insights on ethnicity and culture offered by writers in the field of Ethnic and Racial Studies, Cultural Theory and Anthropology (Gilroy, 1998; Bulmer and Solomos, 1999; Fenton, 1999/2010; Jenkins, 1997/2003; Cowan *et al*., 2001 and others). An additional source of theoretical inspiration comes from writers who have interrogated the impact of identity politics and identity claims-making within contemporary social movements (Bertolino, 2006; Hall, 1992/1996; Malik, 2005; Pateman, 1992; Parekh, 2008; Phillips, 1987/1997/1999/2007 and others). On the other hand, other sources observe that identity claims might not only be used strategically but that people might really believe in them (e.g. Modood, 2007). A balance between these two positions is captured by Hall's (1996) expression of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of ethnic identities (see Chapter Two, Section 2.11).

Methodologically, I draw on the concept of discourse as elaborated within Critical Discourse Analytical (CDA) perspectives (Fairclough, 1989/2003; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Van Dijk, 1998; Reisigl and Wodak, 2009) since I believe that it is appropriate to the investigation of this intra-Traveller debate. This approach

recognises strong links between language and power and hence language's involvement in both social continuity and change. The exercise of power occurs not only through coercion but also, and increasingly so in contemporary societies, through the ideological contribution of language to consent and hegemony (Fairclough, 1989, 17). Accordingly, discourses are understood as more than just texts and means of communication. They are "communicative events" (Van Dijk, 1998, 316), which are deeply implicated in the (re)production of the social world as vehicles for ideologies and sites of power struggles between groups. Language is seen in a dialectical relation with societal structures: it is determined by the existing power and economic relations of production and in turn impacts upon them by contributing to their (re)production and/or change. Our languages, our interactional routines and the related subject positions are regulated by relatively stable interactional conventions. The latter are not casual or freely decided by individuals but reflect historically specific configurations of power relations and economic production. In turn, concrete discursive exchanges among human beings can contribute to reproducing particular economic and power relations and social identities or alternatively, challenge, resist and, over time, change them. Discourses are hence parts of social life as simultaneously "ways of representing", "ways of acting" and "ways of being" (Fairclough, 2003, 206). For further details see Chapter Five, Sections 5.4 and 5.5.

The notion of discourse and the framework of CDA allow me to explore competing discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity' as communicative events located in the Irish historical context, shaped by long-term Traveller-oppressive power relations on the one hand and involved in changing those relations on the other. These power struggles are played out not only between national Traveller NGOs and the State but also among Traveller NGOs and activists. With specific reference to the latter, I can detect the occurrence of an ongoing ideological struggle among Travellers and their national organisations regarding the legitimation of their respective representative roles and the naturalisation of particular understandings of who Travellers are in contemporary Ireland, how their interests can be best served and by what public policies. This means that discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity' are assessed under various interrelated aspects: how they represent Travellers and their culture; how they enact concrete struggles and interactions between competing Traveller organisations and activists, and also vis-à-vis the Irish State; what is at stake in these struggles beyond discourses themselves; and, finally, how they potentially influence Travellers' self-identities, life scripts and

relations with the rest of society. Moreover, the elucidation of the historical -structural and action- contexts of contending discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity' is a necessary requirement of my research. Accordingly, Chapter Three describes the broader historical context for the emergence of the interrelated notions of Irish national identity and Traveller identity. Chapter Four reconstructs the context for the emergence of the discourse of 'Traveller ethnicity' within the arena of Traveller mobilisation, and, finally, the analytical chapters contextualise the selected documents.

Connecting these theoretical and methodological insights to Travellers' own arguments, this study seeks to uncover the ambiguities and dilemmas that lie at the core of the debate on 'Traveller ethnicity'. A few core questions that underpin and guide the analysis of the data are enounced in Chapter Five (see Section 5.6).

The respective constructions of 'Traveller ethnicity' from the contending sides are practically uncovered by examining a small number of selected documents, which express the arguments that are typically advanced by these Traveller organisations and activists in favour of and against 'Traveller ethnicity'. The nine selected data are divided into two sub-groups according to their positioning in relation to the ethnic dilemma. The first set comprises documents that are supportive of Travellers' official ethnic recognition: four pertain to the Irish Traveller Movement's Traveller Ethnicity campaign whereas the fifth is the first comprehensive policy document issued by Minceirs Whiden. The second group of data questions the pursuit of official ethnic recognition. This comprises of four texts published in the Irish press in chronological order to chart the historical development of Traveller opposition to the ethnic route since the early 1990s.

With reference to concrete textual analysis, my method consists of two phases: the first, thematic, involves the listing and subsequent critical examination of each datum's contents, with a particular attention to topics, their internal order and other aspects. The second phase instead deals with linguistic analysis, with a specific focus on lexical choices and semantic aspects, particularly those which are discursively involved as micro-strategies in processes of identity construction (see Sections 5.6 and 5.7).

However, this study focuses primarily on the contexts for the production of these discourses and is based on a limited, although typical, amount of data. Hence, it suggests the potential but not the inevitable or actual implications of these contending discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity'. Thus, it is intended as a modest but rigorous critical

exploration of this debate, which itself can be dialectically assessed in the future through a dialogue with Traveller organisations, academics and other parties.

Reasserting the political commitment that underpins critical approaches, my research is inspired by a sincere desire to support Travellers' quest for equality and recognition in the belief that a critical analysis of ethnicity would benefit Traveller NGOs' politics and Irish State policies. I believe that my approach offers the advantage of putting Travellers themselves centre stage, recognising the agency and insights of those located on both sides of the divide. I hope it will also foster a reciprocal engagement and constructive dialogue between the contending Travellers by pointing to the significance and complementarity of their respective positions.

1.6. Outline of dissertation's structure and contents

This dissertation comprises eight chapters, followed by the bibliography and appendices.

In the current introductory chapter, Chapter One, I provided the rationale for this study, contextualised the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity', spelled out the research questions, aims and methodological approach. I also contextualised this research within the broader academic landscape and indicated the specific contribution of the notion of discourse and a Critical Discourse Analytical approach to examining the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity'.

Chapter Two centres on the concept of ethnicity from two perspectives: first, contemporary critical literature on ethnicity; second, current analyses of the impact of identity politics and identity claims-making within contemporary social movements and in the context of multiculturalism. In the first part, I provide an overview of the introduction of ethnicity into the social sciences as an analytical term and concept, while simultaneously considering its contemporary common usages in the political, administrative, media and everyday arenas. The associated ambiguity, uncertainty and confusion over its usage are observed and explained. The relationships between ethnicity and concepts of 'race', culture and national identity are explored and then an overview of existing debates on the definition of ethnicity is provided. Despite this problematisation and deconstruction of ethnicity, common grounds among critical scholars are found, insightfully captured by Hall's (1996) affirmation of its simultaneous necessity and impossibility.

In the second part I locate political struggles based on ethnicity within the broader context of multiculturalism and identity-based politics. This part charts the contemporary relevance of struggles for the recognition of ethnic and cultural identities and considers how the benefits of recognition have been assessed by many theorists of multiculturalism. From this I draw ethnicity's advantages, alongside the main dangers generally inherent in such a politics.

These insights are applied to the Irish context in the following chapter that deals with the hegemonic and subaltern constructions of Irishness as they emerged historically and developed dialectically in the last century through the interplay of British colonisation and the establishment first of the Irish Free State and later the Republic of Ireland. In Chapter Three I provide a historical overview of the emergence of contemporary hegemonic Irishness incorporating insights from the previous chapter as well as drawing on Irish sources on history, nationalism and nation-building (e.g. Comerford, 2003; Fanning, 2002; Garner, 2004; Kirby, 2010; Mac Laughlin, 2001/1999/1995). I also highlight the parallel interdependence between the colonialist racialisation of the Irish and the subsequent post-colonial racialisation of Irish Travellers by Irish governments, drawing on Ní Shúinéar (2001/2006), Bhreatnach (2006), Hayes (2006) and Ryan (2007). This chapter also outlines the structural changes in Irish State and society since the formation of the Irish Free State, particularly from 1922 to 1970, which crucially impacted upon this nomadic group as well as the rural and urban poor and working classes. The second part of this chapter explores how these groupings were profoundly affected by apparently unrelated social and economic changes such as the evolution and monetarisation of the rural economy, the motorisation of transport, the rise of the welfare state and related processes of regulation of citizens' lives.

In Chapter Four the focus is shifted to the emergence of Traveller mobilisation in the 1960s and its development during the following decades. This chapter charts the historical events that resulted in the politicisation of 'Traveller ethnicity' within Traveller NGOs' struggles for equality and human rights, while discussing the subsequent evolution of Traveller politics and policies. The dialectic interplay and reciprocal influence between scholarly knowledge, politics and policies with regards to Irish Travellers clearly emerges from this chapter.

Chapter Five is concerned with the theoretical and methodological foundations underpinning this dissertation and delineates the practical procedures followed during

the design and effectuation of this research project. I locate my theoretical position broadly within the critical tradition. Methodologically I explain my adherence to the paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis and outline my concrete operationalisation of a CDA method tailored to my particular research aims. I include a section on the primary data, which are schematically outlined and encoded in a correlated table. Finally, I conclude by enouncing some limitations and ethical considerations that emerged in the course of this study.

The subsequent two chapters are devoted to the textual examination of the chosen data, which are subdivided according to Travellers' positioning with regards to the ethnic controversy. Accordingly, Chapter Six examines a typical sample of the pro 'Traveller ethnicity' data, whereas Chapter Seven assesses Traveller discourses against 'Traveller ethnicity'. These analytical chapters reveal that 'Traveller ethnicity' has been a stake and a key site in which Traveller organisational politics have been played out, i.e. a vehicle for ideological struggles over power, representation and policy measures directed towards Travellers. This contention revolves around not only distinct understandings of ethnicity but also around other correlated aspects: leadership, representativeness, political strategies/framing and finally geo-political and socio-cultural divides within the Travelling community. It is anchored in the attribution of different meanings to the notion of ethnicity by the contending sides. 'Traveller ethnicity' is regarded by pro ethnicity advocates as a self-evident and objective fact, independent from Travellers' choice, and as a necessary precondition for Travellers' emancipation, legitimation and equality within Irish society. Conversely, for its opponents it constitutes a questionable political strategy and an optional label, to be decided through an internal democratic debate, with multiple meanings and stigmatising risks.

Similarities between *Minceirs Whiden*'s policy document (D5) and the *ITM* material on the Traveller Ethnicity Campaign (D1 to D4) are considered and assessed with reference to the coincidence of membership and adoption of human rights discourses. Accordingly, an overlapping between the legal category of ethnic status and sociological/anthropological understandings is noted with the consequential transfer of essentialising and reifying aspects from the legal field onto the latter. This shared emphasis on the legal aspect is found to entail a number of pros and cons. Its reliance on criteria of membership and its symbolic and material function as an empowering, legitimising and compensatory measure against structural inequality and discrimination

makes it graspable, desirable and useful. On the other hand, its adherence to traditional anthropological understandings entails a degree of essentialisation and reification of 'Traveller ethnicity' and culture, and of Travellers as a bounded and distinct group. This might be a source of tension and conducive to further social polarisation between Travellers and mainstream Irish society. It also tends to attribute agency to abstract entities and conversely deny Travellers's choice so converging towards a certain degree of determinism and reductionism that is already characteristic of the contiguous notion of 'race'.

Furthermore, CDA examination suggests that contending discourses have exerted a reciprocal influence on one another so that they have incorporated, though to varying extents, both an emphasis on Travellers' cultural distinctiveness and on their Irishness. It also reveals a common tendency to ideologically exaggerate the extent of Travellers' collective support to their respective positions and strategies. Overall the use of CDA allows us to detect the unfolding of an ongoing process of naturalisation of 'Traveller ethnicity' as a self-evident fact, which is prevailing against the competing discourses of its opponents, at the expense of constructivist and critical understanding of this notion. *Minceirs Whiden*'s document is found to mark a further step in this direction by explicitly denying the instrumental function of ethnicity as a political tool for human rights and equality. The framework of CDA permits also to appreciate the potential productive effects of these competing discourses on individual Travellers' self-understanding and life choices (e.g. their adoption of particular life scripts over others) and with regards to the adoption of specific policy measures over others.

The concluding chapter, by examining their respective contributions, points to the complementarity of arguments for and against 'Traveller ethnicity'; it highlights the strengths and limitations of 'ethnicity claims-making' as a strategy towards equality. Indeed, the chapter presents the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' as an exemplification of the more general dilemmas and issues emerging within any kind of identity-based politics and reveals that Travellers' sense of identity in both formulations carries deep traces of anti-Traveller racism with its assimilatory and exclusionary manifestations.

Chapter Two

General assessment of the notion of ethnicity

2.1. Introduction

This chapter offers a critical assessment of the notion of ethnicity from two perspectives: the contemporary critical literature on ethnicity and current analyses of the impact of identity politics and identity claims-making within social movements and in the context of multiculturalism. This double focus is required by the location of the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' in both the academic field and the arena of identity politics. On the one hand, the critical strand allows me to assess the specific subject of this study. At the same time, thanks to the second theoretical contribution, I can individuate issues relevant for the politics of 'Traveller ethnicity', by making links with other oppressed and marginalised groups' struggles to win public respect and recognition of their equal worth and dignity in contemporary liberal democratic societies across the world.

The difficulty in reconciling the academic struggle against essentialism with the social uses of ethnicity as a protective and legitimating label within political projects also emerges from this chapter (see McKinney, 2003 on similar dilemmas previously faced by Scottish Travellers). In fact, theoretically, ethnicity constitutes an ambiguous and controversial concept, whose boundaries have been redefined in recent times as its political relevance has increased across the world. Because of these difficulties, perhaps, many authoritative sources have so far outlined their arguments without connecting them to the main theoretical issues concerning ethnicity. For instance, Lentin and McVeigh (2006) do not engage with a theorisation of ethnicity, despite their acknowledgement of the relevance of this notion and their problematisation of its under-theorisation by State actors, international organisations and human rights bodies (Brandi, 2008). This lack of theoretical definition is even more problematic in the light of their criticism of the Irish government's refusal to recognise 'Traveller ethnicity'. However, McVeigh and Lentin are not just observers of Travellers' anti-racist struggles but also defenders of Travellers' rights and active participants in their identity politics. Hence, their contributions are as likely to be political as theoretical. Their double positioning as intellectuals and activists is a reminder of the reciprocal influence between knowledge and politics. It thus explains why it is important to explore this controversy also from the perspective of identity politics with a specific focus on its advantages, dilemmas and potential pitfalls.

Writers who have interrogated the impact of identity politics and identity claims-making within contemporary social movements and in the context of multiculturalism constitute an additional source of theoretical inspiration for this study. However, this chapter concentrates only on the lessons that can be learnt from an analysis of strengths and shortcomings of identity politics in general, among which the struggle for the recognition of Travellers' ethnic status is located. In this regard, I draw parallels to the dilemmas that historically emerged within feminist and black identity politics.

Part I

2.2. Increasing salience of ethnicity in the social sciences

Ethnicity was introduced in the social sciences in contradistinction to 'race' (Marshall, 1998, 201). The latter was widely used to refer to larger and smaller groupings of mankind until the 1940s (Sollors, 1986, 38). The implication of 'race' theory in the National Socialist genocide led to its substitution in anthropological studies with, first, culture (Bolaffi *et al*., 2003, 63) and, subsequently, ethnicity (Bolaffi *et al*., 2003, 94; Jenkins, 1997, 11). However, culture, as the first substitute of 'race' and then one of the core elements of ethnicity, also conveyed to ethnicity the legacy it had assumed from 'race'. This includes a tendency to determinism (individuals' thoughts and behaviour regarded as being shaped by culture) and a danger of hierarchising (drawing of comparisons and value scales between different cultures). Hence, although ethnicity had been resorted to with the intention of avoiding the negative heritage of 'race' and racism, it has often subsumed its legacy. The step from racialisation to ethnicisation can be very short. Brah (2005, 84) warns: "the concept of ethnicity itself is not devoid of the very same problems which have bedevilled the idea of race. It can be put to the same uses. So the conundrum persists (…)". This conflation and confusion is also favoured by the previous use of the term ethnicity as a synonym of 'race', people and nation, which persisted until the start of the twentieth century.

"Ethnicity" and "ethnic groups" were introduced in the American anthropological field in the 1960s. "Ethnic groups" superseded the colonialist and by then outmoded term "tribes" as one of the basic units of anthropological analysis (Jenkins, 1997, 11). Sollors (1986, 23) questions this date by sourcing its first isolated occurrence in the social sciences in W. Lloyd Warner's *Yankee City Series*, which appeared in 1941. In that study the term is already used simultaneously as an inclusive and exclusionary category: it is meant both as "universal, inclusive peoplehood" (shared

by all Americans) and as "exclusive otherness" (separating ethnics from Yankee or mainstream culture). These two conflicting meanings of "ethnic"/"ethnicity" have endured so that it still refers to both a universal condition (i.e. we are all ethnic, including dominant groups) and to a exclusionary one that links ethnicity to otherness. This ambiguity ultimately goes back to the etymological roots of the Greek word *ethnos*, meaning both "a people" and "others" (Sollors, 1986, 25).

Despite this first academic use in the 1940s, in the early 1970s the term ethnicity still sent American scholars to their dictionaries (Sollors, 1986, 21). Soon, though, it became popular within the North American sociological field, partially due to the explosion of conflicts and movements among minorities (e.g. the Black Civil Rights movement) and to the publication of the magazine *Ethnicity* (Bolaffi *et al*., 2003, 94).

2.3. Popular and academic usage of "ethnicity"

In European popular and academic discourses the terms "ethnicity/ethnic groups" maintain their original ambivalence. On the one hand they tend to be used to refer to post-war non-European labour immigration and settlement in European industrialised countries and, more recently, to non-EU immigration and asylum–seeking in the 1990s, which led to the constitution of the so-called new ethnic minorities and urban minorities. These terms have also assumed new levels of meaning due to the resurgence of ethno-nationalism and to the emergence in particular of ethnic conflict in the Balkans together with the idea and practice of ethnic cleansing (Bolaffi *et al*., 2003, 98). Hence, in the social subconsciousness of the Western world ethnicity tends to be associated with the foreign and somewhat marginal. Its associations with marginalisation, the non-mainstream and difference are often implied in contemporary usage (Ashcroft *et al.* 1998, 81), for example in expressions such as "ethnic music/art/food".

On the other hand, in political, administrative and media discourse ethnicity is often used as a euphemism for 'race' (Bolaffi *et al*., 2003, 96) and in this sense it is applied universally to all human groupings as a classifying category. Within politics and academia, ethnicity is used for the purpose of rescuing and valorising those aspects of life represented by 'race' outside the imperatives of racism (Brah, 2005, 84). This shift is certainly linked to the adoption of ethnicity as a fighting word in anti-racist struggles. As a result, ethnicity has grown increasingly salient in contemporary societies where "the search for national, ethnic and racial identities has become a pronounced, if not

dominant, feature of political debate within both majority and minority communities in the post-modern societies of the 1990s" (Bulmer and Solomos, 1998, 834). Because of its relevance, ethnicity has become a universal issue and is addressed in several disciplinary fields (Bolaffi *et al*., 2003, 95).

2.4. Ethnicity, 'race', culture and nation

2.4.1. Ethnicity and 'race'

Critical social theorists largely agree on the erroneous and problematic status of the notion of 'race' and on its ideological dimensions, which link it to power (as domination) and, ultimately, systematic violence and genocide. They argue that 'race' constitutes an erroneous pseudo-scientific concept, which is not valid for analytical purposes (Fenton, 1999, 62/66; Jenkins, 1997, 49). For instance, Gilroy (1998, 843) regards 'race' as the product of the intertwining of science and superstition, enlightenment and myth, rational and irrational. In this light, 'race' corresponds to racism through the process of racialisation. Nonetheless, such criticism has not prevented many mainstream researchers from using this notion routinely and unproblematically. Furthermore, even among critical scholars, it is still debated whether the scientific refutation of 'race' should lead to the abandonment of the concept and term (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, 132). Most sources justify its retention to account for common sense perceptions, everyday usage and, especially, the material consequences of 'race' as racism for victims. A compromise seems to have been reached, consisting in placing the word between inverted commas to stress its problematic character (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, 133).

In social sciences and in the field of law generally there is a tendency to emphasise the humanity and the positive potential of ethnicity in contrast to 'race', sometimes alongside an acknowledgement of its potential dangers (Gilroy, 1993; Jenkins, 1997; Fenton, 1999/2010; Bolaffi *et al*. 2003). A common reading of the differences between ethnicity and 'race' is based on Banton's (1988) formulation of a binary opposition: at one pole there is malign 'race', which accounts for physical differences, forced membership –i.e. social categorisation – and exclusion. At the other pole, stands the more benign ethnicity, seen as concerned with cultural differences, being about social self-definition and, therefore, inclusion. Banton's model has, however, been criticised by Jenkins (1997, 74-84) for its reductive and simplistic polarisation, which downplays the discretionary – and, indeed, cultural – nature of the

selection of relevant physical differences. For instance, Jenkins contends that this model risks implying a dangerous distinction between objective/material (with regards to 'race') and subjective/ideal (with regards to ethnicity). It also overlooks the interconnectedness of processes of social self-identification and other-classification. Furthermore, it ignores cases of both positive self-identification couched in racial terms and negative other-categorisation conceived of in ethnic terms. Nevertheless, Banton (1997, 40) himself amended his distinction in subsequent publications. This fact contributes once again to the conflation and overlap of these notions. Furthermore, Banton's distinction between 'race' and ethnicity is contrasted with the observation that the former has always included both biological and cultural elements (Rattansi, 2005, 272).

2.4.2. Ethnicisation or racialisation without 'race'

The notion of racialisation is useful to describe the medium through which race-thinking operates (Malik, 1996 in Murji and Solomos, 2005, 3), i.e. "the processes by which racial meanings are attached to particular issues –often treated as social problems–and with the manner in which race appears to be a, or often the, key factor in the ways they are defined and understood" (Murji and Solomos, 2005, 3). Nonetheless, there is a lack of clarity on its meaning and lack of rigour in its application (Murji and Solomos, 2005, 2) and in general it is affected by the same problems, debates and dilemmas concerning issues on 'race' and racism in the social sciences (Rattansi, 2005, 271). Despite it being parasitic for its meaning(s) on prior definitions of 'race' and racism, its emphasis on process and, hence, dynamism, renders racialisation a highly attractive and useful concept (Rattansi, 2005, 272). Indeed, one of the strengths of this notion, according to Rattansi, is that it "tells us that racism is never simply racism, but always exists in complex imbrications with nation, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality" and therefore a dismantling of racism also requires dealing with the other interrelated issues (Rattansi, 2005, 296). With regard to racialisation, the question that appears most relevant for the subject of this study is whether it is possible to imply the occurring of this process of 'race'-thinking and 'race'-making without explicitly referring to 'race' itself. This issue is disputed between scholars who favour a narrower definition, such as Banton, and those who prefer a broader definition, such as Miles. In turn, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) are credited with further broadening Miles' approach to cover any instance of inferiorisation of ethnic groups, migrants and

refugees as well as the notion of the undesiderability of such groups (Murji and Solomos, 2005, 13). In this sense racialisation has also been defined as ethnicisation, an analogous process which usefully highlights "the contingent and constructed nature of differences, except that ethnicity as a cultural or national difference is invoked instead of race" (Murji and Solomos, 2005, 13). I opt for a broader understanding of racialisation, since it accounts for racism against putative groups, which are not represented as biologically distinct (e.g. racialisation of working class people in Victorian England). With specific reference to the subject of this study, Irish Travellers have been racialised by the Irish State and mainstream society despite being recognised as Irish like the rest of the population (or sometimes as even more 'authentically' Irish than the rest; see in this regard Chapter Three, 3.5.1 and 3.5.2).

2.4.3. Ethnicity and culture

Culture has become a central concept within the debate on multiculturalism in contemporary societies. Nonetheless, this debate has been of no help with the definition of culture. Indeed, this notion encounters the same difficulties of definition and use found in the concepts of ethnicity and 'race' (Bolaffi, 2003, 64). There are two meanings currently attached to this word, a narrower and a broader one. Within the former, culture appears to be rather confined to the realms of cultural production (music, art, literature, science), which is currently termed "high culture" as opposed to its "popular" variant. The broader understanding of culture as the symbolic and learnt aspects of human society was first formulated within the social sciences towards the end of the nineteenth century and progressively developed towards pluralist and relativist standpoints.

The importance of culture in the definition of ethnicity emerges from the discussion in the previous sections. Although the two notions are not identical, culture tends to be regarded, to various degrees depending on the authors and the disciplines, as one of the most conspicuous factors of ethnicity, besides ancestry, history and language. In turn, ethnicity tends to be characterised mainly in cultural terms. For example, in human rights law, the conferral of ethnic status is concerned with the protection of minorities' cultures (see section 2.10 below). Nonetheless, the association between ethnicity and culture may risk obscuring how ethnic identities often persist independent of the perpetuation of 'traditional' cultures and beyond cultural assimilation into the wider society (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1998, 84).

Furthermore, the adoption of culture and ethnicity as substitutes for 'race', together with their inheritance of its problematic legacy, has acquired more salience in light of the 1980s culturalist turn in racism, also called the culturalisation of racism. In the wake of developments in modern genetics, cultural elements have increasingly come to the fore as new ways of essentialising people without expressing biologically determinist ideas. This tendency to interpret culture in a deterministic way is usually pronounced when associated with national minorities or non-western groups, often considered to be driven by their 'illiberal' cultures; westerners, on the other hand, are considered to be rational and autonomous in the exercise of choice (Phillips, 2007, 31/63-64). Accordingly, different cultures are regarded as existing in mutual isolation with different value systems which evolve in distinctive ways[10].

Hence, the politics of exclusion have increasingly been predicated on arguments of absolute cultural difference (Fenton, 1999, 49). Consequently, 'race' and racial meanings are sometimes are implied by terms such as ethnicity, culture and the "social problem" approach without being explicitly mentioned (Murji and Solomos, 2005, 3-4). The politicisation of ethnicity and the culturalisation of racism have caused the convergence of both discourses so that understandings of ethnicity and racism begin to occupy much of the same terrain (Fenton, 1999, 51). Gilroy has been particularly outspoken on this issue in the last two decades. As he argues (1993, 57), currently political struggle takes place on cultural grounds: "As culture has grown more central to political debates on race, it has also become more reductively conceived, as if it becomes a biological term through its proximity to the concept of 'race'". He, therefore, warns against conceiving of culture along ethnically absolute lines, as "a fixed property of social groups rather than a relational field in which they encounter one another and live out social historical relationships" (Gilroy, 1993, 24). This "reductive, essentialist understanding of ethnic and national difference which operates through an absolute sense of culture" is called by Gilroy (1993, 65) "ethnic absolutism". He contends that it has reached the status of common sense across the political spectrum beyond the traditional distinction between left and right: even victims of racism may seize on these "simple, self-evident truths". In the wake of these developments, "the distinctions between race, ethnicity and nation, always blurred, have become murkier still" (Rattansi, 2005, 272).

[10] This interpretation obscures the reality of cultural interactions and reciprocal influence, enabled by the increasing movement of people and by the circulation of ideas. Moreover, it overlooks the existence of sub-cultures within each singular cultural group as well as internal dissent and contestation of cultural values, practices and meanings (Phillips, 2007, 44).

2.4.4. Ethnicity and nation

In the wake of the contemporary resurgence of ethno-nationalism and ethnic cleansing, much recent academic research has been devoted to the link between ethnicity and national identity (Bolaffi *et al.*, 2003, 98; Jenkins, 1997, 11; Kaufmann, 2004, 2). This link is of crucial importance also because in most societies politics are ethnicised (Fenton, 1999, 27): states substantiate ethnic categories and frame political affairs through a language of ethnicity (Fenton, 1999, 170).

With reference to my study, the focus on the relationship between ethnicity and nation is important not just because national identity may be regarded as a form of dominant ethnicity, but also because it is deeply connected to the construction, representation and victimisation of Irish Travellers. The nation is a symbolic community which produces meanings – a system of cultural representation in which citizens participate to a greater or lesser extent depending on their relative power. Groups which have the power to define their own identities, and the ability to mobilise their definitions through control of cultural institutions, have greater influence in the definition of national identity and in the selective processes of memory-making which constitute a 'national tradition' (Bulmer and Solomos, 1998, 827-828). Explicit and implicit representations of the nation suggest the image of an ethnic majority with supposed fixed characteristics (Fenton, 1999, 27) in contrast with which minorities stand out.

Social constructionist theorisations of nation and nationalism (e.g. Anderson, 1983; Calhoun, 1994; Gellner, 1983; and Hardt and Negri, 2000; Hobsbawm, 1990), maintain that national commonality and nationhood are imagined, constructed or fabricated by the dominant bourgeois class of modern and modernising states. However, as Fenton (1999, 171-172) observes, it is also necessary analytically to consider each case individually: some nations are more invented than others. Indeed, it makes sense to discuss nationalisms taking different shapes, formed in different international contexts and by different domestic experiences (Calhoun, 1994, 320). These commentators locate the birth of the nation-state in the European context, shaped by modernity, the emergence of the bourgeoisie as the new dominant class, by the development of modern industrial capitalism and by new productive forces. National identity has been presented as naturally reflecting a primordial unity of 'the people' as being of the same blood, as being of one will, one action, as being "founded on a biological continuity of blood relations, a spatial continuity of territory and linguistic commonality" (Hardt and Negri,

2000, 95). The naturalisation of multitudes into peoples is favoured by the complementary mechanisms of colonial racism (with its positing of absolute racial difference and subordination of the 'inferior races') and internal social purification (i.e. the erosion of internal social differences and antagonisms).

Commentators have also analysed the change in character of nationalism as a function both of its historical development and the perspectives of its claimants. In fact, the nationalist discourse has grown in the last three centuries, offering more resources for latecomers to nationalism (Calhoun, 1994, 320). Notwithstanding the differences in ideological contexts and popular mobilisations, wherever the concept of the nation was adopted "it still always was presented as a concept of capitalist modernisation, which claimed to bring together the interclass demands for political unity and the needs of economic development" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 96). These two aspects have been taken up together even in countries with no experience of liberal revolution or a history of primitive capital accumulation.

Moreover, nationalist discourse has been embraced worldwide in movements of liberation from colonial oppression (e.g. in the pursuit of Irish independence from British colonial rule), as well as by movements opposing the internal marginalisation and isolation of indigenous minorities, new ethnic groups and urban minorities. Calhoun (1994, 316/325) and Hardt and Negri (2000, 106) stress the double-edged nature of nationalism: it has contradictory potentialities depending on whether it is in power or not. The very same concept is described as regressive in the hands of the dominant – promoting stasis and restoration; and progressive in the hands of subordinated groups – fostering change and revolution (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 106). Subaltern nationalism promotes the right to self–determination in the face of occupation and control by dominant power, while at the same time it operates as an ideological force against the inferiorisation and devaluation of subaltern groups (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 106). Thus, it is a means of affirming the dignity of a people and legitimating the demand for independence and equality. However, nationalism also homogenises people in an unindividuated whole, erasing class, gender, ethnicity and other differences (the aforementioned social purification). In the hands of the same group the character of nationalism can change as it shifts from being a movement of insurgence to being the dominant ideology, from being a form of resistance to being an oppressive force (Calhoun, 1994, 316). Once the nation is established in power as a sovereign State, it requires citizens within its territory to conform to its 'common' –i.e. hegemonic–

culture, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on context. This is so, even in the absence of a territorial claim, as demonstrated by the example of Black Nationalism in the United States. Indeed, the disparate range of phenomena grouped under the banner of nationalism displays the fundamental progressive and reactionary functions of, respectively, defence of the community and oppression and destruction of multiplicity (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 107). This discussion is relevant for Chapter Three, which deals with the historical constitution of hegemonic Irish national identity and subaltern Traveller identity in the historical context of the pursuit of Irish independence from British colonial domination.

2.5. Theoretical foundations of the subjective dimensions of ethnicity

Several theories of ethnicity have been developed since the beginning of the twentieth century. Bolaffi *et al.* (2003, 95) regroups them into three basic orientations: These are the primordialist, the mobilisationist and the modern. However, the theoretical debate has been built mainly on an opposition between the primordialist and the instrumentalist — also situationalist or mobilisationist — perspectives, drawn respectively from Geertz (1962) and Barth (1969). While an exhaustive enunciation of this dispute is beyond the scope of this research, it is important to sketch out some of the academic controversies around this notion. On the one hand, ethnicity is regarded as an entity, a force for authenticity and identity integration; on the other, it is understood as a strategy, and a tool for group mobilisation in the pursuit of power and resources, especially in a hostile and disempowering environment. Hence, the emphasis is on emotional attachment (sentiment), in the former, and on instrumental manipulation (calculus), in the latter.

The first orientation, commonly found in traditional anthropological analyses, stresses the inherited nature of ethnicity by asserting that each human group presents certain archetypal primordial features, which constitute its specific and essential characteristics. For example, Geertz (1962, 109 in Bolaffi *et al*., 2003, 97) insists that ethnic ties, characterised by "an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness", are "primordial". Hence, ethnicity is treated as "one of the givens of social existence, deriving from birth into a particular community of language, belief and social practices" (Bolaffi *et al*., 2003, 97).

In the second orientation, instrumentalist theory is founded on the legacy of Max Weber, who was the first to stress the subjective dimension of ethnicity as contrasted

with the objective dimension of 'race'. For Weber, the ethnic group shares a subjective belief in common origins, founded on a "similarity of habits, customs and/or collective memories of migration or colonisation" (Bolaffi et al., 2003, 94). Weber's insight that a group's cherishing a sense of common, even if fictitious, ancestry constitutes a base for the creation of community is still at the core of most current definitions of ethnicity (Stone and Dennis, 2003, 32). Of great significance is his consideration that ethnic membership in itself is not sufficient to constitute a group; also required are social awareness and political mobilisation. His formulation opened the way to subsequent social constructivist and instrumentalist theories of ethnicity, while his insistence on agency and on the inter-subjective character of ethnicity is also widely accepted in the academic world, if implicitly contested in other quarters.

Until the late 1960s dominant theorisations of ethnicity were set by traditional anthropology: ethnicity was regarded as a fixed property of ethnic groups. Attention was paid especially to the cultural content, used as a criterion for verification of ethnicity. The Narroll framework (1964)[11] provided an inventory of characteristics which were seen to confirm scientifically the ethnic status of a group: biological difference, cultural difference, social separation, distinct language and spontaneous and organised enmity (Barth, 1969, 10; Equality Authority, 2006, 47). In the Irish academic context these criteria have also been used by scholars arguing that Irish Travellers constitute an ethnic group (e.g. Ní Shúinéar, 1994).

Barth (1969) revolutionised this traditional understanding of ethnicity. Building on Weber, he laid the foundation of the social constructivist and instrumentalist perspectives, which have since prevailed with European and North American scholars in anthropology and sociology (Jenkins, 1997, 19). The understanding of ethnicity has moved from the static vision of "a thing completed - a unit-vessel filled with cultural content (which is how the ethnic actors themselves continue to view it)" to a dynamic one of process and "work-in-progress" (Avruch, 2003, 75). Attention has shifted to group interaction and boundary-construction processes by ethnic actors and away from 'cultural stuff' in itself. Ethnicity is understood as an instrument, a resource and a strategy, invoked to maintain demarcation between in-group and out-group. For example, empirical research by Barth (1969) showed that ethnic identity can be maintained despite evidence of cultural variation within the in-group. This maintenance is made possible by a re-definition of in-group membership criteria, which overrides

[11] The anthropologist Narroll established a set of criteria for the scientific verification of ethnicity with regards to any given group.

cultural variation. At stake within this process is control over power and resources, i.e. in-group symbolic and material domination (Barth, 1969). So, while the cultural content is plastic and changeable, ethnic boundaries can nonetheless be maintained.

2.6. Towards a definition of ethnicity

As indicated, ambiguity and complexity have long since characterised ethnicity. Additionally, ethnicity has an elusive character, stemming from the minimal core on which ethnic groups are based (Stone and Dennis, 2003, 32). Many scholars have tried to isolate its essential characteristics. Ashcroft *et al.* (1998, 84) note that a few features of 'traditional' cultures often represent these elements and that usually there is no full agreement among members of an ethnic group about their own ethnicity and any one essential constituting feature. Despite these scholarly contentions and shifts with regard to the definition of ethnicity and the persistence of coexisting negative and positive connotations, contemporary theorists seem to have found a common terrain over which they for the most part agree. This entails a reconciliation of opposing views in new formulations, which recognise the contribution of various perspectives while building upon a social constructionist foundation (Bulmer and Solomos, 1998, 822-823).

For instance, the aforementioned debate between primordialism and social constructivism has been regarded as overstated and the two approaches have been combined in new perspectives (Jenkins, 1997, 44-48/87; Fenton, 1999, 112). Accordingly, a mild version of primordiality is considered as not excluding a certain situational, instrumental or invented character pertaining to ethnicity (Fenton, 1999, 112). Equally, Barth's stress on the prominence of boundary-making processes has been integrated in the recognition of the social relevance of 'cultural stuff' (Jenkins, 1997, 76). For instance, in Jenkins' view ethnicity is to be regarded as a socially constructed primary –not primordial– form of social, collective and individual identity, grounded in groups' perceived cultural similarity/difference, developed alongside selfhood, gender and humanness and whose "salience, strength and manipulability are situationally contingent" (Jenkins, 1997). From this emerges a view of ethnicity as imagined but not imaginary, i.e. simultaneously constructed/invented and socially, historically and culturally grounded (Fenton, 1999, 59/64-65).

Similarly, the subjectivist stress on the choices of individual actors has been combined with the Marxist/neo-Marxist insistence on structural limitations (Fenton, 1999, 88-89). This approach notes the double contextualisation of ethnicity (Fenton,

1999, 21/89) recognising that individual choices are variously constrained by economic and political factors in specific historical, geographical and locational contexts.

On this basis it is possible to sketch the main aspects of ethnicity and to use it for analytical purposes. Ethnic identities can be recognised as temporally, spatially and situationally variable, flexible and negotiable both at the individual and at the collective level (Jenkins 1997, 50-51), as a consequence of both internal and external pressures (Fenton, 1999, 21). This social constructionist approach constitutes a warning against the essentialisation and reification of ethnicity, ethnic groups and cultures (Fenton, 1999, 12; Jenkins, 1997, 50-51). It highlights elements of plasticity, permeability and variability in the realisation of ethnicity and cautions against a misleading view of immutability and permanency. Furthermore, as Fenton (1999, 94) explains, reference to the situational dimension of ethnicity focuses attention on the action context –i.e. individual actors' choices and their freedom to assume an ethnic identity, to conform to group expectations and to perform differently according to varying circumstances and audiences.

This argument also prepares the terrain for an analytical shift from ethnicity to ethnicities, i.e. the historically grounded study of the specific formations of ethnic identities in the world (Jenkins, 1997, 77). Many authors (Jenkins, 1997; Sollors, 1986; Fenton, 1999/2010; etc.) insist on the importance of recognising that ethnicity is ubiquitous. For instance, Sollors (1986) proposes that we are all ethnic regardless of whether we are aware of it. All people in daily life "experience, use, learn and 'do'" according to complex repertoires within which they construct a sense of themselves, their fellows and the rest (Jenkins, 1997, 14). However, it is generally more difficult to recognise a dominant ethnicity, as its manifestation is taken as commonsensical –i.e. normal and natural. Instead, minority/subaltern ethnicities are often more easily identifiable. Fenton (1999/2010) insists that we cannot talk of ethnicity as a unitary phenomenon but we must consider and analyse each specific manifestation of ethnicity within its historical, structural and action context.

2.7. Processual and political dimensions of ethnicity

The unitary sense of self lies in the encounter between self-images and public images and in the complex negotiation of shared meanings, understandings and practices (Jenkins, 1997, 62-63). As noted already, ethnicity implies a focus on process and is transactional, relational and dialectical. It entails a constant interplay between the

in-group -'we/us'- and the out-group – 'they/them' (Fenton, 1999, 64; Jenkins, 1997, 52-53). In this constant interplay of self-definition and other-categorisation both groups and categories, are socially constructed, while still being historically, contextually and socially grounded. The dynamics involved in the construction of social identities are complex and dialectical (Bulmer and Solomos, 1998, 823). Identity production and reproduction occurs during social interaction and is always situated in context (Jenkins, 1997, 63). Identities are not simply imposed by dominant groups, but also are chosen and actively used. Hence, processes of identification are simultaneously internal and external (Jenkins, 1997, 63). Within the limitations posed by contexts and structures, racialised minority groups can and do play a more or less active role in their own ethnic definition by means of resistance, agency and political struggle (Bulmer and Solomos, 1998, 823; 826). Other-categorisation is more successful when backed by power and authority. More powerful groups can more effectively attach negative labels to those perceived as different. In fact, Jenkins (1997, 80) continues, "categorising 'them' is part of defining 'us'. Our identification of 'us' is entailed in and by a history of relationships with significant others".

The constructivist approach to ethnicity also entails destabilisation of the cultural content (Avruch, 2003; Jenkins, 2003, 59). The theorising of Barth and his collaborators has been a crucial contribution to the awareness that culture is not a "reified entity, 'above' the fray of daily life, which somehow produces behaviour" but is rather "a changing, contingent and variable property of interpersonal transactions" (Jenkins, 1997,12) Therefore, the nature of ethnicity's cultural content is transformable, potentially in flux and variable too. Indeed, its choice can be labile in the extreme (Avruch, 2003, 77) as actors selectively draw upon their ancestry, history/myths and language.

This appreciation leads to the political dimension of ethnicity. Bits of culture are objectified by political actors, projected publicly and then resourcefully deployed for political purposes (Avruch, 2003, 77) and material gains. Nonetheless, "the cultural stuff out of which that differentiation is arbitrarily socially constructed" is also important in its own right for putative ethnic groups (Jenkins, 1997, 107). People participate in collective memories, share a language and learn within families the custom and practice of a wider community (Fenton, 1999, 59). Of course, ancestry is selectively drawn upon and cultural standards are also contested within ethnic groups themselves. Languages can be powerful group markers but also stretch across groups

who see themselves as distinct (Fenton, 1999, 6-8). In turn, groups with originally different languages can, in specific historical contexts, come to perceive themselves as belonging to the same ethnic group. Furthermore, their social and material experience is grounded in the enduring structural circumstances which contextualise their lives.

The social constructionist approach to ethnicity goes hand in hand with the recognition of ethnicity's political and instrumental character (Jenkins, 1997, 12). Ethnicity is usually latent (Bolaffi et al. 2005, 97) and is availed of primarily in critical and crisis situations, such as in a hostile social and political environment or in periods of uncertainty and dramatic change (Bulmer and Solomos, 1998, 825). For ethnicity to spring to life its cultural content in itself is not sufficient. Social awareness and political mobilisation on behalf of the putative ethnic group are necessary: real and/or perceived differences must be mobilised in social transactions (Fenton, 1999, 6). Thus, ethno-political entrepreneurs and organisations play a crucial role in ethnic definition, as outlined in the next section. Ethnicity has been described as the politicisation of culture to stress its links with the pursuit of power and interests -political advantage and material improvement (Wilson and Frederiksen, 1995, 4). Accordingly, ethnicity and 'race' constitute potent social and political categories and resources around which individuals and groups —either dominant or subordinated— organise their identities and construct a politics (Bulmer and Solomos, 1998, 823/826). Being identified by a collective name/label —whether imposed, self-ascribed or both— also entails material consequences in terms of life experiences such as inclusion or exclusion (Bulmer and Solomos, 1998, 822; Jenkins, 1997, 41). While exclusion is generally directed to outsiders –regarded as 'others'– some insiders may find themselves excluded too, if they do not match the mainstream representation of their group (Bulmer and Solomos, 1998, 826).

Avruch (2003) and Fenton (1999/2010), in line with Eriksen (1993), stress the tension existing between ethnic actors and observers (especially social scientists). To see ethnicity as a resource in power struggles between groups seems to downplay or overshadow people's commitment to and interest in their 'cultural roots'. Therefore, those engaged in the politics of culture are understandably enraged by their portrayal as opportunists. However, these two aspects –material/secular gains and sentiment– are not mutually exclusive (Jenkins, 1997, 46). People often feel that they 'belong' to a culturally distinct group and at the same time want to further their social status in terms of power and material resources. This point brings us to the classical argument made by

Taylor (1992 in Fenton, 1999, 90/232) on the politics of recognition and its association with the politics of redistribution. Briefly, dignity recognition, public rights and material gains play a crucial role in matters of identity politics. This point will be further discussed in Sections 2.9 and 2.11, which introduce multiculturalism and outline the strengths and weaknesses of the politics of recognition.

2.8. The problematisation of 'group'

Brubaker (2004) extends the problematisation of "ethnicity"/"ethnic" to the related term "group". Accordingly, he calls "groupism" the tendency to take for granted groups as discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded wholes as basic constituents of social life, protagonists in social conflicts and fundamental units of social analysis (Brubaker, 2004, 50). Groupism consists in the reification of ethnic groups, 'races' and nations as substantial entities and unitary collective actors, which are accorded common interests and purposes. Differently from classes and genders, ethnic groups continue to be understood as entities and cast as actors (Brubaker, 2004, 51). This is partly due to the fact that racial and ethnic categories tend to be naturalising and essentialising in everyday discourses and in people's commonsensical perception of the social world (Brubaker, 2004, 52). People perceive 'racial' and ethnic categories as real and live their lives accordingly so that concrete consequences impact upon those ascribed to ethnic and 'racial' groups. Against this Brubaker (2004, 52) argues that it is our duty as social researchers to break with this cycle of naturalisation, to engage with the contingent and variable aspects of groups and refrain from adopting categories of ethno-political practice as categories of social analysis. This can be achieved by talking about "groupness" (group as an event, which may or may not happen) instead of "group" (as a fixed entity, a given). The role of ethno-political entrepreneurs in the reification of groups must also be critically considered (Brubaker, 2004, 53). Indeed, reification is regarded as a practice that is central to the politics of politicised ethnicity. Organisations of various kinds –states, political parties, social movements, ethnic organisations, churches, media, extremist armed groups, etc.– contribute to ethnic conflicts. In light of this, their representativeness regarding the interests and will of their members across domains and over time must always be assessed (Brubaker, 2004, 57).

Overall, Brubaker's considerations on "groupism" are crucial for my study and find confirmation in Chapter Four's historical overview of Travellers' mobilisation in

Ireland. This highlights the role played by charismatic pro Traveller activists in mobilising Travellers nationwide and in creating a momentum in the political pursuit of Travellers' ethnic recognition, as well as in the interplay between NGOs, State institutions, academics and other organisations in the definition of Travellers' collective identity and in the delivery of specific policy measures. The existence of intra-Traveller opposition to the ethnic route also confirms that both coherence and collective unitary agency are of more concern to national Traveller NGOs than to the Travelling community as a group.

As a researcher, I keep in mind first the current tendency towards ethnic bias within contemporary interpretative framings. Second, I recognise the central role played by the various organisations involved in Traveller affairs and I consider the relationships between Traveller ethno-political leaders and the Travelling Community, as well as the interests at stake. Third, I am aware that sometimes a high level of groupness may be more the consequence rather than the cause of a conflict. Accordingly, I study the various phases of Irish Travellers' mobilisation as part of a political project of transforming Irish Travellers into a cohesive collective political actor. In doing so I am aware that the presence of conspicuous cultural and psychological material (e.g. the historical practice of nomadism, the sharing of a common language –Cant/Gammon, patterns of self-employment, the centrality of family ties and so on) together with the occurrence of dramatic events which routinely affect the life experience of Travellers in Ireland (anti-Traveller racism and a combination of exclusionary and assimilationist tendencies) has contributed to increasing the salience and intensity of Traveller groupness (Brubaker, 2005, 56). However, I am also conscious that Traveller groupness needs to be constantly sustained through specific social and cognitive mechanisms; otherwise it could decline and subside into the everyday interests of the various individuals affiliated to the 'group' (Brubaker, 2005, 61).

Part II

2.9. Challenges to modern democratic societies by the politics of recognition

Identity-based movements have been central in challenging the bias of modern democratic societies with regard to ethnic identification, gender, class, sexual orientation and so on. These movements' political struggles are known by various

terms: identity politics, politics of recognition or politics of difference and multiculturalism.

Despite their failings, the egalitarian foundations of liberal democracies, together with their conception of citizenship, contain the seeds of the historical achievement of civic, political and social rights by excluded groups. Liberal democracy's underpinning principles of equality and universalism are availed of by marginalised groups to apply pressure in order to be included. Post-liberal approaches to citizenship, as Faulks calls them (2000, 163), have identified the political, economic and social barriers to real citizenship that liberals had overlooked in their abstract formulation of citizenship and in their one-dimensional view of power. Roche (1992, 17) notes how the political history of the twentieth century was characterised by the struggles of citizens to defend their rights against tyrannical governments (e.g. against fascism), to extend rights (e.g. women's movement), and to give substance to civil and social rights (e.g. Labour movement, US Black movement). Social movements thus played a crucial role in extending citizenship (Faulks, 2000, 26).

Even though there is no clear boundary between the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition, the first are generally regarded as having dominated the twentieth century up to the 1980s. In turn, scholars record a shift in the last few decades towards the politics of recognition, expressed in a language of difference as opposed to the previous language of sameness (Squires, 2006, 471; Phillips, 1999, 9; Modood, 2007, 1-2). Modood (2007, 1-2) locates this shift in the 1960s; in his view, until then, it was the celebration of humanity's sameness that prevailed through concerns with humanism, human rights and equal citizenship, whereas from the 1960s on the politics of identity anchored on groups' specificity and difference began to dominate. However, it was especially after the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union and the further expansion of neo-liberal capitalism that issues of economic redistribution were relegated to the background (Phillips, 1999, 20; Malik, 2005, 377-378).

This shift in politics has been accompanied since the mid-1980s-early 1990s by an increasing interest in, and endorsement of, ethnic groups' collective rights within Political Theory and by the embracing of multicultural public policy approaches by many western democracies under the pressing demands of indigenous minorities, ethno-national groups and the new ethnic minorities (e.g. in Canada, Australia, United States and also in Europe, such as in the Netherlands and Great Britain). In the work of

Charles Taylor (1992), for instance, it is made clear that cultural identity's misrecognition can be as damaging for people as the denial of civic, political and social rights (Phillips, 2007, 11). The belief that apparently neutral laws, institutions and rules are likely to be biased towards the identity and interests of the majority cultural groups is also more widely accepted. The politics of redistribution are thus linked with a politics of recognition. However, there is also growing concern (Phillips, 1999, 41) that recognition is now more compelling than redistribution. Supporters of the project of multiculturalism (e.g. Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2008) regard this as a false opposition since the two politics offer complementary insights into the mechanisms of marginalisation and exclusion, thus illuminating the related dimensions of economic, political and cultural inequality.

According to Malik (2005, 365-366), some common themes underpin the arguments of mainstream proponents of multiculturalism (Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka, Brikhu Parekh, Tariq Modood, etc.). First, the conception of equality rooted in Enlightenment universalism is culturally biased and so is inadequate for contemporary pluralistic societies. This is replaced by a new conception of equality that accords people differential rights according to their different cultures. Second, an individual's cultural background and location frames his/her identity and helps define the sense of self. Therefore, if cultures and peoples are respected, individuals can develop a sense of security and self-respect and fully develop their humanity and autonomy.

Nonetheless, one of the main problems for multiculturalism is that, at a time when sociology and anthropology have deconstructed the notions at its core, these same notions have become prominent in political life. Therefore, multiculturalism, by relying on bounded and fixed notions of culture, ethnicity and ethnic groups, has had the unintended effect of fostering cultural stereotypes and encouraging a fragmented view of cultures and peoples as systematically more different and distant than they are (Phillips, 2007, 21-25). Multiculturalism's concern with rights, laws and policies requires rigid definitions of human cultures according to specific fixed characteristics in order to confer formal recognition and protection (Malik, 2005, 372). The language of diversity hence can degenerate into the separation of society into different bounded cultures along ethno-racial lines with the potential exclusion of those not conforming to the 'authentic' version of their specific culture. According to Malik (2005, 370) slippage frequently occurs between the conception of humans as culture-bearing

creatures and humans as located inside one particular culture defined by their ethno-national origins. This slippage potentially is very dangerous as it undermines individual autonomy, reduces liberty and enforces conformity. In addition, literature from "the minorities within minorities" highlights some of the perverse effects of multicultural policies on the less powerful sub-groups within so called ethnic minority groups, such as women, children, homosexuals and the poor (Phillips, 2007, 12).

However, these theoretical and practical difficulties only partly explain the current crisis of, and partial retreat from, multiculturalism in the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, the attack on multiculturalism also has to do with a resurgence of right-wing nationalism and populism in Europe and a worrying increase in Islamophobia across the western world. In this sense it represents a backlash against greater social justice and equality and it goes hand-in-hand with cultural racism, as emerged since the 1980s. Multicultural approaches have faced increasing criticism, especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001, in Madrid in April 2004 and in London in July 2005. Other issues with multiculturalism concern court cases about minority practices which are widely publicised in the media and contested in the west (e.g. female genital mutilation, arranged marriages, the wearing of veils and its variations). These are interpreted as evidence for the alleged illiberal and undemocratic tendencies associated with non-western cultures. Accordingly, multicultural policies are regarded as supportive of illiberal practices, and hence are at odds with liberal citizenship and undermining of social cohesion and the sense of national identity (Phillips, 2007, 13).

The above trends are relevant for sketching the wider theoretical, political and policy contexts in which the Irish Travellers' struggle for recognition is located. They help make sense both of Traveller NGOs' demands for formal recognition and of the Irish State's policies towards Irish Travellers, especially in the health, accommodation, education and employment sectors, paralleled by its resistance to other demands (notably the recognition of Travellers' ethnic status). This broad discussion has implications for the intra-Traveller controversy on the pursuit of 'Traveller ethnicity'. The emergence of Travellers' political mobilisation for ethnic recognition is covered in Chapter Four.

2.10. Human rights discourse's impact on definitions of ethnicity

Multiculturalism is underpinned also by the broader human rights discourse elaborated in the aftermath of World War II and which has increasingly deployed the rhetoric of culture (Cowan, Dembour and Wilson, 2001, 2). The right of individuals to 'belong to' and 'enjoy' a culture are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 2.1) and in many other international instruments. Accordingly, culture emerges as a 'thing', its ontological aspect and role in constituting people being implied (Cowan, Dembour and Wilson, 2001, 8).

Even though the model of rights today is hegemonic, it constitutes "one historically specific way of conceptualising the relations of entitlement and obligation" (Cowan, Dembour and Wilson, 2001, 1). Among other agencies, UNESCO has played a significant role in contributing to international debates regarding cultural creativity, cultural rights and ethnic/racial discrimination. Some of the UNESCO's publications have been criticised for their essentialist formulations of cultures and ethnic groups (see Eriksen, 2001, 127-148). For instance, the UNESCO's Report *Our Creative Diversity* (1995) reflects the popular commonsensical perception that each group is clearly defined, bounded and characterised by an equally discrete, bounded and internally homogeneous culture with relatively fixed meanings and values (Eriksen, 2001). This report, despite invoking several concepts of culture, is dominated by the classic 1930s relativist view of cultures as bounded entities with their own sets of shared values and practices (Eriksen, 2001, 134). This essentialist understanding of cultures and ethnic groups is rooted in nineteenth century Romantic Nationalism and informs earlier pre-Barthian dominant anthropological theory (Cowan, Dembour and Wilson, 2001, 3). Accordingly, cultures are treated as social agents while minorities are defined as groups sharing value systems and sources of self-esteem, often not derived from majority culture. Most contemporary societies are regarded as containing several cultures that are implicitly assumed to be bounded.

However, the human rights discourse's essentialisation and reification of ethnicity, culture and ethnic groups is due not only to its anthropological, historical and philosophical underpinning, but also is partly determined by its use in law. Law, being grounded in a positivistic view of truth and requiring clearly defined categories, essentialises social groups and, hence, identities (Cowan, Dembour and Wilson, 2001, 6). This allows for the application of progressive social policies, such as affirmative action; the latter, being dependent on the previous definition of categories for variously

oppressed and vulnerable groups, compensates with forms of positive discrimination. In other words, while contemporary leading sociological and anthropological studies have revealed the complex and dynamic nature of ethnicity, law instead operates according to a reductionist logic: it requires fixity in order to define the categories to which its rules are applied. Each category is defined through a more or less fixed list of characteristics (some compulsory and some optional). In this way law transforms dynamic processes and identities into fixed things and facts. In line with this logic, it defines ethnic groups in a static way, through compliance with a predefined list of characteristics which usually include (with a degree of variability depending on various jurisdictions[12]): self- and other identification as a group, long shared common history, common ancestry, language and culture of which group members are aware. An ethnic minority is considered to be a 'fact' since its existence in law can be ascertained usually on the basis of objective and subjective criteria which pertain to the established legal category.

The human rights discourse elicits new dynamics between the local and the global dimensions and the sites of political struggle: locally-based groups claiming rights from the State often become involved in legal and political processes that reach international human rights fora. Thus, the human rights regime and discourse impacts upon local struggles by "dictat[ing] the contours and content of claims and even of identities" (Cowan, Dembour and Wilson, 2001, 11). This point has important implications for my examination of the debate on 'Traveller ethnicity': its examination requires an assessment of the extent to which the international human rights discourse potentially influences Traveller activists' discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity', demands and self-understandings.

2.11. Strengths and perils of identity politics

Hall (1992/1996) and Parekh (2008, 31-55), respectively operating within Cultural Studies and Political Theory, offer parallel analyses —the first of ethnicity and the second of identity politics— that engage with both the strengths and dangers of each area. Hall's (1996, 16) major contribution lies in his apparently paradoxical combination of the "necessity and impossibility of [ethnic] identities". In turn, Parekh envisages the advent of "a new politics of identity", that simultaneously claims and deconstructs identity in order to overcome its inherent perils while benefiting from its advantages.

[12] A legal definition of an ethnic minority is not provided in the Irish jurisdiction whereas it has been formulated in the British context.

Before explaining in greater detail their respective strategies, I first outline their similar historical contextualisation of the emergence and salience of ethnic identities. They both insist that detractors do not adequately appreciate the strengths of ethnicity and the significance of ethnic identities for marginalised and racialised communities. Ethnic identities are subjective positions that emerge from and respond to structural events such as imperial expansion, colonial encounter and the formation of modern capitalist nation-states (Hall, 1996). Thus, they are traumatically real for marginalised communities, who experience their 'difference' daily, through continual exclusionary and humiliating practices enacted by State institutions, private businesses and civil society. Often trapped in a vicious circle of discrimination, racism, poverty, low educational attainment, unemployment or volatile low-skilled work and poor housing, minority and marginalised groups suffer from "double consciousness", Du Bois's expression signifying their internalisation of dominant groups' contempt. By seeing themselves as their oppressors see them, they internalise lack of self-esteem and lack of self-respect or even, at the extreme, self-hatred (Parekh, 2008, 48). This often causes a sense of pessimism and resignation and limits any attempt to overcome political and socio-economic barriers to reach a higher position in a class-based society. On the other hand, individuals who share a common experience of oppression and injustice may develop feelings of reciprocal solidarity and belonging; they may materially and symbolically support each other, especially when connected by "binding ties of common language, religious practices, history, social customs and customary types of relationships (…)" (Hall, 2001, 5). In this context the ethnic dimension is likely to take precedence over the personal and human components of identity (Parekh, 2008, 26-27).

From this stem the psychic necessity and the strong affective dimension of ethnic identity (Hall, 1996, 447/2001, 5). This is even more relevant in the contemporary world, the "new times" (as per Hall, 1992), characterised by the advent of neo-liberal globalisation. The sense of belonging to a community provides people with co-ordinates, thus offering a source of stability and security to deracinated and destabilised individuals exposed to the vagaries of the market in an ever-changing globalising world. Collective values and ideals can provide individuals with a sense of direction and a moral anchor (Hall, 1996, 237; Parekh, 2008, 50). This symbolic unity and sense of belonging constitutes a source of power and energy that enables the emergence of self-defining and self-determining identity-based agents as political subjects (Hall, 1996, 237; Parekh, 2008, 34-37). In this way minorities are enabled to

develop a politics of resistance around common interests. Thus, identity-based groups often play an important part in building the self-confidence and self-worth of individuals who come from long-oppressed and marginalised backgrounds; they provide people with alternative positive, collective representations of their identity in opposition to the humiliating ones diffused in wider society; they provide occasions to share experiences and concerns, to raise self-consciousness through meetings and discussions, while also providing people with support networks, and a base on which to build the necessary solidarity to mount an emancipatory struggle (Parekh, 2008, 49).

To put it in Hall's terms, this politics of resistance operates through two processes. The first usually is to challenge the relations of representation: groups reclaim for themselves access to the system of representation and the position of political subject rather than that of passive object. Second, they seize the pre-existing categories and fill them in with new contents that valorise their collective identities against the hegemonic one. In so doing they often draw on historical and cultural resources and they insist on continuity with tradition by producing narratives of themselves which are rooted in the past. In this way new social subjects can emerge as an expression of the so-constituted 'groups', more or less organised and self-conscious, which, through their agency, and especially the strategic role of NGOs, can advance demands for public recognition of their legitimacy, equal dignity and respect (Parekh, 2008, 31-32). Neither is it tolerance alone that they expect, but rather the legitimation of the validity of their specific way of life and a responsive fulfilment of their concerns, needs and interests. Through their negative language of liberation from dominant oppression and positive language of pride, they reject their inferiorisation while asserting equal legitimacy. In this way they can generate the public pressure necessary to bring about eventual change of societal norms and attitudes with regard to their identities and to relevant specific issues. This is why Parekh insists that identity struggles also have beneficial effects on wider society: activists act as agents for progressive social change towards more egalitarian, democratic and inclusive arrangements, opening up possibilities of pluralising the dominant culture (Parekh, 2008, 34/37).

Thus, identity politics both reveals and challenges the cultural-specific character of the State; it challenges the identities which the State institutionalises, and it champions the groups which the State excludes or marginalises, while illuminating the subtle ways in which this is veiled and perpetuated (Parekh, 2008, 46). These new

perspectives broaden the collective intellectual landscape and offer people in dominant society additional insights, enabling them to see previously unconsidered social subjects and aspects of life and making it possible to integrate their knowledge of the past (Parekh, 2008, 34). It is by virtue of the many political struggles carried out through the politics of identity by marginalised social groups that most societies have enacted equality laws to defend vulnerable categories of citizens against discrimination, unequal treatment and exclusion. Benefits for these groups have not been limited to formal recognition and legitimation of their collective identities but also usually involve redistributive policies, concrete measures to redress structural inequalities, discrimination, exclusion and racism: "anti-discrimination measures, culturally sensitive interpretations and applications of laws, exemptions from certain rules and practices, group-sensitive application of public policy, additional rights and resources, fostering public respect for marginalized identities, ensuring their adequate representation in public institutions, and when appropriate acknowledging their presence in the definition of national identity" (Parekh, 2008, 42). In this sense Parekh (2008, 45-46) suggests another advantage of the politics of identity: it deepens the redistributionist critique of inequality "by giving it a cultural and moral orientation" and "offering complementary insights into the mechanisms of exclusion and marginalisation".

Thus, ethnic identities are real in the experience of people; they are affectively and psychically necessary and also strategically and politically required for enacting emancipatory politics in the "New Times" (Hall, 1996, 237). They contribute to the maintenance of the minority group's internal cohesion and solidarity, enabling it to resist attempts by dominant groups to dilute or deflect its struggle or to subsume it in a different agenda (Parekh, 2008, 39-40).

On the other hand, both authors are acutely aware of ethnicity and identity politics' limitations: Hall's assertion of the theoretical impossibility of ethnicity in the essential mode (1996, 444) goes hand in hand with Parekh's (2008, 35-37) acknowledgement of three main interrelated perils inherent to identity politics: first, the essentialisation of collective identities; second, the fictive constitution of dichotomised polarisations of social groups and identities; third, the naturalisation and reification of historically acquired identities. The first involves the fixing of certain basic characteristics as the 'essence' that makes somebody a member of a specific group (e.g. definition of the essence of 'women'). This phenomenon, rooted in the discourse of authenticity, can easily enact a process of reductive internal homogenisation. Moreover,

when the champions of the relevant collective identity dismiss nonconformists and dissenters as victims of false consciousness or traitors, an emancipatory movement can paradoxically degenerate into a new oppressive tyranny (Parekh, 2008, 35). The second danger is the tendency to present groups as sharply differentiated, as if they did not have fundamental similarities (Parekh, 2008, 36). Since the politics of identity involve conflicts predicated on group difference, they tend to stress a group's internal homogenous characteristics, communality of interests and needs, unity of intent, thereby erasing internal heterogeneity and complexity. The essentialist characteristics thus constructed, the group is then diametrically opposed to, and separated from, an equally internally homogeneous external group —e.g. blacks vs. whites (Parekh, 2008, 36). Finally, the third peril is the naturalisation and reification of historically acquired collective identities. Oppressed groups often fail to appreciate that the way they have come to define themselves is basically the product of a complex historical process of racialised categorisation that constructs them as totally different from, and antithetical to, the majority population. If they fail to critically engage with this, they risk incurring the second paradox of collective identity: "the more the groups involved assert their historically inherited identity in the name of authenticity and freedom, the more they express and perpetuate their heteronomy" (Parekh, 2008, 37).

Both intellectuals envisage strategies to overcome these limitations while maintaining the beneficial implications of ethnicity and identity politics. Hall's formulation of 'New ethnicities' somehow corresponds to Parekh's invocation of a 'new identity politics'. For the former, the acknowledgement of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of ethnic identities requires the constitution of a "new non-coercive and more diverse conception of ethnicity" that is ""grounded in positional, conditional and conjectural 'difference'" (Hall, 1992, 257). This ethnicity, constituted within the "difference mode" as opposed to the "essential mode", is to be reached through dialogue and dissent, debate and disagreement, "without suppressing the real heterogeneity of interests and identities", which reflect the internal diversity of the putative group or its historical appearance in formations with other divisions and categories such as class, gender, sexuality and so on (Hall, 1996, 444). Furthermore it is to be constantly subjected to moral and political scrutiny to avoid the promotion of exclusivist identities.

Similarly, Parekh's (2008, 41) new politics is identity-creating rather than identity-based. Critical engagement with the dangers of identity politics can help groups struggling for recognition to interrogate reactive views of their identities, to decide

freely how they want to define themselves and to arrive at a conception of identity which is a collective achievement, constituted in the course of political struggle (Parekh, 2008, 41). In this regard, he compares two modalities of Black politics. Black identity-based politics proceeds by accepting uncritically the historically inherited view of their identity, by exploring Black studies, literature curriculum and perspectives on education as well as demanding rights and opportunities to express their Black identity. Black identity-creating politics instead begins by questioning the definition and division of human beings on the basis of skin colour. It challenges the positioning of groups in categories, the drawing of the colour line, the mapping of colour classification on to different ways of life, and the historical reasons for, and the modalities of, the construction of black and white identities.

However, the difficulty of realising a politics that strikes a balance between essentialism and deconstructionism, while making concrete policy demands, is not overlooked:

"This does not make it any easier to conceive of how a politics can be constructed which works with and through difference, which is able to build those forms of solidarity and identification which make common struggle and resistance possible but without suppressing the real heterogeneity of interests and identities, and which can effectively draw the political boundary lines without which political contestation is impossible, without fixing those boundaries for the eternity" (Hall, 1992, 254-55).

As the next section will indicate, strategic essentialism, which Parekh's "new politics of identity" and Hall's "new ethnicities" seem to resemble, might constitute a way around this impasse.

2.12. Insights from Feminist and Black politics

The equality-difference debate and dilemma within feminist theorising and politics constitutes a useful exemplification of the issues affecting identity politics which I have explored above. It also shows possible ways to resolve some of its inherent dangers.

Feminism has been divided for analytical purposes into three waves of thought and activism: first wave feminism, which lasted from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century; second wave, which dominated in the 1960s-1970s and third wave, which peaked in the 1980s and 1990s. Despite the artificiality of this division, it allows for the individuation of new paradigmatic approaches within feminist politics and theorising, especially in the Anglo-American and French contexts. The first wave is largely characterised by the equality approach, the second is marked by the emergence

of the difference approach and the third by a deconstructive perspective (Bertolino, 2006, 36). Initially feminists challenged their exclusion from the public sphere. They demanded the franchise and access to education and the professions on the basis of the universality of the liberal democratic ideal of citizenship: being equal to men they deserved the same rights and opportunities. This approach still represents mainstream or liberal feminism and underpins the equal status and anti-discrimination laws and policies of western democracies (e.g. affirmative action, gender quotas and so on). However, as subsequently pointed out by some strands of second wave feminism, the liberal-theoretical foundations of citizenship, though presented as neutral, treated "men" as the universal. In this way, they imposed a false universal standard and required women to become like men by failing to include women's concerns in the public agenda (Bertolino, 2006, 40).

The Women's Liberation Movement or Second Wave Feminism emerged against this background. Some strands of it adopted a stronger "difference" stance (e.g. radical feminism, cultural feminism), although liberal feminism still prevailed in most parts of the world, including Ireland. Within these strands, women, taken as a group, were opposed to men as a group. On this basis collective action (identity politics) was organised (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon, 2002, 223) and women were presented as essentially different from men and thus deserving of special public measures to meet their specific needs, interests and concerns. Elements of communality between women across the world were stressed, under the banner of universal sisterhood and solidarity. Scholars and activists of different strands developed different theories regarding women's domination and oppression with an emphasis on the structural level (material conditions: e.g. social roles theory, analysis through a Marxist framework, patriarchy, etc.) and elaborated strategies to free women across the world.

However, the trouble with difference feminism was that this approach built into the stereotypical binary distinction between men and women, mind and body, rationality and emotion, public and private. In so doing, it risked reproducing the very patriarchal stereotypes on women that it was supposed to subvert and so posited a new type of essentialism (Bertolino, 2006, 43). It thus incurred the first and second danger of identity politics listed by Parekh, i.e. the essentialisation and homogeneisation of women's identity on the one hand and the social polarisation between men and women on the other.

This limitation was highlighted by feminist scholars and activists from the margins especially throughout the 1980s and even earlier. This fracture of consensus marked the beginning of Third Wave Feminism, characterised by a deconstructive stance and an increasing questioning of the unitary category "women", thus problematising the very basis of feminism as an identity politics. Postcolonial and black feminists on the one hand, gay and lesbian groups and disabled intellectuals on the other, contested previous theorisations based on identity, in particular the use of the concept of patriarchy. In turn even the unity of 'men' as a homogeneous group came under attack. Gays and lesbians, assumed to belong to opposite groups, found common ground in the fight against discrimination, based on their different sexuality, 'deviant' from the heterosexual norm. In the same way women (and men) with disabilities contested the assumed unity of women (and men), from which they felt excluded. Gender then appeared to be much more complex and dynamic than its initial formulation assumed: various, interlocked and often contradictory aspects concurred in the formation of individual women and men: "What it means to be a 'woman' or a 'man' varies according to other differentiating features of positionality, historical time, class, ethnicity and bodily abilities" (Alsop, Fiitzsimons and Lennon, 2002, 81).

Meanwhile, post-modernist instances, together with Foucault's discursive approach to sexuality, were to exert a significant influence on feminist theorising, such that cultural processes of 'gendering' were taken into account. In this climate, the last and probably the most extreme attack on the identity category "women" and on the use of identity categories altogether, came in the early 1990s, with the emergence of, first, the American political movement Queer Nation and, subsequently, Queer Theory. In fact, Queer theorists furthered this trend by questioning the grounding assumption that political thought and action should be based on a claim to universal identity. Appropriating the pejorative term 'queer' for affirmative use, they demonstrated their opposition to the use of restrictive identity categories: this term left definitions open, and whoever claimed to be queer would be included. In particular, Butler (1990) called into question the correspondence between sex and gender (E.g. female-femininity). According to her, even what is held as a biological fact is informed by culture, so that it is because of our cultural assumptions about gender and sexuality that we consider the biological sex as the origin of gender identity and not vice versa. Thus, she claimed, individuals have no essential identity, but rather just the categories available to them within culture. She thus introduced the notion of gender performance, to say that

identity is an illusion, constituted through the repetition of acts (see also Halberstam, 1998 fur further elaborations on this topic).

At this point, feminism seemed to have reached an impasse and risked dissolution. The resulting question is, as Anne Phillips (2007, 30) puts it, whether it is possible to do feminism without women.

While some feminists intervened in favour of a compromise, looking for a third way in order to harmonise the theoretical and political stances of Queer theorists with identity-based feminism, some others contested the over-determinism of Queer Theory. However, the lack of essential unity in the category "women" is now more accepted and feminist politics are pursued also by means of "strategic essentialism" (Philips, 2007, 30).

The deconstructive perspective, in my opinion, has not jeopardised feminism and other identity-based politics. Strategic self-critical essentialism is helpful under certain political and intellectual circumstances: it represents a valuable means with which minorities and subaltern groups can challenge their oppression, inferiorisation and marginalisation in material and cultural practices (Calhoun, 1995, 202). Calhoun (1995) Hall (1996), Parekh (2008) and Philips (2007) are complementary in indicating ways in which identity-politics can overcome dangers by critically and self-reflectively engaging with them.

A parallel between feminist dilemmas and the Travellers' predicament can be drawn. The so-called "Wollstonecraft's dilemma", as described by Carole Pateman, can be applied to the Traveller/'settled' relationship. As Pateman (1992, 236) puts it, "either women become (like) men, and so full citizens; or they continue at women's work, which is not of value for citizenship". Thus, it could be said, "either Travellers become (like) 'settled' people, and so full citizens; or they continue [the] Travellers' life, which is not of value for citizenship". To deepen the dilemma, the appeal to differences among women themselves (gendered positionality), in the light of the contestation of the universal and essentialist hegemonic notion of womanhood, could arguably be applied to Traveller identity, to shed light on the existing heterogeneity among Travellers themselves. Finally, applying the deconstructive perspective we discover how even every single Traveller, as with any other individual, can be seen as having simultaneously competing and overlapping identities struggling for allegiance. Therefore, the challenge -to keep borrowing from feminist theorising- is "how politics for equality of [Travellers and 'settled' people][13] can be shaped without disregarding the differences that exist *between* and *among* [Travellers and 'settled' people]" (van Eerdewijk, 2001, 425), and, I would add, the differences within each individual Traveller.

[13] The original quoted article contains the words "Women and men" instead of "Traveller and settled people".

As with the Feminist movement, Black politics in the United States and Great Britain did not entirely avoid the pitfalls of identity politics (e.g. U.S. Black cultural separatism). Without going into detail on specific struggles for recognition, I briefly refer to the shift in British black cultural politics described by Hall (1992). I believe that his observations on the "end of innocence" for black cultural politics in Great Britain — i.e. "the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject" (Hall, 1992, 254) — is paradigmatic for other cultural/political movements across the world, currently stuck in the phase of essentialism.

Hall (1992, 253-254) refers to the "end of innocence" phase as a shift "from a struggle over the relations of representation to a politics of representation itself", characterised by a new awareness that not all black people are automatically and inherently good or the same. This shift occurred at a historical moment characterised by the fracturing of consensus and unity within British black cultural politics. The latter originated in the 1960s as a response to the racism faced by Afro-Caribbean and Asian immigrants in the post-war period. The appropriation of the term "black" and the subversion of its meaning represented a political action that consisted in "turning the 'Manichean aesthetic' of colonial discourse up-side down" (Hall, 1992, 255). In the cultural field, a singular and unifying framework was constituted, the "Black experience", which contested both the marginality of black experience and its representation by whites in simplified and stereotypical ways (Hall, 1992, 252-253). However, this move left in place the polarisation between the two terms of reference, black and white: the counter-position of a positive black imagery was stereotypical too and often corresponded with the very racial stereotypes that it was supposed to challenge.

Subsequently, the mid-late 1980s were marked by the emergence of new forms of identity, which reclaimed their specific difference from an undistinguished and homogenised 'black', such as those from Eastern and South Asian descent. It also resonated with the emergence and voicing of other black identities such as those of women and gays. These had been overlooked within dominant black discourses and politics, frequently "stabilised around particular conceptions of black masculinity" and underpinned by "an evasive silence with reference to class" (Hall, 1992, 256). These developments together highlighted the diversity and positionality of black identities and thereby recognised the relevant intersection of the racial category with gender, sexuality, class and ethnicity (Hall, 1992, 255). This new awareness imposes a change

of strategy, moving towards a politics that strikes the balance between essentialism and an endlessly sliding discursive liberal-pluralism (Hall, 1992, 255).

2.13. Conclusion

Some arguments covered in this chapter are of great relevance for my study. First, this theoretical overview has ascertained that ethnicity does stand on an uncertain and dangerous terrain, given its elusive character. Its contiguity and overlap with 'race', its conflation with culture, its essentialisation, reification and naturalisation, and finally, the racialisation of both notions, are problematic. Some social scientists (e.g. Gilroy, 1993/1998; Brah, 2005; Bulmer and Solomos, 1998; Phillips, 2007; Brubaker, 2004) express concern about recent developments in contemporary societies in Europe and across the world, which point to a rigid and impermeable understanding of ethnicity and culture by denying their dynamism and malleability. Particularly worrying is the understanding of culture –which, in turn, has serious repercussions for ethnicity-, as it is often conceived along absolutist lines, as "a fixed property of social groups rather than a relational field in which they encounter one another and live out social historical relationships" (Gilroy, 1993, 24). Cultural elements are increasingly invoked in new ways of essentialising people without explicitly expressing biologically determinist ideas. Hence, the politics of exclusion are increasingly predicated on arguments of absolute cultural difference (Fenton, 1999, 49). In this light, the dividing lines between ethnicity, culture, racism, ethnic absolutism and nationalism have become very thin.

Nonetheless, this critical awareness should not obscure the psychic and social significance of collective identification and belonging for oppressed and marginalised minorities in these "new times", and especially in the midst of hostile circumstances. Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that collective identity serves a crucial political and strategic function as a source of empowerment and agency for oppressed groups, together with its contribution to progressive social change and democratisation for mainstream society.

Overall, the theoretical insights on ethnicity and identity politics discussed above inform my analysis of the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' and alert me to possible emerging issues and dilemmas. The implied risk of reification of ethnicity/ethnic groups, culture, 'race' and national identity is assessed with reference to the Irish context and specifically to the predicament of Irish Travellers. At the same time, the beneficial effects of Traveller identity politics are considered. Furthermore, the

potential impact of the human rights discourse on competing constructions of 'Traveller ethnicity' is assessed.

The balanced positions of Hall (1992/1996/2001) and Parekh (2008), presented in Section 2.11, seem to highlight the dilemmas generally afflicting groups who struggle for equality and indicate a possible way around the impasse entailed by the constitutive dangers of identity politics. This can be achieved by simultaneously recognising the necessity and impossibility of ethnic identities, as per Hall (1996), and embracing a new identity-creating politics, as per Parekh (2008), which is self-reflectively anchored in critical analysis. To borrow from Hall (1992, 254-255), such a politics should "work with and through difference", defining itself "through dialogue, and dissent, debate and disagreement", thus reflecting the internal diversity of the putative groups. This new critical identity politics, which is close to the strategic essentialism advocated by some feminists, transcends the divide between essentialism and deconstructionism by simultaneously claiming and deconstructing identities. Although the combination constitutes a source of tension, it might be necessary that the two approaches always coexist:

"Our task must be to remain seriously self-critical about our invocations of essence and identity. This means among other things paying attention to the agonistic, fractured, problematic aspects of identity. (…) The struggles occasioned by identity politics need to be understood, however, not as simply between those who claim different identities but within each subject as the multiple and contending discourses of our era challenge any of our efforts to attain stable self-recognition or coherent subjectivity" (Calhoun, 1995, 204).

Finally, the consideration of the relationship between ethnicity and national identity shed light on fundamental issues, which are explored in the following chapter on the interrelations between the constitution of hegemonic and subaltern constructions of Irishness. It sheds light on the history of Irish nationalist liberation from British colonial rule, the interconnected creation of an Irish hegemonic identity and culture – patriarchal, Catholic, Gaelic, heterosexual, white, middle-class (etc.) - with detrimental symbolic and material consequences for, first, the other indigenous social and ethnic groups and, subsequently, new urban and ethnic minorities. It also sheds light on the interconnectedness of the nationalist and the modernising project –couched in terms of capitalist economic development – despite Ireland's rural tradition.

Chapter Three

Hegemonic and subaltern constructions of Irishness

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a historical contextualisation of both the ideological and structural factors implicated in the marginalisation of Irish Travellers within Irish society and in the emergence of a separate Irish Traveller identity set in binary opposition to Irish national identity. The question of Travellers' origins is also considered within the broader discussion.

Ideological and discursive factors are dealt with in the first part and linked to Chapter Two's considerations on the historical contextualisation and social constructedness of the notion of ethnicity, and also to the simultaneity of processes of self-definition and other-categorisation. This point shows how commonsensical discourses on Irish identity are anchored to specific historical conjunctures and have changed over time. In particular, Irish national identity must be understood as forged within (and in opposition to) the colonial –and then post-colonial– context of British rule and the subsequent partition of the island. Therefore, this chapter begins with an exploration of how a hegemonic, narrow conception of Irish national identity developed historically in relation, and opposition, to Englishness/Britishness within Irish nationalist discourses.

Subsequently, I draw on authors (Comerford, 2003; Fanning, 2002; Kirby, 2010; MacLaughlin, 1995/1999/2001) to explain how essentialised discourses of Irishness, articulated within the project of nation-building, led to the Othering of minority groups in the Irish Free State. While briefly mentioning the exclusionary treatment of Irish Protestants and Jews I focus on the marginalisation of Irish Travellers. More specifically, this chapter points to the inseparability of racist constructions of the Irish and of Irish Travellers (Ní Shúinéar, 2001; Hayes, 2006; Ryan, 2007).

Following this, I move to a discussion of Travellers' origins and cultural distinctiveness, followed by a consideration of other social strata which previously were closer to Travellers. The remaining sections draw on Bhreatnach (2006) and provide material explanations which highlight the parallel structural changes occurring in Irish society since 1922 and which have had great implications for relations between Travellers and the majority population, contributing to Travellers' further distancing from, and exclusion within, Irish society.

3.2. Positive essentialist Irishness versus negative racialised Irishness

The previous chapter drew on Jenkins's (1997) explanation of the dialectical relationship between other-categorisation and self-definition as two simultaneous processes that are chronically and inextricably connected. I also stressed the importance of the historical context within which such collective categorisations emerged and the role played by power differentials between groups in terms of their respective self-definition and categorisation. Accordingly, Irish celebratory self-definition and self-assertion of cultural and 'racial' identity in essentialist terms is understandable in the light of previous experience of racialisation and negative categorisation by the colonial power. Essentialised accounts of Irish identity emerged within the nationalist struggle for independence and were further strengthened in the aftermath of the creation of the Irish Free State. It can be argued that a positive essentialist, static, impermeable and homogeneous Irish racial and cultural identity was constructed as a reaction to English/British inferiorisation of the Irish people.

The inferiorisation of the 'Irish' has deep historical roots. An early justification of the Anglo-Norman invasion of the island of Ireland was first provided by the intellectual Giraldus Cambrensis (1146-1223), who denigrated the Irish character as backward, lazy, bestial and lacking in industry (Comerford, 2003, 54). He became an authoritative source on proving the innate barbarity of the Irish (Comerford, 2003, 54). This negative categorisation was further refined in line with the religious divide – Catholic vs. Protestant– and became a common rationale for the Tudor conquest and other subsequent 'civilising' and modernising missions. Mac Laughlin (2001, 80-81) stresses the successive Plantations' contribution to a Manichean construction of Ireland as inhabited by superior, good, industrious and civilised settlers in opposition to inferior, backward, avenging, lazy, evil and wild Irish. This inferiorisation and racialisation of the Irish was also transmitted via works of colonial history and art (Mac Laughlin, 2001, 82-83). In the nineteenth century Anglo-Irish Ireland and Unionist Ulster 'race' and 'nation' were inextricably intertwined in anti-Catholic discourse so that Irish Catholics were ascribed racial-national characteristics which made them unfit for self-government (Mac Laughlin, 2001, 124).

However, under the tutelage of the English monarchy a modern State apparatus evolved in Ireland over the last few centuries (Coakley, 2005, 4). Both Mac Laughlin (2001, 170/228) and Comerford (2003, 37) stress the role played by the English colonisers in homogenising Ireland, thus making possible the process of creation of a

modern Irish identity. State-driven centralisation and homogenisation had an impact on the Irish landscape –subdivision into counties, cartographic map-making, place-names' transliteration from Irish to English and so on– and also on the population (e.g. the creation of an Irish national primary school system in 1831).

In turn, some elements of the rural 'backwardness' that was denigrated as a proof of innate Irish barbarism by the English/British were sized and reversed in positive terms by Catholic nationalists, as a sign of biological purity and moral integrity. The nationalist Irish State desired to recreate an idealised ancient Gaelic past that allegedly existed prior to the Anglo-Norman invasions. Mac Laughlin (2001, 248-251) cites examples of how this Irish cultural nationalism flourished in the writings of nineteenth century local historians such as Daniel Corkery, the Reverend J. Fahy, the Reverend W. J. Doherty and others. In such histories the western regions of West Cork, Kerry, Donegal, Galway and Mayo were prized because of their being "a world apart from urban Ireland, and urban Britain" (Mac Laughlin, 2001, 248).

Essentialist representations of the Irish were prompted by forces on both sides of the colonial divide: if the English political pamphlets "simianised the 'Paddy' and caricatured Irish politics as irrational", local nationalists celebrated the Irish 'race', Irish farming and civilisation, while denouncing English rule as a foreign imposition (Mac Laughlin, 201, 254). The vision of rural Ireland as the purest form of Irishness was further promulgated by Irish politicians in the Irish Free State and was hegemonic until the 1950s (Crowley *et al*., 2006, 7). Thus, "the concretisation of the possibilities of 'Ireland' and the 'Irish' derived as much from indigenous social forces as from the English State's peculiar way of imagining 'Ireland' and controlling the 'Irish' from the sixteenth century onwards" (Mac Laughlin, 2001, 170).

3.3. Double-edged nature of Irish nationalism

The double-edged nature of nationalism (Calhoun, 1994; Hardt and Negri, 2000), referred to in Chapter Two, is also exemplified in the Irish context. Its progressive aspects are represented by its emancipatory potentialities (as a struggle against oppressive powers), which were successfully fulfilled, at least in part, in the Irish case. In the period between 1870 and 1920 Irish civil society activism thrived and was pivotal in developing new political and social projects that contributed to the struggle for independence (Kirby, 2010, 8). As a result, a large part of the Irish population managed to gain independence from the British Empire. However, the

advent of the Free State marked the decline of civil society activism (Kirby, 2010, 8), thus permitting the remarkable longevity of Fianna Fáil's dominance of the political stage since 1932 with its project of populist nationalism (Kirby, 2010, 18). Irish independence was accompanied by an elite-led homogenisation of social differences with the institutionalisation of a national membership that reflected the interests of dominant groups. This led to the subsequent inferiorisation and victimisation of minority, subaltern or 'deviant' sections of the population, in line with the developmental pattern of nation states described in the previous chapter. Critical interaction between tenant farmers, the Catholic clergy, shopkeepers, local newspapermen, professionals and small businesses concurred with "the constitution of a national and regionally specific historical consciousness, which stressed the importance of the family farm and the centrality of private property to both the survival of Catholic society and the future of the nation-state in Ireland" (Mac Laughlin, 2001, 173). This made perfect sense in a country whose economy was prevailingly agricultural until the end of the 1950s, when a process of more consistent industrialisation and urbanisation began. From its inception the Free State pursued a successful politics of national self-assertion through the promotion of cultural, social and political closeness (Comerford, 2003, 46).

Post-colonial Irish identity came to be defined within a narrow and religious-ethnic construction of the nation. This was forged in opposition to racialised versions of Irishness and Englishness/Britishness and further invigorated by the post-partition Northern conflict. Irishness was equated with Catholicism, Gaelic 'race', language and culture, land ownership and traditional rural, sedentary and bourgeois values. Under its conservative political and religious leadership Ireland adopted a programme of economic self-sufficiency and cultural, political and social isolationism from external influences, coupled with a celebration of rural landscape and society. Catholicism, already crystallised as the key identifier of Irish nationalism in the second half of the nineteenth century, was sanctioned as an irrefutable and necessary attribute of Irishness. The Gaelic cultural revival, an idealised ruralism initiated by the Anglo-Irish elite in the eighteenth century, with its rejection of urban secularism and its opposition to imported mass-culture was appropriated by post-1922 Irish cultural nationalism (Fanning, 2002, 34) and turned into an anti-British and an anti-Protestant device. Mass cultural and sporting organisations such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (G.A.A.) fostered the equation of Irishness with Catholicism. The Irish language, previously discounted by

nineteenth century Catholic nationalists, was now elevated to become a mandatory element of Irish national identification. At the same time, policies of economic support for the disadvantaged *Gaeltacht* areas were introduced. The Catholic Church exerted a powerful influence on the formulation, implementation and delivery of Ireland's social policy agenda (Pilkington, 2002, 135) at least until the 1960s. Some clauses of the Irish Constitution reflected elements of Catholic social teaching, as inspired by Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. The moral teachings of the Catholic Church became institutionalised within the civil code through legislation on censorship, divorce, adoption and contraception (Fanning, 2002, 37). A patriarchal, male bread-winner social model was affirmed in the Constitution (see Art.41.1 and 41.2) and women were relegated to dependant roles as wives, mothers and widows until the 1970s. However, this is not the place for an extensive discussion of these issues.

What matters most for the subject of this thesis is that processes of Irish nation-building, with their complementary myths of Irish 'racial' and cultural homogeneity, contributed to exclusionary and assimilationist attitudes and practices towards Protestants, Jews and Travellers first, and then more recently towards migrant workers, new ethnic communities, asylum seekers and refugees (Fanning, 2002, 2-3). However, Fanning (2002) does not include in his analysis other politically less visible socio-economic groups, which were othered by the Independent State, probably because his book is focused on racism rather than class. These other groups are the rural and urban working classes, whose lifestyles and socio-economic status were dramatically altered in the years between 1922 and 1970. This issue is dealt with later in this chapter.

During the Civil War period (1922-23) roughly two hundred mansions belonging to the Protestant Anglo-Irish elite were burned and a number of Protestants murdered. Afterwards, a much wider pattern of harassment of Protestants was established (Fanning, 2002, 38-39). Despite the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 prohibiting the enactment of any law discriminating on the basis of religious belief, the Irish Constitution sanctioned the special position of the Roman Catholic Church (Art. 44) as the guardian of the faith processed by the majority of the Irish citizens (Comerford, 2003, 114). The Irish Free State substituted cultural symbolism associated with Protestantism with alternative symbolism venerating Irish Roman Catholic nationalism (Fanning, 2002, 37). Religious sectarianism was fostered within the education and health systems as well as various other aspects of associational life (Fanning, 2002, 40) and still subsists to a certain extent today. After the 1920s the

electoral system was altered to the disadvantage of Protestants (Fanning, 2002, 39). For instance, Fanning (2002, 39) refers to the displacement of their pre-independence political leaders and to the abandonment of an initial settlement, which gave Protestants strong representation in the Senate. The Protestant population experienced a significant decline in the South: from composing 10.7 per cent of the total population in 1901 it passed to a mere 3.2 per cent in 1991 (Fanning, 2002, 37).

On the other hand, the position of Irish Jews was already characterised by discrimination and racism (e.g. the campaign against Limerick's Jewish community culminating in the 1904 pogrom). This phenomenon drew ideologically from European - and especially French - anti-Semitism, coupled with the persisting traditional Christian anti-Semitic arguments. The Irish Free State's identification with the Roman Catholic religion further undermined Irish Jews. Fanning (2002, 59) accuses the State of overt anti-Semitism with respect to immigration policy between 1938 and 1956 because of attempts to keep Jews out of Ireland. Among the manifestations of anti-Semitism, he lists the 1930s fascist movement of the Blueshirts; expressions of anti-Semitism among Dáil politicians in the 1940s; Christian anti-Semitic pamphlets published in the late 1950s; official government reports in the aftermath of World War Two and the discovery of the Holocaust and, especially, overt racial discrimination in Irish refugee and immigration policy. Until 1956, the Department of Justice identified Jews as enemies of the nation and portrayed their exclusion as a mission of national defence (Fanning, 2002, 80-81).

3.4. Irish Travellers' marginalisation and exclusion

The marginalisation and exclusion of Irish Travellers in twentieth century Ireland was a result of the fusion of various complex ideological and material factors. Among the commentators who highlight the philosophical and ideological explanations underpinning Travellers' exclusion are Mac Laughlin (1995/1999/2001), Ní Shúinéar (2002), Fanning (2002) and Hayes (2006). They connect the Othering of Irish Travellers with centuries-long racialisation of the Irish by English colonisers, nineteenth century Irish/Catholic nationalism, the formation of the new Irish State in the twentieth century and European philosophical traditions of negative categorisation and inferiorisation of nomadism since the Enlightenment. Thus, "cultural themes have been deployed to articulate racialised difference within power relationships going back centuries" (Garner, 2004, 172).

Fanning (2002, 50) argues that the racialisation of Travellers preceded the emergence of modern Irish nationalism since this group was already subjected to a double colonial racialisation by virtue of their being both Irish and nomadic. Irish Travellers were ranked within Gypsiology as being below the 'true' Gypsies, whose nomadism was ascribed to 'race', whereas Irish Travellers' nomadism was attributed to degeneracy. This matched dominant nineteenth century policy conceptualisations of poverty as being the result of moral failing.

Mac Laughlin (1995/1999/2002) argues that Irish Travellers were further marginalised by Irish Catholic nation-building discourses. These diffused a hegemonic construction of social membership strongly linked to landownership and place (Fanning, 2002, 50). This is not surprising given the previous colonial experience, marked by the Penal Laws and other land dispossessions that had deprived the majority indigenous population of landownership. Irish Travellers were invisible within such discourses (Fanning, 2002, 50). Therefore, their exclusion was first mostly consequential and indirect.

The attachment to landownership also reflects broader European philosophical and political thought. For instance, the defence of property rights, celebrated by the philosopher Adam Smith, constitutes one of the basic principles underpinning the constitution of modern liberal democracies. Similarly, anti-nomadic attitudes within Irish society were influenced by broader anti-nomadic political and philosophical discourses, which prioritised sedentarism over nomadism, considering the latter to be a less advanced stage of development and a characteristic of 'barbarous' people (Mac Laughlin, 1999, 134). The nineteenth century's fusion of social Darwinism and bourgeois nationalism in European thought, together with its priorisation of individuals over collectivities and its stress on homeland, property rights, hygiene and respectability, influenced the racialisation of nomadic cultures and lifestyles. For example, Friedrich Ratzel justified European colonialism and containment of subordinated social groups through his theory of ethnocentric social progress according to which sedentary peoples should be ranked above nomadic populations (Mac Laughlin, 1995, 26). In Mac Laughlin's (1999, 134) view, by the nineteenth century these ideas had become so widespread in the European context that "Gypsies, and other nomadic groups who made no claims on property and who did not accumulate capital or material wealth, had neither political nor social rights within Western capitalistic societies". Therefore, the antithesis between sedentary national values and Irish

Travellers' nomadism and lack of landownership rendered this social group 'less Irish' than the others and contributed to their exclusion from mainstream Irish society.

Ní Shúinéar (2002), on the other hand, explains Irish Travellers' inferiorisation within Irish society by focusing on the Irish colonial experience of English/British oppression. She interprets the racialisation of Irish Travellers by mainstream society as a process of transfer of colonial racialisation of the Irish onto this minority group. She notes that most of the colonial stereotypes attributed to the Irish form the core of conventional wisdom regarding Travellers today, namely backwardness, dirt, nomadism, beggary, superstition, anarchy and a penchant for violence (Ní Shúinéar, 2002, 179). Similarly, Hayes (2006, 102-103) resorts to Cheng's (1995) theory of reverse ethnocentrism to explain the essentialist racialisation of the Irish Travellers by the emerging Irish nation-state. According to this account it is commonplace among nationalist movements striving to evolve away from reductionist colonialist constructions of themselves to fall into the trap of adopting the same binary patterns as their oppressors, judging and arguing by the same rules/categories, ultimately reifying those categories as functional realities (Hayes, 2006, 103). This point is confirmed by Ryan's (2007, 120-123) account of the discrimination encountered by the Irish emigrants in England, first, during the nineteenth century and, subsequently, in the 1950s and 1960s and of the Irish official reaction to it. Ryan (2007, 122) argues that the Irish emigrant in England "could be redeemed by slicing off a segment of the people and sacrificing itinerants to the national interest". In this regard, he quotes correspondence between the Commission on Itinerancy's secretary, A.D. McDonald, and the Birmingham town clerk in the period between 1961 and 1963. It emerges that the Commission managed to turn a concern with the Irish immigrant population as a whole in some areas of Birmingham into a complaint about a specifically defined group, i.e. Irish tinkers, who were consequently placed "at the bottom of a hierarchy among immigrant groups associated with depreciating property" (Ryan, 2007, 123). Indeed, in a 1963 article from *The Times*, referred to by the Commission on Itinerancy, the Irish population in Birmingham was eventually divided into three strata: "'the top group' who 'settle down and are well liked'; the 'second group' who 'settle down but take little interest in the cleanliness of their homes or keeping their children under control'; and the 'third group of the gypsy or tinker class who tend to make whole neighbourhoods uninhabitable' (Ryan, 2007, 123).

Hence, Travellers can be seen as victims of a double form of exclusion throughout the twentieth century: the first, implicit and due primarily to ideological factors and the second, explicit and proactive, due to structural changes such as industrialisation and urbanisation. That notwithstanding, Travellers were not entirely excluded. For some decades they still occupied an occupational niche and succeeded in maintaining a social function by operating in a certain symbiosis with the sedentary population. In this first phase they were rather ignored and overlooked by State institutions, as demonstrated by the Irish Folklore Commission's failure to document Travellers' rich oral traditions, as if they were not bearers of Irish culture. This commission, despite having being established in 1935 to document and preserve Irish oral traditions, did not extend its activities to the lives of the Travelling People (Mac Laughlin, 1995, 37). Mac Laughlin (1995, 1999) and Fanning (2002) see a watershed in the Irish State's attitudes to Travellers in the late 1950s/early 1960s, moving from indirect exclusion to direct and proactive assimilatory policies at national level and exclusionary practices at local level. Indeed, they associate this change with the State-led process of industrialisation and urbanisation of the Irish economy coupled with the opening to external economic and cultural influences. Before spelling out the structural and material changes that contributed to the exclusion of Irish Travellers, I will expand on theories of Traveller origins because they have influenced the relations between Travellers and mainstream society, as well as influencing public policy directed at Travellers.

3.5. Irish Travellers

3.5.1. Difficulties in reconstructing Irish Travellers' origins

The reconstruction of Travellers' origins is arduous owing primarily to three orders of problem. These are: Travellers' nomadism and lack of a written tradition; the administrative focus on property and land as a marker of social status and 'presence' within Irish society coupled with a disinterest towards social differentiation among low status social groups; and finally, the terminological flexibility and confusion among mainstream observers and administrators in the application of collective nouns such as "tinkers", "gypsies", "tramps" and "itinerants". These issues, together with an analysis of the existing British and Irish official historical documents on Travellers, are considered in Helleiner (2000), Bhreatnach (2006a and 2006b), Breathnach (2006) and Hayes (2006). The historical location of Travellers in official Irish sources is very

difficult because over the last two centuries Travellers have been a marginal and prevailingly non-literate group within Irish society who did not adhere to administrative dictates under British or independent Irish rule (Breathnach, 2006, 17). They belonged to an undifferentiated, though broad, group of powerless people who had no direct access to the processes of official record-making. It is unsurprising, therefore, that their insertion in archival records has been almost exclusively linked to problematic situations (Bhreatnach, 2006b, 3).

Early publications of the Irish Folklore Commission, particularly the 1937-38 School Collection on the "walking people" and the 1952 Tinker Questionnaire, constitute valuable documentation on Travellers, albeit from the perspective of the majority population (Bhreatnach, 2006 b, 3). The School Collection deals with both individual vagrants/beggars and with Travellers in family groups (Bhreatnach, 2006 b, 5-6) while the 1952 source contains information on the socio-economic relationship between Travellers and the sedentary population (Bhreatnach, 2006 b, 3; Hayes, 2006, 31). The latter represents the only ethnographic survey ever undertaken in Ireland on representations of Travellers (Hayes, 2006, 2). A series of questions on Travellers was put to members of the majority population, including one on their origins. Most of the responses attributed Irish origins –pre-Christian or pre-colonial–to the "tinkers", whereas only a few considered them to have foreign (Egyptian or Israeli) roots (Helleiner, 2000, 48). Other information also points to relations between the sedentary population and Travellers, suggesting that interactions primarily occurred through hawking and begging, usually carried out by women and children. Although it reflects popular beliefs and assumptions about this minority, it is still a useful source of information on Traveller families, mobility patterns, trades and, especially, dominant perceptions and stereotypes of Travellers by the majority population (Hayes, 2006, 31). The questionnaire also offers an insight into varying degrees of disposition towards Travellers' begging: from sympathy to indifference and hostility (Bhreatnach, 2006 b, 3).

With regard to Travellers' own accounts of their origins, there is no standard theory. In common with Gypsies and other nomadic populations various versions are in circulation, depending on different families' mythologies and traditions (Ní Shúinéar, 2003, 1071). Often such accounts can be challenging for researchers because they can present internal contradiction of documented fact. This is, according to Ní Shúinéar (2006, 66), because Travellers, like nomadic populations generally, perceive history as

"a continuum of past and present continually reinterpreted and reshaped in the telling". In light of this, the very notion of history – a culturally specific construct reflecting sedentary people's mindsets – is ethnocentric and problematical when applied to Travellers, who instead construct it as kinship (Ní Shúinéar, 2006, 84).

The first to collect Travellers' own stories on their origins were the folklorists Pádraig Mac Gréine and Sean Mc Grath (Helleiner, 2000, 49). Some accounts explained the roots of specific families while others had a broader remit by asserting a more collective 'tinker' identity. Some ascribed pre-colonial roots to their ancestors by asserting descent from the smiths of Brian Boru's army and from the plough-makers employed by the High King of Ireland. Certain accounts were in line with those provided by the majority population (e.g. tinkers were condemned to be wanderers forever because it was a red-haired tinker who made the nails with which Christ was crucified) while others represented a reversal in positive terms of the same stories (e.g. Saint Patrick as a young boy escaped from his master thanks to Travellers' help).

Interestingly, intersections between mainstream hegemonic Irishness and Travellers' Irishness emerge also with regard to their assumed origins. Accounts of their roots often combine pre-colonial elements with the nationalist saga of invasion and conquest (Bhreatnach, 2006, 40). Hence, despite their apparent inconsistency, the dominant themes of Irish nationalism and Catholicism are often subsumed in Travellers' myths. This confirms Travellers' attempt to claim a place within independent Ireland while rejecting the stigmatisation of their way of life (Helleiner, 2000, 50). At the same time, by predating their ancestors to Celtic and even pre-Celtic nomadic communities, Travellers posit cultural difference rather than uniformity at the heart of Irishness (Bhreatnach, 2006, 41). Travellers have come to be regarded as both the 'true' Irish and as a 'threat' to the nation because of their marginal status —a remnant of the primordial, backward past, and, hence, people who need to be reformed, modernised and eventually absorbed into mainstream contemporary Irish society (Ryan, 2007, 120).

3.5.2. Theories on Irish Travellers' origins

Apart from the widespread consensus on the Irishness of Travellers, different explanations of their historical origins have been provided. Hayes (2006, 11-13) regroups them into three main schools of thought.

The first strand is that this group descended from Irish sedentary people forced on to the road by compelling factors. Whether as victims of their own inadequacy or colonial oppression, this construction of Travellers as formerly part of mainstream

society became the orthodoxy during the 1960s and has served to justify assimilationist policies (i.e. the itinerants' (re)settlement programme) by the Irish Government (see Chapter Four; Helleiner, 2000, 30; Hayes, 2006, 11-12). This strand, also known as the 'drop-out' theory, emerged in the 1950s and to a certain extent still constitutes contemporary conventional wisdom.

A precursor of the 'drop-out' theory, the folklorist Sean McGrath perceived a distinction between a minority of 'genuine' and 'authentic' Travellers of ancient descent – and hence of great interest as symbolic of an older Ireland— and the majority of more recent formation, regarded as small landowners dispossessed by Cromwell or impoverished during the Famine (Helleiner, 2000, 49). His research gained a much wider audience due to its transmission via radio talks on the national radio station Raidió Éireann and was likely to have been known among the Irish intelligentsia in the 1950s (Hayes, 2006, 32-33).

Moreover, this hypothesis was further supported by Patricia McCarthy's (1972) research, which interpreted Travellers' poverty as cultural and inherited. This theory, known as 'culture of poverty', was an application in the Irish context of a theory originally formulated in the 1960s by the American anthropologist Oscar Lewis to explain poverty reproduction patterns in Latin-America. McCarthy (1972) argued that Travellers' poverty was culturally induced and reproduced, as members of the community passed on from one generation to the next certain behaviour patterns that ultimately reproduced poverty. This explanation, subsequently retracted by McCarthy (1994), overlooked the crucial structural causes of poverty (economy, inequality, discrimination and so on). Nonetheless, her theoretical framework was adopted by policy-makers and contributed to reinforce the assimilationist trend in public policy throughout the 1970s (Hayes, 2006, 39).

The second strand locates Travellers' origins within the ancient context of Gaelic Ireland, when population mobility was a widespread characteristic dictated by the needs of its pastoralist economy. Many itinerant occupational groups were formed through people's movement among various lordships scattered throughout the island. The mobility of Irish society had persisted under British occupation as is demonstrated by sixteenth century British attempts to 'civilise' the Irish with a suppression of mobility (Helleiner, 2000, 31). Nonetheless, mobility and homelessness were subsequently also created by British land dispossession, which deprived many Irish farmers of their land.

This theory was sustained at different times since the early twentieth century by various writers (e.g. McCormick, 1907; MacNeill, 1919; Puxon, 1967 and O'Toole, 1972 in Ní Shúinéar, 1994, 70). They opt for Travellers' having pre-historic roots. Ní Shúinéar (1994, 70-72), accepts this alternative hypothesis and proposes three possibilities: Travellers could be descendants of pre-Celtic groups, relegated to an inferior status by the invading Celts; or they could descend from one of the several distinct Celtic groups which invaded Ireland over a period of several centuries; or else they could descend from indigenous nomadic craftsmen who never became sedentary and whose Celtic or other origin is unknown.

A third hypothesis, probably the most likely one, tries to mediate between the first two and recognise Travellers' heterogeneous ethnogenesis as the consequence of a range of combined historical factors. It considers the possibility of a pre-existing extant community which, at different times and for various reasons, incorporated other people. This view is shared by two American anthropologists who researched Irish Travellers in the 1970s. The Gmelchs (1975, 9-23) indicate differentiated origins for this nomadic grouping. First, those with ancient, maybe pre-Christian, roots, being composed of tradesmen and other specialists who served scattered communities throughout the country. The existence of a secret language largely based on Irish, Shelta or Cant/Gammon, is ascribed as evidence of their ancient origins. A second group would have originated more recently, subsequent to peasant evictions, unemployment and famines. Finally, a third group would consist of 'drop-outs' who allegedly joined Travellers to avoid stigmatisation. According to the Gmelchs (1975, 23-26), the development of a separate Traveller identity was influenced by changes in the last 150 years such as the introduction of carts and barrel-top wagons in the late 1800s.

3.5.3. Irish Travellers' cultural specificities

Traveller activists and organisations, as well as academics from various disciplines, have contributed to a significant literature documenting the specificities of Irish Traveller society and culture in its past and present formations. This literature has considerably expanded over the last two decades. However, a detailed account of Irish Travellers studies is beyond the scope of this thesis. McCann, Ó Síocháin, Ruane (1994) produced a landmark publication which largely informs this section. Traveller and non-Traveller contributors to this collection generally agree in recognising some core cultural elements as specific to Traveller society. The centrality of nomadism for Traveller identity and mindset is widely asserted by many Traveller and non-Traveller

activists such as Michael McDonagh, although this is not necessarily the view of all Travellers. Nomadism is regarded as fulfilling primary psychological, social, economic and cultural functions in Travellers' lives (McDonagh, 1994, 97-99). Among the other primary specificities listed are a distinct language, called Cant/Gammon by Travellers themselves and Shelta by scholars; the centrality of extended family ties; the preference for self-employment and occupational flexibility over waged labour, known as "Traveller economy"; practices of cleanliness taboos similar to those of Romani groups and finally a particular form of Catholicism.

The status of Travellers' language has been long debated within academia and was downgraded by early commentators to a jargon, slang or a variety of Hiberno-English. Nonetheless most scholars currently regard it as a distinct language, passed on from parent to child (Binchy, 2006), possessing its own lexicon although resorting to English syntax and grammar. The priority of social obligations based on kinship, already observed in the Report of the Commission on Itinerancy (1963, 37-39), is sometimes considered as currently the main characteristic of Traveller culture. For instance, Ní Shúinéar has dedicated much of her post-doctoral research to the unveiling of Travellers' family ties, to the point of regarding each extended family as a sub-ethnic group characterised by specific traditional tendencies with regards to marriage and other aspects of life.

3.6. Heterogeneous mobile population in early twentieth century Ireland

Historical evidence demonstrates that Irish Travellers were not the only wanderers of the Irish roads at the beginning of the twentieth century (Bhreatnach, 2006, 30). Despite the paucity of knowledge about the lowest Irish social strata, some precious information can be derived from the aforementioned School Collection gathered by the Folklore Commission in 1937-38 (Bhreatnach, 2006, 32). According to this source, the Irish mobile population in rural areas at that time was heterogeneous and used nomadism to maximise living opportunities (Bhreatnach, 2006, 30). Alongside the indigenous nomadic families, there were other nomadic groups known as the Anglo-Romanies or Gypsies, who came from England and mainly concentrated in the eastern counties. In addition, other individual vagrants, usually male, able-bodied and poor went from place to place, variously earning their living from the communities they frequented (Bhreatnach, 2006, 30-31). Hence, "the survival and accommodation

strategies of the poor make it difficult to identify a homogenous 'settled' community developing in opposition to a 'travelling' one" (Bhreatnach, 2006, 40).

Some partial and imprecise information about the numbers of people without fixed abode can be derived from sporadic surveys carried out from the 1920s onwards. Both Bhreatnach (2006, 8-11) and Ryan (2007, 118-120) refer to the 1925 Poor Law Commission survey on the numbers of homeless people that was conducted by Gardaí on the night of 25th November. A total of 3257 individuals was enumerated, primarily concentrated in the rural area (2918) and divided according to gender/age parameters (men, women and children) and into five categories related to work. These included: travelling in search of work, willing to undertake casual labour but unfit or unwilling to work continuously, habitual tramps, old and infirm persons and finally *bona fide* pedlars and hawkers. Although this survey does not contain any specific mention of traditionally nomadic groups, both sources draw similar assumptions about these being mainly recognisable in the categories "Habitual Tramps" and "Bona Fide Pedlars, Hawkers, etc" —together constituting 64% of the total— on the basis of the equitable distribution of men, women and children (Bhreatnach, 2006, 9; Ryan, 2007, 119). What differentiated Travellers and Gypsies from the rest of the rural mobile population were primarily their family dimension and their different forms of accommodation. The other wanderers travelled individually and sought temporary lodging among rural families.

With regards to the urban mobile population, the county homes provided indoor relief for needy people, especially the sick and the elderly, who were regarded as the respectable poor. The able-bodied homeless vagrants were usually excluded as they were regarded as being in need of reform and rehabilitation and, thus, a source of concern in terms of health and order (Bhreatnach, 2006, 35). These people could avail of common lodging houses, where rooms were rented by the night. However, the Irish State expected voluntary organisations such as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Legion of Mary to provide for their moral, accommodation and basic material needs. For example, the Society of Saint Vincent the Paul provided night shelters in Dublin city for men travelling from place to place as well as visiting public lodging houses on Sundays to offer breakfast and religious guidance (Bhreatnach, 2006, 36). It is estimated that 27,529 people nationwide benefited from the assistance of the Saint Vincent De Paul Society in 1926 (Bhreatnach, 2006, 71).

It is difficult to discern how many of these homeless people belonged to nomadic groups, since in the first half of the twentieth century this distinction was not

politically relevant or contested and government officials' use of nomenclature was largely inconsistent (Bhreatnach, 2006, 39). This analysis complements McVeigh's sociological assertion that "reactionary ideologies and practices which affect the whole Irish social formation have been constructed and reproduced at the race/gender/class nexus" (1992, 42).

The distinction between 'gypsies' and 'tinkers' was not absolute for the sedentary population, which displayed a degree of flexibility and also of confusion in the use of these labels (Bhreatnach, 2006, 7-8/26/29). Generally the former were assumed to be of foreign origins, Protestant and exotic, while the latter were considered as indigenous, Catholic and more 'prosaic'. Although Bhreatnach finds mention in the Report of the Commission on Itinerancy (1963, 34) of Gypsies travelling to the eastern counties of Leinster during the Second World War, newspaper coverage shows that travel patterns between the two islands were already well established even at the beginning of the twentieth century (Bhreatnach, 2006, 7).

Confusion between these two groups can be understood owing to the similar nomadic lifestyle, form of accommodation and self-employment economy. Men used to sell their craftsmanship, especially but not exclusively tinsmithing, labour and ware. Many families specialised in horse/donkey dealing. In addition, Traveller women sometimes disguised themselves as Gypsies to exploit the financial advantages of the foreign look (Bhreatnach, 2006, 13).

Nomadic groups and the working classes used to be physically closer and share certain socio-economic characteristics before the inception of the Free State and the dramatic changes it enacted, as considered later in this chapter (Bhreatnach, 2006, 43/65). Many Travellers took to cheap private-rented accommodation for the winter months, often living side-by-side with working-class people in slums and city lanes, as their accommodation patterns were determined by seasonal factors, age and personal choice. For instance, families commonly had a home-base during the winter, often in wagons or vans at the edge of urban areas, or availed of private rented options, publicly run county homes, semi-derelict or empty properties (Bhreatnach, 2006, 14).

With regard to economic communality, it is worth considering the shared patterns of trade as supplements to their informal subsistence economy (Bhreatnach, 2006, 45). The marginal economies of the rural and urban poor were dependent upon family labour and vibrant street markets, mainly managed by women and children. In common with Travellers, lower class people had no clear-cut division between home

and work as most of the activities were carried out within the home or at short distance from it. Furthermore, individuals with a trade, similar to Travellers, went through the countryside researching a market for their goods and skills. Begging often was necessary when trading could not furnish a living.

3.7. Material and structural factors in the marginalisation of Irish Travellers

The extent to which Irish nationalism is at the basis of anti-Travellerism has been recently questioned by Bhreatnach (2006, 42). She asserts that the status of Travellers is entangled with intricate mechanisms of social and economic change in urban and rural environments from the inception of the Irish Free State onwards. These include: the monetarisation of the rural economy; the decline of fairs and markets; the motorisation of transport; an increase in State's regulation of landscape and order such as urban planning and the introduction of the concept of tourist amenity; augmented State intervention in the health and, more generally, in the lives of Irish citizens (e.g. stress on sanitation of public and private spaces; compulsory education); and, finally, the growth of the welfare state. These observations are crucial and should be seen as a valuable and necessary addition to ideological arguments. Modernisation, State intervention, regulation and social and economic change are not totally independent from ideological forces and elite groups' power and interests. Since nationalism, liberalism and racism were overarching and overlapping ideologies in late-nineteenth and twentieth century Europe, they must have influenced, directly and/or indirectly, decision-making and planning in these historical periods. Material and ideological forces are, in fact, deeply interconnected and implicated in each other, although Bhreatnach (2006) fails to acknowledge that government decisions are also underpinned by ideological thinking. Politicians and administrators represent particular group interests, according to which national citizenship is codified and normalised into conventional and acceptable characteristics and behaviours. This aspect indirectly emerges also throughout Bhreatnach's (2006) work.

3.8. Modernisation's impact on rural Ireland

Dramatic social and economic changes introduced by the Irish Free State since 1922 caused a progressive decline in the numbers of the mobile poor, leaving Travellers alone in exploiting niche economies and the charity of the settled rural population

(Breathnach, 2006). Similarly, these alterations caused a dramatic change in the economy of urban working class families, which overwhelmingly were co-opted into the growing welfare project and became financially dependent on State support, so growing more apart and distant from the previously closer Travellers (Bhreatnach, 2006, 30). Accordingly, at the outset of the twentieth century Travellers and sedentary people were interdependent in rural Ireland, which was characterised by scattered communities. Until the spread of the cash economy in the 1940s, rural households were primarily self-sufficient with regard to their subsistence needs. Such a static society depended on Travellers and other nomads' services for their extra-needs (products not made in the households, various other services and entertainment) and paid them back mainly with food. In such a context seasonal/monthly/weekly rural fairs and markets had a great significance for both Travellers and settled people and represented the events by which time was measured. Travellers' trading, caravan parades, street fights, funerals, wakes, weddings and other family celebrations were central attractions and sources of entertainment and generated in sedentary people ambivalent and contradictory feelings towards the nomadic groups: from respect and admiration to fear and distance (Bhreatnach, 2006, 25).

In the first decades of the twentieth century car ownership became more widespread in Ireland apart from the years of the Second World War, during which car circulation collapsed. The increased mobility of people in rural areas due to the motorisation of transport and the growth of a rural bus service and the monetarisation of the rural economy contributed to the decline of Traveller hawkers' business. Horses and donkeys were progressively substituted by cars and tractors. In addition, in the late 1930s government policies regulating and discouraging home production of food induced farmers into specialising in commercial production while buying food in grocery shops. As a result of these changes, fairs and markets began to lose their crucial function in Irish society, with a detrimental effect for the visibility and acceptability of Travellers (Bhreatnach, 2006, 29). The diminished demand for their craftsmanship skills also forced them to turn to scrap and waste collection and dealing, which then became a prevailing activity since the 1960s. For instance, tin ware first witnessed competition by the introduction of enamel-ware in the 1930s and, eventually, by the diffusion of plastic in the 1950s.

3.9. Irish State policing of public space and citizens' behaviour

As already noted, the independent State was characterised from its very inception by persistent government regulation and policing of various aspects of Irish social organisation, which in the long term moulded Irish society and its social norms. A first blow to the marginal subsistence economies of the rural and urban poor dependent on family labour and street trading came from mid-1920s new regulations aimed at policing public spaces and limiting norms of public acceptable behaviour. In particular, two 1926 Acts were crucial in this regard: the Street Trading Act and the School Attendance Act, subsequently complemented by further regulations in the following decades. In modernising bourgeois Ireland working class and small farmers' street stalls came to be perceived as an obstruction to traffic and thus as a nuisance for the car owners as well as unfair competition for rate-paying shopkeepers (Bhreatnach, 2006, 50). This statute that licensed and limited trading to circumscribed urban areas was thus enacted to defend middle class interests to the detriment of the poor's subsistence economy, especially women and children. However, Travellers' door-to-door selling was not affected by this legislation, thus causing a growing differentiation between these two groups' subsistence economy and habits (Bhreatnach, 2006, 43). It was the beginning of the setting of official standards and norms for acceptable public behaviour. It also marked the erosion of public tolerance for unconventional uses of public spaces, with consequently less tolerance for Travellers.

The 1926 School Attendance Act equally penalised the informal economy and regulated the behaviour of the poorest and marginalised segments of society. Indeed, "concerns about children's work and education were closely related to conceptualisations of the public street" (Bhreatnach, 2006, 50). Children's part-time work –an integral part of the subsistence family economy– was thus forbidden while school attendance was rendered compulsory for children aged between 6 and 14 years of age. An exemption was made for part-time light agricultural work, while no sympathy went to the urban working class counterpart. The enforcement of compulsory education for working-class children constituted another element of differentiation between this group and Travellers, who instead managed to escape[14] "the interventionist zeal of local authorities" by virtue of their nomadic lifestyle as well as the division of competences between various government departments. Therefore, "when the whole

[14] Bhreatnach (2006, 51) argues that the drafting of the School Attendance Bill in 1943 to address the difficulties posed by "vagrant children" suggests that Travellers mostly did not conform to the terms of the 1926 School Attendance Act.

family economy was abolished by compulsory school attendance and the informal labour habits of the working classes criminalised, some central values of Traveller culture were deemed unacceptable" (Bhreatnach 2006, 142).

The erosion of street life in Irish towns and villages continued with the beginning of town planning and the provision of public housing for the marginalised sections of society in the 1930s.

3.10. Rise of social welfare, public housing and spatial planning

The provision of public housing by virtue of the 1931 Housing Act represented a significant intervention of local government in citizens' lives. Under this legislation the slums in which Travellers and the poor lived side-by-side in winter months were seen as a source of disease and ill-health. Thus, the government opted for the joint policies of slum clearance and public housing. New modern, plumbed accommodation surrounded by large gardens and green spaces for public use in purposely built new estates at the outskirts of cities represented a dramatic change for inner city dwellers, accompanied by dislocation and sometimes traumatic separations (Bhreatnach, 2006, 53). The creation of local authority housing estates was accompanied by rigid regulations prohibiting coincidence of work and residential settings. For example piggeries and tripperies could no longer be located in the vicinity of housing. This factor further contributed to a widening of the gap between the working classes and Travellers, who instead maintained the traditional association between living and working spaces.

Public housing was followed by an increase and variation in welfare benefits through the 1938 Unemployment Assistance (Amendment) Act. Hence, the poor were transformed into public authority tenants and rigidly regulated welfare recipients, financially dependent on State subsidies and obliged to comply with its encompassing codes of behaviour. Intolerance and resentment over begging may have progressively developed among the sedentary population as this practice decreased due to State-funded assistance and increasing benefits (Bhreatnach, 2006, 143).

Town Planning complemented public housing (Bhreatnach, 2006, 142). The 1934 Town and Regional Planning Act marked the institution of formal planning process (Bhreatnach, 2006, 57). Despite its initial lack of implementation, by virtue of this act the notion of amenity –environment regarded as a valuable and consumable resource– had become part of administrative and public language and consciousness

(Bhreatnach, 2006, 58). Local communities –including public housing estates tenants– progressively became concerned with the appearance of their own areas.

A further step in the revolution of public space in Ireland was represented by the 1940 Acquisition of Derelict Sites Act, which authorised local authorities to acquire and improve sites of derilict appearance and ruinous conditions. The reclamation of waste and marginal land had repercussions for Travellers' material experience and their status vis-à-vis sedentary people. Furthermore, as the redefinition of landscape advanced, the availability of land for Travellers and Gypsies was reduced. As a result of these developments, Travellers began to be evicted from the Dublin area and probably the same occurred in other parts of the country (Bhreatnach, 2006, 59).

Moreover, the diffusion of tourism during and after World War Two gave further significance to the notion of amenity so that public environment was conceived and managed in line with health/safety/tourist considerations. Even outdoor holidaymaking became subject to State regulations by means of the 1948 Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act. This statute was used as an instrument to obstruct nomads' campsites rather than uncompliant holidaymakers, as it was overwhelmingly applied far from the tourist trail (see examples of this practice in Bhreatnach, 2006, 62-64).

Ultimately, given Travellers' nomadic lifestyle and need of free and marginal space for accommodating temporary campsites, land usage became the most significant issue between Travellers and the majority population (Bhreatnach, 2006, 65).

3.11. Irish Travellers' relegation to the assistance of the voluntary sector

As observed above, Travellers were not included within the categories of needy people catered for by the State institutions but fell within the remit of charitable organisations. Overall, Bhreatnach (2006, 67) observes an absence of a coherent attitude towards Travellers among civil servants and politicians until the late 1950s. This group was occasionally targeted for public health issues and other problems related to vagrancy and homelessness. For instance, public housing estates were built in derelict urban areas often acquired by the local authorities through compulsory purchase orders. Travellers, who encamped in these open spaces, began to be evicted and forced out of urban areas. Nonetheless, local authorities at times included some Traveller families among their tenants even though they dealt with them unsystematically (see examples in Bhreatnach, 2006, 979). The disposition of local county/city managers, elected

representatives, as well as the mediation of local priests, doctors and representatives from voluntary organisations played a big part in the successful outcome of some applications. Among the obstacles faced by Travellers were bureaucracy, lack of literacy and discrimination. Travellers' tenancy in public housing schemes was often met with hostility, so that they often limited their interactions to their group members (Bhreatnach, 2006, 79-80).

Various reasons have been given for the missed co-option of Travellers into the Irish State's welfare system until 1960. Bhreatnach (2006, 67) finds little proof that Travellers as a group were already subjected to sustained scrutiny by the machinery of the State. Instead, in her opinion, in the period from the beginning of the Free State until the overt identification of the 'Traveller problem' in the early 1960s, this proportionally small but increasingly distinctive nomadic minority was rather "largely ignored". This depended on various factors. First, as already mentioned, responsibility towards homeless people –including nomadic groups– was delegated to voluntary and charitable organisations. Second, administrative responsibilities towards Travellers were divided among several departments and there were discrepancies between central and local administration. Third, welfare schemes assumed literacy and permanent residency criteria. Finally, Travellers initially intentionally and proactively avoided specific benefits that clashed with their living patterns, such as educational benefits for their children, since they required fixed residency in one locality for most of the year.

Voluntary organisations' engagement with nomadic people in Ireland is documented since the early 1930s. Members of the Society of Saint Vincent De Paul first in Rathgar and then in Dublin started to offer spiritual assistance to Gypsies and Travellers camped in city yards and open areas, focusing primarily on the children's religious sacraments and education and only subsequently concentrating on regularising marriage practices according to the Catholic tradition. However, involvement with nomadic groups was not uniform and systematic but depended on individual members' interests at local level (Bhreatnach, 2006, 78). The Gypsy Visitation Guild was established in Dublin in 1932. By 1936 the Society's conferences also began providing more material assistance and secretarial service to Travellers (Bhreatnach, 2006, 76). However, in the mid- to late 1940s the work of the Dublin Visitation Guild faced some setbacks partially due to Dublin Corporation's closure of many yards and open spaces within the city that were frequented by nomads, forcing the latter to relocate in the suburbs. By 1958 the Gypsy Visitation Guild work was no longer listed among the

principal special works carried out in Dublin by the Saint Vincent De Paul conferences (Bhreatnach, 2006, 77). The Legion of Mary's involvement with Travellers was usually limited to children's religious education and sacraments. For example, in 1960 it ran a mobile school in Dublin city (Bhreatnach, 2006, 77). The fact that both the Saint Vincent De Paul Society and the Legion of Mary made submissions to the Commission on Itinerancy further confirms their involvement in spiritual charitable work with Travellers.

3.12. Conclusion

This chapter ascertained that until the beginning of the twentieth century Travellers were not totally distinct from mainstream Irish population. On the contrary, they were physically and socio-economically closer to a heterogeneous rural and urban mobile population that shared nomadism and other practices to maximise opportunities for subsistence.

Specifically, I stated that the emergence of a separate Traveller identity is due to a combination of ideological and structural factors that contributed to their increasing differentiation and separation from mainstream Irish society. Accordingly, the racialisation of Travellers is deeply interconnected with the historical racialisation of the Irish by the English colonisers. Irish national identity developed in relation to and in opposition to Englishness/Britishness within a polarised, simplistic essentialist dichotomy ultimately promoted by both contending sides. In the aftermath of independence, the Free State imposed a homogeneous, narrow and essentialist vision of Irishness characterised by Catholicism, Gaelic 'race', language and culture, landownership, traditional conservative rural, bourgeois and sedentary values. In turn, the rigid fixation of a hegemonic national identity elicited the contrasting individuation of obverse groups and identities, ascribed to Irish Protestants, Jews and Travellers. The transfer of negative stereotypes from the Irish onto Travellers was favoured by the de-valorisation of nomadism, then dominant within European philosophical thought, and was conditioned by the Free State's ideological focus on landownership and sedentary lifestyle.

Ideological explanations were integrated with material and structural ones, identified with the social and economic changes that affected Irish society from 1922 to 1970. The second part of this chapter explored how low socio-economic groups and Travellers were affected by the evolution and monetarisation of the rural economy, the

motorisation of transport, the rise of the welfare state coupled with an increased State regulation of and intervention into citizens' lives and the development of urban planning. These combined developments altered dramatically their life environment, habits and identities.

Travellers' persisting nomadism, beggary, coexistence of work and residential spaces, occupation of marginal and derelict land, children's involvement in the family economy and inconsistent school attendance became conspicuous and attracted hostility from the majority population. The "itinerant problem" officially emerged in the early 1960s. Since then the Irish State began its involvement in Traveller affairs, which has been paralleled by the emergence and development of Traveller interest groups and mobilisation. The historical developments of Traveller politics and policies are covered in the next chapter.

Overall, this chapter confirmed the historical and structural contingency of phenomena of identification as well as their transactional, dynamic and political characteristics. If the constitution of a racialised Traveller category is connected to the colonialist racialisation of the Irish within a binary system of representation, in turn the political affirmation of a positive Traveller identity within Traveller politics is inseparable from the racialisation of Travellers and is related to, and opposed to, hegemonic Irishness.

Chapter Four

Travellers' politics and policies in Ireland

4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines some important historical developments within Traveller politics and policies in Ireland, focusing on the action context of the phenomenon of ethnicity. Thus I deal with the deliberate politicisation of collective Traveller identity in social struggles for equal rights and respect, which represents, in light of Chapter Two's theoretical considerations, the springing to life of 'Traveller ethnicity'. First, I expose the official surfacing of the 'itinerant problem' and the subsequent emergence of Travellers' interest groups. In doing so I explore the unfolding of different phases within the pro-Traveller mobilisation from a largely paternalistic, consensus-based and charitable approach towards an affirmation of a more defined human rights and community development one. Second, I highlight the main developments within public policy with regard to Travellers. Finally, I conclude the chapter by stressing the interconnections between these fields, the dialectic between past and present events, as well as the contribution of this historical contextualisation to the grounding of the analytical parts of the thesis.

4.2. The Irish State and the emergence of the 'itinerant problem'

There are different views on the relevance of the Traveller 'issue' at a national level before 1949. While Bhreatnach (2006) considers it as emerging more vehemently after World War II, Helleiner (2000) contends that anti-Traveller discourse –the construction of Travellers as a danger to the nation– had a longer history than is generally recognised. The first governmental report overtly addressing Travellers – under the noun "itinerants" – as a problematic group is relatively recent, i.e. the Report of the Commission on Itinerancy (1963).

Before this landmark document, which marks the beginning of the State's official engagement with Travellers as a 'problem', only thirty one parliamentary questions concerning Travellers had been posed to different ministers in the period between 1925 and 1963, of which only five are dated before 1949 (Bhreatnach, 2006a, 92). Research by Helleiner (2000, 58) dates the first parliamentary question concerning Travellers to 1939, when the Fine Gael TD, James Dillon, referred to itinerancy as a situation of acute difficulty for the majority population in rural Ireland. Two years later, during a Dáil debate of 4th June 1941, Travellers were accused of

spreading foot-and-mouth disease and a deputy proposed emergency powers of internment against them (Helleiner, 2000, 59). Most of the questions were addressed to the Minister for Justice (in charge of law and order and possessing of the power of criminalise behaviour), even though the themes dealt with often were in the remit of the ministry for Local Government and Agriculture (i.e. unauthorised encampments). In most of the cases, the ministers delegated matters to the Gardaí. Bhreatnach (2006, 92) notes that the first minister who overtly explained his department policy was the Fine Gael Minister for Justice Séan Mac Eoin in 1950. He admitted to renouncing the introduction of new legislation dealing with Travellers' occupation of land as he believed there was no "satisfactory solution". He told the House that there were "six thousand of these persons whose people had been on the roads for centuries and they have a prescriptive right to be on the roads" (Bhreatnach, 2006, 92).

However, this does not automatically imply that Travellers were well accepted within majority society (See Chapter Three). A hypothesis for the initial lack of official complaints could be that they were still tolerated by virtue of their precious function performed in rural society. In addition, as Helleiner (2000, 59) suggests, it could also be that farmers' views were not collectively voiced until they formed interest groups and got directly involved in political activism and lobbying. For instance the farmers' party, *Clann na Talmhan*, emerged in the early 1940s. Although anti-Travellerism was not overtly on their political agenda, some members of this party –Patrick Cogan of Wicklow and Francis O'Donnell of Tipperary– consistently spoke against Travellers (Helleiner, 2000, 59). Helleiner (2000) interprets the periodic count of Travellers by the police as a sign of an inhospitable climate. This was initially highlighted as a rural issue (that is probably why urban districts had been excluded from the census). However, subsequently, towards the late 1940s, it began to concern urban areas too, especially the Dublin district (see Chapter Three re policy changes such as the 1948 Sanitary Services Act; Helleiner, 2000, 60). During the second coalition government (1954-1957) Travellers' encampments became firmly established as a source of urban concern (Helleiner, 2000, 60). Their removal from Dublin city and surroundings had already been requested by the Minister for Justice in 1949. A few years later, in 1955 and 1956, complaints were made in the Dáil about Travellers' horses and camps in and around Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford and Dublin. According to the same author, a shift in Fianna Fáil thinking about Travellers occurred in the late 1950s, when Charles Haughey was mandated to study the matter

and make proposals. The Commission on Itinerancy was formed in 1960 and issued its report in 1963. Its wide-ranging settlement programme, adopted as government policy in 1964, was reinforced by the theories of alleged peasant Travellers' origins (see Chapter Three, Section 3.5.2). Elements of this are revisited in Sections 4.4 and 4.8 whereas the following section attempts to explore Travellers' activism in the face of these changes.

4.3. Outset of Travellers' mobilisation and activism

The emergence of Traveller mobilisation in Ireland parallels similar developments within the British and broader European context in the second half of the twentieth century. As observed in Chapter Three, modernisation's socio-economic changes increased competition for land between sedentary and nomadic groups while reducing their reciprocal economic transactions. Similar to the British context, in Ireland evictions of Travellers from encampments in public and private land began in the late 1940s-1950s and were practised systematically in the 1960s so that nomadic families were kept forcefully on the move through the intervention of Gardaí and local administrations. Acton (1974, 48) charts the emergence of a new phase of Gypsy/Traveller mobilisation across Europe in the 1960s. In Acton's view, the novelty of such conflict consists in it being staged over a more general defence of the rights of cultural minorities (Acton, 1974, 47). Accordingly, the politics conducted by the leaders of these new pressure groups tended to be oppositional and contrasted with older philanthropic, paternalistic and assimilationist philosophies regarding social and moral regeneration of nomadic people. These new organisations attempted to establish their legitimacy among Travellers themselves and vis-à-vis public institutions at national (national governments) and international level (United Nations and European bodies).

The beginnings of Irish Travellers' political mobilisation in the early 1960s fit within this international climate of Gypsy/Traveller political mobilisation. This confrontational phase was, however, short-lived in Ireland where it was rapidly replaced by the more conciliatory and charitable approach taken by the *Itinerant Settlement Movement* from 1965 onward. It is probably not a coincidence that the politically assertive rights-based beginnings of Traveller mobilisation saw the involvement of an English pacifist who fled to Ireland in 1960 to evade military service, Grattan Puxon. These initial developments in Ireland were closely followed

by British politicians and activists. For instance, Norman Dodds, the British Labour MP who had championed the Gypsy cause within the British parliament since the late 1940s, wrote several letters in support of the Irish Travellers' campaign between 1963 and 1965 (Acton, 1974, 155).

Puxon had purchased a barrel-topped wagon from a Traveller and parked on Dublin local authority land. In this way he befriended the Traveller Kevin Keanan and his family and subsequently got involved in negotiations against their eviction. This first successful intervention led to his involvement in other cases of Traveller eviction.

The publication of the Report of the Commission on Itinerancy by the Irish government in 1963 was invoked by Puxon and other Traveller campaigners who founded the *Itinerant Action Campaign* because it recommended the provision of accommodation and education for Travellers. This Travellers' rights organisation adopted a tactic of passive resistance to evictions, founding of schools and demonstrations (Acton, 1974, 156; Bhreatnach, 2006, 124). During the summer of 1963 a group of Travellers led by Grattan Puxon, Kevin Keanan and John Macdonald made a procession from Ballyfermot to Dublin City Hall demanding an end to Traveller evictions and the provision of education for Traveller children. They also established the first Travellers' school in a hut within their encampment in Ballyfermot. This was burned down by Dublin Council workers in January 1964, stimulating a wave of support for Traveller campaigns among students and liberals. A new camp was set up near Dublin at Cherry Orchard in Easter 1964. Fifty families moved into this site and a second school was opened in January 1965 coinciding with the anniversary of the burning of the first one.

Press coverage put pressure on the Irish government at international level, especially from British politicians and intellectuals and emerging international Gypsy pressure groups. The deputies of the *Communauté Mondiale Gitane*, Vanko and Leulea Rouda, even visited Ireland and took part in Traveller protests. The Dublin Traveller committee gained a "semi-official recognition through direct contact with the new Irish Government Advisory Committee on Itinerancy" (Puxon in Acton, 1974, 157).

Strengthened by this support, Grattan Puxon, John Connors and Johnny Gray attempted to establish a national organisation and to expand Traveller militancy at national level in order to secure the setting up of official campsites and schools for Travellers nationwide. They began organising the *National Committee of the Irish*

Traveller Community composing of Lawrence Ward, as acting president, John Connors of the *Dublin Committee* and Grattan Puxon. In July 1965 Puxon organised a campaign in western Ireland with Laurence Ward and planned a national convention for the following autumn during the Ballynasloe Horse Fair. The idea was that leading Travellers from various parts of Ireland would come together, establish the *Irish Travellers' Committee*, become the trained leaders in each region of Ireland, and also become affiliated to the World Romany Community. In this way Travellers themselves would be actively involved in finding the solution to their problems rather than this "being imposed from above as an act of charity" (Puxon in Acton, 1974, 159).

Such a proactive and politicised approach was however unpopular with the Irish governmental Advisory Committee on Itinerancy —convened in accordance with the Report's recommendations— and with the Catholic Church establishment, which ran the Catholic Mission to Itinerants. Despite their engagement in negotiations with the Traveller rights' movement, they sought an end to its protests and disorder in exchange for their co-operation. Hence, the constitution of an oppositional *Travellers' Committee* at the Ballynasloe Convention, which Puxon hoped would receive official legitimation, was instead disapproved of by the Advisory Committee's representative Father Fehily. Hence it was short-lived and failed to obtain self-determination for Travellers and their direct involvement in Traveller bodies.

Constant threats of legal action, the co-opting of some Travellers onto Government-sponsored bodies and the harassment of individual activists such as Puxon[15] and Connors frustrated the Irish Travellers' Committee's efforts. As a result, Puxon, followed by a few Irish Traveller activists, moved back to England where he had already planned to pursue Gypsy mobilisation and politics in connection with international Gypsy organisations. Bhreatnach (2006, 130) observes that Puxon had underestimated Irish Travellers' long-lasting attachment to the Catholic Church and its affiliated charitable organisations such as the Saint Vincent De Paul and the Legion of Mary (see Chapter Three, Section 3.11). This first Traveller activist organisation foundered as its leading figures left Ireland.

4.4. Affirmation of a charitable reformatory approach to Travellers

Subsequent Traveller mobilisation and politics were to be dominated by paternalistic, charitable and consensus-based approaches for two decades. The first

[15] At the end of February1964 he was arrested on a charge of possessing explosives.

period of such mobilisation, occurring from the mid-1960s, was led by non-Traveller campaigners, activists and wealthy philanthropists, often affiliated to the Catholic Church, who were already involved in voluntary work and campaigns for Travellers. The *Dublin Itinerant Settlement Committee* was founded in Dublin in 1965 by Victor Bewley, Lady Wicklow, Father Thomas Fehily, the auxiliary bishop of Dublin Desmond Williams and other prominent individuals in order to meet the recommendations contained in the Report on Itinerancy. This group was largely composed of representatives and volunteers from charitable organisations, especially from Saint Vincent De Paul and the Legion of Mary, and its approach to the State was conciliatory. Its efforts rapidly inspired nationwide mobilisations with the ultimate goal of permanently settling Travellers on sites or in conventional housing and to absorb them into mainstream Irish society. This gave rise to the *Itinerant Settlement Movement*, which reached its peak with 70 active committees in 1972 (Gmelch, 1990, 305) and continued to operate on a reduced scale until the early 1980s. The *Irish Council for Itinerant Settlement* was established in March 1969 in order to coordinate local committees (Keane, 1985, 4). This umbrella organisation did not include any Travellers among its members. Bhreatnach (2006, 136-139) stresses the vital role played by *Itinerant Settlement Committees* in Ireland in gathering public sympathy for Travellers and in accommodation, education and employment provision, despite their paternalism. Furthermore, she notes that they achieved significant results as they managed to create or find accommodation for over one third of the Traveller population between 1965 and 1974 (Bhreatnach, 2006, 137). Such a contribution was precious at a time of administrative stasis, when most local councils' plans for Traveller accommodation were vehemently opposed by local residents and politicians. Such positive elements have been obscured by more recent criticism directed towards the committees' limitations —paternalism, ethnocentrism, assimilationist tendencies and exclusion of Travellers from decision-making. At least at a rhetorical level, writings by prominent activists display a higher level of awareness of Travellers' cultural specificity and right to self-determination than is usually credited by subsequent detractors. For instance, Sister Colette Dwyer, who became a firm opponent of the ethnicity quest in the 1980s and 1990s, referred to Travellers as an internally heterogeneous "ethnic group" in 1974. Furthermore, Father Fehily wrote in his preface to Bewley's *Travelling People* (1974, 7):

"From the beginning the central theme of our policy has been quite clear, and contrary to the ideas of many people, it is not to persuade the travellers [sic] to settle

or to settle them at any cost. We have always maintained, and still do, most strongly that if the travellers wish to continue travelling, then they have every right to do so, and it is the duty of society to allow them to do so in conditions that befit human dignity. On the other hand, if they wish to settle in our community, then we must accept them as we would any other neighbour. There may be a third option –that they may decide to keep their own identity and accept as many of the benefits of settled living as appear good to them. This must be their decision: it is our privilege only to help them on that road".

During the 1970s Travellers increased their assertiveness and participation within the organisational structures of the *National Committee*. This body changed its designation to the *National Council for the Travelling People* (*NCTP*) in either 1973 (Keane, 1985, 5) or 1974 (Gmelch, 1990, 306). This corresponded to a declared change in policy –now also concerned with obtaining Travelling People's basic rights and self-determination— and to the inclusion of Travellers within its structures (Bhreatnach, 2006, 139; Gmelch, 1990, 306). The adoption of Travellers' preferred self-designation "Travelling People" instead of the government-coined "Itinerants" and the inclusion of Travellers among its representational and administrative structure signals this evolution in orientation.

However, it remained publicly associated with the founders of the *Itinerant Settlement Movement* and maintained its primarily cooperative approach to public institutions. This organisation soon became the main national Traveller representative organisation vis-à-vis the Irish State until its dissolution in November 1990. Its work was concerned with formulating policies concerning Travellers, playing an advisory and lobbying role to Irish State institutions and directly providing support and assistance to Travellers with regard to accommodation, education, employment and health and in their dealings with public institutions.

Prominent individuals involved on a charitable basis with Travellers took responsibility for specific policy fields. For instance, Sister Colette Dwyer, in Traveller education since 1967, founded the *Association of Teachers of the Travelling People* (*ATTP*) in 1972 and initiated the first Traveller Training Centre in Ennis in 1974. She was appointed as the *National Council*'s National Coordinator for Traveller Education in 1974 and she retained this post until the early 1990s. She was an initiator of the enduring system of segregated school provision for Travellers that came under attack from the late 1980s. At a very early stage training centres were officially recognised by State Departments as meeting the specific educational needs of young Travellers and were hence quickly duplicated in other parts of Ireland. In order to

coordinate these educational services at a national level, to develop shared expertise and to elaborate ad hoc educational policy, the *National Association of Training Centres for the Travelling People* was established in 1976, Subsequently known as *NATC* (*National Association of Traveller/Training Centres*), it had the Association of Teachers for the Travelling People as its mother organisation (Ní Shúinéar, 1996, 1). Traveller students' attendance was encouraged through the payment of trainees' allowances by the Department of Education and the Vocational Educational Committee.

The activities of *NATC* soon expanded to involve also youth service provision between the late 1970s and the early 1980s. It currently counts twenty-four affiliated youth services nationwide. The training centres, that adapted to changing policies and extended their remit to cater for Traveller adults and other non-Traveller learners, were closed down by the government in June 2012. The *ATTP* and the *NATC* were closely affiliated to one another and to the *National Council for the Travelling People*, because of overlap between their leaders and because of the proximity of their charitable, reformatory and consensus-based approaches to working with Travellers. Ní Shúinéar (1996) confirmed such organisational closeness and criticised coordinators, teachers and volunteers' methods of working with young Travellers for over two decades. In her view politically correct rhetorical statements of respect for Traveller identity and culture were countered by a pathologisation of their way of life as detrimental to the personal and social development of children.

4.5. The 1980s and the beginning of a new phase in Traveller politics

By the early 1980s a new oppositional Traveller organisation was formed in Dublin, known as the *Dublin Committee for the Rights of Travellers* (Gmelch, 1990, 31) or the *Travellers' Rights Committee* (McCarthy, 2001, 23). This began to challenge the role of the *National Council for the Travelling People* in representing Traveller interests.

Despite the efforts of the *National Council for the Travelling People* and local *Itinerant Settlement Committees*, the issue of Traveller accommodation provision had worsened. This was partially due to a dramatic demographic increase of Travellers in Ireland, especially in urban areas, because of the high birth and growth rate of the Traveller population (it more than doubled between 1961 and 1981), the return of some Traveller families to the road after attempts at social housing, the arrival of Traveller

returnees from England and the State's poor delivery of official campsites and other accommodation provision nationwide. Local residents' harassment and violence against encamped Travellers had become commonplace as well as local authorities' eviction policies.

In particular, the presence of Traveller families on the roadside and near new working-class housing estates in the outskirts of Dublin was met by angry reactions from local residents, which culminated in the Tallaght anti-Traveller attacks of 1981. These originated as a response to Traveller families' resistance to eviction from their Tallaght encampment, imposed by the opening of the new Tallaght-bypass. The local authority had offered no alternative site to the one hundred families living in the locality (McCarthy, 2001, 23).

A few Travellers and non-Traveller activists formed a new oppositional group in order to resist racist agitation and violence against Travellers in Tallaght at the hands of local residents and politicians. This organisation decided to enter electoral politics by sponsoring in 1982 a Traveller candidate, Nan Joyce, for a seat on Dublin City Council. She got 581 first-preference votes but withdrew from the race due to her controversial arrest for theft. Charges were subsequently dropped. McCarthy (2001, 23) comments that "It turned out that the stolen jewellery had been planted in her caravan by the police themselves in an exact repetition of the frame up they had done on Grattan Puxon over twenty years previously".

This renewed phase of confrontational mobilisation was also stirred by the return to Ireland in 1982 of John O'Connell, a former Irish Columban Father, inspired by Paulo Freire, who had worked for five years in the Philippines and pursued post-graduate studies in New York before returning as Justice and Faith coordinator of the Columbans. He immediately got involved in Traveller politics and advocated a new understanding of Travellers as an ethnic group, whose recognition constituted a human rights issue. In his obituary published in *The Irish Times* (1999, 18) a Traveller friend of his is quoted as stating: "he transformed the understanding of their situation. Before he came on the scene the view was one of assimilation and denial of Traveller culture. John O'Connell changed all that". He also consciously adopted a community development approach to working with Travellers starting initiatives aimed at boosting their confidence and theoretical and political skills to articulate their own interests and forge a strong sense of group identity. Among these there were adult literacy classes, personal development and communication workshops and social events. O'Connell has also been

credited with appreciating the international dimensions to pro-Traveller anti-racist work and campaigning (*The Irish Times*, 1999, 18). These dimensions have been maintained in the approaches followed by *Pavee Point* and *ITM* and have successfully guaranteed international support for Irish Travellers' quest for ethnic recognition among international and national bodies and NGOs.

In this new climate of Traveller empowerment in 1983 the *Dublin Committee for the Rights of Travellers* gave way to the first Traveller-only group, *Mincéir Misli* (which in Cant/Gammon means "Travellers go"). This group was composed of politicised Travellers, who posed themselves outside consensus-politics by adopting tactics of demonstrations, pickets, marches, hunger strikes, public speeches and made links with trade-unions (McCarthy, 2001, 23). The usage of Traveller Cant words for the group's official denomination and publications signals a heightened sense of cultural pride and collective assertiveness. However, their confrontational approach to State institutions prevented them from accessing public funding for their initiatives and campaigns. According to McCarthy (2001, 23), for this reason and for organisational problems –for example, the prevailing illiteracy among its members– *Mincéir Misli* lasted less than two years so leaving a void in oppositional Traveller activism.

The *NCTP* came under increasing criticism from these newly-formed and more militant Traveller representative groups. These were highly critical of the subordinate position of Travellers within the *NCTP* and of its charitable, assimilationist and consensus-based approaches. These tensions are evident in the words of a member of the *NCTP*, Hawley Keane (1985, 32), who in a short publication on the history of this organisation mentioned: "A small group, of recent origin and unconnected with the National Council, now claims that it should be the only voice speaking for Travellers. It purports to be an all-Travellers group, and, for some reason, sees fit to depreciate the work of the National Council". From the same publication, it also emerges that the *NCTP* was being accused of being dominated by settled people. The author of this booklet insisted that there was room for both kinds of organisations within Traveller politics in Ireland.

Meanwhile, the *Dublin Travellers' Education and Development G*roup (*DTEDG*) was established between 1983 and 1984 by a group of professionals involved with Travellers who were not satisfied with the then dominant theoretical analysis and approaches (O'Connell, 1992, 3/17). This group was closely linked with *Mincéir Misli* (O'Connell, 1992, 3). John O'Connell was one of its prominent founding members,

together with professionals in the social and educational field (especially social workers and teachers) such as Niall Crowley, Ronnie Fay, Des Curley and others. McCarthy (2001, 23) argues that, despite their different approach to working with Travellers, this still was not an agitational group and thus there was a vacuum within Traveller resistance politics. Nonetheless, Kenny (1997, 22) and O'Sullivan (2005, 397/399) credit O'Connell and the *DTEDG* with having played a revolutionary role within the 1980s political, policy and academic arenas regarding Irish Travellers. In contrast with the hegemonic assimilationist and case-work approaches, the *DTEDG* adopted community development principles and practices such as consciousness raising and political education for mobilisation.

These ideas were nurtured and embraced by some young Travellers who were subsequently to emerge on the scene of Traveller activism and mobilisation in the late 1980s and 1990s. They include Michael Collins (also an actor), Martin Collins and others. Thanks to the efforts of O'Connell and the other members of this organisation, grants were obtained for Travellers to be trained in community development and also enroll in academic courses, thus favouring the constitution of a generation of assertive and educated Traveller campaigners and activists, who are currently prominent in the main national Traveller NGOs. O'Connell, who had initiated the politics of 'Traveller ethnicity' as a human rights issue, set the scene for the thematisation and textualisation of this notion within the Irish academic community (O'Sullivan, 2005, 397/399) and Traveller politics.

Initially some members of the *DTEDG* were also active within the *NCTP* and the *ATTP*. In this regard, Ní Shúinéar comments (1996, 20) "*DTEDG* and its nationwide offshoot the *Irish Traveller Movement* (*ITM*)[16] effectively operated as ginger groups alongside/within the *ATTP* and *National Council*. While no one in the newsletter was openly declaring dual allegiance at this point, these organisations were clearly providing an alternative platform which would appeal to those espousing a more left-wing analysis".

Meanwhile, Traveller women had already emerged as activists within the Traveller rights mobilisation of the early 1980s. In fact, three of the four officers of *Mincéir Misli* were women and Traveller women were also active within the *NCTP*. Individual Traveller women also played prominent roles within other local Traveller groups throughout the country and constituted local Traveller women's organisations.

[16] However it must be noted that the *Irish Traveller Movement* did not officially exist yet, since it was founded later, in 1990.

Gmelch (1990, 312-316) explains the leadership role played by Traveller women in dealings with mainstream society and its institutions as rooted in their traditional involvement in social and economic transactions as well as their desire for an improvement of their living circumstances and for obtaining education for their children. Their role within the community was further enhanced in 1988 with the establishment of the *National Traveller Women's Forum*. This was (and still is) a national network that has offered Traveller women an opportunity to meet, share their experiences and form collective responses to their multiple oppression, further enhancing their leadership and empowerment.

4.6. Changeover in national Traveller representative organisations

Within this renewed context, in 1984 the *NCTP* published the *Charter of Rights of the Travelling People,* which opened with the assertion of their human, social, political and legal rights, including the recognition of their own cultural identity as individuals and as a minority group (Equality Authority, 2006, 19). O'Connell, because of his key role in promoting a change in attitudes towards Travellers, became the target of indirect attacks by prominent activists involved in the *NCTP* and its sister organisations[17].

Tensions eventually exploded into the irreparable dissolution of the *NCTP* in November 1990, during its Annual General Meeting in Mullingar. Thirty-year old Owen Ward, a member the Tuam Young Travellers' Club, proposed the disbanding of the national Traveller organisation declaring: "Travellers, young and old alike, are now in a position to represent and advance their own interests. They need new organisational structures to represent them and meet their needs" (*Connaught Tribune*, 1990, 5). Both, the national broadsheet, *The Irish Times* and the western local newspaper, *Connaught Tribune*, mention Owen Ward and Mary Moriarty's complaints at the increased politicisation of the *NCTP* over the previous six years which allegedly meant Travellers being left behind while highly educated members dominated meetings using a language inaccessible to Travellers (see *The Irish Times, 1990*, 4). According to these accounts, Travellers were left voiceless and alienated.

[17] Sister Colette Dwyer indirectly targeted him in a publication of 1988 with her reference to "people who have returned from Third World countries", who "seem to assume that the needs of the Travellers are identical with those of the oppressed people for whom they have been working abroad, and tend sometimes, without spending long enough first actually getting to know and listening to the Travellers, to impose on a somewhat bewildered Traveller community their own philosophies, which were valid enough in Africa or the Philippines but not appropriate when applied to the Irish Traveller Community".

Ironically, the accusation of settled-domination, previously levelled at the *NCTP's* main activists, in this case instead referred to the professionals affiliated to the *DTEDG*, the group that had been formed six years before.

However, Ní Shúinéar (1996, 20) provides a different reading of this event, considering it as a "preplanned coup" and as a "countermove" of the "Old Guard". According to the information provided by media coverage of the time (e.g. *The Irish Times*, 1990, 4), the pursuit of 'Traveller ethnicity' constituted the most divisive policy issue between the *NCTP's* factions.

From this split two new organisations were immediately formed: the *National Federation of the Irish Travelling People* (*NFITP*) and the *Irish Traveller Movement* (*ITM*). The first appeared to maintain the line set by the *NCTP*, despite having a Traveller as its acting chairperson, i.e. Mary Moriarty. It received support from Victor Bewley -—"one of Mary Moriarty's great heroes", Desmond Williams, Sister Colette Dwyer and other long-term prominent activists since the times of the *Itinerant Settlement Movement* (see *The Irish Times*, 1990, 4). According to Ní Shúinéar (1996, 20) the latter were still the effective leaders of the new organisation. It is likely that they were still quite influential since Mary Moriarty herself had been active within the *NCTP* for a number of years in prominent positions (she was one of its vice-chairpersons in 1985) and was extremely close to Sister Colette Dwyer, for whom she had acted between 1987 and 1989 as assistant in Traveller Education with the special responsibility for dealings with Traveller parents and promoting the value of education for their children (Dwyer, 1988, 16).

On the other hand, the *Irish Traveller Movement* comprised of Traveller and non-Traveller activists and professionals who preferred the new approach initiated by O'Connell and the *DTEDG*. Among these there were Niall Crowley, Des Curley, Michael McDonagh, Gearoid O'Ryan and others.

Moreover, the two organisations were portrayed as differing in their dealings with the Irish State: the *ITM* was labelled as more militant and radical, whereas the *NFITP* was regarded as being more conciliatory and diplomatic. For instance, Mary Moriarty was of the view that "Militancy and aggression will never achieve worthwhile progress but we hope to be a strong voice for the travelling community [sic] in every part of the country" (Cummins, 1991, 4). Her reference to "militancy and aggression" possibly refers to the competing newborn organisation, the *ITM*, which the journalist Mary Cummins reports as having been "loosely labelled as being

more radical, more provocative, more threatening" (Cummins, 1990, 4).

However, the attribution of militancy seems to be an exaggeration, as the *ITM* since its inception rarely got involved in direct action campaigns such as pickets, protest marches, occupation of public buildings or spaces. McCarthy (2001, 25) regrets that the *ITM* has not built "a strong militant direct action movement among Travellers and their supporters", preferring instead to be primarily involved in partnership with the State; lobbying and influencing policy and legislation, education provision and public awareness raising among Travellers and mainstream Irish society. In addition, its high dependence on public funding has limited its resistant politics.

Because of its historical continuity with the *NCTP*, the *NFITP* had, since its inception, a large nationwide capillary membership and also received in 1991 the patronage of the then Irish President, Mary Robinson. The *ITM* was smaller and initially Dublin- and Navan-based. However, its activists were particularly experienced in public relations with the media and State institutions and managed to receive better coverage. Considering the reciprocal accusations of each being dominated by settled people who were allegedly setting the Traveller agenda, it could be reasonably deduced that probably both groups operated under a considerable non-Traveller influence. Travellers appeared to be divided according to the respective influence of older, more conservative, pro-Travellers campaigners affiliated to church-based, voluntary and charitable organisations, versus the new emancipatory and rights-based approach promoted by professionals, on the political left, associated with the *DTEDG* (but also with the Catholic Church in some cases) on the other. The latter situated 'Traveller ethnicity' at the centre of their struggle for Travellers' human rights and equality within Irish society. The reciprocal reproaches regarding settled people's status in decision-making seems to have survived until now so that it is still common to find spokespeople of national Traveller organisations stressing pursuit of ethnicity as Travellers' core priority while denying settled people's influence in this matter (see Chapter One's reference to Traveller activist Sweeney's statement "There is no settled influence on this").

The *NFITP* seems to have suddenly dissolved in the mid-1990s coinciding with the increasing popularity and influence of the *ITM* among Travellers and vis-à-vis State institutions. The *NFITP*'s abrupt dissolution appears to be rooted in an internal dispute over the issue of 'Traveller ethnicity' between Mary Moriarty and the still

influential Sister Colette Dwyer. In February 1994 Sister Colette Dwyer made public a document opposing Traveller ethnic recognition, written on the basis of a meeting that included only members of the Munster and Leinster components of the *NFITP*. Mary Moriarty, then acting chairperson of the *National Federation*, openly dissociated herself from the document (see *The Irish Times* 1994, 2 and *The Irish Times*, 1994, 5). In contrast to that, Moriarty stated that she had "a very open mind" on the question of ethnicity and affirmed that both the Connaught region and the *NFITP* were not represented by the position paper. Interestingly, the document issued by Sister Colette Dwyer on behalf of the *NFITP* was regarded by *The Irish Times* journalist Padraig Yeates as "an indirect attack on the philosophy of many members of the other two main Traveller organisations, the *Irish Traveller Movement* and the *Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group*".

This internal disagreement between Sister Collette Dwyer and Mary Moriarty over their organisation's official stance on the issue of ethnicity and over attitudes towards the other Traveller organisations probably caused (and/or reflected) an internal fracture, which is likely to be at the root of the cessation of activity by the *NFITP* in the following years. After that, not only did both Mary Moriarty's[18] and the *NFITP's* names disappeared from the media chronicles of the intra-Traveller controversy over 'Traveller ethnicity' but also there was no longer mention of the controversy at all.

However, Mary Moriarty, was still one of the members of the Task Force Commission on the Travelling Community, as a representative from the *NFITP*, together with two representatives from *DTEDG*/*Pavee Point* (Niall Crowley and Martin Collins), a member of the *ITM* (Chrissie O'Sullivan) and a member of the *NATC* (John McGee)[19]. Mary Moriarty continued officially representing the organisation until at least 1995. Her organisation's divisions with regards to 'Traveller ethnicity' might have contributed to the Task Force Report's (1995) cautious and deliberate avoidance of the application of the concept of ethnicity to the Traveller community, coupled with a determined affirmation of its cultural specificity and collective social identity[20].

[18] *Google* search associates her name with a recently published memoir (2009) entitled the *Turn of the Hand*.
[19] See Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995, 8).
[20] Other social commentators, such as McVeigh (2007), do not read as strategic this omission of ethnicity by the Taskforce. Instead, they attribute it to the greater influence exerted by more conservative members of the Taskforce. This explanation can be supplemented by considering intra-Travellers politics and diverging opinions on ethnicity. Intra-Traveller tensions over the ethnic stance may have constituted a

However, among the members of the Monitoring Committee that published its first progress report five years after (2000), the only national Traveller organisations to be officially represented were *Pavee Point*, the *ITM* and the *NTWF*[21]. This organisational representation is confirmed by the second Progress report published in 2005[22]. Having won over any open intra-Traveller opposition, *Pavee Point*, the *ITM* and the *NTWF* in a relatively short time gained the credibility of constituting the three main national Traveller NGOs. They assumed a mostly uncontested representative role vis-à-vis the Irish State institutions and became a regular presence in the Irish national press.

As such, Mary Moriarty's withdrawal from the scene of Traveller politics and the obscuring of the *NFITP* itself left unchallenged their assertions about 'Traveller ethnicity' and demands for Travellers' official ethnic recognition. The three main national Traveller organisations, together with the *Parish of the Travelling People*, also developed in partnership the Citizen Traveller Campaign, funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and launched in October 1999. This three-year initiative was intended as "a support for Traveller organisations in creating a better understanding between the Traveller and settled communities in Ireland, creating an environment to promote Travellers as equal citizens in Irish society and encouraging the Traveller community to take pride in their own cultural identity" (Citizen Traveller Campaign, 2000, 179).

Since the early to mid-1990s they have participated in policy-making, implementation and monitoring through their inclusion in various committees/bodies. Indeed they have been appointed to the National Traveller Consultative Committee advising on Traveller accommodation, as well as to the Traveller Health Advisory Committee and liaised with the Department of Education regarding the formulation of Traveller education (Crowley, 2005, 244-245) and so on. The strategies adopted by these NGOs helped secure national and European funds for: policy responses; policy formulation and analysis; the establishment of relations with the media; targeting Travellers and settled people with their programmes; extensive networking with other

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considerable concurring factor in reaching a final compromise between the opposing positions: accordingly, Travellers' cultural specificity and collective identity –over which there was agreement– were stressed, whereas ethnicity –which was contended– was deliberately left out. Also the division among Travellers might have created space for the more conservative views to prevail.

[21] See Monitoring Committee on the Task Force on the Travelling Community (2000, 6).

[22] *Pavee Point* and the *Irish Traveller Movement* had two representatives each (respectively Ronnie Fay and Martin Collins, and David Joyce and Thomas McCann) whereas the *National Traveller Women's Forum* had only one (Cathryn Mannion). In this regard see Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2005, 5).

Traveller organisations and the wider community sector; engaging in partnership negotiations with the statutory sector; and presenting legal challenges in the courts (Crowley, 2005, 250).

Nonetheless, the professionalisation of Traveller politics from the 1990s onwards coincided with the progressive disappearance of local voluntary mobilisations in support of Travellers that characterised the previous decades. The loss is lamented by campaigner O'Riain (2000) who advocates a return by local communities to this kind of voluntary support and solidarity with Travellers in order to counter locally-based opposition to their presence in mainstream society.

The *NATC* managed to survive the collapse of the organisations it was affiliated with, first the *NCTP* and then the *NFITP*[23]. It still exists, although it is now called *Involve* (*In Partnership with Travellers*). Moreover, *Involve* has appeared as an alternative national Traveller organisation, which is ready to offer additional spaces for Travellers whose views on national policy issues are currently unacknowledged by the other main national Traveller organisations.

Beside these four long-established national Traveller organisations, a new Traveller NGO was informally initiated in 2004 and formally founded in 2008, i.e. *Minceirs Whiden*, a Cant expression which means "Travellers Talking". This Traveller-only forum represents a significant development within Traveller politics, since it constitutes an attempt to articulate a democratic and collective Traveller voice. Traveller activists are trying to enhance their assertiveness and gain the role of direct interlocutor of the Irish State with regard to Traveller affairs. This forum is very closely associated with *Pavee Point*, *ITM* and the *NTWF* so that their core policies, centred on Travellers' ethnic recognition, are enshrined within its mission. This could potentially alienate the involvement of Travellers who oppose this core pursuit.

Minceirs Whiden has progressively raised its public profile since its inception but it is still not widely known within mainstream Irish society. It promoted the initiative of the Traveller flag/logo national vote in 2005, mentioned in Chapter One; it has organised events for the Traveller Pride Week (known as Traveller Focus week until 2009) in the last few years; in 2010 it called for an official apology by the Irish

[23] See www.natc.ie/about-us/history.php. This website omits to name the now defunct *NFITP* as one of the two organisations originating from the split of the *NCTP*, whereas it incorrectly mentions *Pavee Point* in its place. Its neutral position on ethnicity is coupled with the statement that "Full cognisance of Traveller culture and identity is the driving force for this organisation"; in addition, in another passage it adds that it [*NATC*] has been at the forefront to ensure that Travellers' culture and heritage is cherished for the community".

State to Travellers for its role in their victimisation; it has organised public demonstrations and marches. Its current most prominent members also exert a pivotal role within the three main national Traveller organisations[24].

4.7. New challenges to the three main national Traveller NGOs

Despite the prominent partner position of *Pavee Point*, the *ITM* and the *NTWF*, in the last decade the Irish government has at times also controversially sidestepped these NGOs on more than one occasion, taking very important decisions with no consultation. This top-down approach, which has cast serious doubts over the continuation of the State's partnership approach with national Traveller NGOs, emerged during the enactment of the 2002 Housing Act (Section 24) and has continued subsequently. These developments will be covered in the next section.

Meanwhile, the representativeness of these NGOs has also been challenged recently by Martin Ward, chairperson of *Involve*/*NATC*, as being unreflective of 'ordinary' Travellers' positions. Currently, the major subjects of disagreement seem to relate to the demise of Traveller training centres, which was advocated by the national Traveller NGOs, as well as the official recognition of ethnic status for Travellers.

On the other hand, the official legitimation of *NATC*/*Involve* as one of the national Traveller representative organisations is witnessed by its inclusion within the membership of the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee, established in 2007 as a substitute for the Traveller Monitoring Committee, that had lasted for over two decades. Members of *NACT*/*Involve* are listed not only among the members drawn from the national Traveller organisations alongside *Pavee Point*, the *ITM* and the *NTWF*, but also as individual Traveller nominees.

The current intra-Traveller disagreement over Travellers' ethnic recognition is also referred to in statements by the Minister for Justice and Equality Alan Shatter during *Dáil* debates held on 3rd May 2011. On this occasion he stated that the Traveller Policy Division of his Department "had held discussions with five national Traveller groups about the issue of the recognition of the Traveller community as an ethnic minority and it had also been the subject of extensive discussions at meetings of the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee" (*Dáil Eireann*,

[24] For instance, at the time of the publication of *Minceirs Whiden*'s 2010 Policy statement its chairperson was Rosaleen McDonagh, who has also worked for *Pavee Point* for a number of years. Its vice-chairperson was Jim O'Brien, who was simultaneously the chairperson of the *Irish Traveller Movement*. Rose Marie Maughan (who is an *ITM* officer and actively involved in the *ITM* Ethnicity Campaign) is also involved in *Minceirs Whiden*. Martin Collins, a *Pavee Point* employee, spokesperson and very well-known Traveller activist, is also engaged with *Minceirs Whiden*.

Debates, 2011, 280). He noted that a wide divergence of views among Irish Travellers on the issue of ethnicity existed and that it was therefore necessary that the Travelling community discussed this issue and gave full consideration to the implications. He also stressed that any decision would have no domestic legal significance as Travellers were already specifically identified for legal protection under anti-discrimination laws.

Table 1- Traveller mobilisation and politics from the 1960s to date

	APPROACH		
PERIOD	**CONFLICT**	**MIDDLE WAY**	**CONSENSUS**
1960s-1990	***Itinerant Action Campaign*** (1963-1965) mixed, Dublin-based, militant, direct action, minority rights' approach; >***Irish Travellers' Committee*** (1965) mixed membership; nationwide reach (attempted); foundered as activist Grattan Puxon left the country ***Dublin's Traveller Rights' Committee*** (1981-1982) mixed, direct action tactics ***Mincéir Misli*** **(**1983-1984) Traveller-only, direct action, self-funded	***DTEDG*** (1983/84-) Dublin-based, mixed, human rights and community development approach; Travellers regarded as ethnic group ***NTWF*** (1988-) national, Traveller women collective voice and response to common issues; linked to women's groups and Traveller organisations ***ITM*** (1990-) fast expansion nationwide, mixed, human-rights approach, demand of Travellers' ethnic recognition development of legal unit	***DISC*** (1965) only majority population membership; Dublin-based, philanthropic, charitable, Church-based, conciliatory, assimilationist; **Itinerant Settlement Movement** (1965-early 1980s): establishment nationwide of voluntary Itinerant Settlement Committees (peak of 70 in 1972) **DISC> ICIS** (1969) national, non-Traveller, sensitivisation of public opinion; provision of halting sites and housing/lobbying to public institutions; support to Traveller families ***ICIS>NCTP*** (1973-1990) mixed membership, case-based approach; pragmatic goal to meet Travellers' needs re accommodation, education, employment, anti-discrimination and other services ***ATTP*** (1972-1996?) affiliated to the NCTP and concerned with Traveller educational policy formulation ***NATC*** (1976-) Coordination of Traveller Training Centres and policy formulation; youth services
1990s – 2012		***DTEDG*** > ***Pavee Point*** (mid-1990s) ***Minceirs Whiden*** (2004-) Traveller-only; attempting to become main Traveller representative org., demanding State apology and ethnic status for Travellers	***NFITP*** (1990-1995?) national, mixed; continuity with N.C.T.P.; ethnicity not a priority for Travellers; implosion perhaps due to internal dissent over Traveller ethnicity ***NATC>*** ***Involve*** (2011-) new role in supporting Travellers into mainstream education (due to closing down of C.E.T.); maintaining youth work provision; reclaiming the role of national Traveller organization

Legend:
DISC = Dublin Itinerant Settlement Committee
NCTP = National Council for the Travelling People
NATC = National Association of Traveller/Training Centres
NFITP = National Federation of Irish Travelling People
DTEDG = Dublin Traveller Education and Development Group
NTWF =National Traveller Women's Forum

ICIS= Irish Council for Itinerant Settlement
ATTP= Association of Teachers of Travelling People
ITM = Irish Traveller Movement
> = becomes

4.8. Outline of main Traveller policies

A detailed outline of the historical development of Irish social policy initiatives with regard to Travellers is beyond the scope of this section. I contextualise only the unfolding of major policy trends since the 1960s while pointing to the main underlying influences that conditioned such policy changes.

Different social policy approaches to Travellers embraced at different times by Irish governments have been informed by varying understandings of their collective difference as a group vis-à-vis the majority Irish population (Christie, 2004, 148/150). Indeed, changing assumptions or perspectives about the identity and status of Travellers in Irish society have shaped public policy literature and measures in the areas of Traveller accommodation, education, health, training, employment and social welfare (Equality Authority, 2006, 11). The development of public policy thinking on Travellers is generally deduced from the three major official reports on Travellers (Christie, 2004; Crowley, 2005; Equality Authority, 2006): the Report of the Commission on Itinerancy (1963), the Report of the Travelling People Review Body (1983) and the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995). These reports elicited other Traveller-specific policies and legislation regulating and/or protecting aspects of Travellers' lives and/or addressing structural inequalities. To these should be added the High Level Officials' Group Report on Traveller Issues (2006), since it marked a countertendency to the partnership approach previously adopted by the Irish government vis-à-vis Traveller representative organisations.

Institutional and official discourses on Travellers' distinctiveness have been shaped not only by the dominant trends within Irish society and politics, but also by international and national policy and scholarly theorising, as well as obligations flowing from European and international agreements. Prevailing discourses espoused by the various national Traveller representative organisations, which have gained prominence over time in Traveller politics and mobilisation, have also been influential. This dialectic interplay between Traveller-specific policy formulation and Traveller organisational politics is already evident from this chapter.

In the Report on Itinerancy, Travellers, generally named as "itinerants", were considered to be both similar to the rest of the population due to their Irishness but

also different because of their different needs and lifestyle (Christie, 2004, 151/152). As noted above, the government endorsed the Report's advocacy of the (re)absorption of 'itinerants' within mainstream Irish society from which they were believed to have originated under the strains of British colonial oppression (Christie, 2004, 152). Such a broader goal was considered to be achievable primarily through housing and education[25] (Christie, 2004, 151; Crowley, 2005, 234).

The government issued a policy statement that set the framework for intervention over the following twenty years (Equality Authority, 2006, 14). Despite plans for initiatives such as the introduction of subsidies to local authorities for the provision of serviced halting sites and other measures in relation to education, training, health, and social services, it delegated such provision to the local voluntary settlement committees that were coordinated by a centralised voluntary organisation that was renamed over the years (see Table 1). Equally, as already seen, training and education initiatives for Travellers were pioneered by volunteers, such as Sister Colette Dwyer. This was subsequently endorsed by the Departments of Education and Labour and duplicated nationwide. Despite a change of emphasis towards integrated provision in the 1990s, some segregated institutions survived until recently.

A positive shift in public thinking on Travellers' collective identification is recognised in the second report on Travellers, the Report of the Travelling People Review Body (1983). This was undoubtedly influenced by the public debate stimulated by recently emerging militant Traveller activist organisations that had championed rights-based approaches and had possibly influenced the then main Traveller representative body, the *NCTP*. The 1983 Report encompassed a range of perspectives, including a partial acknowledgement of the value of Traveller culture, the significance of Traveller identity at an individual and collective level as well as the individual's right to choose. The term "travellers" [not capitalised] replaced "itinerants" throughout the Report to reflect their chosen designation and the target of "integration" substituted the previous "absorption" (Equality Authority, 2006, 16-17).

Nonetheless, this document retained some ambiguities since it also maintained the still dominant underlying discourse of a community in need of rehabilitation and reintegration, whose differences were negatively ascribed to nomadism as a source of poverty and disadvantage (Crowley, 2005, 135; Christie, 2004, 153). Ameliorating functions were delegated to social workers, who would undertake the role of

[25] See Department of Education and Science (2005/2006).

supporting Travellers on the way to integration. The government published a detailed statement of policy in response to the report and established a Monitoring Committee. The latter, stimulated by its Traveller members, immediately advocated the introduction of anti-discriminatory legislation to protect Travellers and repeated such calls in every single report until its dissolution in 1993 (Equality Authority, 2006, 18). This pressure elicited the introduction of the Incitement to Hatred Act (1989), which, after lengthy parliamentary debates, explicitly included "membership of the travelling [sic] community" (Equality Authority, 2006, 20-25). Furthermore, the 1988 Housing Act contained the first legislative definition of Travellers (Equality Authority, 2006, 20).

The Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) is generally considered to be a watershed in terms of "the redefinition of the Traveller situation in terms of cultural rights" as opposed to "a poverty issue" (Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995, 63). It signals the public recognition of the distinctiveness of Traveller culture and collective identity (in the singular mode) as significant factors for policy making and service delivery. It documents a shift in focus "from a welfare approach inspired by charity to a more rights based approach inspired by a partnership process (…)" (Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995, 62). Despite falling short of defining Travellers as an ethnic group[26], it was influenced by the discourse of 'Traveller ethnicity' as well as by the rights-based approaches promoted by *Pavee Point*, the *ITM* and the *NTWF*.

However, such legitimation and recognition of Travellers' distinct culture and collective identity also contained reductionist implications in terms of strengthening more rigid and bounded subject positions for both Travellers and non-Travellers and their respective separated cultures. This side-effect is crucially observed by Christie (2004, 155) in the following passage:

> "The culture of Travellers is defined again as those activities that are different from, as opposed to similar to, the settled community. Traveller culture and settled culture are homogenised and emptied of the many differences *within* and *across* these cultures [emphasis in the original].Traveller culture is reduced to those aspects of the Traveller ways of life that are pushed outside the dominant settled culture. This marginalisation of Traveller culture limits the possibility of alliances between settled and Traveller communities based on any common interests. As in the previous reports, the focus on how the Traveller community is 'different from' the settled community leaves sedentarism unquestioned and homogenises both groups".

[26] It also contained a minority report, signed by a small group of dissenting members, who refused to accept the position of all the other commissioners and denied the value of Traveller culture, insisting on the need to assimilate Travellers to the mainstream Irish society and abolish nomadism.

The 1995 Report, which was accepted by the government, has informed a wide-range of national-level policy making and legislation relating to Travellers over the last two decades. It has been inspired by a strategy of "mainstreaming" that implies the dual approach of making special provision for Travellers according to their distinctive needs and aspirations while adapting standard mainstream provision to make it accessible and relevant for Travellers (Crowley, 2005, 236).

As already noted, the policy and legislative measures introduced in the last two decades have been mostly co-influenced through consultation and lobbying by the three NGOs which are generally recognised as the main national Traveller organisations: *Pavee Point*, the *ITM* and the *NTWF*. Their discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity', "arguably accepted as a de facto reality by both the statutory and voluntary sectors" (Mc Veigh, 2007, 96), have since been incorporated into most departmental policies concerning Travellers even though the Irish government and, particularly, the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform, have persisted in denying ethnic status to Travellers[27]. This creates an anomalous situation in the Republic of Ireland where the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform contradict the practices of the other departments and bodies (Mc Veigh, 2007, 96-100).

The main landmark developments, as listed in Crowley (2005, 237-249), include the 1998 Housing Act addressing Traveller-specific accommodation needs, including local authorities' responsibility to provide for nomadic families; the equality legislation (1998 Employment Equality Act and 2000 Equal Status Act) making explicit reference to Travellers; the inclusion of Traveller children in mainstream school classes and the publication of a series of documents with an intercultural focus, culminating in the Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy (2006); the publication of *Traveller Health: A National Strategy* (2002), the public funding and duplication countrywide of a *Pavee Point*'s service named Primary Health Care for Travellers and the recent publication of the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study; public support to the "Traveller economy" and to Travellers' access to the mainstream labour market, particularly through pilot employment initiatives of positive action within public services. As noted already, this process of policy making, implementation and monitoring has mostly benefited from the active participation of the three main

[27] For a detailed analysis of these contradictions see Equality Authority (2006, 11-41) and McVeigh (2007, 96-100).

national Traveller organisations, involved in partnership with the Irish State (Crowley, 2005, 244-245).

However, the significant progress in policy making and legislation has not been matched by an adequate level of policy implementation (Crowley, 2005, 254). Indeed, this approach has met ongoing resistance at local level, so hampering real progress in terms of equality of outcomes for Travellers (Crowley, 2005, 245). Therefore, for obtaining "a definitive improvement in the experience and situation of the Traveller community" such gaps need to be bridged. Nonetheless, achieving such a goal requires not only political willingness but also a reversal of the still socially dominant negative, discriminatory and exclusionary attitudes towards Travellers.

In addition, as already observed, the partnership between Irish State and the national Traveller NGOs has been recently challenged by the appointment of the High Level Officials' Group on Traveller Issues, which issued its first report in 2006. Equally some crucial progressive legislative and policy measures have been reversed or undermined by more recent ones. First, the 2002 Housing Act transformed trespass from a civil to a criminal offence, de facto criminalising and penalising Traveller families still living on the roadside awaiting government provision of suitable accommodation and/or halting sites. Second, in the same year, the government withdrew its funding for the Citizen Traveller Campaign, allegedly in the aftermaths of a controversial advertisement that was critical of the 2002 Housing Act. Third, in 2006 the High Level Officials' Group Report on Traveller Issues was adopted by the government. This had been commissioned from a group of nineteen male, senior civil servants from various departments, appointed by the Taoiseach, but without any contribution from individual Travellers or members of Traveller organisations. Meanwhile some of the already existing partnership consultative fora on Travellers were disbanded, not re-appointed or not convened. The Monitoring Committee on Travellers was disbanded in December 2005, while the National Traveller Education Advisory Committee has not convened since October 2005 and the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee was not re-appointed since its term of office in March 2006. The only consultative body which has continued to operate is the National Traveller Health Advisory Committee, whose power, nonetheless, has been reduced since the Health Service Executive's establishment of a National Working Group on Travellers and Minority Ethnic Groups. Finally, the government has refused official recognition of the ethnic status of Travellers, despite such recognition being

demanded by the man national Traveller NGOs with the widespread support of several national and international human rights bodies and organisations[28].

The coexistence and shifting of conflicting approaches adopted by the Irish government shows shifting attitudes over time as well as lack of unity among State institutions, in the various components of which power struggles are played out under the influence of powerful lobbies.

4.9. Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the historical development of Traveller politics and policies while pointing to the dialectic interplay between these contiguous fields. Traveller political mobilisation was reconstructed primarily relying on newspaper archival material and other written documents and therefore the presentation has some limitations. Undertaking ethnographic research might have generated a partly different historical account. The discussion focused especially on the period from the early 1960s onwards. A substantial part was dedicated to outlining the development of various Traveller organisations with their own specific strategies, policy approaches and position vis-à-vis State institutions. Some of these were short-lived whereas others expanded and consolidated their influence throughout the years, gaining reputation as national Traveller NGOs, involved in various partnerships with the Irish State. The collapse of the *NCTP* (1990), followed by the implosion of the derived *NFITP*, marked a change in organisational approaches to Travellers, from a predominantly charitable and paternalist to a human rights one, centred on the core concept of 'Traveller ethnicity', championed first by the *DTEDG* (then *Pavee Point*), and subsequently also joined by the *NTWF* and the *ITM*. The only organisation that survived the changeover and gained consolidation throughout the following decades was the *NATC* (renamed *Involve* in 2011). The latter survived yet another threat recently: the State-imposed closure of the training centres finalised in June 2012. As a result.

This chapter constitutes the historical backdrop for the analytical part of this thesis. It adds significant insights for the examination of the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity', revealing how this conception has been at the centre of internal struggles among Traveller activists and their respective representative organisations since its introduction into Traveller politics in the 1980s.

[28]See O'Brien (2012) in *The Irish Times* (10/03/2012) for a commentary on governmental responses to the recommendations made with the U.N. Universal Periodic Review process. One of only four recommendations it did not accept is the recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority.

Chapter Five

Critical Discourse Analysis as a methodology and method

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter I locate my theoretical position within the critical tradition, while outlining its specificities and the main tenets of a critical ontology. Then I narrow the focus to the more specific adherence of this study to the paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis, which stands in a dialectical relation with critical theory. In doing so, I point out the usefulness of Critical Discourse Analysis to the exploration of the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity'. Third, I describe my application of a CDA method with regards to both the whole research design and the specific analytical procedures. Fourth, I provide an overview of the selected data. Finally, I conclude by pointing out some limitations and address ethical considerations that arose during the research process.

5.2. Critical theory as the broad theoretical perspective underpinning this study

My theoretical assumptions are primarily located within more recent critical positions that seek to continue and renew the critical perspective with a particular focus on discourse. These include Fairclough (1989/1995/2003), Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), Reisigl and Wodak (2009), Van Dijk (1998), and Calhoun (1995).

Critical theory is historically associated with the Frankfurt School of Social Research, which was founded in the early 1920s. It is located within the neo-Marxist tradition, although it draws some elements from psychoanalysis and in particular from the Freudian tradition (Marshall, 1998, 131; Churton, 2000, 17). The first critical sociologists tried to correct orthodox Marxism's economic determinism by putting more emphasis on superstructure, in particular on the ideological means of domination.

Having developed over the past decades, the critical perspective currently incorporates a variety of approaches, from neo-Marxism to structuralism, feminism and black perspectives. Variants abound in all the social science disciplines (Creswell, 1998, 80). Critical theorists (Calhoun, 1995; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999) have also engaged with postmodernism, assimilating some of its insights with regard to its epistemological relativism, concerns with difference and the complexity, instability and flux of late modern social life and identities.

These approaches, which have evolved in parallel with social movements'

political struggles for recognition and redistribution, have drawn attention to the complexity, openness and discursive constitution of social identities (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 120-138). Sensitivity to issues of identity and difference complements the critical inclination for universalism by helping recognise particularism and distinctions between and within groups, in the hope of establishing some form of non-repressive dialogue across differences (Calhoun, 1995, xxiv-xxv). This critical focus on the simultaneous recognition of similarities and differences is relevant for the subject of my study and informs my examination of the debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' within Traveller politics.

Furthermore some recent critical theories focus upon the central role played by language in social life, so correcting an original omission within orthodox Marxist economic determinism. According to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, 74) this attention to language is due not only to their realisation of the significance of language but also to the fact that language and, more broadly, discourse, has become increasingly relevant in the course of modernity and, especially, late modernity due to the rise in mass communication. This has also been combined with other semiotic elements, especially visual ones such as photography and films. Late modern societies are referred to as "post-traditional" by Giddens (1991 in Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999) to signify new possibilities for individuals to construct, negotiate and enact their own identities and lifestyles. More precisely, "the unprecedented autonomy of individuals" goes hand-in-hand with "an unprecedented dependance upon mass mediated symbolic resources" (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 44). Therefore, mass communication pervasively undermines and informs individual and collective identities so that struggles over the construction of identities have become one of late modernity's salient features (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 83). Attention to these specific issues is particularly relevant for this study.

Critical theory starts from the presumption that the existing arrangements within the social world do not exhaust the available range of possibilities (Calhoun, 1995, xviii). It therefore attempts to gain consciousness of 'social reality' through an exploration of the ways in which our categories of thought often preclude us from recognising potential alternative arrangements (Calhoun, 1995, xviii), and, finally, it proceeds to suggest alternatives. Accordingly, it is not enough to describe society, but research has to go beyond it, to explanation that can operate as a basis for change aimed at challenging social inequality and oppression (May, 1997, 39 and 42; Layder, 1998,

147). To be critical refers to the articulation of "an explicit position of scholarly dissent in relationships of societal dominance and inequality" (Van Dijk, 1998, 11). Although critical theorists acknowledge that as human beings we are able to make sense of our own world, they argue that our understanding is often distorted and incomplete, due to the absence of broader contextualisations and critical insights into underlying societal mechanisms and constraining forces. This limitation can be at least partially overcome through a critical engagement with the social world also thanks to the theoretical tools provided by critical theory.

Thus an essential element of critical research is the analysis of domination and ideology, which are considered as means of legitimation and concealment of oppression (Layder, 1998, 147; Marshall, 1998, 131). In contemporary societies the exercise of power occurs not just through coercion, but is increasingly achieved through the ideological workings of language, by means of what is called the manufacturing of consent (Fairclough, 1989, 17). In this regard, Thompson's appreciation of critical theorists' contribution deserves an extensive quotation:

"Whatever the shortcomings of the work of the critical theorists, they were right, in my view, to emphasise the enduring significance of domination in the modern world; they were right to stress that individuals are self-reflective agents who can deepen their understanding of themselves and others and who can, on the basis of this understanding, act to change the conditions of their lives; and they were right to regard the critical analysis of ideology as one phase in the dynamic relation between domination and action, between the establishment and reproduction of forms of domination, on the one hand, and the process of critical self-reflection which may enable individuals to challenge these forms, on the other" (Thompson, 1990, 330).

5.3. Specificities of critical social research

Hammersley (1995, x) denies the existence of general common grounds for critical theoretical approaches, on the basis of the proliferation of differing, even contradictory, conceptions within this perspective. Hence, in positioning myself within the critical framework, I must confront this dismissal. Although I share some of his concerns with the fashionable status of critical approaches within current social research, often further confused by the various overlapping meanings attached to the attribute "critical", I contend that rigorous and distinctively critical research exists and is grounded on solid theoretical bases.

The specificities of the critical theoretical practice are convincingly summarised by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, 31/35). These authors argue that the great variety and tension within critical research is both "appropriate and productive" because of its

capacity to account for the complexity and tension of human life (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 76). In addition, it is committed to providing an explanatory critique, based on a commitment to produce a modest contribution to scientific 'truth' regarded as "epistemic gain", which can be assessed within practices and against competing theoretical formulations in terms of comparative strengths and weaknesses (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 35). These points will be further explicated in the following section.

The first characteristic shared by critical researchers is that they analyse social reality in light of a dialectical and relational logic, i.e. regarding the social world as the product of the interplay between social structures and people's concrete actions. These relations are conceived of in dialectical terms so that social structures are both the preconditions and the effects of social actions. This entails a dialectical tension between "structural permanencies" and the activities of people engaged in them (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 31-32). In this way, critical theory recognises the constitutive role of structures and power in enabling and shaping social practices, while retaining subjects/actors' agency. To varying extents, according to their relative power and resources, people are accorded the ability to impact upon those structures and relations and, hence, to change them.

According to this perspective theory is an established form of social activity that is inserted within networks of other social activities according to relations of reciprocal influence. This entails that there are two-way flows between theoretical and practical activities. For example, social movements and struggles inform critical social science while the latter, in turn, strives to theoretically contribute to their causes, provided that there is real dialogue across the public spheres (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 9).

Thus, as critical practitioners we must be self-critical and aware that, by being specialised in producing knowledge about the social world, we have, to various extents, the power to draw the line between what is 'thinkable' and what is 'unthinkable'. This brings us to the second feature of critical approaches: their commitment to social causes, justice and equality. To say it in Chouliaraki and Fairclough's (1999, 31) words, critical studies maintain a "weak boundary between the theoretical practice and the analysed ones". In this sense Habermas states that critical scholars adopt an "emancipatory knowledge interest" (1972 in Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 31).

In contrast to the positivist tradition, the purpose of critical research consists not just in producing new knowledge, but also in revealing and criticising oppression and

inequality, with a practical aim of leading to progressive social change (Churton, 2000, 17). Nonetheless, this engagement is not always accompanied by close relationships between critical researchers and the people and social phenomena that are examined. Often researchers are distanced from those researched, as in my case. Hence, the practical benefits to their cause (if any) might be rather indirect and longer-term (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 31). However, critical social research cannot guarantee the realisation of progressive social change and greater justice, which necessarily requires political and social action.

Because of its political commitment this perspective is problematised especially by sociologists from the positivist tradition, who maintain that the differences between facts and values can be sustained and concentrate on neutrality, fact gathering and the development of hypotheses to be tested. This dispute is linked to the wider controversy over the nature of sociology as a social science, and its differences from natural sciences. Against this critique, I argue that the articulation of an explicit position of scholarly dissent towards societal dominance and inequality does not entail an abandonment of the obligations of the researcher.

Against Hammersley (1995, x) and with Fairclough (1989, 5), I argue that an overt declaration of such a commitment does not correspond to writing political propaganda or to a renunciation of research rigour. Critical researchers are not excused from arguing rationally, producing evidence for their statements and dealing with contradictions and ambiguity. Additionally, even the competing positivist standpoint is not as objective and neutral as it pretends to be, since it is also based on taken for granted and unacknowledged assumptions on the social world and human nature. Its claim to political neutrality does not guarantee that such research is neutral especially when it sustains inequality and oppression.

5.4. Key role of discourses in the social world

Despite the coexistence of different approaches within critical research, they are rooted in common ontological and epistemological grounds (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 19-36). According to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), critical ontology is anchored in a view of social life as an open system consisting of networks of social practices so that every event is governed simultaneously by various mechanisms. Practices articulate with one another and through reciprocal exchanges they emerge as partially transformed or over-determined. Hence, events cannot be

predicted in simple causal ways, since they are simultaneously influenced by the various mechanisms underpinning different practices, networks of practices and dimensions of life (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 19).

The concept of practice is characterised by a beneficial ambiguity, according to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, 21), as it is meant both as a "habitual way of acting" and as concrete "social action". This double connotation enables practices to occupy an intermediate position between social structures and concrete events so that a certain balance can be reached between structure and agency in order to account for phenomena of social continuity and social change (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 21-22). Furthermore, each practice is reflexive (i.e. a discursive representation of what we do is generated as part of what we do). Practices are inserted within social relations and processes; they have a material dimension (i.e. as actions), a mental dimension (i.e. as beliefs, values and desires) and finally a discursive dimension (i.e. as language and semiosis). Within this view of social life, social relations of power play a crucial role in maintaining relatively stable interactional routines, activities and subject positions.

However, these relatively stable networks are open to power struggles, which can challenge their relative stability. Power struggles are reflected in shifting configurations of institutions, interactional routines, activities and subject positions. Power is intended as both domination (which establishes causal links between institutional practices and subjects' positions) and bio-power (i.e. self-regulating internalisation of power relations and subjective positions at the micro level).

The implications of this theoretical formulation of social life with regards to the discursive dimension of practices are paramount for my research. Discourses imply more than texts: they are "communicative events", in Van Dijk's words (1998, 316), and constitutes a very significant element of practices in three ways (Fairclough, 2003, 206): first, because each practice is accompanied by a reflexive representation of the practice itself and of other practices; second, because most practices actually involve the use of language to varying degrees so that discourse functions as a means of action and interaction; third, discourse is employed in the identification and construction of personal and social identities.

The focus on the discursive dimension of practices entails the use of two other crucial conceptions within critical theorising: ideology and hegemony. Indeed, discursive constructions of practices are called ideologies if they serve to sustain either relations of domination – a negative conception of ideology- according to Chouliaraki

and Fairclough (1999), or any kind of power relation (a neutral conception of ideology), according to Van Dijk (1998). I locate myself in line with the neutral understanding of this notion since it presents the advantage of maintaining a critical edge while avoiding the arbitrariness of labelling as ideological only the belief systems that we do not accept (Van Dijk, 1998, 11).

Discourses play the fundamental role of vehicles of ideologies and a means to achieve hegemony. The Gramscian notion of hegemony helps to explain how domination can be covertly reached by means of the ideological manufacturing of consent rather than through coercion. Through a number of strategies of legitimation and reproduction, among which the process of ideological naturalisation plays a pivotal role, particular ideologies (one-sided self-constructions of practices, sustaining particular power relations and competing with alternative representations of the same practice and power relations) manage to mostly suppress their internal contradictions, dilemmas and antagonisms. In this way, these discursive constructions come to be perceived as natural, self-evident and common sense and become hegemonic. Their ideological character becomes disguised by their new universal appearance. Hence, an ideology (and the discourse type which carries it) becomes commonsensical once a process of ideological naturalisation has taken place.

Therefore, the Gramscian notion of common sense is also strictly connected to the workings of ideologies. Naturalisation occurs at the level of language itself (codification of standard languages and fixation of words' meanings), as well as at the level of interactional routines (establishment of conventional ways in which participants interact with each other), and ultimately at the level of subjects and situations (fixation of specific subject positions and then, in the long term, delimitation of the stock of social identities and situation types). This last level is particularly relevant for my study since it is concerned with competing discourses on ‘Traveller ethnicity’ and their potential implications in terms of Traveller identity construction, social relations with mainstream Irish society and policy measures.

However, consent is never fully reached, since social life is naturally open and there is always some form and degree of dissent in society. Hence, hegemony, as an ongoing process of political domination, is dynamic and subjected to change. In this openness lies the possibility for the generation of alternative resources for resistance, social struggle and social change. Discourse emerges as such a pivotal resource. Discourses can be hegemonic (when implicated in processes of social continuity),

counter-hegemonic and dissident (when fostering social change and resistance). Hence they are a key vehicle of social continuity and/or change.

Consequently Fairclough (1989, 43-75) contends that there is "power in discourses" (discourses are seen as the place where the powerful control and constrain the contributions of the powerless). There is also power "behind discourses" (in the conventions regulating orders of discourses). The second expression refers to the structural level of societal relations in the sense that orders of discourses are underpinned by conventions that are not naturally given but determined by the ideological assumptions of the dominant power. For instance, we can consider types of discourses which are held in mainstream professional relations, where professionals are reserved a special social status and authority, generally accepted by most members of society as naturally due because of their expertise (Fairclough, 1989, 63-64).

Similarly discourses constitute the site of ideological struggles between competing systems of beliefs linked to particular configurations of power relations, as it is exemplified in Fairclough's expression struggle 'over discourses' (types of discourses taken as the stake of struggle) and 'in discourses' (i.e. during the actual discursive event). Contrary to appearances, at stake are not only words, but also the control over the contours of the political world, the legitimation of a policy approach over others, the maintenance of particular societal power relations and subject positions and ultimately of the status quo or its challenge (Fairclough, 1989, 90).

5.5. Adherence to the Critical Discourse Analytical perspective

The analytical paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) builds on the preceding insights combining them with a linguistic analysis of discourse. Thus this framework is appropriate to an investigation of the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' and its potential (re-) productive implications.

CDA, sometimes also referred to as Critical Discourse Studies, is a relatively young discipline, founded in Britain and Australia in the 1980s (Slembrouck, 2001, 34). Over the last decade it has become institutionalised worldwide within academia (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, 4). It has roots in Critical Linguistics, a branch of Discourse Analysis. It takes a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach, as its sources lie within linguistics, philosophy, psychology and social science (Stenvoll, 2002, 145) and it is adopted by a growing number of practitioners. In this regard, Wodak and Meyer (2009, 5) stress the enormous variety among studies in CDA, which are derived from quite

different theoretical backgrounds, oriented towards different data and methodologies and relying on a variety of grammatical approaches. For this reason, they (2009, 5) prefer to name CDA more loosely as a heterogeneous school, framework, research programme or shared perspective to which many researchers variously relate.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) constitutes a specific form of discourse analysis among others. They share certain core assumptions on the nature of language and its relationship to the central issues of social science (Kroger and Wood, 2000, x). First, discourse is considered as text and talk in their social dimensions, hence as a social practice, in contrast with the study of language as an abstract entity; second, it is held as a central and constitutive feature of social life and not just a medium of communication (Kroger and Wood, 2000, 4). CDA studies also share the characteristic of being problem-oriented.

However, it represents a departure from dominant modes of linguistic research by going beyond description, to the explanation of how and why particular discourses are produced. Hence discursive interpretation, explanation, socio-political contextualisation and thus the recognition of the crucial role played by deeper social forces are crucial parts of the research process. Moreover, in accordance with the critical perspective, this analytical approach is characterised by a political emancipatory programme of empowerment and elimination of social inequality (Slembrouck, 2001, 35) and of social dominance (Van Dijk, 2001, 354).

The CDA framework entails a dialectical and dynamic relationship at different levels. It occurs between theory and practice so that the former informs the concrete way of carrying out the analysis, whereas the empirical application can in turn help further improve the methodological framework. Equally, a dialectical relationship is established between critical social theory and CDA so that they mutually inform each other. For instance, CDA benefits from accounts of late modernity and discourse (see Section 5.2) formulated within critical theory while in turn contributing to the development of the field of critical research by providing systematic accounts of the discourse moment of contemporary social practices (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 154). Finally, the relational-dialectical logic operational within the critical perspective establishes a two-way exchange between researchers and the researched. Accordingly, first, inputs for social research are generated within social practices; second, outputs from researchers are produced and put into dialogue with those researched; third, newly acquired theoretical knowledge is fed into social practices with the aim of transforming

these where needed as well as having the potential to further refine social theory itself (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 34-35).

With regard to my specific study, this methodology is particularly apposite, considering my focus on competing discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity' as formulated and advanced within Traveller politics. This theoretical framework allows me to explore these discourses as communicative interactions occurring within a specific Irish historical context and as simultaneously shaped and influenced by long-term unequal Traveller-oppressive social relations of power on the one hand, and involved in their change, on the other. It also permits me to connect this Irish specific instance of a minority's struggle for recognition to a broader network of social practices and institutions, which include identity-based mobilisation and international human rights fora, such as the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination.

It means appreciating the appropriation by Irish Traveller NGOs of human rights discourses on ethnicity and culture formulated within the aforementioned international bodies (a phenomenon called interdiscursivity and realised textually as intertextuality) and their potential impact on public policies dealing with Traveller issues, Travellers' collective and individual identity construction and relations with mainstream Irish society.

Specifically, the discourses advanced within Traveller politics are regarded, in line with Fairclough (2003)'s tripartite characterisation of discourses' functions, as "ways of acting" -i.e. Traveller NGOs pose their demands to the Irish State using these discourses as a means of social resistance to structurally unequal power relations and to the systematic vilification of Travellers within Irish society; "ways of representing" –i.e. they promote particular descriptions of ethnicity and culture with regard to Travellers and their relations with mainstream Irish society as the expenses of competing understandings; and "ways of being" –i.e. they construct Traveller identity (-ies) in specific ways, contributing to the fixation and legitimation of certain ways of being Traveller over competing ones. Hence, national Traveller NGOs' affirmation of a positive Traveller identity rooted in their ethnic difference and cultural independence is interpreted as part of a broader political struggle for recognition and equality.

The theoretical consideration of discourse as a co-productive factor of social life (rather than mere medium of communication) and as a moment of social practices which enters in a relation of articulation with the other constituting moments bears

potential implications for Travellers' lives. The 'Traveller ethnicity' discourse variously intercepts with their material activities, mental phenomena and social relations and processes at various levels. Therefore, it has potential constitutive effects on Travellers' self-understandings, lives, identities and relations with mainstream society, Irish institutions and adopted policies.

Furthermore, the discourse of 'Traveller ethnicity' can be historically located and assessed with reference to its initial articulatory affirmation up to its current quasi-hegemonic status within Traveller politics, despite a simultaneous long-term opposition to it from within and without the Traveller community. The CDA framework helps me detect the occurrence of an ongoing ideological struggle among Travellers for the legitimation and naturalisation of particular understandings of themselves in contemporary Ireland, how their interests can be best served and by what public policies. This internal struggle is paralleled by an enduring opposition within Irish mainstream society to the recognition of the ethnic status of Travellers.

Nonetheless, the discourse of 'Traveller ethnicity', sustained by the main national Traveller NGOs, can be regarded as having gained momentum. This suggests its involvement in a process of ideological naturalisation, which appears to be moving towards a successful end. It seems that the ethnicity campaign has been increasingly securing hegemonic status among Travellers, within Irish society and internationally, to the point that official recognition by the Irish State might soon become inevitable. Nonetheless the re-emergence of a renovated opposition among Travellers might challenge or postpone such a victory of the 'Traveller ethnicity' discourse. In turn, these competing discourses might influence one another during the struggle and could reciprocally appropriate some elements into a new common perspective.

Overall, the CDA framework allows me to appreciate how this discursive struggle on 'Traveller ethnicity' does not merely reflect what Travellers are but also discursively contributes to their very constitution. Furthermore, it does not only refer to the representational level – i.e. the definition and construction of Traveller identity (-ies) vis-à-vis Irish national identity (-ies). It also expands onto the interrelated moments of social life: Travellers' beliefs, values, desires and self-perceptions; Travellers' relations with mainstream Irish society; the formulation of concrete policies dealing with Traveller issues and the allocation of funds (or their withdrawal, as it is more commonplace in the current economic climate of recession) to some initiatives and organisations rather than others.

By shedding light into intra-Traveller issues it also permits to appreciate the complexity of Traveller politics and its internal heterogeneity against an appearance of consensus and uniformity. What emerges is a complex picture characterised by issues of power imbalance, access to the media, competition for scarce resources, representativeness, democratic participation (or lack of it) in advisory roles affecting decision-making with regard to initiatives that concern all Travellers (such as the conferral of the ethnic status and the closure of Traveller training centres).

5.6. My operationalisation of CDA: an eight-stage method

In this section I outline the adopted method with regards to the research design and its various phases. I then focus on the analytical tools applied during the phase of textual examination. In drawing my method with regard to research design, I took into consideration the eight research stages recommended by Reisigl and Wodak[29] (2009, 96) and applied them selectively according to the constraints imposed by my PhD research project, which I carried out on my own and availing of limited resources and a competence still in formation.

As advised by Reisigl and Wodak (2009), I first devoted considerable time to the consultation of current theoretical literature on the core concepts (ethnicity, culture, 'race', national identity and identity politics) and, more specifically, on sociological and anthropological applications of such notions to Irish Travellers. In addition I also familiarised myself with various methodological approaches to CDA and finally with concrete operationalisations of such approaches by referring to CDA current research as published in *Discourse & Society* within the last fifteen years.

Second, due to the paramount significance of contextualisation within the CDA framework, I embarked on a systematic collection of contextual information including consulting newspapers' archives such as *The Irish Times,* considering articles since the mid-1950s and early 1960s to the present, other published works on Traveller politics and mobilisation in Ireland, State policy reports regarding Traveller issues and other studies published by various organisations (including past and present Traveller NGOs

[29] Reisigl and Wodak (2009, 96) recognise that their suggested eight-stage programme for a thorough approach constitutes "an ideal-typical list" which "is best realised in a big interdisciplinary project with enough resources of time, personnel and money". They have specifically in mind the situation of PhD researchers, who are usually short of these resources. In this case, they state that "smaller studies are, of course, useful and legitimate", provided that practitioners make explicit choices when devising their PhD research projects. Occasionally, projects can be restricted to very few case studies or genres; in alternative, some parts might be left for a follow-up project. Even less extended studies offer a valuable contribution, but in the awareness of their specific limitations.

and professional organisations) and academics. However, this search was limited to the material I could find in the U.C.C. library and/or on the internet but excluded additional debates in other fora and undocumented by (or unavailable in) the sources that I availed of. Nonwithstanding this limitation, this investigative process revealed a long-lasting intra-Traveller contention over 'Traveller ethnicity', dating from the introduction of this category/label within Traveller identity politics in Ireland. Especially thanks to my archival investigation of *The Irish Times*, I could trace the historical roots of this controversy (which is also documented to various extents in the other sources referred to in the analytical chapters) and its resurfacing in recent times.

This discovery brought me to the third stage: the revision and refinement of the original research questions formulated within the research proposal. To my surprise, even when this internal disagreement was acknowledged by other Irish researchers, it was not regarded as an appropriate subject of enquiry. This appeared to me to be a discursive problem within current Irish academic practice on Traveller issues, specifically, its overlooking of the internal debate over Traveller ethnic recognition within the Traveller community itself. Therefore, I reformulated my initial research plan, which was originally aimed at investigating State and national Traveller NGOs' competing discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity'. I decided to shift the focus of my attention onto the Traveller 'side' itself, to examine their past and present arguments in favour and against 'Traveller ethnicity', how this is variously constructed by the contending sides and to what political and discursive effects, especially with regards to potential implications for Travellers' identities.

Fourth, I engaged with the data selection process. Similar to most critical discourse analysts, I decided to focus on already existing discursive material, i.e. "non-reactive data". In order to commence the process of data selection, I followed most of the recommendations made by Wodak and Meyer (2009). Hence, I familiarised myself more systematically with the main national Traveller NGOs' websites (*Pavee Point*, the *ITM*, the *NTWF*, the *NATC*/*Involve* and *Minceirs Whiden*) and their newsletters (when available). I stored this various discursive material with reference to 'Traveller ethnicity' or closely related topics. I also browsed the websites of some local Traveller organisations when useful. However, I eventually decided to use documents only from two of the four national Traveller NGOs that have mobilised in favour of Travellers' ethnic recognition, namely the long-established *ITM* and the more recent Traveller-only forum, *Minceirs Whiden*, since they both draw their membership nationwide and have a

democratic system of representation among affiliated members. *Pavee Point* is primarily Dublin-based while the *NTWF*, despite its support for Travellers' ethnic recognition and its nationwide reach, has been less visible within public and media debate on this issue. *NTWF* did not reserve any special section of its website to 'Traveller ethnicity' and did not appear to be at the forefront of the Traveller ethnicity campaign. Nonetheless, there is an overlapping of membership between the selected organisations and the latter, in the sense that some of the Traveller activists involved in *Pavee Point* and the *NTWF* are simultaneously active within the *ITM* and/or *Minceirs Whiden* (e.g. Martin Collins and Rosaleen McDonagh from *Pavee Point* play leading roles in *Minceirs Whiden* too).

I regrouped the primary data into two main groups: the first produced by sustainers of Traveller ethnicity and the second by its opponents. They are mostly in a written format (apart from D4 which is a film) and, as noted already, belong to various genres and sources. Despite their heterogeneity, the chosen documents pertain primarily to the context of production of discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity'. Hence with this study I do not analyse the contexts of distribution and reception.

Fifth, I concentrated on devising my own analytical method, by drawing both on CDA literature and on research published in the journal *Discourse & Society*. This overview was quite time-consuming but also extremely useful since it enhanced my knowledge about practical analytical procedures and dilemmas faced by other researchers. It also made me more confident in the process of identifying and analysing data. Most researchers have to make similar choices. Indeed, even other studies investigating phenomena of identity construction (Wodak et al.,1999; Clary-Lemon, 2010; Kalmus, 2003; Pietikäinen, 2003) confirm the usefulness of a primarily thematic examination combined with linguistic analysis of purposedly selected aspects. For instance, Clary-Lemon (2010) in her bottom-up approach to Irish immigrants' identity construction in Canada simplified the Discourse Historical Approach to CDA. In terms of data collection she dispensed with the principle of data triangulation by concentrating in greater depth only on one set of data -immigrants' oral histories. As regards data analysis it was operated through two phases: first she analysed the contents and topics of the interviews and then she focused upon selected linguistic features that are usually implicated as micro-strategies in identity construction discourses. Similarly Kalmus (2003) in her work on inter-ethnic integration in Estonia among school pupils from majority (Estonian) and minority (Russian) background relied on content analysis,

conducted on the basis of core guiding questions. Even in her case, the linguistic analysis was primarily limited to those features which were assumed to be relevant for her research questions. Finally, Pietikäinen (2003)'s study was concerned with indigenous Sami identity construction in print news in Finland. The data clustered within a specific historical period (1985-1993) that represented a crucial moment of transition for both Sami resistance politics and Finland's national and international re-stabilisation after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The author focused on contents analysis (the topics: what was regarded as worthy of news attention with regard to the Sami?; the topics' order: what topics are prioritised?; the quotation patterns (who is considered to be a trustworthy source of information?) as well as on a limited set of linguistic features such as the naming of participants (what labels are assigned to participants?); and, finally, the distribution of grammatical agency (are Sami represented as agents or patients of socio-political action?).

Therefore, in consideration of my study's focus on competing discursive constructions of 'Traveller ethnicity' I opted for a similarly selective approach. Particularly, I decided to concentrate on finding out what topics are present within discussions/definitions of 'Traveller ethnicity' and in turn within what topics the discussion of 'Traveller ethnicity' is inserted; if they are presented within a hierarchical order (the topics' order reveals the prioritisation of different topics) and also what other themes are partially or wholly omitted/absent.

Simultaneously, I committed to assess these data on 'Traveller ethnicity' against current critical insights as outlined in Chapter Two's overview. Accordingly, I made a list of questions to keep in mind during the analysis of the data's thematic and semantic aspects:

a) How is the notion of Traveller ethnicity discursively constructed? Is it equated to cultural distinctiveness? Is it considered as a process or as a property/entity? Is it conceived in a dynamic (acknowledging polivocality, internal dissent, heterogeneity and processes of cultural change and exchanges) or static way (along ethnically absolute lines)? What are presented as its characteristics? What relationships are drawn between Traveller ethnicity and the notions of culture, 'race' and national identity? How are Irish Travellers constructed as a group? How is their relationship to mainstream Irish society constructed?
b) What are the similarities and divergences, if any, between national Traveller NGOs discourses in favour of 'Traveller ethnicity' and the opposing discourses

from within the Traveller community? Are they signs of reciprocal influence and/or resistence? Are they discursive struggles being played out within the analysed texts?

c) What kind of identity politics can be individuated as being pursued by mainstream Traveller NGOs (e.g. essentialist, deconstructive, self-critical or strategic essentialism)? Are affirmative strategies being combined with self-critical and deconstructive (destabilisation of fixed identity categories) strategies?

d) What are the potential effects of the analysed discourses on both Travellers themselves and mainstream society in terms of identity construction and societal relations? What kinds of identifications and relations do they foster among the general public? Do they potentially reinforce or challenge stereotypes and societal divisions?

With reference to the linguistic examination of data's texture, I devised it in a selective way. I chose to concentrate primarily on the semantic aspects concerning the core notions of ethnicity, culture and identity. This enables a better understanding of the examined constructions of 'Traveller ethnicity' with regard to the elements presented as its core characteristics, and to other terms/concepts associated with or, alternatively, dissociated/opposed to it. However, when necessary I also included a consideration of other grammar aspects such as verbal modality, expression of agency, and so on. Furthermore, I focused on the potential deployment of discursive macro- and micro-strategies, particularly those usually implicated within identity construction processes.

Sixth, I conducted a pilot analysis to test categories, assumptions and devised method. As a result, I decided to reduce the amount of data since I realised that there was a considerable degree of repetition among many items and also their examination required consultation of other parallel texts (reports, speeches, books, websites pages and so on). Hence, I limited the study to nine primary data, yet, still keeping in mind some of the remaining ones among my secondary data of consultation (see section 5.9 for some examples of excluded data). Overall, all the other organisational material that I accessed, stored and read reinforced my discursive analysis.

Seventh, I effected a systematic and detailed data analysis for each group of data and, when necessary, I added final comparative considerations. The practical details of this textual examination are spelled out in the section below.

Eighth, I critically assessed the findings from each section against one another and against contemporary critical scholarly insights. Subsequently, I outlined the main implications of this study for the debate over 'Traveller ethnicity'.

The final stage, which will take place after the conclusion of my Ph.D. project, involves my engagement as a researcher with those researched as well as with other researchers. In this way I hope to establish the dialectical relationship advocated by critical social theory and CDA between theoretical practice and other social practices as well as between the researcher and those researched to the mutual advantage of Travellers themselves and my dissertation's refinement. Accordingly, I intend to communicate my findings to Travellers NGOs, activists and academics and seek in turn their feedback on my work.

5.7. Further specifications on textual analysis

With regard to my procedure of textual examination, this was designed by maintaining the centrality of contextualisation (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, 20). In order to do so, the analysis of each datum is preceded by two preliminary sections respectively on description and contextualisation. Specifically, each text is described in its general contents (for the reader to gain a general idea of the text) and its context of production is reconstructed so that relevant contextual details are available in the course of the examination in order to gain a better insight on the broader picture, intended audience and occasion (Wodak *et al*., 1999, 73). This consideration is also in line with Chapter Two's theoretical emphasis on the significance of the historical structural and action context of ethnicity.

With reference to concrete textual analysis, my method consists of two phases: the first, thematic, involves the listing and subsequent critical examination of each datum's contents. This section considers topics, their internal order, possible repetitions, eventual instances of omission, the presence or absence of quotation patterns and other aspects. It also contains observations on how the main topics are constructed sometimes with reference to specific wordings and grammatical aspects which highlight agency.

The second phase deals with linguistic analysis. I scrutinise lexical choices and semantic aspects, particularly, the occurrences, collocations and paraphrases of the core notions/terms. Furthermore, I detect occurrences of specific lexical choices and syntactic devices which are usually involved as micro-strategies in processes of identity construction. The most common are lexical units indicating personal references, spatial

references and temporal references. Particularly relevant are occurences of personal pronouns (e.g. I/We/us and they/them), possessive adjectives (our/their) and spatial/temporal adverbs (here/there).

These micro-strategies in turn linguistically enact the macro-strategies which are usually involved in processes of discursive construction, perpetuation, transformation and destruction of identities. These are called assimilation and singularity when they emphasise respectively sameness and homogeneity, whereas they are dissimulating if they create difference and heterogeneity (Wodak *et al*., 1999, 33). There may be also instances of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (this overall strategy is called ideological square), usually but not exclusively realised through four passages: foregrounding the positive about the self and backgrounding/obscuring the negative about the self, on the one hand, coupled with the opposite two moves for the Other: backgrounding/obscuring the positive about the other and foregrounding of the negative about the other.

I also include a section on the emerging construction of Irish Travellers and another one on the datum's underpinning assumptions. Such a bipartite system allows for a certain rigour and systematicity but has the drawback of causing a certain degree of repetition and overlapping among the two phases and also within their sections.

5.8. Criteria of data selection

As anticipated in the previous section, my criteria of data selection have been modelled on those advised by Wodak and Meyer (2009), according to the allowances that they made for smaller research projects with a limited involvement of research personnel and a relatively tight time frame and financial funding. First, in line with much CDA research of this kind, I concentrated on already existing discursive material. As Wodak and Meyer (2009, 28) point out, this kind of data avoids the distortions commonly related to the inhibiting presence of tape-recorders and/or video-cameras as well as the awareness of being part of an occurring research project. It also was more feasible in terms of time and word constraints. However, I acknowledge that this choice might have prevented access to further insights that could have emerged from interviews, focus groups and ethnography. Furthermore, I recognise that particular kinds of data, such as promotional leaflets and movies, inevitably entail a certain degree of simplification of complicated issues such as the discussion of ethnicity.

Furthermore, I adopted the criterion of accessibility for the broader public (Traveller and non-Traveller). Hence I made sure that I incorporated material that was available through various media. For instance, the documents from the *ITM's* ethnicity campaign that I have selected for this analysis are produced in various formats (including the visual one -D4 is a film) and can be accessed in different locations: on the web through the *ITM* website and/or *Youtube*, in hard copies distributed to national and local Traveller NGOs and at local events and purposedly fully organised workshops. Therefore, among the available material I made a first selection of data comprising organisational press statements, letters to the editors, informative/campaign material –a leaflet and a film- , policy documents and reports, public speeches, television and radio talkshows, a petition, youth gatherings for young Travellers, public comments posted on web fora such as *Facebook*, and so on.

I also kept in mind Wodak and Meyer's (2009, 23) advice to choose "typical texts", i.e. texts which tend to contain recurring elements and so are quite common within the analysed social phenomenon and temporal-geographical context. These texts are regarded as samples/concrete instantiations of specific discourses on certain topics in specific contexts. It would be unfair to pick a non-typical text and analyse it as if it was an instance of common behaviour/attitudes/beliefs/practice among the researched institutions or subjects. Nonetheless, this does not prevent the practitioner from focusing on texts which seem to be unusual within the discursive production of the examined problem. Indeed, it can happen that in specific periods of time new important discursive aspects/orientations emerge. These might be also crucial for signalling important discursive changes which are reflective or constitutive of broader social changes or aimed at fostering such social transformations.

Wodak and Meyer (2009) also stress the significance of certain historical periods for the affirmation of specific discourses in any given context. According to this insight, I primarily focused on data produced in the recent years from 2007 to 2010 since they are characterised by an intensification of national Traveller NGOs demands for ethnic recognition vis-à-vis the Irish State, in combination with the endorsement of their struggle by national and international human rights bodies and fora. This momentum achieved by the Traveller pro ethnicity side seems to coincide with the emergence of a more visible and outspoken opposition to 'Traveller ethnicity' from within the Traveller community. This is documented not only in the press but also in radio and TV programmes and talkshows. In addition to this recent discursive material,

I also considered it useful for comparative purposes to avail of older material on this issue, dating from the early 1990s, when the intra-Traveller controversy over 'Traveller ethnicity' first broke into the public arena and was reported by the Irish media.

5.9. Overview of primary data

The primary material on which I based my analysis consists of the nine data listed in the table above. The original plan foresaw the scrutiny of more audio-visual and written material and a conversation among the public on the social network *Facebook.* Then I realised that each individual text offered a great richness of elements and in turn interlinked with another array of parallel texts. At this stage I had to make a choice: I could have examined a larger amount of data more superficially or a smaller number in greater depth. I opted for the second alternative.

Nonetheless, the excluded data[30] were still kept in mind as a concurring guide in the formulation of preliminary hypotheses and served to further corroborate some of the research findings. In particular, the TV and Radio talk-shows, given their oral aspect and their interactional nature, allowed for less controlled use of language and contained instances of slippages into essentialist and racialised understanding of 'Traveller ethnicity'. Furthermore, the conversation[31] on *Facebook* offered an interesting example of people's engagement with the discourse of 'Traveller ethnicity' in the public sphere and confirmed the main observations emerging from the two analytical chapters.

The selected data are divided into groups according to their positioning in relation to the ethnic dilemma. The first set (D1 to D5) comprises data that are supportive of Travellers' official ethnic recognition. D1 to D4 pertain to the *ITM's* Traveller ethnicity campaign launched at the end of 2008: D1 constitutes a press release informing of the *ITM's* unanimous vote on running a Traveller ethnicity campaign and petition. D2 is the text of the petition itself, which is accessible both on the *ITM's* website and in hard copy in the premises of the various local Traveller groups afiliated to the *ITM*. D3

[30] These include Crowley, N. (2009) 'Ethnicity a key to Equality' (accessed at www.itmtrav.ie/keyissues/myview/82 on 7/02/2011; *ITM*, 'Pride & Prejudice: Martin Collins' in *Irish Traveller* (*ITM* Newsletter), Vol.2, Is.1, p.7 accessed at www.itmtrav.ie/uploads /May_2006.pdf.; *ITM*, 'Working for Positive Change' in *Irish Traveller* (ITM newsletter),Vol. 2, Is.2, p.7 accessed at www.itmtrav.ie/uploads/Oct_2006.pdf.; 'Irish Traveller or Traveller Irish? View pro and against…' in *The Irish Times* 29/03/2009; *Tonight with Vincent Browne* TV show (18/05/2010, accessed at www.tv3.ie/videos.php?video=22690&locID=1.65.169&date=2010-05-19&date_mode=&page=13&show_cal=&newspanel=&showspanel=&web_only=&full_episodes=; Pat Kenny's *Frontline* on Travellers (28/06/2010) accessed online at http://www.rte.ie/news/av/2010/0628/thefrontline.html; *Newstalk* radio show (11/01/20110 at 10.00 am, part 4).

[31] See *ITM* (2010) *Irish State should apologise to Travellers.* Available: www.facebook.com/topic.pho?uid160681543259&topic=13617. (Accessed: 06/07/2011 at 11.15 a.m.).

(Traveller Ethnicity Leaflet) and D4 (Traveller Ethnicity Film) constitute two different media for the same contents -i.e. information on 'Traveller ethnicity' and promotion of the *ITM's* campaign, so the analysis of D3 is generally valid also for D4. Therefore, the examination of D4 adds only those details that relate to the use of a different medium of communication. A film contains additional semiotic elements such as the visual and acoustic. Hence it can exert a different influence on the audience. It also renders information more accessible for the public with literacy difficulties. Data D3 and D4 are particularly relevant because, as the *ITM*[32] specifies, they are conceived as tools to be used in workshops on ethnicity by local Traveller organisations with the purpose to create awareness and discussion especially (but not only) amongst Travellers on ethnicity's meaning and practical implications. Both the leaflet and film/DVD are available online (the latter is accessible from the *ITM* website and *Youtube*) and have been distributed in hard copies to the local Traveller groups affiliated to the *ITM*. Finally, D5 constitutes the first comprehensive policy document issued by *Minceirs Whiden*. It is an extended paper, consisting of a 24-page outline of this organisation's position with regards to 'Traveller ethnicity' and policy measures to meet Travellers' needs.

The second group of data is united by the common questioning of the pursuit of Travellers' official ethnic recognition. This comprises four items, all published in the Irish press.These follow a chronological order to chart the development of Traveller opposition to the ethnic route since the major dissolution of the *NCTP* over this very issue. D6 in fact dates from 1991 and is a letter written to *The Irish Times*' editor by Mary Moriarty, at the time acting chairperson of the *NFITP*. The other three data are more recent and are all written by Martin Ward, who has championed Traveller opposition to Travellers' official ethnic recognition in recent years. They appear to be indicative of different stages in his alignment to the ethnic controversy and towards the main national Traveller organisations (see Chapter Seven).

[32] See www.itmtrav.ie/keyissues/myview/71.

Table 2- Primary data that are analysed

TITLE	DATE	SOURCE	TYPE	MAIN THEME	AUTHOR	ITEM CODE
'Travellers vote unanimously to petition for ethnic status'	Undated (presumably June 2008)	*ITM's* website	Press release	Travellers' agreement on petition for ethnic status	*ITM*	D1
'Ethnicity petition'	8th December 2008	*ITM's* website	Petition	Call for State recognition of ethnic status for Travellers	*ITM*	D2
'Traveller Ethnicity'	Undated (presumably 2008)	*ITM's* Website	Leaflet	Arguments in favour of recognition of Travellers' ethnic status	*ITM*	D3
* 'Traveller Ethnicity'	Undated (presumably 2008)	*ITM's* website and YouTube	Film (same contents as D3)	Arguments in favour of recognition of Travellers' ethnic status	*ITM*	D4
'Policy 2010'	Undated (presumably 2009-2010)	*Minceirs Whiden's* website	Policy document	Adopted policies on core issues affecting Travellers	*Minceirs Whiden*	D5
'Travellers' Rights'	06/02/1991	*The Irish Times*	Letter to the Editor	Comparison between the *ITM* and the *NFITP*	Mary Moriarty	D6
'Working For Positive Change: Martin Ward'	April 2007	*The Irish Traveller*	Activist's Profile	Martin Ward's Contribution to Travellers' rights	Martin Ward	D7
'No: Travellers are not an ethnic minority' within 'The big debate: Ethnicity'	October 2008	*Voice of the Traveller*	Forum on issues debated among Travellers	Arguments against the ethnic status (Juxtaposed to Catherine Joyce's arguments in favour of it)	Martin Ward	D8
'Ethnic status would not be good for Travellers'	22/12/2010	*Tuam Herald*	Letter to the Editor	Ethnic recognition is pursued by the 3 main national Traveller NGOs without Travellers' consent	Martin Ward	D9

5.10. Limitations of this study

My study has a series of limitations. Some emanate from its methodological framework, whereas others pertain to my research project and my personal limitations as a social researcher at a relative early stage of her professional career.

In terms of the limitations emanating from CDA, my work suffers from partiality and temporality since textual analysis is carried out selectively, covering various aspects of texts but not all the possible questions about them. However, this is recognised by Fairclough (2003, 14) as an inevitable characteristic of all social scientific knowledge of texts. In addition, my findings about the implications of competing discourses of 'Traveller ethnicity' can reveal only potential effects on the public (either Travellers or non-Travellers), not the actual ones. This is even more pertinent considering that other discursive contexts, which are enmeshed in the process of Traveller identity construction, have not been explored within this project (e.g. everyday conversation, other institutional settings, narratives and stories, commodified contexts, spatial locations, etc.). I am aware that the controversy is being simultaneously played out in other fora, whose analysis could have disclosed further information. In addition, new data could emerge that could somehow enrich the picture with new findings.

Other limitations emanate from the genre/s of the chosen data. For instance, reliance on leaflets and information videos (e.g. D3 and D4), in addition to the above highlighted advantages, presents also some drawbacks due to the schematic and simplistic nature of the mediums. Chapter Six documents the necessary simplification of complex concepts and phenomena required by the task of rendering them accessible to a broader non-academic audience and within a very reduced space (see Section 6.3.3, p.156). Similarly, the fact that some of these data pertain to the pro ethnicity campaign somehow favours the prioritisation of persuasive goals over merely informative ones. A similar point can be made with regards to the data analysed in Chapter Seven: even in this case, their political persuasive relevance may constitute a limitation with regards to the clarity or transparency of their theoretical arguments. Nonetheless, these documents are still very relevant for their potential impact on the audience.

Other criticisms that have been directed at CDA practitioners can be extended to my study. According to Wood and Kroger (2000, 207), the most common is that "it imposes a priori linguistic categories and relies on analysts' own understanding of texts and assumptions about the reality of social circumstances". CDA researchers are

criticised for reading meanings off texts on the basis of their own unexplicated knowledge. However, in my view this critique should be applied universally to all social scientists. Whatever approach they embrace, their analysis (as much as the whole research design) ultimately will be always based, to a certain extent, on their own interpretation of the facts, their own selected categories and, more generally, their own underpinning assumptions about social reality.

In addition, a distinction must be made between the two phases involved in the interpretation process, according to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, 67-68). They (1999, 67) regard it as a very complex and layered process composed of understanding and explanation. Therefore, CDA does not impose a single understanding of texts. It admits the possibility of various understandings on the basis both of the text's properties and of the analyst's properties —social positioning, knowledge, values, etc. However, it advocates a particular explanation that involves locating texts in social practices partly by reference to the theoretical category of ideology (Chouliaraki ad Fairclough, 1999, 68). In turn, the critical analyst's explanation can be also assessed against competing theoretical explanations and within the practice itself. The role reserved to the audience's critique is paramount in the sense that it opens up a channel of constructive dialogue between the academic practice and wider social practices and actors, i.e., in Habermasian terms, an effective public sphere (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 68).

Nonetheless, I acknowedge that critical theory and CDA's presumption about the correctedness of our explanatory framework with regards to societal dynamics and forces can be regarded as elitist. In addition, the complexity of our theoretical notions, the sophistication of our tools of linguistic examination, the adoption of a highly technical linguistic jargon could potentially be at odds with our political commitments to oppressed groups. Our studies can be inaccessible to many among our intended audience and beneficiaries. Hence, in deference to our emancipatory goals we should try to produce versions of our studies intended for a general readership, so that our work can have more chances to become politically useful. Such contradictions within CDA are already the object of internal polemics among CDA theorists as documented in the journal *Discourse & Society*[33].

[33] Particularly relevant is the debate initiated by Billig (2008), who gave rise to a heated exchange among established CDA theorists, including Fairclough and Van Dijk. In this article Billig turns CDA analysis onto CDA research itself. This is intended as a provocation to his colleagues, in order to stimulate their reflexivity and question their own highly sophisticated writing style in line with CDA and academic conventions. His argument is that we should change our standard ways of writing CDA research by adopting simpler and more accessible prose.

Another shortcoming of my thesis is its lack of direct engagement with the language users, who are "theorized out of sight" (Slembrouck, 2001, 43-44). This could have been avoided by associating to CDA ethnography, focus groups or interviews, as advised by Fairclough and Wodak (1997). Nonetheless, despite being potentially favourable to such a development, I had to renounce such methodological triangulation in the awareness that it would present problems of feasibility within my constraints of time, resources and expertise. A subsequent post-doctoral research project could offer the occasion for a further development in this sense.

Finally, I must also acknowledge my relative novelty with CDA research as an additional limitation. The theoretical engagement with my sources of inspiration in Critical Social Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, Wodak, Van Dijk and Calhoun, for instance) makes me realise that a long journey awaits me in order to reach their level of insight and expertise. However, I am aware that the time-span of a doctoral research project represents a relatively short period for such an ambitious goal.

5.11. Ethical considerations

Some ethical considerations have arisen from my involvement in the study of this enduring intra-Traveller controversy. These are primarily connected with the implications of the embraced methodological approach and with the political sensitivity of the topic. More specifically, they relate to my role as researcher and my commitment and responsibility towards those researched. A reflection on the relationship between my role and those researched emerges as both an inner exigency and as a duty in ethical and pragmatic terms for a practitioner located within a critical discourse analytical perspective (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 68). In this regard, I must recognise my relatively privileged position as academic researcher in relation to the overall underprivileged position of the 'group' that constitutes the subject of this study.

As a critical researcher, I seek to generate knowledge that is emancipatory and politically engaged on the side of the Irish Travellers. A commitment to equality and justice for Travellers has constituted the motive for my involvement in this study. My thesis is intended as a resource for Traveller organisations and individuals in their quest for equality, respect and justice. Particularly, I hope that this study contributes to providing access to academic discourses and insights to both Traveller 'sides', i.e. those in favour and those against their official ethnic recognition. By outlining and critically assessing their competing discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity' I hope to make a

contribution towards a constructive engagement between Traveller advocates and opponents of 'Traveller ethnicity', in the awareness of the complementarity of their respective insights. I also hope that the observations and issues raised by my study could contribute to theoretically informed and critical policy-making with regards to the controversy over 'Traveller ethnicity'.

Nonetheless, as anticipated in Chapter One (Section 1.4.), I am preoccupied with the political sensitivity of this research topic. My worries regard both its reception and the uses to which it might be put. This tension between my belief in the relevance of my research findings for Travellers and the concern that they might, on the contrary, be perceived as disempowering has been a source of anxiety throughout these years and has brought me to seriously question my own position as a researcher. In particular, I am afraid that my contribution and its constructive critical observations on some of the analysed texts are at risk of being misunderstood as misrecognition of Traveller organisations' daily commitment to Travellers. Therefore, I openly state that I recognise national Traveller NGOs' enormous contribution to Travellers' struggles for equality, respect and dignity. They have so far played a crucial empowering role for the advancement of Travellers' rights and their sense of pride and self-esteem, alongside their provision of invaluable welfare, other services and advice.

However, it is also important to acknowledge the existence of an internal dissent among Travellers over their ethnic recognition (and other policies) and to account for their partly diverging views. It is also my duty to draw attention to the potential positive and negative developments for Travellers themselves with regard to essentialised invocations of their collective identity. Travellers themselves and contemporary literature on ethnicity and identity politics have valuable contributions to make in this regard.

5.12. Conclusion

In this chapter I started by locating my theoretical position within the critical tradition, while pointing out the main tenets and specificities of this approach. I then narrowed the focus onto the more specific adherence of this study to the paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis. In doing so I stressed the usefulness of Critical Discourse Analysis to the exploration of the research questions formulated in this dissertation. Thirdly, I outlined my concrete operationalisation of a CDA method tailored to my specific research project on the intra Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity'. I

described the corpus of texts that constitute the primary data for this study. Finally, I concluded by acknowledging some limitations and ethical considerations that have emerged in the course of this study.

On the basis of this chapter it should be clear that this study is not intended to exhaust all possible developments or to reach the status of an ultimate 'truth' on the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity'. It is regarded as a modest but rigorous critical exploration of such debate, which is open to the assessment of Travellers, Traveller representative organisations, academics and other stakeholders.

The field is now ready for the analytical phase that is presented in the next two chapters.

Chapter Six

Traveller NGOs' discourses for 'Traveller ethnicity'

6.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses each of the five selected data advocating 'Traveller ethnicity' in line with the previously described CDA approach. In doing so I keep a dual focus both on the topics developed in the data and on the semantic environment of this study's key notions –ethnicity, culture and identity– as applied to Irish Travellers. I also pay attention to specific lexical choices and their function within the analysed texts. In this way I aim able to identify and explore the main themes invoked within discussions of 'Traveller ethnicity' by national Traveller NGOs and Traveller activists campaigning for ethnic recognition. The semantic examination of clusters of words associated with or opposed to ethnicity and culture in their application to Irish Travellers helps reveal the construction of these notions and of Traveller identity as applied by these specific national Traveller organisations. The main aspects considered in the following analysis draw both on Chapter Two's theoretical explorations and on the selected data's central themes. As previously noted (Section 5.8), D1 to D4 pertain to the *ITM's* Traveller Ethnicity campaign, which targets not only Travellers but also the general Irish population. Therefore, the overall purpose of the campaign is persuasion at least as much as information and discussion: to "collect as many signatures as possible to present to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, calling on the government to recognise Travellers as an ethnic group"[34]. Finally, D5 is *Minceirs Whiden*'s 2010 policy document.

Below follows a section that provides a succinct contextualisation of the five data under scrutiny within this chapter. The analysis of these five data is completed with a conclusive comparative discussion, where I expand on the key arguments emerged throughout the textual analysis. Written data are included in Appendix II, whereas the Traveller Ethnicity film/DVD is transcribed, described and referenced.

6.2. Contextualisation of the five data

The *ITM* has pursued State recognition of ethnic status for Irish Travellers since its foundation in 1990. After many years of intense work and commitment the organisation, initially more Dublin and Navan-based, has expanded throughout the

[34] See information on the ITM Ethnicity Campaign on the *ITM's* website at www.itmtrav.ie/keyissues/myview/71.

national territory of the Irish Republic, counting, according to its website, over eighty affiliated local Travellers' groups. Two other national Travellers' organisations, *Pavee Point* and the *NTWF* (though the latter seems to be less visible in the media), have long been supportive of Traveller ethnicity too. Since 2004, *Minceirs Whiden*, a recently established all-Traveller forum, has joined the other National Traveller NGOs' demands for official recognition of 'Traveller ethnicity'. These combined efforts to promote 'Traveller ethnicity' among Travellers themselves and the broader public through engagement and networking with national and international human rights bodies have begun to bear some fruits. The repeated endorsement by human rights bodies, NGOs and leading academics of these pleas for recognition has been favourable to the intensification of the *ITM's* activity in this regard. At the *ITM's* Annual General Meeting in Letterkenny in June 2008 delegates unanimously agreed to present a national petition calling on the Irish State to recognise Irish Travellers as an ethnic minority group. The petition was conceived as a part of a broader campaign at national level. Relevant information material was produced and distributed to the local Traveller organisations with an *ITM* membership as well as made available online, both at the *ITM* website and on *YouTube*.

On the other hand, *Minceirs Whiden* represents a significant development within Traveller politics since it constitutes an attempt by Traveller activists to further enhance their assertiveness and gain a role as direct interlocutors to the Irish State with regard to Traveller affairs. Its profile has risen since its foundation in 2004 (see Chapter Four, Section 4.6). By means of this forum, consisting of an assembly and a council, Travellers are trying to articulate a democratic and collective voice. This organisation is independent but benefits from the organisational support of both *ITM* and *Pavee Point*. Some of its most prominent members also have key roles within these national Traveller organisations (see Section 4.6).

Nonetheless, it should also be remembered that there is no Traveller unanimity on the ethnic issue across the country (see Chapter One, Section 1.3 and Chapter Seven's analysis of discourses against 'Traveller ethnicity').

Part One

6.3. The *ITM's* Traveller Ethnicity Campaign

6.3.1. Analysis of D1: *'Travellers vote unanimously to petition for ethnic status'*

Description

D1 is an *ITM's* press release that reports on the unanimity among Travellers attending the *ITM's* AGM in Letterkenny regarding a petition to the Irish government to call for recognition of the ethnic status of Travellers. It stresses the support obtained from national independent bodies such as the Irish Human Rights Commission, the Equality Authority and the Irish Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism. It makes clear the planned course of action decided by the organisation: collection of signatures across the country and their submission to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform together with a position paper explaining the rationale and evidence for this request. A series of quotations constitute the rest of the text; the first and last quotations are from the then chairperson of the *ITM*, Catherine Joyce. The others are excerpts from key representatives of State bodies. The *ITM's* chairperson makes two main points: the first affirms the centrality and priority of ethnic recognition for Travellers as overwhelmingly the most important issue. This argument is expressed in both indirect and direct speech. She is also pleased with the support of national independent bodies. The second quotation from the *ITM* chairperson spells out some of the most significant practical advantages, at a material and symbolic level, inherent to the State's recognition of 'Traveller ethnicity'.

Topics developed within the text

T1) Travellers unanimously support petition for ethnic status [appearing in the title and then in the first paragraph of the press release].

T2) Major State bodies and human rights groups support Travellers' demand for ethnic status and petition.

T3) Traveller groups attending *ITM's* AGM will sign the petition.

T4) Information is provided on the petition's future submission to the Irish government.

T5) Ethnic recognition is one of the core aims of Travellers.

T6) Traveller members overwhelmingly regard the ethnic status as the most important issue facing the community.

T7) Independent analysis and evidence is in support of Travellers' demand.

T8) Government's recognition of Travellers' ethnic status is a priority of the Irish Human Rights Commission.

T9) The Equality Authority's Chief Executive Officer supports the petition and pleas for a more widely articulated definition of Travellers in national policy and programmes.

T10) Amnesty International fully endorses the petition and agrees to promote it.

T11) The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism is disappointed with the government and fully supports the petition.

T12) The co-ordinator of South Tyrone Empowerment Programme agreed to sign the petition as a serious challenge to anti-Traveller racism.

T13) Recognition of the ethnic status would bring many clear benefits to the Traveller community at a material and symbolic level:

T13a) greater legal protection of Travellers' cultural independence;

T13b) official recognition of Traveller culture in social policy provision;

T13c) Traveller political representation at national level;

T13d) symbolic validation of Traveller culture.

Four of the topics (T1, T3, T4, T6) constitute contiguous formulations of the same theme: Travellers' active role as informed, organised and legitimate agents in pursuing official recognition of ethnic status. Accordingly, Travellers' unanimous vote on the petition and their commitment to signing it reflect the fact that ethnic recognition is a priority for Travellers –a point explicitly made by Traveller members when consulted by the *ITM*. As a result, *ITM* appears strengthened by this vote as the legitimate representative of Travellers' will; it can therefore be seen as acting upon a strong democratic mandate from its Traveller membership.

Topics T8, T9, T10 and T11 constitute specifications and mostly repetitive elaborations of T2 (Major State Bodies and Human Rights Groups support the campaign and will sign the petition). They also follow immediately after the first direct quotation of the *ITM's* chairperson, which is strategically concluded with "There is also a lot of independent analysis and evidence which fully support our case". The fact that an expert from each single organisation (IHRC, EA, AI, NCCRI, and South Tyrone Empowerment Group) is directly or indirectly quoted (combined strategies of

overcompleteness and quotation patterns[35]) serves the *ITM's* positive self-presentation, which is aimed at legitimising the *ITM's* campaign and petition. This support also strengthens the Travellers' quest into a demand. Among these quotations from independent analysts, only two add some extra-information: in T9 Niall Crowley links his support of the petition with the need to provide a more widely articulated definition of Travellers in national policy and programmes as a means of achieving full equality for Travellers. However, this quotation is too vague to be clearly interpreted in a specific sense. In T11 Bernadette McAliskey makes an important connection between signing the petition and challenging racism against Travellers. The pursuit of the ethnic status is interpreted as representing a response and a form of resistance against anti-Traveller racism.

Semantic environment and lexical choice

In D1 the noun "ethnicity" does not appear whereas its adjectival form "ethnic" is recorded. This is not surprising since this text does not engage directly in the definition of ethnicity neither generally nor specifically with regards to Travellers. It is a short press release reporting specifically on the Travellers' decision to launch a national petition to the government as part of a broader campaign for recognition of their ethnic status. Therefore a discussion of the topic of ethnicity lies beyond the scope of D1.

"Ethnic" is associated four times with the word "status", another three times with the expression "minority group" and once with the word "group" alone. In the text a relation of equivalence is established between the expression "ethnic status" and "becoming recognised as an ethnic minority group" in the sense that the latter specifies the meaning of ethnic status. This is demonstrated by the quasi-repetition of the first half of the same sentence twice (with little difference), in the title and in the first paragraph of the text followed by a change in the expression characterising the content of the petition (the title states "Travellers vote unanimously to *petition* for *ethnic status*" while the first paragraph: "Travellers have today voted unanimously to support a national *petition to become recognised as an Ethnic Minority Group*".

"Ethnic status" is also associated as a logical subject in a cause-effect relation to "many clear benefits" which it "would bring" if it was recognised: provision of "greater

[35] Discursive features such as quotation patterns, overcompleteness and incompleteness constitute discursive micro-strategies, which serve the macro-strategy of positive self-presentation, and are in turn functional to reinforcing the legitimacy of the author/subject of the text.

protection of Traveller cultural independence under law" and "official recognition of Traveller culture in the provision of housing, education, health services". The use of the attributes "many" and "clear" reinforces the validity of the statement by excluding doubts about the positive implications of the recognition of ethnic status. This paragraph is very important in its elucidation of the rationale underpinning Travellers' demand for ethnic status. It appears that ethnicity is not being demanded on some a priori basis but on the basis of practical and clear outcomes.

With specific regard to the lexical choice, the first significant observation refers to the title and first paragraph of the press release. At the outset of D1, the adverb "unanimously" is coupled with the discursive strategy of incompleteness. "Unanimously" stresses that all Travellers support this move and regard ethnic recognition as a priority for their community: "unanimously" appears both in the title in capital letters ("Travellers vote unanimously to petition for ethnic status") and in the first paragraph of the press release. However, it is never specified that the Travellers who have unanimously voted for such recognition are not all the Travellers in the country but only those *ITM* delegates who were attending the annual general meeting in Letterkenny and who represent organisations which are classified as full members of the *ITM*. The unanimity can therefore be considered as more limited than the piece suggests (more on this follows in the last analytical sub-section). The next crucial adverb in this regard is inserted within the discussion of the *ITM's* current Business Plan. The answer to the *ITM's* question about the most important issue facing the community is "overwhelmingly" the need to secure ethnic status.

Attention to the semantic environment (clusters of concepts, concordances, associations, oppositions) and lexical choice is also useful to find out how the notions of 'Traveller ethnicity' and culture are constructed in this text.

The already noted association of the attribute "ethnic" with the word "status" (which appears three times in this text alternated with the explicative paraphrases "become/ing recognised as an Ethnic Minority Group"/"Government recognition of Travellers as an Ethnic Minority Group") is in turn characterised as an active subject which will bring "many clear benefits". The ethnic status is presented as a legal instrument for securing rights primarily (but not exclusively) defined in terms of cultural recognition and protection at a material and symbolic level: providing "greater protection of Travellers' cultural independence" and "official recognition of Traveller culture in the provision of housing, education, health services" as well as adding "the

important symbolic meaning of Traveller Culture becoming validated as both distinct and valued within Irish society".

Thus, Travellers' rights appear as strongly rooted in the field of the international human rights discourse. This is confirmed by a preceding paragraph in which the *ITM's* chairperson refers to a forthcoming meeting between the Irish Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Human Rights Committee with regard to discussing Ireland's record on civil and political rights. Hence, the human rights discourse frames and defines the contours and contents of the *ITM's* constructions of 'Traveller ethnicity', culture and thus its demands on the Irish State. The interrelation between different texts within a single one, called intertextuality, sheds light on the strong interconnections between the discourse of 'Traveller ethnicity' and culture articulated by the *ITM* and the broader human rights discourse (see Chapter Two, Section 2.10 on the human rights discourse's impact on ethnicity's definitions). This intertextual link with the human rights model partially explains the reification and essentialisation of culture which seems to characterise D1. However, it should be also considered that the purpose of D1 is to stimulate action rather than thought; finally, it is possible that in the context of the press release the reification is inevitable.

The framing of the *ITM's* demands for official state recognition of Travellers' ethnic status within the human rights' discourse and practice does not only occur within this text but has been a recurring characteristic for a number of years. The positive endorsement granted by national and international expert bodies and human rights organisations (e.g. recommendations made by the UNCERD Committee to the Irish State from 2005 onwards) have been a source of strength for the advocates of Travellers' official ethnic recognition. This is demonstrated by the symbolic launch of the Traveller ethnicity campaign on the day marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On that occasion, Traveller activists and supporters were wearing t-shirts carrying on the front the statement "Traveller rights are human rights".

In D1 'Traveller ethnicity' implicitly emerges as primarily characterised in a cultural sense within a legal framework: recognition of the ethnic status is associated with "greater protection of Travellers' cultural independence" and a symbolic "validation of Traveller Culture as both distinct and valued within Irish society". The matching of the attribute "cultural" with the noun "independence" and its association with the nominalisation "protection" posits clear-cut boundaries between Traveller

culture and an implied non-Traveller culture. Also other expressions suggest this characterisation: in the last paragraph among the benefits is mentioned the symbolic meaning of "Traveller Culture [sic] becoming validated as both distinct and valued with Irish society".

Overall the text displays a bias towards looking at Traveller culture only with regard to its difference and separation (see associations of culture/cultural with "distinct" and "independence") from the unmentioned majority culture, while glossing over their communalities and historical interdependence (in this regard see Chapter Two, especially sections 2.10 and 2.11). Accordingly, Travellers are recognised as a singular, discrete, bounded, distinct and independent culture, without mention of crossovers, intermingling and borrowings and without any global external influences and internal contestations. Importantly, "protection of cultural independence" implies the maintenance of a society in which Irish Travellers and other Irish people are culturally separated and, perhaps, polarised.

Nonetheless separateness does not necessarily always imply polarisation especially if within a context characterised by multiple cultures. Referring to "greater protection" implies that some form of protection already exists. Indeed, the 1998 Housing Act already obliges local authorities to provide Travellers with a preferred form of accommodation (including transient sites which allow the practice of nomadism) but does not guarantee its application since it does not penalise uncompliant local authorities. Within this representation, nomadism is offered as an example of a practice to be protected by legislation and policy provision. The choice of this example, as confirmed by other published research on nomadism and cultural rights, is not casual but confirms the centrality of nomadism[36], though in a contemporary dynamic formulation, within the *ITM's* construction of Traveller identity, ethnicity and culture. For instance, nomadism is taken by the Traveller activist Michael McDonagh (2000, 33-34) as not just a practice but as a mindset inherent in all Travellers, hence as the differentiating factor between Travellers and non-Travellers: this mindset, allegedly

[36] However, this choice makes logical and strategic sense from the perspective of identity politics, in consideration of the fact that nomadism has been subject to a global and national negative bias according to which it has been proactively undermined and attacked both symbolically and materially as a backward, primitive and out-dated way of living, incompatible with sedentary existence and associated or even identified with criminality and deviance. In fact any struggle for recognition involves the establishment of the identity against the societal definitions that were formed largely by oppression. The discussion of anti-Travellerism in Ireland and its links to European sedentarism has been clearly and convincingly carried out by McVeigh (1992).

shared by all Travellers, entails a totally different outlook on life which goes beyond the mere actual act of travelling.

But is cultural independence achievable when human life is marked by reciprocal dependence, especially in the contemporary globalised world characterised by an increasing hybridity of cultures and identities? By aiming at cultural distinction and independence, the fact that cultures are always inter-related, hybridised and poly-vocal gets obscured. D1 seems to suggest that Traveller culture is like an island, clearly bounded and separated (distinct and independent) from the implied 'settled' culture. This assumption contradicts critical insights that suggest that cultures should be regarded as processes, fields of creative interchange often around certain shared symbols, propositions and practices, in continuous transformation, subjected to internal contestations and external influences, with multiple axes of internal differentiation (Cowan, Dembour and Wilson, 2001).

However, given D1's brevity and focus on a specific event rather than on the definition of core concepts, it needs to be crossreferenced with other more detailed textual material produced by the *ITM* or its members. For instance, Michael McDonagh (2000, 29) displays awareness of culture's dynamic and inter-relational character. Hence, despite the fact that D1's semantic associations of "culture" hint at a reified and essentialised notion of Traveller culture, comparative analysis of other material suggests that a form of strategic essentialism is at play in D1. Generally, in fact, programmatic and policy documents published by the *ITM*, *Pavee Point* or individual Traveller activists' contributions to TV and radio debates demonstrate an undeniable awareness of gender, age, sexual orientation, class, dis/ability differentiations/divisions within the Traveller community. This is not surprising, given the strong commitment of these organisations to social justice and equality and their established networks with the academic world and other groups/movements struggling for justice and equality.

This consideration is confirmed, for instance, by *Minceirs Whiden*'s 2010 policy statement which explicitly acknowledges several axes of internal differentiation within the Traveller community. This document will be analysed later in this chapter as D5.

Construction of Irish Travellers

Travellers are represented as active and willing agents at the outset of this text: first, in the title they constitute the logical acting subject –"Travellers vote (…)"; second, in the first sentence "Travellers have today voted (…)"; and, finally, in the

second sentence "Traveller groups (…) committed to signing the petition (…)"). Moreover, the lead of the press release makes reference to the support accorded by major State bodies and human rights groups to "Travellers Demand" [sic]. The choice of the noun "demand" indicates a strong stance on behalf of Travellers. They are not just asking, requesting or seeking the ethnic status but demanding it as something which it is legitimately due to them and that they are impatient to be granted. The support of major State bodies and human rights groups (the attribute "major" stresses the extreme importance and the authority of these independent expert sources) makes their request even more plausible and legitimate so that, in light of this authoritative support, it can become a "demand". Demand also implies that Travellers are not willing to wait passively for it but are proactive in its pursuit (the petition and campaign represent a further step in Travellers' mobilisation).

Moreover, Travellers are constructed as a unitary cohesive and informed subject involved in the democratic process of consultation and decision making within the movement (see considerations made in section 2.8). Travellers have voted unanimously to support the petition because indeed "becoming recognised as an ethnic minority is one of the core aims of Travellers" and when members have been asked "what they felt was the most important issue facing the community" "overwhelmingly the answer was the need to secure ethnic status".

Ideological construction and implied assumptions

This press release does not only serve the purpose of informing the public about Travellers' decision to write a petition and carry out a public campaign in support of the official recognition of ethnic status for Travellers but is also aimed at further legitimating the *ITM's* demand of the Irish government by persuasive means. In a sense with this text the *ITM* has already begun its campaign to gain widespread public support for its cause. According to the above examination, legitimation is sought by reference to democratic will and consensus (Travellers' unanimous vote), authority (quotation patterns of various independent key experts' voices) and utility (the rationale for ethnic recognition is represented by "many clear benefits" at a material and symbolic level).

First, this piece gives an impression of consensus among Travellers and stresses the active role played by Travellers themselves, organised in a democratic way, in pursuit of ethnic recognition (consider title, lexical choice, use of transitivity—Travellers posited as logical subjects of actions).

Ethnic recognition is also validated by the authority of key experts. This justifies the list of direct and indirect quotations, which occupies a considerable part of the text (at least one third). Finally, it also bears practical advantages for Travellers at a material and symbolic level.

While the information in relation to the major State bodies and national and international human rights organisations is correct (indeed the provided list could be enriched with additional relevant organisations such as the UNCERD Committee), and, likewise, the mention of benefits is mostly reliable, yet partial and perhaps overstated in its effectiveness (it is silent on the potential disadvantages inherent to ethnic recognition)[37], the reference to Travellers' unanimous vote is ambiguous or at least partly incomplete and misleading, since it implicitly suggests that all Travellers agree on the pursuit of the ethnic status, whereas it is only the delegates of full member organisations. Although it must be recognised that membership of the *ITM* is widespread throughout the country, this unanimous vote of Travellers does not include those Travellers organisations which are not members of *ITM*, and individual Travellers who are not involved in any association or in *ITM*.

This observation does not intend to downplay the national reach and popularity of the *ITM* or to question its organisational arrangements with reference to participation and decision-making. On the contrary, the *ITM* has put in place a democratic structure through which local organisations are given opportunities and stimulated to contribute to decision-making and agenda-setting within the national movement/platform. Local member associations can nominate candidates and vote for the board of management (called Central Group, with a compulsory Traveller majority) as well as suggest in advance motions and topics for the Business Plan to be discussed at the Annual General Meeting.

Despite this, the potential for disagreement over the ethnicity stance is being offset from the outset by the organisation's statement of vision, core principles and approved definition of a "Traveller organisation". In fact, the recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority group is listed as the second core principle of the *ITM* and is also implied in the movement's vision statement: "An Ireland where Travellers are proud of their identity and with their ethnicity recognised, can achieve their fullest potential to play an active role in Irish society"[38]. From this sentence the recognition of ethnicity

[37] This point is discussed in detail within the analysis of D3 since this datum offers a more extensive description of the advantages deriving from official ethnic recognition.
[38] See www.itmtrav.ie.

emerges as strictly linked with Travellers' pride in their identity and with the achievement of their full potential and active participation in Irish society. In other words, recognition of ethnic status seems to be presented as a necessary precondition for Travellers' self-realisation in Irish society. With regards to the definition of Traveller organisations, it is relevant to note that the associations affiliated to *ITM* have been classified into two distinct groups: full members and associate members. Only Traveller organisations, local, national or international, are classified as full members and are granted a right to vote at the AGM and in other circumstances. At the 2004 *ITM's* AGM a definition of what constitutes a Traveller organisation was approved. Among the definitional criteria, it is stated that "they work from the understanding that Travellers are an ethnic minority with a distinct culture, which should be taken into account in the provision of services". Therefore, the understanding of Travellers as an ethnic minority constitutes one of the pre-conditions to full membership of the *ITM* (and hence to vote). Conclusively, the *ITM* does not allow opposition to the ethnic quest among its members.

However, as anticipated in Chapter One and Four, the official pursuit of ethnic recognition is not unanimously supported by all Travellers in Ireland. To what extent does *ITM* represent the majority of Irish Travellers? To what extent are Travellers aware of the meanings and issues at stake? Is ethnicity really perceived as the priority (or at least one of the priorities) by all or most Travellers?

While these remain open questions, it is evident that D1's insistence on Travellers' agency and unanimity is crucial for the *ITM* campaign of legitimation of its action against its internal and external opponents.

6.3.2. Analysis of D2 (D2): *ITM's Ethnicity Petition*

Description

The text of the petition overlaps substantially with D1, despite the fact that the arguments are presented in a different order. First, it expresses the *ITM's* call on the Irish government to recognise Travellers as an ethnic minority group. Immediately, it makes reference to the rationale for the pursuit of the ethnic status. The chair of the *ITM* is reported as spelling out its positive implications: greater protection of Traveller cultural independence under law; official recognition of Traveller culture in the provision of housing (with the example of appropriate accommodation of nomadism), education and health services, the obligation to secure Traveller representation in the

political system; and the symbolic validation of Traveller culture as both distinct and valued within Irish society. Then follows the same list (only one is omitted) of direct quotations of key independent experts from major State bodies and national human rights and anti-racist organisations: the CEO of the Equality Authority, the Executive Director of Amnesty International and the Director of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism. Finally, the third part of the petition re-states the rationale for the petition in mostly the same terms, by listing again the positive outcomes guaranteed by the recognition of 'Traveller ethnicity'. The order is however inverted so that the symbolic aspect comes first and there is a specific reference to an identity crisis among Travellers, especially the young. The recognition of ethnicity is considered as contributing to overcoming such a crisis and redeeming a sense of pride and esteem in their cultural identity.

Topics developed within the text

T1) *ITM* calls on the Irish Government to recognise Travellers as an ethnic minority group.

T2) The *ITM* chair states the positive implications of ethnic recognition at a material and symbolic level.

T3) Equality Authority's CEO supports the petition and pleas for a more widely articulated definition of Travellers in national policy and programmes for their achievement of full equality.

T4) Amnesty International fully endorses the petition and agrees to promote it and urges members/supporters to join the campaign.

T5) National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism is disappointed with the State for its failure to recognise Traveller ethnicity and fully supports the petition.

T6) The recognition of Traveller ethnicity would provide symbolic and material advantages for Travellers.

With regard to the order of topics it is important to note that T2 and T6 are primarily reassertions of the same points in a slightly different order and with slight changes in expressions. Yet, T2 is offered as the perspective of the *ITM* chair while T6 is presented as a generally valid assertion without an explicit singular point of view. This repetition at the beginning and at the conclusion of the text, despite being mostly

redundant in terms of its content, is crucial to the appeal that the petition can have on its potential signatories. The topics in the middle (quotations from major State bodies and human rights organisations) respond to the strategy of quotation patterns, which, as already noted, serves to reinforce the *ITM* claims by presenting the independent support provided to this petition by expert authorities.

Semantic environment and lexical choice

As I have already observed, this text is mostly overlapping with D1 and therefore the observations will be limited mainly to considerations additional to the ones already made for D1.

Differently from D1, "Ethnicity" does appear (though only once) in D2. Its occurrence is linked to the adjective "Traveller" and as a specification of the noun "recognition". This is located at the opening of the third and conclusive part of the petition, where the pros of official ethnic recognition are summed up. Clearly, the expression "Recognition of Traveller Ethnicity" stands here for the longer expression "the Irish government's official recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority group", i.e. "ethnic status". Therefore, as in D1, the semantic environment sheds light on a legal construction of the notion of ethnicity. The text does not delve into any theoretical (either sociological or anthropological) talk about ethnicity. "Traveller Ethnicity" in this text presents two additional associated expressions in comparison with D1: "their cultural heritage" and "their cultural identity". "Heritage" stresses the rooting of 'Traveller ethnicity' in its historical past, in its cultural tradition and legacy, whereas "cultural identity" functions as a synonym for ethnicity. Recognition of 'Traveller Ethnicity' would hence entail recognition of their cultural traditions and legacy as worthwhile and still practicable. Indeed, the vilification of their past and the viewing of Traveller culture as inherently problematic, backward and homogeneous are at the basis of the marginalisation and exclusion of Travellers from Irish society (hence the reference about Travellers' "place in Irish society"). 'Traveller ethnicity' is represented as the sole source of their collective identity, defined as "a cultural identity". Its misrecognition and denial is considered as the only cause of a crisis in identity among Travellers, especially the young, whereas its recognition would help tackle this crisis and restore a sense of pride and esteem in their cultural identity. Consequently, the "Recognition of Travellers' Ethnicity" is represented as the means of "addressing the crisis in identity they [Travellers] face". This crisis is expressed through implicit

reference to a lack of "sense of esteem and pride in their cultural identity" which could be restored ("redeem[ed]") by means of due recognition. The lexical choice of the verb "redeem" characterised by a Christian religious connotation semantically associates ethnic recognition with salvation: "(…) It [Recognition of Traveller Ethnicity] would go towards addressing the crisis in identity they face and *redeem* a sense of pride and esteem in their cultural identity" [emphasis added].

Similarly to D1, "ethnic" appears in conjunction with the legal word "status" which is explained by the expression "recognise Travellers as an ethnic minority group". Indeed, the *ITM* is calling on the Irish government to grant this official recognition. "Ethnic status" is also associated as a logical subject in a cause-effect relation with a series of positive outcomes which it "would[39] provide" if it was recognised: "greater protection of Traveller cultural independence under law" and "official recognition of Traveller culture in the provision of housing, education, health services". Therefore, Traveller ethnicity is defined in cultural terms since it is cultural aspects that are stressed within the discussion of the advantages deriving from ethnic recognition. Indeed, Traveller ethnicity would imply the symbolic validation of Traveller culture as both distinct and valued within Irish society. In other words, the differential aspects ("distinct") of Traveller culture are exclusively focused upon within the pursuit of 'Traveller ethnicity'. Hence, Culture (capitalised) is associated with Traveller (the capitalisation might be linked to the use of the verb "validate"), while "cultural" is linked with the terms "independence" ("Travellers cultural independence"), "heritage" ("their cultural heritage") and "identity" ("their cultural identity"). In both forms (noun and attribute) culture/cultural is logically the object of the action of ethnic recognition within hypothetical sentences. The fact that Traveller Culture would become validated implies that at the moment it is not validated within mainstream Irish society and is denied its equal worth just as Travellers are being denied a "place" in Irish society (reference to social exclusion as strictly interconnected with ethnic, i.e. cultural misrecognition).

Construction of Irish Travellers

In D2 Irish Travellers are characterised as a group facing an identity crisis. This characterisation is attached especially to the young. This identity crisis is attributed to

[39] The use of the modal "would" instead of the future indicative "will" (which would have entailed a higher level of certainty) can be interpreted as dependent on an implied hypothetical sentence "If ethnic status was officially recognised", it would (…).

the Irish State and mainstream society's vilification of their cultural heritage. The argument goes like this: if ethnic denial causes identity crisis the inverse is also true, that ethnic recognition restores a stable sense of identity and self-esteem. This passage points to the inextricable and inter-related nature of self-definition and other-categorisation in the construction of our sense of self. According to this interpretation young Travellers' identity crisis lies in the negative other-definition of State and mainstream society. While this highlighted phenomenon plays a major role in such a crisis, the explanation is probably more complex than this. What is left out is the role played by significant others such as parents and family members and by the changed historical and societal context. In fact, as a Traveller woman, Winnie McDonagh[40], observed, young Travellers seem to be caught between two worlds: their family's expectations/definitions and the societal expectations/definitions of Irish institutions and peers. Their parents (like most parents) often expect that their children behave exactly as they themselves did, as if time had stopped. However, young Travellers, like all young people, live in different times and in a different society and develop attitudes also influenced by various broader contemporary cultural phenomena assimilated through the mass media, their peers and urban spaces. On the other hand, they may feel misrecognised by both sides: mainstream society which discriminatorily rejects them as inherently different and their family too, which often regards them as different and more similar to their settled peers:

"(…) the younger current generation of Travellers are trying to live in the ever-changing world of today and are trying to hold on to and maintain what their understanding and perceptions of being a Traveller is for them. They have to live in a very different time and society than the one that their parents or grandparents lived in and they have to try to cope with that reality and also with what their families and community expect of them and this can at times be at odds. It is very difficult and confusing for them. Their grandparents and parents may want them to live a life, as much as what they themselves did, this can seem to the young people that they are caught between two worlds. On the one hand they want and need to live and survive in today's society and on the other they are expected to continue to live like Travellers from another time and place and with the best will in the world this is neither possible nor appropriate. (…) The young people want to be like their peers –they are living closer than ever to and with the settled community, they see consumerist culture on television and in the media. Many young Travellers are starting to work, socialise and go to school for longer with the young people from the settled community and are more exposed to outside influences. This can be confusing and frustrating for young and old. I even find it confusing myself! (…)".

[40] See McDonagh, W. A Woman's Perspective: Travellers and Education: A personal perspective sourced online www.travellerheritage.ie/asp/default.asp?P=61 on 07/03/2008 at 10.37 a.m.

Ideological construction and implied assumptions

The petition aims at gathering support for and creating consensus over Travellers' ethnic recognition by persuading the potential signatories among Irish Travellers and other Irish citizens. Therefore the reasons/rationale suggested in the petition must appeal to Travellers and non-Travellers alike. Accordingly, the two main reasons for supporting ethnic recognition are the legitimising authoritativeness of key experts and the stated practical and symbolic benefits for Travellers. The former point should generally appeal to all Irish citizens who are in favour of human rights and equality in society, while the latter should be of particular appeal especially for the Traveller public itself who could derive significant benefits/improvements from ethnic recognition.

This persuasive effect on readers is obtained through the repetition of the same arguments with roughly the same expressions twice (T2 and T6) within a short text (first from the specific point of view of the *ITM's* chairperson and then from a general unspecified point of view). In the latter conclusive occurrence, though, the highlighted benefits are presented as a generally valid point of view (the statement this time is not attributed to a particular speaker). This passage is possible thanks to the authoritativeness of independent supporters, whose views occupy a median position within the petition's text. Thanks to the aforementioned widespread and proactive expert support, the *ITM's* point of view can be presented as a legitimate assertion on the basis of which everyone should sign the petition. All those who regard themselves as pro-equality and human rights, liberal and anti-racist are called to sign the petition by the respective representative body.

Overall the *ITM* here presents valid, legitimate and convincing reasons for supporting the pro-ethnicity petition. Definitively the authoritative support of key national and international bodies on human rights, equality and anti-racism represents a source of strength for the *ITM* quest. Travellers' support on this issue is sought on the basis of an enumeration of practical advantages deriving from the official recognition of ethnic status by the Irish State. Strangely, D2 does not mention the centrality and fundamental importance of ethnicity to Travellers, which is stressed insistently in D1 and also features in other news releases[41]. This omission in the petition might not be coincidental and casual. The text could be expressly silent on it, in order to impress

[41] See "Irish Traveller Movement welcomes UN call for recognition of Traveller ethnicity", dated 25/07/2008, which also contains a statement by the *ITM* chairperson affirming "ethnic status is an issue of fundamental importance to Travellers".

favourably and hence persuade even those Travellers who are unaware of, confused about or indifferent to the ethnic quest. By seeing all the advantages related to ethnic recognition they might be persuaded to sign the petition although they might not hold a clearly defined position in this regard. Furthermore, in a petition it is usually best to avoid confusing signatories by hosting too many different propositions.

6.3.3. Analysis of D3: *ITM's "Traveller ethnicity" leaflet*

Description

The information leaflet is a flier folded in three sections per each side (for a total of six parts). The first two contain the definition of Travellers, of ethnicity and the specification of Travellers as an Irish ethnic minority group. The third, fourth and fifth describe briefly the current negative situation for Travellers while more extensively pointing to the many advantageous changes that would occur if official ethnic recognition was accorded. Finally, the last section answers negatively questions posed by Travellers on potential disadvantages allegedly deriving from ethnic recognition. The very last paragraph gives practical information on how to join the campaign and sign the petition.

The front page is coloured in blue with a vertical green stripe on the left. A picture is located in the middle. The expression "Traveller ethnicity" in capital characters is put both horizontally above the picture and vertically beside it. On the top right corner stands the logo of the *Irish Traveller Movement*, the producer of this brochure and the promoter of the ethnicity campaign. In the middle there is a picture depicting a countryside landscape with four Traveller children and a horse as well as two caravans in the background and further back some rural dwellings. Three female children probably of primary school age are in the foreground. They smile and one taller girl hugs another with the right hand while she attempts a greeting sign with the left hand. Another female child stands on the right hand side. A bit more backgrounded and partly obstructed by her stands a boy who holds a brown horse and also smiles. Underneath the picture is located the question "What makes us Travellers?" followed by a bullet-point list of characteristics: born into family, religion, language, beliefs/values, way of life, culture, history. This picture overall offers an impression of rural joy and engagement with the observers since the four children's smile and hand gesture seem to address the flier's readership.

The first folded section inside the leaflet deals in a succinct and accessible way with the theoretical definition of ethnicity moving from the general meaning to its specific application to Irish Travellers. It first provides a brief definition of ethnicity; it then states the universality of ethnicity, followed by a table which re-proposes (both in the left and in the right column) roughly the same list of characteristics printed in the front section but in a slightly different order. This table is divided into two columns: the left one is entitled "Ethnicity" and the right one is headed by the question: "What makes you a Traveller?" These two bits can be read either together (horizontally) or separately (vertically) with reference to the cells below each heading. The colon plays an explicatory function (i.e. "Ethnicity: What makes you a Traveller?" i.e. Ethnicity is what makes you a Traveller). But the colon connects also the heading "Ethnicity" with the six cells below occupying the left column (i.e. ethnicity: Family, Religion, Language, History, Culture/way of life, Beliefs/values). With regard to the table's right column the heading "What makes you a Traveller?" is followed by cells below filled with a replication of the same list of characteristics appearing in the left column (hence it can be read as "What makes you a Traveller? It is: Family, Religion, Language, History, Culture/way of life, Beliefs/values). All the elements listed for "ethnicity" in the left hand side are identically repeated under the heading "What makes you a Traveller", so leading to the obvious conclusion that Irish Travellers are an ethnic group. Briefly, the use of such a table creates a parallelism and repetition throughout the two juxtaposed columns so reproducing the visual situation of a check-list.

Below the table follows a paragraph that explains the reason why Travellers constitute an Irish ethic minority group. Finally, a last paragraph explains the problem: the State refuses to recognise Travellers' ethnic status even though ethnic recognition represents a basic human right.

The following parts of the flier deal briefly in a bullet-point style with the issues currently affecting Travellers and, then, more extensively, with the positive changes which official ethnic recognition would bring legally (increased protection under international human rights, equality and constitutional laws); symbolically (validation of Traveller culture); in the social policy field (accommodation, education, employment and health); and, finally, in terms of political representation (obligation to elect Traveller representatives in government). Each part contains a small size photograph (the last has two small pictures) that represents moments of life in the Travelling community: family celebrations, traditional work (e.g. tinsmithing), school,

demonstrations and symbols (e.g. a wooden model of a barrel-topped wagon). Finally, the last part is structured as a series of three questions and answers about concerns and fears that Travellers might have about the drawbacks of the ethnic recognition. At the end of the flier there is information on how to get involved in the *ITM's* Ethnicity Campaign and sign the petition.

Topics developed within the text

T1) Traveller Ethnicity determines Travellers' identity.

T2) What makes us Travellers is "born into family, religion, language, beliefs/values, way of life, culture, history".

T3) Ethnicity is the determinant of people's identity.

T4) Everyone has an ethnicity.

T5a) Ethnicity is constituted by a set of characteristics (family, religion, language, history, culture/way of life, beliefs/values).

T5b) Your Traveller identity is determined by the same set of characteristics (family, religion, language, history, culture, beliefs/values).

T6) Travellers are an Irish ethnic minority group.

T7) This ethnic minority status is not recognised by the government.

T8) Such recognition of ethnicity and identity is a basic human right.

T9) Travellers are currently affected by cultural and identity misrecognition including within the school system, high levels of racism and discrimination, inability to practice nomadism, lower life expectancy and discrimination in employment.

T10) Ethnic recognition would bring positive improvements for Travellers in the long term:

> T10a) increased protection under international and national (equality and constitutional) legislation;
>
> T10b) official legitimation of Traveller culture and potential more positive outlook on Travellers by mainstream society;
>
> T10c) legitimation of nomadism and consequential use of the ethnic status as an instrument to legally defend and promote Traveller culture;
>
> T10d) access to international law to oblige local authorities to meet their obligations with regards to Traveller-specific accommodation;

T10e) protection of Traveller Culture from extinction as a duty for the government (e.g. governmental funds for facilitating nomadism and teaching of Cant);

T10f) an increased level of legal protection against discrimination and racism under international law;

T10h) recognition and teaching of Traveller Culture in schools as part of the curriculum;

T10i) increased school retention of Travellers;

T10j) additional educational opportunities for children of nomadic families;

T10k) positive evaluation of the Traveller Economy;

T10l) increased possibility to legally challenge anti-Traveller discrimination in employment;

T10m) possibility to introduce positive discrimination laws in employment;

T10n) improved living conditions and consequential improved Travellers' health;

T10o) culturally appropriate design/delivery of health services to Travellers;

T10p) longer life expectancy for Travellers;

T10q) the government would be obliged to keep some seats in government for Traveller representatives.

T11) The recognition of Traveller ethnicity does not entail the loss of Irish nationality.

T12)The recognition of Traveller ethnicity does not affect social welfare benefits.

T13) The recognition of Traveller ethnicity would not separate Travellers and Settled people but rather achieve the opposite effects.

T14) Information on how to get involved in the campaign and sign the petition.

The developed topics demonstrate how arguments in favour of Traveller ethnicity adopt a distinctive reasoning aimed at persuading readers and stimulating their involvement in the *ITM's* political campaign. First, ethnicity is the determinant of people's identity, and is, in its general form and in its specific Traveller variant, measurable and definable by virtue of a set of characteristics. Travellers match the definition of an ethnic group since they possess the set of characteristics which define ethnicity. Second, in practical terms, such recognition would bring many beneficial changes to Travellers (see analysis of D1 and D2) since the ethnic status would assure greater legal protection and produce tangible cultural, social, political and legal benefits.

In other words, it would constitute an additional legal instrument through which Travellers could campaign and put pressure on the Irish government by engaging international rights bodies in order to obtain greater equality for themselves. Third, the feared downsides of the ethnic status are unfounded. In this regard, it is significant to consider the *ITM's* explicative piece[42] on the ethnicity campaign, which clarifies that the leaflet and the DVD "answer questions Travellers have already raised about what ethnicity will mean". However, they do not deal openly with the objections which have been voiced by other Travellers who for various reasons oppose their ethnic categorisation. Finally, readers are informed about how to offer support by joining the campaign and signing the petition.

The argument about ethnicity assumes the dimension of undeniable self-evident fact. This effect is reached not only by virtue of the repetitive occurrence of nearly the same topics between T1 and T6, but also by means of the use of a bullet-point and schematic writing style with the insertion of a table. The table gives the impression of immediacy and clarity, as if ethnicity was a measurable scientific fact which could be proved by ticking the provided boxes. Furthermore, the question on its right hand side (i.e. "What makes you a Traveller?") addresses directly in second pronominal person each single Traveller reading the leaflet and therefore personalises the information as something immediately relevant to every Traveller. Traveller readers, each addressed individually ("you"), are being asked the same question and provided an objective answer to it in the table cells. This factual reading of 'Traveller ethnicity' is confirmed by the section underneath the table which resorts to non-modal declarative verbs, expressing the strongest form of truth value inherent in the assertions: "Travellers *are* an Irish ethnic minority group because we *are* a small Irish community who share the same culture/way of life, language, belief values and history" [emphases added]. This assertion leaves no doubt about the ethnic classification of Travellers.

With regards to the recurrence of similar points, we can see how the topics T1 to T6 alternate from the specific case of Travellers and Traveller ethnicity to the general definition of ethnicity to subsequently associate the two by means of the juxtaposition of the general "ethnicity" with the specific "Travellers" within the table, followed by the same listed characteristics in the cells below. The juxtaposition and repetition serves to visually reinforce the idea that Travellers unequivocally are an ethnic group since they display exactly all the listed characters which constitute ethnicity.

[42] See www.itmtrav.ie/keyissues/myview/71.

From the space attributed to the various topics we can see how the practical argument about the advantages deriving from ethnic recognition (T10) is prioritised and occupies a central position within the leaflet. The list of subtopics within T10 extends over nearly half of the leaflet's length. These positive changes are proposed against the backdrop of the negative issues currently affecting Travellers (T9). The latter occupy a comparatively short space since Travellers do not need much explanation about their own daily experience of negative stereotyping, discrimination, mistreatment and marginalisation. In addition, the goal of the leaflet is to show how this negativity can be subverted and removed. Despite the recognition that such positive change would not occur all of a sudden ("Things wouldn't change over night"), ethnicity is presented as the solution to all the issues currently affecting Travellers in Irish society thanks to the consequential increased legal protection for Travellers under international human rights law, the Irish equality laws and the Constitution. Indeed, the flier delves into details of the various positive implications in different aspects of social policy, everyday life and people's attitudes. If we break down the listed advantages according to their similarities, we can notice how indeed most of them are legal in nature (T10a, T10c, T10d, T10e, T10e, T10f, T10l and T10m); these are followed by improvement regarding quality of life and inclusion (T10b, T10i, T10j, T10n, T10o and T10p), whereas a few others are symbolic (T10b, T10h and T10k) and one (T10q) concerns politics.

Some points are undoubtedly compelling and provide a clear rationale for the *ITM's* pursuit of official ethnic recognition and offer very valid reasons for signing the petition and supporting the campaign. Especially, the consequential increased protection under international laws (in line with what is guaranteed to the other officially recognised ethnic groups worldwide), seems to constitute an undeniable strength for the ethnic status quest. Other positive implications of the ethnic status are more questionable, inadequately justified or exaggerated. For instance, T10b's assertion that "other people in society *may* see Travellers more positively" [emphasis added] because of government's ethnic recognition is not accompanied by an explanation of the reason why this should happen and why an alternative reaction might not be possible. For instance, because of ethnic recognition other people may become more hostile to Travellers. This point is reiterated in the last exchange of questions and answers (T13), where a negative response is provided to the question about the risk of a further separation between Travellers and 'settled' people: "No. if Traveller ethnicity was recognised by Settled people they may start to understand Travellers better which may

bring Travellers and Settled people closer together". It is possible that law-abiding citizens who are indecisive and uninformed on this matter would gain a better understanding, embrace the official recognition and approximate their attitude to the official one. Yet, this is only a partial possibility, not a certainty. In fact, it is also likely that discriminatory people already holding anti-Traveller prejudices and behaviour would be enraged by such recognition and would increase their level of hostility and aggressiveness. It is also possible that the unfounded, false but commonly voiced public impression that Travellers are being granted 'special rights' by comparison with the rest of the Irish population would further feed a negative public disposition towards them. Moreover, the use in these sentences of the modal verb "may" (instead of the more certain "will") somewhat implicitly concedes that what is asserted is only a possibility and not a certainty. The same can be said regarding the listed changes within the education field, which are all expressed with the use of the modal "may" rather than the more certain "will": Traveller Culture *may* be recognised in schools and *may* be taught to all children in schools; more Travellers *may* stay on in education and, finally, children whose families travel *may* not lose out in education. These changes will not automatically happen; they may also not happen.

In addition, some changes[43] which the leaflet presents as consequential to the official ethnic recognition have already begun to take place. They have been initiated by the Irish government primarily because of pressures and initiatives from national Traveller organisations themselves, although without any statutory obligation for the government to guarantee their pursuit.

With regard to increased legal protection allegedly deriving from Travellers' ethnic recognition, it must be noted that the current legislation already specifically mentions "membership of the Traveller community" as one of the nine grounds under which discrimination in employment is not permitted. With regards to positive discrimination in employment, we must note that even the Report of the High Level Officials' Group (HLOG henceforth) on Traveller Issues (2006)[44], though controversial for other aspects, explicitly mentioned the Employment Equality Act 1998-2004 as a key instrument "to overcoming discrimination for Travellers in the workplace in that it

[43] Consider for example the Travellers' Primary Health Care Project, introduced by *Pavee Point* in 1994 and then officially endorsed in the National Traveller Health Strategy (2002). This document also stresses the importance of cultural awareness training for staff, as well as the involvement of Travellers in the design, implementation and delivery of services to their community.

[44] For more details see HLOG (2006, 31-38). In the Section on Traveller Employment the State is charged with the responsibility to provide Travellers with training, work experience and job opportunities in the public and private sector.

allows Positive Action" (p.36). Hence, the existing equality legislation can already be used to put pressure on the State to obtain positive discrimination initiatives for Travellers, even though the granting of the ethnic recognition might put an obligation on the government of the day to keep up with its planned measures and perhaps set annual target quotas. Travellers' fear that these changes might be reversed is grounded and understandable.

The choice and order of topics in the Traveller ethnicity leaflet displays a high degree of repetition and a strategically selective and limited conception of ethnicity. The need to use an easy and concrete language understandable by a non-academic audience and the shortage of space available in the flier partly justify a degree of simplification and reduction. However, the highly determinist understanding of ethnicity and the exclusion of any attempt to combine other processual dynamic and critical understandings of this notion are more problematic. All the complexity and dynamism pertaining to processes of identification and identity construction is flattened and reduced to a simple and clear action realised by an abstract entity. Ethnicity is presented as the only determinant of Travellers' identity. 'Traveller ethnicity', ethnic status, culture and identity end up overlapping in various passages throughout the leaflet. One sole source of identification is selected and assigned as the maker of Travellers and their identity.

Topics T1 to T6 turn around the same points: Travellers derive their source of identity from their ethnicity which is in turn defined by a set of core characteristics: family, religion, language, beliefs/values, way of life, culture and history. Hence, since Travellers can tick all the provided boxes, there are no doubts that they constitute an ethnic minority group in Ireland. The provided definition of ethnicity and Travellers as an ethnic group approximates the one formulated within the legal field. In particular it recalls the definition, which was at the basis of the 2000 British court case, which decided that Irish Travellers would be regarded as an ethnic group in England under the Race Relations Act 1976[45] since they satisfy the two core conditions of long shared history and cultural tradition and other criteria among which their experiencing disadvantage and discrimination.

[45] In this regard see IHRC, 2004, pp.7-8: "In the summer of 2000, in the case of *O'Leary & Others v. Allied Domecq & Others, unreported 29 August 2000*, the Central London County Court was dealing with a claim by a number of Irish Travellers that they had been refused service in five public houses in northwest London. (…) It follows therefore, that our conclusions clearly are that we are satisfied that the *Mandla* criteria are satisfied in this case, and therefore Irish travellers may be properly identified as an ethnic minority, so we answer the preliminary question in the affirmative".

However, the flier does not make any distinction between the implications of a legal perspective on ethnicity and its difference from other sociological or anthropological understandings, not to mind the lived experience of practising culture at a day to day level. The use of a legalistic understanding of ethnicity is perhaps strategically motivated: deplying concepts of human rights law reduces the risk of relying on discretion and open-endedness. Furthermore, the definition contained in this leaflet also seems to adopt the objective perspective characteristic of early anthropological conceptions of ethnicity according to which it can be assessed on the basis of a list of objective characteristics. As such, it is regarded like an entity which determines from outside people belonging to the same group and makes their identity. In this way it overlooks approaches that acknowledge its subjective dimension as opposed to the objective interpretation (see Chapter two). It also overlooks the UNCERD Committee's view[46]: "the State party should pay particular attention to *self-identification* as a critical factor in the identification and conceptualisation of a people as an ethnic minority group (…)" [emphasis added].

The omission of the subjective and political dimension of ethnicity is significant because it is the one that guarantees the progressive potential of ethnicity as a means of emancipation against the regressive potential of 'race' as a means of oppression. Ethnicity cannot be externally imposed but must be voluntarily chosen and claimed if its emancipatory function is to be preserved; otherwise it would risk slippage into 'race' and could be open to exploitation as an instrument of oppression and racism. Travellers who learn about their ethnicity solely on the basis of this leaflet and/or the Traveller Ethnicity DVD might not be made aware of the centrality of their own will and political assertiveness in this regard, even though they might be exposed to alternative sources of information or be familiar with the intra-Traveller debate on ethnicity. Instead, they might be induced to believe that, even if they were to think differently about themselves, their opinion would not change the objective fact, visualised and proved in the table and affirmed in the flier, that they are in any case objectively ethnic. Travellers are not being told that it is up to them as a collectivity to politically claim the ethnic attribution. At the same time, they are being invited to become active around this issue and they are being mobilised around a particular view so that this call to involvement does run the risk of exposing alternative views. While ethnic claims do arise around and

[46] See UNCERD Committee, 1990 (General Recommendation N.8) and 2011 (Report on Ireland).

mobilise the identified ethnic attributes, nonetheless the latter are not sufficient on their own to ensure ethnicity.

On the other hand, there is also a real challenge in trying to make political use of a more fluid concept of identity. If it is so amorphous then can you really fasten any particular legal obligation to it? Is this position consistent within its own political terms of reference?

These limitations are not only related to the schematic and simplistic nature of the medium. Instead, comparative analyses of other sources which can be accessed online on the *ITM* website confirm this view. For example, Niall Crowley[47], former Chief Executive Officer of the Equality Authority and, before this, one of the core founding members of *ITM* in 1990, made the following comments in a speech delivered on occasion of the 2009 *ITM's* Annual General Meeting in Athlone:

> "There has been much discussion as to whether or not Travellers are an ethnic group. This misses the key point. Ethnicity is an academic concept that has been relatively well defined. Travellers are an ethnic group by this definition. The discussion then changes to whether or not the Government recognizes Travellers as an ethnic group and to whether or not Travellers choose individually to be identified as a member of an ethnic group. But the starting point is that Travellers are an ethnic group and this is not something that is in the Government's gift, *nor* is it *a* matter of *choice* for *Travellers*" [emphasis added].

This position was already formulated by the Equality Authority Report on Traveller Ethnicity (2006) published when Niall Crowley was its Chair Executive Director. This statement on the self-evidence of 'Traveller ethnicity' draws on academic essays, which are quoted as authoritative sources (e.g. Ní Shúinéar, 1994; McVeigh, 2007). While this contradicts the principle of self-identification enshrined by the UNCERD Recommendation N8 (1990), it does not contradict the *ITM* political project in itself. It also marks a step towards the naturalisation of 'Traveller ethnicity' as a self-evident fact and away from past conceptualisations that included elements of choice within Travellers' definition as "ethnic". For instance, O'Connell (1994, 112) insisted that "ethnicity is not just a matter of personal choice", but did not exclude choice altogether.

I acknowledge that such a denial of Travellers' key and active role in their own categorisation/definition as ethnic is guided by the will to maximise potential benefits deriving from the official recognition. To those who object that Travellers have not absolute agreement in this regard, it is answered that their consensus is not a necessary prerequisite for such official recognition because their ethnicity is a 'fact', which

[47]Crowley's speech is available at the *ITM's* www.itmtrav.ie/keyissues/myview/82 accessed on 07/02/2011 at 10.27 a.m.

warrants no choice, irrespective of its contrast with the democratic nature of the claim emphasised in D1. This denial of choice makes strategic sense as an attempt to persuade Travellers into supporting the ethnicity campaign but it is nonetheless still problematic (see below analysis of D5).

Despite this misleading overlapping of two different fields, it must also be acknowledged that the *ITM* has valid arguments. International human rights legislation was introduced to protect communities and groups from the reality of racial discrimination and structural inequality. The legal category of ethnic group responds to this function. Some jurisdictions (but not the Irish State) provide legal criteria to determine communities which fit into the ethnic group category. Since Irish Travellers have been historically subjected to racial discrimination and have experienced inequality, hence they should be secured protection against it and for this reason they should be granted official recognition of their ethnic status. In fact the reification of ethnicity and ethnic groups is operated by international human rights law in response to a situation of 'racial' oppression afflicting some already marked collectivities. This goes beyond a sociological or anthropological perspective on ethnicity.

Nonetheless, this should not bring Traveller activists to denying Travellers' right to choose and substitute it with an absolute need determined by their background. As Parekh (2008, 11) importantly remind us, identity always involves, within certain variable limits (depending on internal and external constraining factors), choice. We are never totally determined by our background but are able to reflect on it critically and sometimes even break with it. Personal identity is not a finished product or a possession but an individual achievement (although within structural limitations). It retains its vitality through a life-time by being exercised and affirmed in choices and actions and functions as our compass which coordinates our lives and makes a life path. Therefore, nowadays, even when people seem to be living accordingly to the dictates of the 'culture' they are born, socialised and acculturated into, this is also partly the result of individual choices to the extent that they are aware of possible alternative ways of being, thinking and acting. Furthermore people can and mostly do engage actively and dialectically with their culture(s) and this contributes to the vitality and dynamicity of culture(s), characterised by both continuity and transformation of the collectively accepted and sanctioned ways of acting, thinking and being.

Hence, the information provided in the leaflet clashes with contemporary identity formation theories, such as that discussed in Parekh (2008) and mentioned in

Chapter Two, according to which ethnic identification is one among many factors involved in identity construction processes since identity is multi-dimensional and plural. These nuances get flattened and somehow erased by D3's discursive determinist overlapping of ethnicity and identity conceived of in a singular and static form and by its omission of individual (and collective) choice and agency. To conclude, I reiterate that the definition of ethnicity with which Travellers have been presented by the *ITM* is pre-Barthian and dangerously closed to the legacy of 'race' in its determinism according to which the sole ethnicity, like 'race', entirely makes people's identity. This formulation does not acknowledge either the various dimensions of identity or the other concurring factors in identity constitution and does not specify the relevance of the historical structural and action context.

Finally, the topics T11 to T13 address three concerns expressed by some Travellers. The question and answer format and the use of the personal pronoun "I" makes it clear that these matters have been raised by Travellers themselves. The answers, all beginning with the negative "no", categorically reassure doubtful Travellers. Some of these doubts, as we have seen in Chapter One, were at the roots of many Travellers' fears and concerns on occasion of the planned internal vote on a Traveller flag/logo in 2005.

T11 emerges as the most crucial concern for Travellers. This is evidenced by the insertion, after a negative answer, of a sentence in capital and bold characters stating "Being Irish is our nationality, being a Traveller is our ethnicity". As seen in Chapter One, the episode of the aborted vote on the Traveller flag (or logo) in 2005 constituted an occasion for the voicing of 'ordinary' Travellers' concerns and fears about diluting (or even losing) their Irishness. Fears ranged from the symbolic level of being identified as less Irish than the rest of the population to the very preoccupation of being concretely denied citizenship and nationality and all the liberties inherent to the status of Irish citizen. T11 specifies that official recognition of Traveller ethnicity does not entail the loss of Irish citizenship and nationality. Yet, it attributes this to the factor of birthplace, although being born in Ireland is currently not sufficient in itself to guarantee Irish citizenship and nationality[48].

Importantly, the statement "being Irish is our nationality, being a Traveller is our ethnicity" at first glance appears to set Traveller identity in the complementary mode as "both Traveller and Irish" as opposed to possible more exclusive claims of identity

[48] See Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2005, Nationality and Citizenship Act.

according to which one affiliation excludes the other (either/or). However, deeper examination reveals that Irishness functions as a superficial category since it is ultimately denied as a concurring (or competing) source of identification for Travellers since their identity is presented as determined exclusively by their ethnicity. As a result, this statement aims to dissolve a widespread concern among Travellers but does not engage with the sentient implications of national membership. Yet, this position adopted by the ITM is also understandable since it is justified by a desire to cultivate a sense of collective pride among Travellers -ethnic status as not only protection but also as a positive empowering resource.

The attribution of Irishness to Travellers also clarifies that the *ITM*, despite its insistent reference to Traveller cultural distinctiveness and independence, does not demand Travellers' total separation from the Irish population but instead seeks recognition of its specificity and acceptance of the practice of nomadism. This position is confirmed by other documents produced by the *ITM*.

An additional observation concerns the choice of the word "nationality" in the aforementioned sentence, where it might have been expected to find "citizenship" or at least the two of them together. Despite the fact that the two notions (citizenship and nationality) are conflated within official understandings, nationality's meaning is closer to cultural sameness and belonging and hence rather tends to overlap with ethnicity, as a sub-category of it. Instead, citizenship entails the legal status granted to the members of a territorial state, with the attached rights and duties. Hence, given Travellers' claim to cultural distinctiveness vis-à-vis the dominant group, the notion of nationality seems to be out of place. The concept of nationality in fact implies a commonality derived from a collectively shared ancestry, culture, language and history, while this is what is being denied by claims of Travellers' ethnic distinctiveness. Perhaps it was used in the leaflet because of it being a pre-requisite for conferral of the Irish passport. Furthermore, nationality and nationalism have a long political currency in Ireland, also expressible via cultural forms –songs, etc.- which might appear –though not necessarily be– broader ranging than citizenship which pertains more to the legal field.

D3's omission of other questions and objections also deserves consideration. This section of the leaflet deals selectively only with certain specific concerns. Yet, it does not address other expressed objections and/or opposition to Traveller ethnicity coming from Traveller quarters. These are articulated in other data which will be analysed in the course of this research (see Chapter Seven). Moreover, the negative

answer is correct with regard to the first two questions, whereas the response is not so straightforward in the case of the third question ("Would it separate Travellers and Settled People further?"). The answer to this question cannot be simply and unequivocally "no". And this is implicitly acknowledged by the use twice of the modal verb "may"[49], which works as an implicit admission that this risk indeed may exist. The point which is being denied in the third answer represents in fact an objection raised by Travellers who oppose or are doubtful on the ethnic status.

This risk of further separation is also supported by academic research, which attributes to identity politics the potential danger of reinforcing societal binary polarisation among groups on the basis of their allegedly different and separated identities (see Chapter Two). As a result, commonalities are underplayed while differences are exaggerated so that society gets broken up into "exclusive, hostile and epistemologically closed groups" (Parekh, 2008, 36). This is indeed exemplified in this leaflet itself: T13 proceeds in completing a subdivision of the Irish indigenous population into two ethnic and culturally distinct subgroups: "Travellers" and "Settled People". This passage is realised by means of the capitalisation of the attribute settled ("Settled People"). In this way a very heterogeneous and internally differentiated set of people, whose unity derives only from its counter-position to Travellers, is transformed into an ethnic group, which can be then juxtaposed as a homogeneous and coherent historical and cultural community to Travellers. 'Settled people' do not constitute an ethnic group. As noted in Chapter Three, Irish people were not naturally a homogeneous whole (like any other people) but have been variously subjected to homogenising influences due to ideological and material historical processes of social construction, which are still underway. But these homogenising processes have not erased internal heterogeneity and tensions so that the so called "Settled People" can be regarded as a mystification, undermined as it is by several axes of differentiation (e.g. class, gender, age, sexual orientation, dis/ability, religion and so forth) not to mind cultural practices and other affiliations.

In conclusion, the leaflet fails to provide a distinction between the legal category of ethnic status and ethnicity as a socio-anthropological notion to explain a dynamic phenomenon, whose dimensions and processes of construction are plural and constantly under way. While the ethnic status was legally formulated to protect communities from racial discrimination and oppression, ethnicity has a more descriptive interpretative

[49] The answer is "No. If Traveller ethnicity was recognised by Settled people they *may* start to understand Travellers better which *may* bring Travellers and Settled people closer together"[emphases added].

character and has shifted from a static to a more dynamic understanding of process and work in progress (in this regard see Chapter Two, sections 2.5. and 2.6). This conflation causes the transposition of the static nature of the former onto a dynamic process, thus transforming the latter into an objective and deterministically explained fact recognisable by virtue of some essential characters.

Semantic environment and lexical choice

"Ethnicity" occurs eleven times whereas "ethnic" appears seven times. The word "culture" has also a high degree of occurrence since it appears thirteen times. This confirms once more that Traveller ethnicity is primarily defined in cultural terms. Only in three cases "ethnicity" is not specifically linked to "Traveller" but used in general definitional sentences which constitute the brief theoretical section of the leaflet. The other occurrences of "ethnicity" are one in association with "identity" and the rest associated with the characterisation "Traveller" or the possessive adjectives "our" and "their". In all these cases "ethnicity" emerges as something which is currently not recognised whereas it should "be recognised" by the government, because "it is a basic human right" and can guarantee potential beneficial changes in line with those enjoyed by all other ethnic groups around the world. The centrality of Travellers' ethnic recognition is proven by the re-occurrence of this word in its verbal and nominal forms throughout the leaflet: it is found eleven times as a past participle ("recognised"), once in the infinite form ("recognise") and once as a noun ("recognition"). This verb appears mostly in hypothetical sentences regrouped under the heading "What would change if our ethnicity was recognised?". This series of sentences depicts a positive definitive change in Travellers' treatment as consequential to official ethnic recognition of 'Traveller ethnicity'. Such recognition translates into recognition of Traveller identity (again in the singular form) and Traveller Culture.

The first two appearances of "ethnicity" are accompanied by the adjective "Traveller" and constitute the main focus of the flier's front page. The general definition of ethnicity constitutes the clue for the interpretation of the whole leaflet: "ethnicity is a fancy word which means: What makes you; YOU". If we look at the transitivity of this sentence, ethnicity is the acting subject, whereas the person "you" (which here signifies a generalised subject, which could be everyone) is the object of the action. Therefore each person, is characterised as passive and determined by the agent, i.e. "ethnicity". The use of capital characters for the second "you" probably

serves to reinforce and stress the identification of the first "you" as deeper and more fundamental. In light of this explanation we can go back to the front page and read it as: "Traveller ethnicity" is "what makes us Travellers" which is determined and recognisable on the basis of these characteristics: "born into family, religion, language, beliefs/values, way of life, culture, history". This definition of ethnicity, as noted above, denies any component of individual agency, will and choice. It also denies the plurality of identities coexisting within every individual. Furthermore it omits to account for the role played by racism, discrimination and segregation as factors highly implicated in phenomena of ethnic collective identities formation.

The above provided interpretation is subsequently completed by the sentence "Everyone has an ethnicity" from which ethnicity emerges as a universal possession in the singular form ("an"). Even though ethnicity functions as the grammatical object in this sentence while the person "everyone" is the subject, this clause does not express an action but rather a relationship of possession. The person possesses an ethnicity but she/he is determined by it, specifically by the set of characteristics which makes up ethnicity. There is no subjective perspective allowed within this proposed reading of ethnicity. Ethnicity in other words is a universal entity, made up of a set of objective elements, which pre-determines the identity of all of us and on which we can exert no choice or will.

The consequentiality of "ethnicity" and "identity" is confirmed at the end of the same page, where the two are linked together in the same expression. It is stated "It is a basic human right to have *our ethnicity and identity* recognised". This consequentiality then evolves into an outright identification towards the end of the leaflet. Indeed, in a passage in the last folded page "identity" is used as a substitute for "ethnicity" as if ethnicity constituted the only source of a person's identification: "Everyone is examined on the basis of their means (ie: how much money they have) and not on their *identity* [emphasis added]". Moreover, the use of the attribute "fancy" is in itself interesting: given that the *ITM* holds the concept so dear and repeatedly articulate it, why does the organisation distance itself from it? Perhaps it reflects the approach being taken, i.e. that this is a legal necessity that does not require much in the way of critical reflexivity because it is strategically appropriate.

The equivalence between "Traveller ethnicity" and "Traveller identity" extends also to include "Traveller Culture". This can be noted by comparing two almost identical clauses, the first, containing the expression "Traveller identity" and the second

"Traveller culture". The first outlines a current negative issue of identity misrecognition whereas the second points to a potential positive reversal of this problem, as conditional to Travellers' ethnic recognition. The statement "*Traveller identity* not recognised in schools" is listed among the issues affecting Travellers today; then in the following section it is stated that if ethnicity was recognised "*Traveller Culture* may be recognised in schools". Hence, "Traveller identity" and "Traveller Culture" overlap in D3. The recognition of "Traveller Culture" in schools, anchored in their ethnic distinctiveness, translates into the acceptance of their distinct collective identity (in the singular mode) from the rest of the Irish children and into the teaching of Traveller culture as a curricular subject to all children. In this way, Traveller children are regarded as a unified block, having only one singular fixed identity which is strictly rooted in their cultural heritage apart from their specific life experience and individual subjectivity. This formulation in other words does not allow for the possibility of a coexistence of various plural Traveller identities but portrays Travellers as exclusively determined by their background and culture which are distinct from the rest of the Irish population.

Nonetheless, I have already acknowledged that this characterisation of Travellers contrasts with other *ITM's* publications and interventions in media debate which denote a clear awareness of Travellers' internal heterogeneity. Therefore comparative analysis suggests a rhetorical reading of certain assertions made in the Ethnicity leaflet. The leaflet is geared towards the building up of consent and support for the petition and therefore its aim has more to do with persuasion than precise information.

Even in D3 the attribute "ethnic" is associated with the legal status whose official recognition is being pursued against the Irish government's denial. This legal status enshrined in international law is recognised as an instrument ("as a *campaign* and *lobbying tool*" [emphasis added]) in Travellers' hands to obtain more equitable and respectful treatment and to force the government to practically enact its legislative obligations towards Travellers' specific accommodation and specifically towards nomadism. This is evident by the clause "*We* could *use our status* as an ethnic minority to campaign and put pressure on the government to create laws that respect the Traveller culture and strike down laws that attack our culture". Ethnic status would give Travellers an extra-power and influence vis-à-vis the government and in this way it would enhance their collective agency. The stressing of Travellers' agency is operated

by the repeated use of the personal pronoun "We" as the subject of a series of possible actions.

This point about the legal instrumentality of international human rights law and of the ethnic status probably represents the major strength for the *ITM's* ethnicity campaign. It perhaps represents a tacit acknowledgement of the strategic basis of ethnic claims. This would place Irish Travellers on an equal footing with all the other ethnic groups around the world, who are also guaranteed political representation within their governments.

Even in D3 Traveller culture occurs both with small and capital C. The government's official recognition of 'Traveller ethnicity' is presented as linked to a symbolic and material endorsement and legitimation of "Traveller culture". Traveller culture is again presented as being in need of respect and protection from external attacks ("(…) to create laws that *respect* the Traveller culture and strike down laws that *attack* our culture") and extinction (Government would have to *protect* Traveller Culture *from dying out*). This characterisation highlights the contested position of Travellers within Irish society and their current victimisation and vilification based on the rejection of the practice of nomadism and attempts at their assimilation into mainstream society coupled with their marginalisation and exclusion. Traveller culture is presented as primarily characterised by nomadism. Nomadism clearly appears as the crucial cultural characteristic to be defended. This is very understandable since it is probably the most attacked aspect of Traveller culture by mainstream society. The mention of "laws that attack our culture" as something to be stricken down constitutes a clear reference to the 2002 Housing Act which criminalised trespass into public and private land de facto targeting Travellers' nomadic practices and forcing many Travellers into unwanted forms of accommodation. The ethnic status is regarded as a means for a potential reversal of such law to the extent that "they may provide funds to keep travelling alive". However, in representing culture in this way this document also ignores the more complex and fluid features of culture.

Finally, an aspect of the leaflet which deserves some attention is the use of personal pronouns referring to Travellers. There is an alternation between the use of the collective name "Travellers", the pronominal third person plural (they/them) and corresponding possessive adjective ("their") with the first plural (we/us) and possessive adjective "our". This change in pronouns allows the *ITM's* flier to address simultaneously both a Traveller and a non-Traveller audience, since the *ITM* ethnicity

campaign targets everyone. The Traveller audience may gain the impression of identification with the writers of the leaflet: it is a communication among Travellers: there is a bond, communality and common interests at stake. At the same time, the other Irish readers' perspective is also guaranteed by using the name "Travellers". In the question "what makes us Travellers?" "us" includes a you who is reading and a me/us who is writing, who are sharing the same condition and involved in the same phenomenon. This question is reiterated again inside the leaflet with a slight difference, the direct address to individual Travellers: "What makes *you* a Traveller?"[emphasis added]. Furthermore, the fact that the picture with the four Traveller children is located above the question makes it look as if the "us" also includes these four children who are posing the question to others, Travellers and non-Travellers alike.

Throughout the leaflet this alternation between the noun "Travellers" and personal pronouns is maintained and replicated. A few illustrations will suffice as many could be cited: the statement "*Travellers* are an ethnic minority group because *we* are a small Irish community who share the same (…)"[emphasis added] combines objective talk (Travellers *are*…) with the co-identification between author and Traveller readership. This combination suggests Travellers' ownership of the leaflet. Travellers are addressing both their own people and wider Irish society about this. Another example is located under the heading "Issues Affecting Travellers Today": the title presents facts objectively to an undifferentiated audience whereas two of the listed issues display the use of the personal pronoun, once in its subject form "we" and the other in its object form "us": "*We* die younger than *country people*"[emphases added] and "Not many people will give *us* a job". The expression "Traveller culture" is alternated with "our culture" from one line to the other. Finally the set of questions and answers favours Travellers' immediate identification through the use of the first person singular of the personal pronoun ("I" and "we/us"). The list of examples could be longer.

Construction of Irish Travellers

Throughout the leaflet Irish Travellers are depicted as a homogeneous and uniform community whose ethnicity is both an objective fact and a basic human right. The understanding of ethnicity provided by the *ITM's* leaflet represents individuals as totally determined by their ethnicity. Their being an Irish ethnic minority group appears as self-evident on the basis of their being "a small Irish community who *share* the *same*

culture/way of life, language, belief values and history"[emphases added]. The insistence on one "Traveller identity" in the singular mode as consequential to "Traveller ethnicity" and overlapping with "Traveller Culture" flattens the plurality of ways of being Travellers into a unified one so denying the concurring role played by individual agency and other external factors in processes of Traveller identity construction. This singular and clearly defined and bounded small Traveller community is portrayed as juxtaposed to an equally bounded and homogeneous community of "Settled People", also referred to as "country people" (one of the Traveller expressions used to designate non-Travellers). This ethnicisation of mainstream Irish society obtained through the capitalisation of the words' initials conjures up a construction of Irish society along ethnically defined lines: the compact and clearly defined small Traveller community, characterised by one culture and one singular identity, is juxtaposed to the "Settled" counterpart, with its own equally bounded and singular culture and identity.

However, as noted before, the statement "being Irish is our nationality, being a Traveller is our ethnicity" operates a delicate balancing act by confirming Irishness as a Traveller attribute and hence defining the small community in the complementary mode as "both Traveller and Irish" as opposed to other more exclusive possible claims according to which one affiliation totally excludes the other (either/or). Despite this, their Irishness is presented in the background and as ultimately not contributing to their overall culture and sense of identity. In fact the introduction of the notion of nationality and its application to the Irish Travellers exclusively towards the end of the flier, only as a response to a frequent question posed by Travellers themselves, seems to be an afterthought and to function as a empty category used to guarantee rights and services to Travellers and overcome the impasse represented by Travellers' double identification and attachment to both identities. In other words, it seems that the *ITM* does not engage with Travellers' Irishness semantic and lived implications, in line with Chapter Two's observations on national identity. The fact of sharing Irishness with the rest of the Irish population, of having been born and living in the same country, exposed to many common influences, ultimately entails also cultural communalities and some shared co-identification between Travellers and non-Travellers.

However, a more progressive movement and intention could be attributed: rather than getting bogged down in what Irishness is, they might implicitly suggest that it can

accommodate plural identities. Nationality then becomes a kind of backdrop not to be agonised over.

Ideological construction and implied assumptions

The analysis revealed that D3 operates a problematic conflation between the legal category of ethnic status and the sociological-anthropological notion of ethnicity. Therefore, notwithstanding the appearance of a clear logical and valid rationale underpinning the pursuit of official ethnic recognition, this datum seems to be ideological to the extent that it offers a deterministic, limited and, hence, problematic understanding of ethnicity and culture as acting entities and self-evident facts as well as a reductive, homogeneous and singular construction of Travellers and Traveller identity at the expenses of their internal heterogeneity and agency. I also regarded the omission of an acknowledgement of the subjective and political dimension of ethnicity as problematic because it denies Travellers' choice with regard to their ethnic categorisation. Second, the leaflet portrays a black and white scenario of radical and dramatic positive change as consequential to the official recognition of Travellers ethnicity. The positive outcomes of ethnic recognition for Travellers are probably overstated. Nonetheless, this is often implicitly acknowledged by the use of modality, such as the verb "may". Third, I argued that the leaflet accepts and confirms the polarisation of Irish society along ethnic lines as if it emerged out of cultural distinctiveness alone rather than having been created as the result of the combined processes of nationalism, Irish State formation and structural changes in Irish society since 1922.

On the other hand, I acknowledged that there are pragmatic and strategic reasons for such choices, since the flier has primarily a persuasive goal: to maximise the support to petition and campaign in order to gain real, potential or presumed benefits for Travellers in terms of equality. I also pointed out that the material and discursive reality of anti-Traveller racism and structural inequality must be acknowledged for the role it plays in eliciting certain contrasting but still homogenising and essentialising discursive articulations.

6.3.4. Analysis of D4*: *Traveller Ethnicity DVD*

DVD's Description

D4 reproduces more synthetically the same contents as D3 but through an audio-visual medium. They are dialogically presented in a conversation between two interlocutors. Furthermore it includes a written section —"More info"— that offers a series of slides reproducing almost identically the same sections and words as those used in the Traveller Ethnicity flier.

The *ITM* Ethnicity DVD presents in its opening page a combination of features marked in the middle by the horizontal title "Traveller Ethnicity". At the top of the screen there is an horizontal automatically moving succession of forty-nine pictures; on the left hand side the Irish Traveller Movement logo, address and contact details; on the right hand side, the two optional features which can be operated through clicking on each title: "Play" and "More Info". Finally, the title (Campfire in the dark) and singer (Kathleen Marie Keenan) of the song played at the opening of the menu page and at the end of the movie are acknowledged. Once the DVD is ready on the opening page the sequenced pictures at the top start moving while the song "Campfire in the dark" plays automatically until the viewer makes a choice. The song transmits a melancholic and nostalgic feeling. It communicates the sense of loss of a better, more fulfilling and harmonious past life (busy days of work happily ending with evening socialising in the countryside around campfires with children playing nearby under the sight of their parents) against the more comfortable but empty current life, evoked with references to inactivity, dole collection, exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination.

The photos are mostly in colour (apart from one depicting a tinsmith in his house showing his work to a visitor) and primarily depict contemporary people, both female and male Travellers of various age groups, some indoors (in houses or caravans) and others outdoors (in front of houses or caravans or in other settings such as streets, in front of buildings, in the countryside, etc.) in various moments of their family and working life as well as pastimes and celebrations. Some pictures are close ups and focus specifically on the facial features and expressions while some others present people at full-length. Only a few of the photos do not portray people but shots of caravans and horses, caravans and vans/cars on the side of roads, a barrel-topped wagon with a horse in a rural landscape, wall graffiti representing Travellers' symbols (boxing gloves and a medal; a representation of Jesus, a horse-drawn barrel-top wagon, etc.). The photos move at a sustained speed leaving no time to concentrate specifically on any of them but

just giving an idea of who are Travellers nowadays, how they live, what they look like and what is significant to their lives (family, travelling, horses, religious celebrations, boxing, tinsmithing and other activities).

Movie's description

The movie opens up with the *ITM* logo and the sound of Irish traditional music, which is played in the background for the duration of the film. The first three shots are taken outdoors in a sunny day: the first features a state-of-the-art housing estate named Castlebrook taken at a certain distance; the second shot pictures an idyllic, green and hilly rural landscape, probably surrounding the housing estate, with birds singing in the background; the third shot moves closer to the detached houses' parking space where a dog is wandering between the cars. A young woman[50] approaches the first house on the left, opens the door and walks inside. The rest of the shots are indoors in the house's sitting room, where the young woman greets a middle-aged man, Jim, sitting on an armchair, with a Nike cap, who is reading a newspaper.

The film is mostly centred on their brief conversation on the ethnicity issue and ends with them agreeing on the greatness of ethnic recognition for Travellers. As the woman enters the sitting room, she shows Jim the *ITM* ethnicity leaflet that she collected from work and asks him to have a look at it. The camera moves closer to the flier as Jim opens it and flicks through it, eventually focusing on the front cover. In turn, he asks her about the meaning of the expression ethnic minority; while she is answering, the camera focuses on the section of the front page where can be read the question "What makes us Travellers?" followed by the bullet-point list of characteristics. Hence the information is conveyed simultaneously in the written and oral forms. Throughout the conversation the camera moves from the young lady to Jim as they talk. However, towards the end the camera focuses again on the leaflet showing a section of its last page, which corresponds to the topic they are discussing (potential impact of ethnic recognition on welfare benefits). The words "being Irish is our nationality, being a Traveller is our ethnicity" can be read, as well as the second question regarding welfare benefits entitlement and most of its answer. Again, the visual shot of the flier is completed with the oral explanation of the young woman. In the final exchange he

[50] The two actors are Jim O'Brien and Rose Maria Maughan, two Traveller activists who are involved in Minceirs Whiden and the Irish Traveller Movement. They have been prominent within the Traveller Ethnicity campaign. Their points of views often feature in newspaper articles and radio/TV talkshows (for example, see *Irish Traveller*, 2006, Vol.2, Issue 2, p.7; *The Irish Times*, 09/03/2009, 'Irish Traveller or Traveller Irish?'; Pat Kenny's *Frontline* on Traveller issues, 28/06/2010).

offers her a cup of tea and biscuits. Subsequently we see him getting up and can hear them laughing and chatting together. The movie's final shot is again outside the house: from the window we can see him moving and hear chat and laughter. Then the Irish traditional music, which had been very low during the conversation, gets louder and a white message appears on a black background providing information on *ITM* contact details to support the campaign.

Overall analytical considerations on D4

The Traveller ethnicity movie is very short, accessible and straight to the point so that it succeeds in rendering more graspable a quite challenging topic, especially for an audience which may include people with low or no literacy skills. The combination of visual and oral elements helps the audience follow the conversation and the chosen words are easy and clear. Overall the movie facilitates and guides the reading of the leaflet. Due to their commonality of contents, most of the analytical observations made for D3 are also valid for D4. Hence, this section is concise and complements D3's examination.

The short movie is significant as an instance of social marketing, given its similarity to a TV advertisement in which the seller calls up to houses to promote a new product to buy. The qualities of the new product are clearly shown by the seller who convincingly and persuasively answers the questions posed by the house dweller and potential customer. Eventually the seller and potential buyer end up agreeing together on the virtues of the advertised item. The latter has no faults, in line with advertising patterns. Accordingly, questions are posed but no substantial objections to the item are voiced. Nonetheless, ethnicity is not like any other product bought in the supermarket. It is not a thing, but a phenomenon and a process with its pros and cons, which implies dynamism, allows for individual and situational variations and must always be contextualised historically, structurally and at the level of collective and individual agency.

Furthermore, D4's persuasive effects are enhanced by the combination of additional audio-visual elements that are highly evocative. As noted above in the descriptive section, the photos, the song and the background music concur in creating a nostalgic feeling of loss and the belief that the good old days can be brought back by virtue of Travellers' official ethnic recognition. In addition, the idyllic setting of the house, peacefully surrounded by green hills, and the perfect conditions of the estate

suggest that high standard Traveller accommodation is a successful reality in some parts of the country.

Furthermore, this film constitutes a clear example of explicit intertextuality, since the *ITM's* ethnicity leaflet is the focus of the movie: it is not only mentioned but also shown during the duration of the film. The conversation between the two actors evolves around the leaflet that the young woman picked up at work and explicates its contents. In this sense it is significant that some of the correspondences and equivalences that implicitly emerged from D3's textual analysis are explicitly made in D4. For instance, the equivalence and overlapping of ethnicity, culture and identity pointed throughout the examination of D3 is more direct in D4. In fact, if we take the passage on Travellers' Irishness and compare the answers of D3 and D4 we note how flier and film resort to similar but not identical clauses. Indeed, the film appears to be more explicit in making the equation:

> Flier (D3): "Being Irish is our nationality, being Travellers is our ethnicity"
>
> Movie (D4): "(…) so being Irish is our nationality and our Traveller identity and way of life is our ethnicity (…)"

The latter explicitly states that "Traveller ethnicity" corresponds to "Traveller identity and way of life", confirming an equivalence that the textual examination had brought to light for D3.

Nonetheless, I previously argued that this essentialist and reductive understanding of ethnicity, culture and identity could be interpreted as strategic since it is at odds with other ITM stances, which stress Travellers' heterogeneity. This DVD/film has a primarily ideological and persuasive aim: it is supposed to be seen by Travellers to gain information on Traveller ethnicity or be shown at the beginning of ethnicity workshops held locally by Traveller organisations in order to stimulate a 'debate' on Traveller ethnicity among the participants. Briefly, the movie, like the ethnicity flier, seeks to convince Travellers that they are 'objectively' ethnic and that such recognition is extremely advantageous and has no drawbacks.

Part Two

Minceirs Whiden's construction of 'Traveller ethnicity'

6.4. Analysis of D5: *2010 Minceirs Whiden's policy document*

In consideration of the significant length of this document, the linguistic analysis will be mainly limited to Sections Two and Three which respectively provide *Minceirs Whiden*'s formulation of 'Traveller ethnicity' and specify the existing diversity of needs among Travellers themselves. In addition, it will also consider passages from the introductory part and the final one, such as the mission statement and other affirmations of the centrality of 'Traveller ethnicity' for this organisation, which further concur with *Minceirs Whiden*'s construction of ethnicity.

Description

D5 presents the advantage of constituting an extended document which comprehensively articulates *Minceirs Whiden*'s position with regard to 'Traveller ethnicity' and its planned actions to overcome the problems currently facing the Travelling community in Ireland. It consists of twenty-four pages and is divided into four sections, preceded by a page of contents and the foreword.

The foreword of the policy document (p.4) is written by Jim O'Brien, vice chair of the organisation, whose picture is printed on the top right hand side of the page. He wears a black t-shirt imprinted with the statement "Travellers rights are human rights" and is holding a microphone in his right hand; the logo of the organisation is partly visible in the background. With regard to the foreword's content, it interprets Irish Travellers' experience of racism, oppression and denial of social services as rooted in the ongoing denial of their ethnicity and culture. It praises the work done by Traveller organisations characterised by a settled/Traveller partnership approach in order to secure Travellers' human rights. It also confirms *Minceirs Whiden*'s intention to work in solidarity with these pre-existing NGOs. Subsequently it describes the birth of this new Traveller-only forum as the coming to maturity and independence of Traveller activism and assertiveness. It proceeds by introducing this policy document as the product of deliberations of Travellers involved in the forum's Assembly. It sets the validation and recognition of 'Traveller ethnicity' and culture as a condition for the solution of the issues currently affecting Travellers. Finally, it thanks all those involved in the development of the document itself.

The first section provides information on the organisation, its mission, structures and functioning while also outlining the structure of the document itself and the centrality of ethnic recognition for the realisation of Travellers' rights.

The second section deals with the definition of 'Traveller ethnicity', Irish Travellers and schematically summarises inside grey boxes *Minceirs Whiden*'s beliefs and planned actions with regard to obtaining official ethnic recognition from the Irish State.

The diverse needs of Travellers are objects of consideration within the third section, which focuses on the existing internal heterogeneity among Travellers along the axes of gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, disability, religious beliefs, political beliefs and health conditions. On this basis, this section individuates certain sub-categories of Travellers and elaborates on their specific situation and needs: "Travellers with a disability", "Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Travellers" (LGBT), "non-traditional Travellers", "Traveller women" and "young Travellers". The use of grey boxes to summarise *Minceirs Whiden*'s beliefs and planned actions is reiterated in this and in the following section.

The fourth section covers the main issues currently affecting Travellers and advances *Minceirs Whiden*'s plans for overcoming these particular problems. This final part is the most extended (pp.13-21) and is set against the backdrop of the 1995 Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community[51]. This is regarded as having been a milestone in setting an institutional framework for a different approach to Travellers, "based on respect for Traveller culture and the participation of Travellers with other partners in finding appropriate solutions to their issues" (p.13). This final part deals: with the lack of Travellers' political participation and representation especially, but not exclusively, at national level; with issues related to Traveller education, Traveller accommodation, health, employment; and, finally, with the detrimental impact of intra-Traveller conflict and drug misuse on the Travelling community.

Topics developed within the selected sections of the document:

Section One: Introduction (p.5)

T1) Human rights are not negotiable even if their protection comes at a high price.

[51] Interestingly, the document that *Minceirs Whiden* takes as the reference does not merge respect for Travellers' culture with ethnicity. For more details in this regard see Chapter Four, Section 4.9.

T2) Official recognition of Travellers as an ethnic nomadic group constitutes a necessary precondition for the achievement of Travellers' rights and equality in the various policy fields.

T3) Ethnicity is central to Traveller identity so that their collective difference as a group must be understood as due to birth into and inheritance of their ethnicity and identity rather than to lifestyle choices.

T5) The erroneous interpretation of Travellers as famine drop outs, responsible for their poverty and social exclusion still prevails within Irish society.

T6) Recognition of the truth -Travellers being a distinct ethnic group with a long nomadic tradition and positively contributing to Irish society- would lead to Travellers' celebration within Irish society.

T7) Travellers are an internally diversified group whose life in Ireland is characterised by a difficult struggle for recognition and rights.

T8) *Minceirs Whiden* embraces a worldview underpinned by a human rights approach to the pursuit of Travellers' rights and the solution of ongoing issues, and is committed to nurturing the plurality and diversity of Traveller voices through internal debates.

T9) Solidarity of *Minceirs Whiden* with other nomadic and oppressed groups and their NGOs in their pursuit of full equality.

T10) Interconnection of various policy fields for the achievement of Travellers' rights.

T11) Outline of document's sections and contents.

Section Two: Traveller ethnicity

T12) Definition of Irish Travellers as an ethnic nomadic group, part of Irish society for centuries and distinct from the sedentary population according to self- and other-identification.

T13) Travellers' increased politicisation enabled them to retain a separate ethnic identity against assimilationist pressures.

T14) Travellers' social exclusion and low status are due to settled people's prejudice, which is at the root of their practices of persistent anti-Traveller hostility and discrimination.

T15) Despite this, Travellers still celebrate their culture and share it with Irish society.

T16) The core issue for Travellers is their recognition as an ethnic group.

T17) Traveller ethnicity constitutes a key factor with regards to policies responding to the needs of the Traveller community since culture and identity shape the needs of any group.

T18) Contrast between the recognition of Travellers' ethnic distinctiveness at European and international level and the Irish government's refusal to do so.

T19) The official denial of Travellers' ethnicity undermines Travellers' claims to their distinct culture and permits service providers to dismiss Travellers' rights to the fulfilment of their specific cultural needs as only cultural or lifestyle choices.

T20) *Minceirs Whiden* believes that ethnicity does not constitute a political tool to secure human rights but that Travellers should be recognised as an ethnic group on the basis of their intergenerational cultural continuity, distinctiveness and uniqueness.

T21) The pursuit of ethnicity corresponds to a fight for the survival of the Traveller community.

T22) Recognition of Traveller ethnicity would ensure service provision by right.

T23) *Minceirs Whiden* promotes a series of actions to obtain ethnic recognition:

T23a) Fostering intra-Traveller debate on ethnicity geared towards obtaining a consensus on a set of demands to secure their status.

T23b) Supporting existing pro-ethnicity campaigns, adding new ones and enact direct actions to lobby the Irish government for due recognition.

T23c) Lobbying at European and international level for ethnic recognition.

T23d) Securing consultative status for *Minceirs Whiden* vis-à-vis the State re laws/policies affecting Travellers.

T23e) Networking and cooperating with other ethnic groups facing similar struggles.

<u>Section Three: The Diverse Needs of Travellers</u>

T24) Travellers constitute a heterogeneous group whose differences and diverse needs arise by gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, disability, religious beliefs, political beliefs and health conditions.

T25) *Minceirs Whiden* promotes the acceptance of diversity and individuality within the community and opposes all forms of inequality for the achievement of all Travellers' rights and equality.

T26) All Traveller policies must reflect all Travellers' diversity of needs.

T27) *Minceirs Whiden* is committed to achieve full equality for five discriminated Traveller sub-groups with diverse needs:

T27a) Travellers with a disability: the absence of culturally appropriate services for disabled Travellers forces them into prioritising their disability over their ethnicity.

T27b) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Travellers: they experience multiple and interlocking forms of discrimination within their community and broader Irish society and their needs are currently invisible.

T27c) Non-traditional Travellers experience exclusion, stigmatization, discrimination and misrecognition as Travellers within the Traveller community and broader Irish society.

T27d) Traveller women are described as community leaders, involved in progressive social change, primary carers and victims of overlapping forms of discrimination: sexism within and outside their community (particular focus on issue of domestic violence) and anti-Traveller racism at individual and institutional level.

T27e) Young Travellers, the largest component of the community, though internally diversified, are valued by *Minceirs Whiden* as active participants and supported through a Youth Work approach. They are affected by racism and discrimination as well as specific issues (i.e. identity confusion due to lack of recognition of Traveller ethnicity, low secondary school retention rates, increase in drug misuse and suicide rates, lack of access to mainstream youth services/facilities/employment, exclusion from decision-making mechanisms and young marriages).

The above listed topics can be divided into subgroups according to their central themes: first, the insertion of this policy document and Travellers' pursuit of official ethnic recognition within the human rights and equality framework;
second, the association of Traveller ethnic quest within a politics of resistance against institutional and societal oppression, racism and assimilatory pressures;
third, the characterisation of Irish Travellers as a clearly bounded group, characterised by a homogeneous and inherited culture, separated from the majority sedentary population;
fourth, the acknowledgement of Travellers' internal heterogeneity as rooted in their diverse needs.

The language of human rights and equality permeates and shapes this document. Accordingly, Travellers' official ethnic recognition is considered as a necessary precondition for Travellers' achievement of rights and equality in any policy field (T2). Conversely, Travellers' ongoing experience of racism and oppression, described in the

Foreword (p.4) as rooted in the denial of 'Traveller ethnicity' and culture, is strictly connected with their negative representation as famine dropouts who are responsible for their own exclusion and discrimination (T5). Reference to human rights appears in many of the topics listed above, starting with the statement included on every page of D5 (e.g. T1).

Accordingly, T1, T2, T7, T8, T9, T10, T18 T19 T22, T25 explicitly insert the quest for Traveller ethnic recognition and the achievement of equality for all Travellers within a rights discourse which is in line with European and international human rights laws, backed by independent bodies and academics but stubbornly opposed by the Irish government (T18). Explicit mention is made of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. There is also a direct quotation taken form the Equality Authority's publication "Traveller Ethnicity" (2006). The adoption of a worldview underpinned by an appeal to human rights discourse (T8) is also explicitly asserted by *Minceirs Whiden* within its introductory section and is at the roots of this organisation's solidarity and joint actions with other oppressed groups (T9, T23e) and commitment to the achievement of equality and rights of all Traveller sub-groups (T25). Accordingly, the mention in T27 of various Traveller sub-groups is characterised by quotations from national equality laws according to which discrimination against these groups is not permitted. Significantly, in D5's Section Four (which was not included in the systematic examination), Travellers' right to official formal ethnic recognition is associated with peoples' right to self-determination as enshrined in international law[52] (pp.14-15), i.e. "the right of all *peoples* to freely determine their political status and to pursue their own economic, social and cultural development"(*Minceirs Whiden*, 2010, 14) [emphasis added].

Some of the topics associate the discourse of 'Traveller ethnicity' with a politics of resistance and struggle against racism and oppression (e.g. T2, T7 and T22). For instance, T7 implicitly recognises a source of cohesion, solidarity and resistance in Travellers' common experience of racism and oppression against the background of their great internal diversification. This interconnection could have informed *Minceirs Whiden*'s preference for an instrumental and political interpretation of ethnicity.

[52] Within Section Four's subsection on Political Participation and Representation (p.15) *Minceirs Whiden* express their commitment to "lobby the Irish government to recognise Travellers' right to self-determination and as such recognise Travellers as an ethnic group with corresponding rights" on the basis of the belief that "the formal recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group, including their right of self-determination within Ireland, needs to be put in place by the Irish government".

However, this crucial and instrumental function is explicitly denied in T20. In this way D5 approaches the competing understanding of ethnicity as an objective fact (i.e. a real entity, founded on culture and externally shaping people's identity) and of Irish Travellers as objectively belonging to the category of ethnic group. Hence, Travellers' historically constituted difference and distinctiveness is discursively naturalised as self-evident beyond its historically contextual contingency and variability and detached from collective political mobilisation.

However, this controversy over the objectivity of 'Traveller ethnicity' is not confined to the field of theoretical knowledge but rather has crucial political, policy, symbolic and material repercussions: at stake are groups' power, interests, resources distribution and also the validation and fixation of specific discursive expressions of Traveller identities and available life-scripts. In fact the assertion of T20 is clearly motivated by an opposition to T19, i.e. resisting the Irish government's regressive, assimilatory and repressive goals masked by the language of ethnicity denial and by vilifying myths of their origins (T5), despite the widespread expert support for Travellers' ethnic recognition at national, European and international level (T18).

Minceirs Whiden's insistence on the centrality of ethnicity for Travellers (T2, T3, T16) matches the *ITM's* position in this regard. Particularly, D5's T8 "The core issue facing Travellers is their recognition as an ethnic group" literally recalls the assertions made in D1 (See T5 and T6).

Finally, there seems to be some tension between the topics pertaining to the third and fourth groups: while the former grounds 'Traveller ethnicity' on their sharing of the same needs, the latter affirms the internal diversification of needs among Travellers. This point will be explored in the following section.

Semantic environment and lexical choice

Many of the observations made during the analysis of the *ITM's* ethnicity material also apply to the examination of D5. However, the more extended and discursive nature of this document permits readers to access a more explicit formulation of ethnicity. Moreover, the comparative assessment of D5's Section II ("Traveller Ethnicity") and Section III ("The diverse Needs of Travellers") is particularly revealing since some tensions between the two parts emerge from the textual examination.

Within the analysed sections, the occurrences of ethnicity/ethnic are primarily concentrated between the Introduction (respectively three times "ethnic" and four times

"ethnicity") and Section Two (respectively ten times "ethnic" and six times "ethnicity"), whereas those which appear in Section Three are rare and less relevant in terms of the overall understanding of *Minceirs Whiden*'s construction of 'Traveller ethnicity'. Section Two is crucial also for the definition of Traveller culture and its interconnection with ethnicity and identity.

"Ethnic" is mostly associated with the word "group" either on its own or with an added characterisation such as "nomadic", "minority", "distinct", "with a long nomadic tradition" and so on; in addition, reference to "recognition"/ "recognise" or "official recognition" of such "status" is also very frequently made, in line with the already observed insertion of the discussion within the field of international human rights law. Indeed, similar to the *ITM*, *Minceirs Whiden* identifies the official recognition of 'Traveller ethnicity' by the Irish government as "the core issue facing Travellers" (p.7). Furthermore, ethnic recognition is regarded as crucial for the future survival of the Traveller community while the increasing politicisation of Travellers is credited with the merit of having preserved a distinct ethnic identity for Travellers against societal and institutional pressures for assimilation into mainstream Irish society.

The ethnic status is taken as the guarantee for the protection of Travellers' human rights couched in cultural terms: meeting Travellers' specific cultural needs is regarded as "a right that is legitimately based on ethnicity as enshrined in European and international law". 'Traveller ethnicity', through its core defining feature, culture, is considered as primarily shaping Traveller identity and Travellers' specific collective cultural needs which need to be met by specific and culturally appropriate policy responses, programmes and services. D5, likewise D3 and D4, displays the overlapping of ethnicity, culture and identity and the conferral of an ontological nature and agency to these notions, in line with traditional anthropological and popular essentialist understandings. The insertion of an excerpt from the Equality Authority's paper on "Traveller Ethnicity" (2006) that attributes Travellers' collective difference to their birth into a cultural group and inheritance of their ethnicity and identity confirms the previously noted intertextuality between discourses elaborated by independent bodies and the parallel discourses of these national Traveller organisations:

"*Traveller ethnicity* is a *key factor* that has to be taken into account in identifying and responding to the *needs* of the *Traveller community*. *Culture and identity* will *shape* the *needs of a group*. Policies and programmes that respond to the *needs* will be only effective to the extent that they take into account *the culture and identity* of the *group* concerned". (Equality Authority, 2006 in *Minceirs Whiden*, 2010, 7)

In this passage we can note how the "Traveller ethnicity" of the first sentence corresponds to the "culture and identity" of the second and third ones by virtue of their identical role with regards to a group's needs. If "Traveller ethnicity is a key factor" with regards to the "needs of the Traveller community" and "culture and identity will shape the needs of a group", it follows that "Traveller ethnicity" corresponds and overlaps with "culture and identity" and shapes the needs of the Traveller community. Hence, culture and identity, i.e. ethnicity[53], are imbued with agency, while groups' members are represented as passive recipients of these entities' actions. In this way ethnicity and culture become essentialised and transformed into pre-given acting entities. This construction clashes with Cowan, Dembour and Wilson's (2001, 14) definition of culture as a "sociological fiction referring to a disordered social field of connected practices and beliefs which are produced out of social action and thus it is mistaken to imbue it with any independent agency or will of its own".

Furthermore, D5 tends to stress ethnic inheritance by birth into the community at the expenses of individual and collective choice and agency. *Minceirs Whiden* are trying to assert their right to nomadism (as inherited) against opponents who regard it as an optional lifestyle choice. In order to fight the assimilatory intention that is hidden behind the "choice" argument these Traveller activists end up denying choice as a concurring component of Traveller difference and identity construction. This passage is evident from the two following excerpts from D5:

"Ethnicity is central to Traveller identity. Without this understanding across services and society, Travellers will continue to be treated as a group who are *different* because they *choose a certain lifestyle* rather than a group who *were born into and inherited their ethnicity and identity* which is their right and entitlement to exercise. In many areas of Irish society, Travellers continue to be viewed as 'drop outs' from the famine who chose their poverty and social exclusion. If the *truth* was recognised and

[53] The conflation and overlapping of ethnicity, culture and identity is also evident in other parts of the document, which are not being extensively examined. For example, in Section Four's Subsection on Traveller education (pp.15-16) these three concepts are used as synonymous. Let's consider and compare the statement (p.15) "Unfortunately many Traveller children are aware that *their identity* will create difficulties for them within the school and peer context" (in which identity stands for ethnic identity) with the following page's statement "The current *lack of visibility of and focus on Traveller culture* within the *school system* needs to be addressed head on so as not to further exclude Travellers" and with the declared commitment to "Lobby for *Travellers' ethnicity* to be *taught* within the *school curriculum* and for comprehensive training for teachers to deliver such modules within the school system" and to "Work with a range of stakeholders to ensure that *Traveller identity* is respected and built in to the *training* of *teachers* and to encourage Travellers' participation in such training". It is clear that the current negative situation characterised by a lack of visibility of and focus on "Traveller culture" within the school system is opposed to the desired future situation in which "Traveller ethnicity" is taught within the school curriculum and "Traveller identity" is covered within the training of teachers. Within these statements Traveller ethnicity, culture and identity appear to be used interchangeably.

understood, Travellers would be celebrated as *a distinct ethnic group* with a *long nomadic tradition* and much to offer Irish society. (…)"(*Minceirs Whiden*, 2010, 6) [emphases added].

"This position [the Irish government's refusal to officially recognise ethnic status for Travellers] undermines Travellers' claims to their *distinct culture* and the measures required to protect Travellers' human rights. It also impacts on the delivery of policies, programmes and services that affect Travellers' lives. For example, services that are required to meet Travellers' *specific cultural needs* may be seen by service providers as being *a 'cultural choice'* rather than a right that is legitimately based on ethnicity as enshrined in European and international law. Therefore, it is easy to dismiss Traveller culture and the services that are required to support their needs as *'lifestyle choices'* rather than a right based on their needs as an ethnic group" [emphases added]. (*Minceirs Whiden*, 2010, 7)

Within these passages Travellers are described as automatically inheriting from birth an ethnicity and a singular identity. Consequently, following a Traveller way of life corresponds to the fulfilment of cultural needs without the exertion of choice. Accordingly, ethnicity and identity seem to overlap as a unified and passively inherited trait. In other words, ethnic identity is reductively constructed as pre-given, fixed and exhausting all the possibilities of the personal, social and human dimensions of identity. This formulation, even though it is motivated by a progressive goal, i.e. defending Travellers' cultural rights as untouchable (because inherited), ends up denying Travellers' agency. It might also be that *Minceirs Whiden*'s members do not believe that an element of choice is involved in matters of ethnic identification. Nonetheless, these tensions might reflect *Minceirs Whiden*'s efforts to grapple with the complexity and transition of identity issues and politics.

On the other hand, this contrast between fact and choice finds some interesting parallels in debates about homosexuality: some activists fear more fluid definitions of sexuality on the ground that choice is equivalent to lifestyle which is perceived as having less value than an identity that is pre-given or pre-ordained.

Furthermore, Section Two ("Traveller Ethnicity", pp.7-8) posits a stark distinction between the Irish sedentary majority with their own settled culture and the Traveller community with their specific nomadic distinct culture so that their respective internal cultural homogeneity can be assumed or taken as natural. In so doing it obscures their respective internal cultural heterogeneity as well as downplaying the existing interconnections between them. Traveller culture is described as "a distinct and unique culture in its own right", "not secondary or dependent on settled culture" and as characterised by internal "continuity" since "customs, values, norms and traditions are

passed from one generation to the next", so giving people "a sense of belonging, a sense of identity, a sense of being part of a community".

However, an acknowledgement of interconnections between Traveller and broader Irish culture does not necessarily imply that Traveller culture has no specificity or is secondary or not valid. It is just an acknowledgement of a general phenomenon: the undeniable interconnection and reciprocal influence of contiguous groups and cultures and the circulation of certain ideas and practices across cultural divides.

Particularly significant in this regard is *Minceirs Whiden*'s casting of the Traveller tradition of early marriage as problematic[54]. This is indicative of the temporality, internal vitality and contestation of cultural practices and also of the interconnection between Traveller, non-Traveller and Western cultural trends. Why otherwise should a Traveller tradition, smoothly passed on from one generation to the next in line with cultural continuity, constitute for *Minceirs Whiden* an issue to be discussed among young Travellers? *Minceirs Whiden*'s casting of Travellers' early marriage as an issue might be influenced by hegemonic discourses about adolescence and developmental theories, contemporary society's prevailing bias towards institutionalised school learning over other forms of experience-based learning, the centrality of formal education for employment opportunities and other discourses generally dominant not only in contemporary Ireland but also in contemporary western societies. Beyond this observation, the Traveller tradition of early marriage should be regarded as historically constituted and relative rather than naturalised and reified as a Traveller tradition passed on from one generation to the next.

According to Gmelch (1977), who drew on interviewed Travellers' own accounts, prior to the 1950s Travellers' average age for marriage used to be roughly the same as the rest of the Irish peasant population (eighteen-year-old). If the American anthropologist's (1977, 125-130) account corresponds to reality, the traditional Traveller practice of early marriage constitutes a historically contextualised adaptive response to the urbanisation and consequential changed living circumstances of Travellers since the 1960s, when they began to camp in large numbers in the outskirts of Dublin, other Irish cities and provincial towns (instead, up to the mid-twentieth century they prevailingly used to travel in small groups of a two or three interrelated families and hence camps were small and in the countryside). In this new urban

[54] "Travellers getting married young" is included in the list of specific issues affecting young Travellers (pp.11-12) and also dealt with among the actions *Minceirs Whiden* plans to undertake: "Create a space where young Travellers can discuss the issue of young marriages".

overcrowded situation parents began to lose control over their teenage children, who became able to socialise among themselves within the camp or in the urban spaces and also with other non-Traveller teenagers. Hence, parents began to resort to earlier marriage to compensate for their loss of control and supervision over daughters and sons by attributing to them the family responsibilities of wives/mothers/family carers and husbands/fathers/breadwinners. In their view, the so anticipated marriage could prevent girls from being exposed to unsupervised interaction with male counterparts, from within and/or outside the community as well as young boys from getting into trouble. In addition, this arrangement was also financially preferable since welfare allowances for dependent children were being suspended at the age of sixteen. This concrete example demonstrates how it is possible to overlook the historical contingency of some traditions and their function as an ecological adaptation to the existing environment. As human beings we often tend to naturalise cultural practices.

On the other hand, *Minceirs Whiden*'s naturalisation and reification of a historically-constituted and hence contingent Traveller identity and culture is underpinned by a strategic logic: it constitutes a form of resistance to the Irish institutional and societal demonisation of this very way of being Travellers. It counters the hegemonic vilification and oppression of Travellers' nomadic culture, such as the circulation of widespread myths depicting Travellers as previously settled people forced into nomadism by famine, poverty and/or British evictions/dispossessions. Because it is this nomadic identity that is under attack, this very identity is seized, positively marked and elevated as the primary Traveller identity.

This resistance is pushed to the point of explicitly denying the politically instrumental characterisation of ethnicity through the assertion that "Traveller ethnicity is *not* a *political tool* to secure human rights from the state as these rights should be granted automatically [emphasis added]" (p.8). This statement —combined with D5's focus on the existing cultural continuity among members of an ethnic group, a silence over the coexisting phenomena of cultural contestation and transformation and the reference to "the truth" to be recognised and understood— posits Traveller ethnicity as an objective fact whose recognition is a matter of truth. Such denial (see T20) marks *Minceirs Whiden*'s explicit distancing from the instrumentalist, situational and socially constructed understanding of ethnicity as primarily a social and political resource (See Chapter Two).

Nonetheless, this position is in tension with many other D5's references which instead locate the pursuit of Traveller ethnic recognition within the realm of politics and as necessary for the fulfilment of Travellers' equality and rights. By virtue of this discrepancy, the discounting with the political and instrumental nature of ethnicity could be interpreted as a political strategy in itself, aiming at achieving for Travellers the best possible outcome in terms of equality and legitimation of Traveller culture and identity vis-à-vis the Irish State and mainstream society. Yet, this position runs the risk of becoming enmeshed in the essentialising and reifying logic of identity discourses and tainting Traveller ethnicity with the deterministic legacy of 'race'.

Furthermore, another tension can be detected between Section Two and Section Three of D5. Indeed, the part on "Traveller ethnicity" appears to be in tension with the following elaboration on the "diverse needs of Travellers" (Section III, pp. 9-12). While the former stresses the agency of ethnicity, i.e. culture and identity, in shaping the needs of the Travelling community and therefore seems to hint at a diachronically and synchronically continuous homogeneity of needs among Travellers, the latter addresses Travellers' internal heterogeneity in terms of diverse needs. Hence, on the one hand, this document suggests an understanding of Traveller culture and identity constructed in a fixed and singular manner around the historically grounded tradition of nomadism and the deriving collective needs.

On the other hand, it also constructs the existing internal heterogeneity among Travellers as grounded in their diverse needs, arising along various axes of differentiation. Accordingly, it explicitly enumerates a set of sub-groups among Travellers: "non-traditional Travellers", "Traveller women" (with particular consideration of the status of single Traveller women), "disabled Travellers", "LGBT Travellers" and "young Travellers". This formulation somehow recalls the idea of an internally differentiated sisterhood promoted by feminists.

But if Travellers' needs are shaped by their inherited ethnicity, i.e. their shared bounded and static culture and a singular fixed identity (according to D5's Section Two), without explicit reference to other influencing factors, how is it possible that Travellers have diverse needs? In other words, the acknowledgement of a diversity of needs among Travellers should be suggestive of both an internal cultural heterogeneity and contestation and a plurality of (overlapping, complementary or/and competing) social identities which Travellers variously combine within their own personal identities and also partially share with members of mainstream Irish society.

The lexical choice of the word "needs", without reference to the related "identities", allows *Minceirs Whiden* to maintain an articulation of Traveller identity in the singular form, synchronically and diachronically, as constantly shaped externally by ethnicity and culture alone. Its talk about "diverse needs" (instead of "identities") seems to constitute a strategic balancing act which permits to avoid the acknowledgement of a coexistent, and sometimes conflictual and competing, plurality of intersecting identities within the Travelling community (and individual Travellers) as well as glossing over the commonalities between Travellers and non-Travellers.

Finally, a further tension can be observed between *Minceirs Whiden*'s prioritisation of the role played by ethnicity and culture in shaping Irish Travellers' identity (at the expenses of choice and agency, as per D5's Section Two), and its declared intention to act as a catalyst for social change by adopting a socially transformative role with regard to both Traveller and broader Irish society. The social change that *Minceirs Whiden*'s activists strive to promote is also cultural in so far as they attempt to rework both Irish Traveller and mainstream practices so that they fully adhere to the international human rights model and culture[55]. Accordingly, *Minceirs Whiden* affirms its commitment to transforming any aspect of Traveller and broader Irish culture which contradicts human rights (T27) so that Traveller sub-groups can achieve equal respect within both the Traveller community and broader Irish society. In this way, this *Minceirs Whiden*'s document proves the dynamic, interrelated (as much as distinct), transformative and poly-vocal nature of all cultures. It demonstrates how Traveller activists' agency can operate to positively change both national and minority cultures from inside by drawing on the international human rights legal model and other resources and discourses.

Construction of Irish Travellers

D5 contains two main characterisations of the Irish Travellers throughout the analysed sections. We can distinguish between the more essentialist and reified representations of the Travelling community that *Minceirs Whiden* sketches within Section Two and other more dynamic aspects which are dealt with in Section Three as well as those emerging indirectly by means of textual analysis and from the remaining parts of the document. The former offers a rather idyllic and traditional portrayal which

[55] See *Minceirs Whiden*'s (2010) statement "a human rights approach is central to how Minceirs Whiden view the world around it" (p.6) and also its assumption of the role of "catalyst for positive change, not only for Travellers but Irish society in general" (p.4).

is in line with the definition of ethnic groups and cultures provided within the international human rights model on the basis of earlier anthropological theorisations. As such they are constructed as a pre-given, bounded, culturally distinct and independent human group with shared culturally specific collective needs shaped by their specific nomadic culture and ethnicity. Even though their historical belonging to Irish society is acknowledged, their separation from the sedentary population is more strongly stressed. This representation broadly coincides with the one made by the Irish Traveller Movement within the previously examined set of data, which portrays Irish society as characterised by a binary division into two equally bounded, separated and internally culturally homogeneous communities, Travellers and "Settled People" (capitalised).

On the other hand, Section Three implicitly accounts for the phenomena of plurality, transformation and internal power dynamics by explicitly enumerating a set of sub-groups among Travellers on the basis of their diverse "needs": "non-traditional Travellers", "Traveller women" (with particular consideration of the status of single Traveller women), "disabled Travellers", "LGBT Travellers" and "young Travellers". Moreover, differently from Section Two, Section Three depicts a bleaker scenario: it reveals how disabled, LGBT, non-traditional Travellers and single Traveller women are unfairly victimised, stigmatised, excluded and also denied recognition as 'real' Travellers within both their community and broader Irish society. Accordingly, it challenges hierarchical positioning and internally unbalanced and oppressive power relations between various Traveller sub-groups, further complicated by the concurring structural inequality, oppression and lack of culturally appropriate service provision within broader Irish society.

Yet, the mention of the diverse needs that characterise the various Traveller sub-groups implicitly calls into being a hegemonic Traveller type whose needs constitute the norm by comparison with these subaltern groupings: e.g. non-traditional requires its opposite, traditional; LGBT requires a heterosexual; women requires men, single implies married; disabled assumes able and finally young implies adult. Section Two's privileging of a 'traditional' construction of Traveller identity in the singular mode might indirectly contribute to legitimising the hegemonic position of 'traditional' Travellers over the other listed sub-groups and related identities. In this way, *Minceirs Whiden*, despite their explicitly affirmed commitment to promote respect for diversity and individuality among Travellers, might inadvertently contribute to reinforcing a

hierarchy among Travellers which delegitimises subaltern Travellers and their respective identities ("non-traditional", "LGBT", "single", "women" and "disabled" Travellers), who variously deviate from the historical continuity of Traveller culture, the 'authentic' way of being Travellers. How effectively can *Minceirs Whiden* promote acceptance and respect for diversity and individuality and recognition of the legitimacy of diverse ways of being Travellers if it provides a deterministic and reductive understanding of Traveller identity and culture in the singular mode? How can individuality be valorised if individual agency and choice is not acknowledged as a concurring factor in identity construction?

Interestingly, the description of "non-traditional Travellers" as "those who may not have held onto all of our cultural traditions", for example "who *chose* not to travel, not to marry young, who are not religious" [emphasis added], re-introduces that element of actors' choice and cultural transformation which were overlooked in Section Two by the assignation of agency to abstract entities (ethnicity and culture) in the making of Travellers' identity.

Another observation could be directed towards the artificiality and reductionism of such subdivision into the categorical opposition "traditional/non-traditional": are there Travellers who can be fully classified as traditional in contrast with non-traditional? Probably, the majority of people (not just Travellers) would fall in between the two, since as human beings we tend to combine a variety of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' choices together during our lives or to think non-traditionally but to act traditionally (or viceversa); as we get older we can also further change outlook on and attitudes to certain subjects. Hence it would be very difficult to fit neatly into one given box for everybody, not only for Travellers.

Traveller women are represented as crucial actors within the community, playing ever expanding roles beyond their traditional remit, not only by virtue of their traditional function of primary carers for the family but also for their social location at the inter-face between Travellers and broader Irish society both traditionally and through their more recently acquired functions as community leaders and agents of change within their group and broader Irish society, actively involved in dealings with the Irish institutions as well as in struggles for recognition. This appraisal of the strength and commitment of Traveller women is accompanied by an awareness of the interlocking forms of discrimination and oppression experienced by them at various levels (also due to the absence of culturally appropriate services for Traveller women),

such as their difficulties in dealing with situations of domestic violence, feuding and patriarchal oppression and imposition of rigidly scripted gender roles (e.g. reference to the stigmatisation and exclusion experienced by single Traveller women because of their deviance from the hegemonic Traveller life-script of marriage and family life).

Young Travellers are depicted as a very diverse group, experiencing identity problems and other closely related issues. These are ascribed only to the official denial of ethnicity and the misrecognition of their (ethnic) identity and culture within the school system and society in general, in line with the insight previously provided in D2. From this unsettling situation stem young Travellers' low school retention rates and educational attainment, lack of participation in youth facilities, drug misuse patterns and high male suicide rates.

Recognition of internal heterogeneity and cultural transformation is present also in other parts of D5 which are not subjected to systematic examination, such as Section Four. There, with regards to Traveller employment, reference is made to Travellers' changing attitudes to work and recent interest also in mainstream employment, besides the traditional preference for self-employment within the Traveller economy.

The concurring reality of Travellers' internal divisions against the previous more idyllic scenario of in-group solidarity and unity, are somehow confirmed by other parts of D5, such as the introductory Section One (p.5) in which the sentence in bold characters "We seek to" is followed by a bullet-point list opened by the objectives "unite Travellers", "address divisions among Travellers" and "promote a collective voice and a political platform for Travellers". These prioritised points implicitly disclose the current prevailing lack of unity among Travellers and hint at the challenge of political coordination into a collectively representative voice.

Ideological construction and implied assumptions

D5 displays some of the discursive traits already observed during the analysis of the *ITM's* ethnicity campaign material, in particular D1. Similar to the *ITM*, *Minceirs Whiden* put in place democratic and participatory structures of consultation (Assembly and Council) as well as profess an outright openness and commitment to nurturing Travellers' internal debates and to listening to their diversity of voices with regards to Traveller issues.

Though, their claim is somehow weakened by the setting a priori of Travellers' ethnic recognition as their mission and as the core issue affecting Travellers. In fact, as

noted elsewhere, these stances are questioned by other Travellers. However, *Minceirs Whiden* in D5 does not acknowledge the internal questioning of the 'ethnic route' and of its centrality for the majority of Travellers. This suggests that, as far as *Minceirs Whiden* is concerned, ethnic recognition is not a debatable issue in itself but only in its more superficial details. The suggestion derived from D5 is that such internal debate would be confined to defining together a key set of demands to secure the ethnic status.

Alternatively, *Minceirs Whiden*'s just appeal to the principle of Travellers' self-determination could lead to a Travellers' democratic deliberation process and pronouncements in this regard, in line with the principle of self-identification enshrined in the United Nations CERD Committee's General Observation N.8 (1990).

6.5. Comparative analysis of the examined data

The textual examination reveals a series of similarities and a few differences between D5 and the previously analysed *ITM's* material on the Traveller Ethnicity Campaign (D1 to D4). These may not only due to the fact that some of the currently leading Traveller activists occupy strategic positions in both organisations or alternatively in *Pavee Point* but also to the fact that they adopt as a common frame the human rights model. This latter, as already noted, concurs in defining the contours and contents of these organisations' discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity', culture and identity and the demands they make on the Irish State. Both organisations locate the understanding and official recognition of 'Traveller ethnicity', regarded as the core issue currently facing Travellers, at the centre of their practices and consider this process as the necessary precondition for the realisation of Travellers' full rights, equality and active participation in all aspects of Irish society.

Yet, as has emerged from the analysis, the framing of the ethnicity claim as a human rights issue presents benefits while being simultaneously a source of tension. These organisations' practices are apposite and underpinned by a rationale as they are seeking to maximise the legal, symbolic and material advantages deriving from ethnic status. Furthermore, this rights framework functions in a culturally transformative way since it conditions their attitudes to Irish dominant culture and Traveller culture according to their compliance with human rights principles. Accordingly, the preservation of Traveller culture is being rhetorically sustained and practically pursued by these organisations but only to the extent that it does not clash with equality and rights. Hence their actions are set as catalysts for a culturally led social change geared

towards the acceptance and valorisation of diversity and respect for subaltern minority groups both within the Travelling community itself and broader Irish society. In this sense, they also intend to modify the very same culture that they purport to protect and preserve from extinction. Traveller activists are the very proof of the dynamic vitality of cultures, of their internal tensions and transformative natures.

According to their adherence to the human rights model and to the provided category of ethnic group, their constructions of 'Traveller ethnicity', culture and identity are essentialist, deterministic, reified and bounded. They also display a bias in focusing on Traveller cultural difference from Irish majority culture while overlooking their similarities and interconnections. However, as already noted, the undeniable reification, reduction and essentialisation of ethnic groups and cultures operated by international human rights law and embraced by *ITM* and *Minceirs Whiden* is conceived as corrective to a situation of racism, structural inequality and oppression afflicting some already marked collectivities. Thanks to the ethnic status, these groups can avail of internationally recognised legal protections and also pressurise the State for a programme of affirmative action. Thus, these discursive constructions made available within the international human rights framework are strategically seized by Traveller organisations, which otherwise display a clear awareness of Travellers' internal heterogeneity and of cultural change.

Yet, this evident awareness of in-group diversity does not concretise in a plural and dynamic articulation of Traveller identities. Both *ITM* and *Minceirs Whiden* stop short of this move. Despite the acknowledgement of Travellers' diverse needs, their identity still remains constructed in the singular form and their culture is portrayed as statically fixed around their historical cultural heritage. While it was argued that there are sufficient elements to cast this essentialism as strategic, especially by virtue of a comparative analysis of other discursive material produced by these organisations, it was also noted that there are risks of slipping from a strategic to an ontological essentialism which could lead to the reification and naturalisation of the polarisation of Irish society into Travellers and 'settled people'. This could happen if discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity', culture and identity formulated within a politics of resistance to institutional and societal racism become delinked from their contexts of production and legitimised as a proof of natural and a-temporal essential differences between two clearly bounded and separated groups. This risk is more marked in the case of *Minceirs Whiden*'s 2010 policy document, which associates the affirmation of the factuality of

'Traveller ethnicity' with an explicit denial of its instrumentality. As I argued this denial of human choice with regards to the processes of identity construction is reductive and potentially problematic because it places agency on externally determining agents – ethnicity and culture- which therefore subsume a deterministic legacy from the concept of 'race'. Nonetheless, this determinist discourse makes strategic sense given its contraposition to an institutional 'cultural choice talk' that hides assimilatory intentions.

Furthermore, both organisations' recognition of Travellers' Irishness alongside their 'Traveller ethnicity' could look at first glance as a concession to the articulation of a double 'identity' in the complementary mode (both Irish and Traveller). This could indicate an attempt at bypassing some of the pitfalls of that dualism towards a conception of Irishness that accommodates an active and strong sense of Traveller particularity. Yet, their Irishness is not conceived of as a complementary source of identification and allegiance, but implicitly as only a scarcely influential factor, which does not seem to contribute to their overall culture and way of life.

The portrayal of the Travelling community emerging from the examination of D5 is more revealing than the one from the *ITM's* material, primarily due to its longer content. It combines a reified construction of Irish Travellers as a pre-existing bounded group with a more dynamic outlook at its internal diversity and divisions. D5 also highlights the internal divisions and practices of discrimination existing within the Travelling community, against subaltern Travellers, such as gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender, non-traditional, disabled and single women. These are often victimised and not recognised as 'real' Travellers from within and without the community. In this regard it was noted that *Minceirs Whiden*'s static and homogeneous definition of Traveller culture could paradoxically contribute to reinforce a hierarchy among Traveller sub-groups that elevates the 'traditional' type as the paradigmatic model by virtue of its presumed 'authenticity'. Hence, the absence of references to subaltern Traveller identities within the definition of 'Traveller ethnicity' and culture in D5's Section Two could indirectly favour the stigmatisation of the former.

Finally, both organisations emerge as being animated by progressive and emancipatory motivations geared towards a combination of recognition and redistribution not only with regard to the Traveller cause but also with regards to the plight of other similarly oppressed groups.

Nonetheless, their claim to take a democratic, participative and inclusive approach to all Traveller voices is somehow undermined by their silence over

Travellers' internal division and dilemmas over the ethnic stance. Ultimately, both organisations' overlooking of the intra-Traveller debate over the ethnic avenue cast some shadow over their real openness to take on board Traveller voices and to engage in a democratic debate. While both organisations claim to greatly value diversity of opinion and voicing of internal dissent and to be aiming to reach a general Traveller consent through debate, the democratic nature of this debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' is weakened by the fact that the object of Travellers' demands has been determined in advance of the actual debate itself. In both cases, their setting of Travellers' official ethnic recognition as their founding mission has the potential to alienate the participation and contribution of those Travellers who are doubtful or opposed to such a demand.

Yet, these tensions reflect the challenges of doing politics for political gain as well as the difficulty of reconciling social theory and political practice. Furthermore, such organisational policies could change with time and if subjected to pressures from within.

Chapter Seven
Intra-Traveller problematisation of 'Traveller ethnicity'

7.1. Introduction

This chapter covers the discursive examination of selected texts by Travellers who have objected to their official ethnic recognition. Textual analysis is preceded by a contextualising section, which attempts to locate the questioning of 'Traveller ethnicity' within Traveller politics and to identify potential geographical clusters and historical roots of intra-Traveller opposition to the ethnic route.

The chosen data are in chronological order to chart the development of Traveller opposition to the ethnic route since the major dissolution of the *NCTP* over this very issue. D6 dates from 1991 and is a letter written to *The Irish Times*' editor by Mary Moriarty, at the time acting chairperson of the *NFITP*. The other three texts are more recent and from the same source, Martin Ward, who has championed Traveller opposition to Travellers' official ethnic recognition in the last few years. These three texts, all published in the press, have been selected since they appear to be indicative of different stages in his attitude in relation to the ethnic controversy and towards the organisations advocating 'Traveller ethnicity'. This evolution of his attitude may be explained by the changing dynamics of Traveller politics and policies within a national context of sudden economic crisis. D7 constitutes a first-person account of his professional and activist achievements for Traveller rights, published in 2007 in the *ITM*'s newsletter *Irish Traveller*. D8 expresses his view point on the ethnicity debate published in the *NATC*'s magazine *Voice of the Traveller* in autumn 2008, juxtaposed to the opinion of the then *ITM's* chairperson Catherine Joyce. Finally, D9 is a letter to the editor of the local newspaper the *Tuam Herald* dated 22nd December 2010. All this material is examined according to the same method adopted for the previous analytical chapter (Chapter Six). Finally, these four data are comparatively assessed together to reveal convergences and divergences between past and present problematisation of 'Traveller ethnicity'.

7.2. Contextualisation of intra-Traveller questioning of 'Traveller ethnicity'

As I noted in Chapter One, it is more difficult to assess the extent of Travellers' dissent with regard to the pursuit of official ethnic recognition. No national Traveller organisation currently champions this position in contrast to national Traveller NGOs'

support for ethnic recognition. The *NFITP*, which had initially articulated a position against the ethnic status, ceased its activities in the late 1990s, simultaneously with the national expansion of the *ITM* and its increased visibility in the Irish national media (see Chapter Four, Section 4.6). Nonetheless, this early Traveller resistance to ethnicity in the 1990s and its subsequent public re-surfacing in the late-2000s, appear to share ties with the town of Tuam, Co. Galway. As previously noted (see Chapter One, Section 1.3 and Chapter Four, Section 4.6), Tuam's Travellers played a major role in the dissolution of the *NCTP* (1990). Moreover, in recent years the Tuam-based Traveller organisation, *Western Traveller and Intercultural Association*, spoke publicly against the official recognition of 'Traveller ethnicity'. Their rejection of the ethnic stance appears to be coupled with a strong pride in Traveller cultural heritage, demonstrated by the fact that in 2007 this association won the special Award for Provision of Ethnic Culture within the All-Island Pride of Place Awards Competition[56].

Tuam, the town with proportionally the highest percentage of Travellers in Ireland (14 per cent[57]), is unique in the Irish context for various reasons. As early as 1977 the American anthropologist Gmelch (1977, 148-154) referred to it as one of the two cases of successful "adaptation" (the other being Mullingar, Co. Westmeath). Interestingly, in both cases their settlement began at least a decade before the publication of the Report of the Commission on Itinerancy (1963). Tuam housing authority provided housing to nine Traveller families by virtue of existing vacancies in its housing list due to consistent emigration. Subsequently when the local *Itinerant Settlement Committee* was formed in 1968 they maintained this position with the housing of the other Traveller families across the local population, avoiding a ghettoised situation (Gmelch, 1977). They also availed of renovated farmhouses with large backyards at the outskirts of the town, where it would have been more feasible to collect scrap metal and keep horses. Among the other positive aspects of 'adaptation', Gmelch (1977) enumerated Travellers women's "conscious efforts to blend in with the settled population" by changing their clothing traditions and cessation of house begging. More generally he mentions Travellers' participation in some of the town's clubs and activities (including high Mass attendance), and children developing friendships with settled peers in schools and club settings. However, other sources regard Travellers' ties

[56] For further information see www.cooperationireland.org/?q=news/20071110.
[57] See Burke, J. 29/06/2006, 'Traveller mayor aims to heal community rift' in the *Tribune*, accessed online at www.tribune.ie/archive/2003/jun/29/traveller-mayor-aims-to-heal-community-rift/ on 22/06/2011 at 12.15 a.m.

to Tuam as rooted further in the past. For example, Ellen Mongan asserted[58] "The vast majority of (Travelling) people in this town, with the exception of one or two people, have allegiances to this town over the years not just because people were housed here in the 1940s and 1950s, but even prior to that. People were born, baptised, buried, married in this town going back 150, nearly 200 years".

In addition, Tuam has appeared on the news throughout the years for many positive developments, in parallel with negative news coverage of an enduring feud between the McDonagh and the Ward families, eventually overcome in 1998. Traveller activist Ellen Mongan regards Tuam as leading the way towards reconciliation on both sides (i.e. Irish Travellers and majority Irish population). For instance, in 1994 it was the first town to have a Traveller as a public representative: Ellen Mongan herself was elected as town councillor[59]. In 1999 she lost this position, substituted by another Traveller, Martin Ward, who held it until 2010[60]. In 2003, Tuam was identified as having the first Traveller mayor[61], although Tommy Stokes from Granard (Co. Longford) was elected mayor the year before, in 2002. In 2000 Tuam was in the news[62] for another first in the field of Travellers' education: at a time when most Traveller teenagers dropped out of school shortly after transferring into secondary school, it celebrated the first full class of Travellers (five girls) to have completed the Leaving Certificate exam. Moreover, during the same year for the first time Travellers in Tuam were being recruited and trained as foster parents by the Western Health Board. These various achievements are suggestive of successful engagement and integration between its Traveller and majority components, despite the coexistence of anti-Traveller discriminatory attitudes, which are at the root of its derogatory renaming as "Tinker town".

Apart from the episode of the withdrawal of the Traveller flag/logo referendum (see Chapter One, 1.3 and Chapter Four 4.7), resistance to 'Traveller ethnicity', if any, did not seem to make news for a number of years. Eventually, in the late 2000s there has been a resurgence of public intra-Traveller opposition to 'Traveller ethnicity', simultaneously with (and probably as a reaction to) the intensification of the efforts by

[58] See MacDubhghaill, U. (1997), 'Tuam elected State's first traveller [sic] to hold public office' in *The Irish Times*, p.2.
[59] For further details see McGarry, P. (14/06/1994), 'Mongon [sic] is first traveller [sic] to be elected to any public body' in *The Irish Times*, p.10.
[60] See Donnellan, E., (27/02/2001), 'Proud to be an elected own commissioner' in *The Irish Times*, p.8.
[61] I am actually unsure about the correctedness of this Tuam's 'first' as Thomas Stokes a Co. Longford Traveller was elected mayor of Granard in 2002. However, differently from Ward, he does not seem to have overtly based his political and public image on his Traveller identity.
[62] For further details see Gilmore, T. (14/06/2000), 'Travellers plan to celebrate' in *The Irish Times*, p.4.

the four national Traveller organisations to obtain such official recognition from the Irish State. Significantly, the latest anti-ethnicity efforts bear ties with Tuam, in the person of Martin Ward, who is involved in and employed by the same Tuam Traveller group mentioned above.

Hence, from this historical recollection it emerges that throughout the years three of the few Traveller activists who have been involved in crucial Traveller-related commissions, have become public representatives and gained employment within public bodies have been involved and employed within the Tuam's Traveller organisation. Mary Moriarty, Ellen Mongan and Martin Ward all began their pro-Travellers activism and professional career within this organisation. Two of them, Mary Moriarty and Martin Ward, have played a pivotal role in questioning the official recognition of 'Traveller ethnicity'[63].

As already noted in Chapter Four, it was Mary Moriarty who initially represented Traveller opposition[64]. She had been professionally involved in Traveller education as well as in the *NCTP* and constituted a Traveller representative on State commissions such as the Travelling People Review Body (1981-1983) and the Taskforce Commission on the Travelling People (1993-1995). She assumed the role of acting chairperson of the then newly formed *NFITP* in 1990, and, prior to this, she had been vice-chairperson of the *NCTP* and mostly aligned with its founding members. She had worked closely with Sister Colette Dwyer, as her assistant for at least two years (1987-88) when the latter was national coordinator for Traveller education[65]. On this basis, it could be plausible to associate Mary Moriarty, the Tuam Travellers' organisation and the *NFITP* to the more 'moderate' component of the disbanded *NCTP*, which seemed to prefer a charitable, voluntary, consensus-based and practical problem-solving approach in working with Travellers.

Martin Ward, as noted, a politically and professionally very successful Traveller, as well as a firm opponent of the ethnic stance, has long been employed as a youth worker with the same Tuam's Traveller organisation, besides being its chairperson. He

[63] Ellen Mongan did not express her view on 'Traveller ethnicity' in the Irish press. However, this controversy might have been played out in other fora where she might have revealed her position on this contention.

[64] In this regard, see Cummins, M., (10/12/1990) 'Travellers' movement divided over policy' in The Irish Times, p.4. In particular, consider the following direct quotation: "Going around the country, travellers [sic] say to me, 'we want to be Irish, we're not ethnic'".

[65] In this regard see Dwyer, S.C. (1988), *The education, training and employment of Travellers: 21 years on*. In the introduction Sister Colette Dwyer thanks Mary Moriarty for her invaluable work as her assistant during the previous two years.

was town councillor for more than a decade[66], twice Tuam's mayor and is still currently chairperson of the *NATC* (renamed Involve since 2011), in addition to being member of several committees, including the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee[67] (established in 2007).

As a final consideration, it remains in doubt whether resistance or, at least, indifference to the ethnic quest is mostly limited to the Travellers from the western town of Tuam, or, if it is widespread throughout the country as it has been repeatedly argued by its currently principal public opponent. The previously mentioned acknowledgment by *Changing Ireland*'s journalist Allen Meagher that the Traveller flag affair constituted one of the most interesting and divisive issues among Travellers in recent years can be reasonably extended to the ethnicity dilemma by virtue of the flag initiative's symbolic overlapping with *Minceirs Whiden*'s quest for official recognition of 'Traveller ethnicity'. Furthermore some Traveller activists who are firmly in favour of ethnicity (e.g. Patrick Nevin) or still uncertain about it (e.g. Winnie McDonagh) agree on Travellers' widespread lack of awareness on the concept of ethnicity. However, the national Traveller Ethnicity Campaign and petition carried out by *ITM* since the end of 2008, in parallel with *Pavee Point* and *Minceirs Whiden*'s conjoined efforts towards the same goal, appears to have built a momentum for the pro-ethnicity side.

7.3. Analysis of D6 (D6): *Travellers' Rights*

Description

This letter, written by Mary Moriarty to the Editor of *The Irish Times*, contains a double message: it combines a request of acknowledgement of her own national Traveller representative organisation, the *NFITP*, with an implicit complaint over the allegedly disproportionate media coverage devoted to the *ITM's* meeting. She focuses on the difference between the two competing Traveller organisations' approaches in terms of aims and methods and poses such divergence at the basis of the split of *NCTP*. Her insistence on the national reach of the *NFITP* is coupled with a claim regarding the

[66] He withdrew from the role of Tuam's Council Commissioner for health reasons in April 2010 and nominated Traveller rights activist Owen Ward as his replacement. This information was accessed at http://www.galwaynews.ie/11566-travellers-rights-activist-take-seat-tuam-council on 09/08/2011 at 14.03 p.m.

[67] The National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee documents the discussion of the issue of Travellers' ethnic recognition within its recent report (2009, pp.18-20 and 25-26). This committee includes representatives from the national Traveller organisations (*ITM*, *Pavee Point*, *NTWF*, *NATC*).

ITM's mainly Dublin and Navan base. She states that the *NFITP*'s meetings are dominated by Travellers themselves while benefiting from the support of long-lasting settled benefactors. Then she contends that Travellers do not place ethnicity at the top of their agenda but have other material priorities regarding accommodation, educational access, end of discrimination and investigation into the ethnic contention by means of research on Travellers' origins. She also voices Travellers' concerns with the assignation of any further labels while questioning both the reality of 'Traveller ethnicity' and its usefulness in terms of Traveller advantage in gaining their full rights.

Topics developed within the text

T1) In light of the media coverage of the *ITM's* meeting, an acknowledgment of the existence of the *NFITP* is requested.

T2) Provision of general information about the *NFITP*: its national reach and prevailing Traveller membership from twenty-three counties as opposed to the mainly Dublin and Cavan membership of the *ITM*.

T3) The extensive representation of the *NFITP* nationwide requires the organisation of regional meetings prior to the holding of the national conference planned for May.

T4) Travellers disagree very strongly with *ITM's* prioritisation of ethnicity and its representation as the solution to all Travellers' problems.

T5) The *NFITP*'s priorities, decided by Travellers, are the promotion of Travellers' rights regarding access to accommodation and to all levels of education, as well as an end to discrimination and the establishment of research on Travellers' origins to ascertain their correct designation.

T6) The majority of Travellers prefer the designation as Irish Travellers and are wary of any further labels at least until they are proved as real and beneficial to achieving Travellers' rights.

T7) Denial of any friction with the *ITM* coupled with an affirmation of different approaches in terms of aims and methods between the two groups, ultimately at the root of the *NCTP*'s divide.

T8) Affirmation of Travellers' agency and priority at the *NFITP*'s meetings, with support provided by long-term settled benefactors, who have concretely proven to have Travellers' interests at heart.

All of the topics, implicitly or explicitly, establish a comparison between the national Traveller organisation chaired by Mary Moriarty and the competing group, the *ITM*, both of which originated from the split of the *NCTP*. Although the *ITM* is explicitly mentioned only in half of the eight topics (T1, T2, T4 and T7), it is an implicit term of comparison in the remaining ones. The first point made in the letter is that the media attention granted to the *ITM's* meeting does not do justice to the allegedly overlooked *NFITP*. Accordingly, T2 and T3 specify respectively the national geographical reach of the *NFITP* compared to the more restricted reach of the *ITM* and the proportional majority of Travellers within the *NFITP*. This is also specified with the provision of the organisation's Traveller/settled ratio (4/5:1). The latter specification implicitly hints at an assumed settled predominance within the competing organisation. Hence, Mary Moriarty's request that the media acknowledge the existence of her organisation appears as a complaint against the extensive coverage of the *ITM's* meeting in the press, radio and television. In affirming the national scope and representativeness of her own group the author indirectly suggests the narrower remit of the competing group, implicit in the specification that participants at the *ITM* meeting are primarily from Dublin and Navan. The information about the *NFITP* provided in T1, T2 and T3 by means of its explicitly and implicitly comparative elements, together with T5 and T8's insistence on Travellers' leading role within the same organisation, intends to stress the greater legitimacy of the *NFITP* as the organisational representative of the Traveller voice at a national level. T8's implicit allegation that at *ITM* most of the talking is done by settled professionals is confirmed by other discursive material. On occasion of the disbanding of the *NCTP*, Mary Moriarty herself had accused them of dominating the *NCTP*'s meetings so that Travellers had felt silenced and frustrated. On that occasion she stated: "Twenty years down the road I was very angry. More and more highly educated people were coming in and telling me what to do. This was happening in other groups as well. (…) I must emphasise that we need settled people, we need their support and we need the skills they can teach us, but they must realise that travellers [sic] are not ignorant. We know what travellers' lives are like and it is travellers who must be given the basic rights to live accordingly to their choice. For so long, I have been going to meetings and listened to settled people talking about constitutions and about their salaries. My main point and my main purpose is to see that travellers are supported"[68]. Finally the two groups are compared a last time towards the

[68] In this regard see Cummins, M. (12/11/1990), 'Traveller council disbands after 24 years' in *The Irish*

closure of the letter in T7, which reasserts that their "very different" approaches with regards to aims and methods caused the split within the *NCTP*. Hence, contrary to D6's disclaimer expressed in T7 "We have no quarrel with the *ITM* (...)", the degree of competition between the two organisations was quite high and tensions are evident within D6. These tensions within Traveller politics are confirmed by previous *NCTP*'s documents throughout the decade prior to its dissolution. For example, Keane (1985, 32) stated "a small group, of recent origin and unconnected with the national council, now claims that it should be the only voice speaking for Travellers. It purports to be an all-Travellers group[69] and, for some reason, sees fit to depreciate the work of the National Council". He also challenged the accusation that the *NCTP* was dominated by settled people while insisting that there was room for both kinds of organisations.
Furthermore, both the *ITM* and the *NFITP* were committed to Travellers' achievement of full rights and equality, valued Traveller culture and affirmed the importance of recognising Traveller identity. The main difference rather concerned the preferred strategies: for the *ITM* Travellers' equality was (and still is) directly dependent upon the public recognition of their ethnic status whereas for the *NFITP* concrete advancements in terms of accommodation, education and employment should have been prioritised and an end to discrimination could be reached by convincing settled people to accept Travellers in their midst.

However, the contrast between these two different approaches to Travellers should not be taken as too drastic and clear-cut at least with regards to rhetoric. For instance, Sister Colette Dwyer, who became a firm opponent of the ethnicity quest in the 1990s, had previously referred to Travellers as an "ethnic group" (see Chapter Four, Section 4.4). Moreover, already in the 1970s there was an awareness of Travellers' internal heterogeneity and there was at least a rhetorical acknowledgement of Travellers' right to exert a free choice with regards to their future life in Ireland (see Chapter Four, Section 4.4.). In addition, the *NCTP* had already stressed Traveller cultural distinctiveness and it was also on this basis that special services for Travellers had been introduced.

The divisive issue of 'Traveller ethnicity' is touched upon in three of the topics, respectively T4, T5 and T6: first, Travellers do not place their ethnic designation at the top of their agenda (T4); second, their ethnic designation, which is listed fourth and last

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Times, p.4.
[69] This all-Traveller group was more than likely the short-lived *Minceir Misli* (1982-1984), chaired by Michael McCann. Journalist Cummins (1984, 9) defined the relationship between this group and the *National Council* as "edgy" in *The Irish Times.*

of their priorities, can and should be ascertained through "real research" on Travellers' origins (T5); third, Travellers' own preferred self-designation is that of Irish Travellers and they are suspicious of any further label until it is proven real and beneficial to their fight for rights (T6). In D6 ethnicity is interpreted as a notion verifiable by means of scholarly research, hence as having an objective basis depending on the verification of the group's origins. Specifically, the notion of ethnicity is regarded as determined by the origins of a group. Furthermore, the *NFITP's* argument also insists that the notion of ethnicity should be applied to Travellers only if it is instrumental to the full achievement of Travellers' rights. In other words the contention was not so much about knowledge per se but about its strategic function in Traveller politics, its utility for practical and political goals, namely the advancement of Travellers' rights to accommodation, education, employment and an end to their discrimination. More specifically, if we read T6 closely with T4 we can deduct that the *NFITP* precisely questioned the *ITM*'s core argument that "the solution to all our many problems will come" from ethnicity.

Reference to other declarations made by Mary Moriarty in the aftermaths of the *NCTP*'s split helps further clarify her assertions in D6. For instance, *The Irish Times*' journalist Mary Cummins[70] reported her intervening on the issue of Travellers' separate culture by stating "Going around the country, Travellers say to me 'We want to be Irish, we're not ethnic". This reported opposition to 'Traveller ethnicity' implies that ethnicity and Irishness were perceived as mutually exclusive. Ethnicity was thus regarded as a marker of irreconcilable otherness and hence as a stigma, in line with commonsensical everyday understandings of it. Mary Moriarty did not consider in the quoted passage the possibility of a coexistence of the Irish and ethnic. Ethnicity appears to belong to that inaccessible jargon through which, according to Moriarty, settled professionals silenced Travellers at meetings (see Chapter Four, Section 4.6).

Interestingly, Moriarty's position appears to be quite similar to that of other charismatic members of the dissolved *NCTP*, such as Sister Colette Dwyer, with whom the former had a close professional relationship. For this reason it is relevant to assess the latter's own assertions in this regard. For instance, Sister Colette Dwyer in her 1988 report on Traveller Education had already quarrelled with unnamed but identifiable settled people whom she regarded as trying to impose on Travellers an alien understanding of themselves; this could somehow match with Moriarty's argument

[70] See Cummins, M. (1990), 'Travellers' movement divided over policy' in *The Irish Times*, 10/12/1990, p.4.

formulated in D6 that ethnicity is not a Travellers' concern. Sister Colette Dwyer (1988, 30) strongly insisted on the necessity to listen to Travellers themselves and to take into account how they themselves saw their needs and aspirations:

> "The traveller community [sic] has suffered too much already from well-meaning people who decide not only to champion their cause without any real understanding of how *they* see their needs and aspirations, but too often with preconceived notions of what they actually need and aspire to. (...) The vast majority of Travellers do not see themselves as wanting to be segregated from society, they want to be accepted by it, but allowed to retain their own strong identity, and not to be absorbed into the larger community of settled people. The essential role of those who work with Travellers is (…) rather to free them and give them the necessary skills to articulate their own aspirations for the way **they** want to see their future unfold." [emphasis in the original].

In the quoted excerpt Dwyer seems to indirectly suggest that the affirmation of 'Traveller ethnicity' cannot be combined with their identification as a distinct and distinctive minority community *within* Irish society. Her contention that Travellers do not want segregation but acceptance by mainstream Irish society seems to indirectly imply that ethnicity distances and segregates Travellers from mainstream Irish society and would cause them being less accepted by it. On the other hand, Dwyer's negation of 'Traveller ethnicity' is combined with an affirmation of Travellers' cultural distinctiveness and strong sense of group identity.

It was noted in Chapter Four (Section 4.6) that Sister Colette Dwyer accused John O'Connell of overlooking Travellers' own self-understanding and aspirations by externally imposing on them an alien designation that they did not understand and did not want. Moriarty's and Dwyer's common insistence on the necessity to let the Travellers themselves decide freely about their own self-designation is crucial as it is still being affirmed nowadays by Traveller opponents of 'Traveller ethnicity'. I will come back to this point during the analysis of the remaining data.

As briefly mentioned in Chapter Four (Section 4.6), in 1994 Sister Colette Dwyer wrote a document against ethnic claims for Travellers[71]. In that document Travellers' characteristics (i.e. deep religious feeling, generosity and attachment to the family) were defined as "aspects of Irish life to which Travellers have clung to a far greater extent than the settled community". Unfortunately this document was not available online so I can only refer to its contents through the mediation of the aforementioned article. Nonetheless some of the arguments made in it resonate highly

[71] See Yeates, P. (1994) 'Travellers challenge ethnic claim' in *The Irish Times* (21/02/1994, p.2).

with D6's contents, with other declarations made by Mary Moriarty in the Irish press as well as with Dwyer's statements made in her 1988 Report on Traveller Education. For instance, the 1994 document states that "most travellers [sic] see themselves as Irish first" and also stresses the importance of identity for Travellers: "The federation says that identity is all-important to travellers [sic] and no-one has a right to tell them who they are. We cannot and should not say to them 'You are an ethnic minority group in Irish society'" (Yeates, 1994, 2). Crucially, the Irish origins of Travellers are offered as proof of their non-ethnic status whereas Romani Gypsies are regarded as constituting "very different ethnic groups". In other words, ethnicity is strictly associated with foreign origins and partially overlapped with 'race', thus becoming a marker of absolute otherness, in line with the everyday commonsensical understanding of this notion. Conversely Travellers' Irishness should exclude their ethnic nature. The argument reads like this: Travellers are not ethnic because they have the same national and racial origins as the Irish (in fact their peculiar culture and traditions are quintessentially Irish since they have clung to aspect of Irish life to a greater extent than the settled population) whereas Romani Gypsies have different 'racial' roots (foreign origins), and are hence ethnic. This comparative reference to parallel documents confirms the belief, expressed in D6's T5, that Travellers' origins might prove Travellers' ethnic or non-ethnic nature.

Moreover, D6's questioning of 'Traveller ethnicity' does not imply a denial of their distinctive culture and traditions or a negation of their strong sense of collective Traveller identity. On the contrary, the importance attributed by Travellers to their sense of collective identity appears to be strongly reasserted. The internal quarrel rather appears to have concerned the construction and labelling of such collective Traveller identity.

Finally, a 1992 Irish National Teachers' Organisation's publication, *Travellers in Education*, concurs in shedding light on this first stage of the intra-Traveller controversy over 'Traveller ethnicity'. Based on submissions by the three national Traveller organisations of the time (*DTEDG*, *ITM* and *NFITP*) and individuals working with Travellers, it explicitly mentioned the emergence of two distinct views within Traveller politics over the issue of ethnicity (INTO, 1992, 23): "those who support the notion that Travellers are an indigenous nomadic ethnic group with a distinct history and culture to celebrate and those who are *not* convinced that it is in *the interests of Travellers* to designate them as *a "separate" group within Irish society*". Specifically, it stated: "The National Federation claims that the majority of Travellers want to be regarded as Irish.

They take pride in their Irish heritage and have no interest in the concept of ethnicity" (INTO, 1992, 26) [emphases added]. Because of these diverging views articulated within the Traveller movement, the INTO document affirmed the necessity of carrying out further research "to establish whether Irish Travellers regard themselves as ethnically different, and in particular, in what sense do they articulate their differences" (INTO, 1992, 24). Interestingly the INTO publication (1992, 24) contained a reference to the British Swan report according to which "the Travelling community in Britain meets these criteria" [of ethnic minority group, being "an identifiable group of people sharing particular cultural characteristics and a way of life which differs markedly from that of the majority community"] "even without reference to their racial origins". The latter specification implies that usually the criterion of having different racial origins constitutes one of the basic factors of ethnicity, in line with pre-Barthian objective criteria of ethnic membership (e.g. the Narroll framework).

On the basis of D6 and these various documents, it appears that the designation of Travellers as ethnic is generally questioned as a divisive and alienating factor within Irish society. It is believed to favour segregation of the Traveller component from the rest of Irish society and hence lower their acceptance by settled people. In this sense it does not appear to be serving the interests of Irish Travellers, who allegedly want to be accepted by broader society as an originally constitutive component of the Irish fabric, though with a recognition of their own strong sense of collective Traveller identity. After over twenty years such division over the ethnic stance has not been resolved yet within Traveller politics. This is witnessed for instance in the first National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee's report (2009, 18) which states: "Some members of the Committee felt that it was debatable as to whether the majority of Travellers would welcome such a development [recognition of Travellers as a distinct ethnic group], and that it could serve to further marginalise Travellers. Others however argued that recognition would have legal and symbolic value and importance". Such a statement resonates with the position initially articulated by the *NFITP* and acknowledged in the INTO publication: in both texts Travellers' acceptance of the ethnic label and the real instrumentality of it for Travellers' interests are questioned.

Semantic environment and lexical choice

The word "ethnicity" does not occur in D6 whereas its corresponding adjective "ethnic" appears only twice and there is no definition of the concept. This is understandable given the function of the letter, primarily designed to demand media visibility and greater legitimacy for the *NFITP* over the competing organisation, the *ITM*. The issue of ethnicity is only superficially and preliminarily touched upon as a concept/label whose applicability to Irish Travellers is contested, debatable and hence to be first scientifically demonstrated. For the same reason D6 contains no mention of Traveller culture or specific collective identity. The first occurrence of "ethnic" is combined with the noun "nature" and the specification "of travellers". The "ethnic nature of Travellers" constitutes the logical object of the *ITM's* action, i.e. its "placing of the ethnic nature of Travellers" at the top of their agenda and as the solution to all Travellers' many problems which is allegedly the object of Travellers' strong disagreement. It is interesting to note the use of the associated word "nature": this seems to approximate ethnicity more to the ontological realm of essences rather than to the socially produced realm of cultures. This hypothesis is confirmed by the second recurrence of "ethnic" in D6. This is located within the expression "ethnic minority group", a designation whose applicability to Irish Travellers is deemed capable of being proven or falsified by "real" research on Travellers origins. The talk about "nature" together with the comparative analysis of other discursive material at the time on this topic suggests that the search is about the historical and 'racial' origins of Travellers, whether they are Irish or foreign (as in the case of Romani Gypsies). This research is listed as fourth and last of the *NFITP*'s priorities. In the subsequent paragraph the expression "ethnic minority group" is referred to as one potential "further label" which is feared by Travellers, given their doubts over both its validity for Travellers and its instrumentality for their rights' achievement. Hence, such a label could be welcome only if both aspects were confirmed. Therefore, D6 combines a prevailingly essentialist understanding of ethnicity with an instrumental and strategic dimension (i.e. its concern this label's usefulness for the advancement of Travellers' interests).

With regard to the aspect of lexical choice, the use of adverbs, personal pronouns and adjectives throughout D6 is quite strategic. D6 is written by a Traveller who purports to speak on behalf of the majority of Travellers across the country. Mary Moriarty makes it clear at the outset of the first paragraph by specifying "as a traveller myself [sic]". This information is completed at the end of the letter with the provision of

details about her role with regards to Travellers: she is the Acting Chairman [sic] of the *NFITP*. The association she chairs is in turn defined as, first, "a *really* national organisation" and, then, as being "*so* nation-wide"[emphasis added]; the insertion of the adverbs "really" and "so" implicitly challenges the national remit of the competing organisation named in the letter, the *ITM*, of which it is specified that "(...) *most* of those who attended [the meeting] were from Dublin and Navan, as were *all* those who spoke on Morning Ireland, on RTE News and are quoted in the morning papers"[emphases added]. The implication is that the *ITM's* promptness in holding a national meeting is not due to its greater efficiency but to its more limited geographical reach among Travellers.

The third, fourth, fifth and sixth paragraphs (of a total of six paragraphs composing the text of D6) contain at their beginning the pronoun "we" or the adjective "our": "Our federation"(...); We have made our priorities (...)"; "We have no quarrel (...)"; and, finally, "At our meetings (...)". Throughout D6 personal pronouns and adjectives essentially reinforce the positing of the *NFITP* as the organisation properly representative of Travellers. There are numerous examples of this: first, "*We travellers* [sic] would differ *very strongly* with the *ITM*'s placing of the ethnic nature of travellers at the top of *their* agenda, from which, as one of *them* said on the news recently, the solution to all *our* many problems will come [emphases added]. This sentence clearly establishes an opposition between "we travellers" and an external "they" represented by the *ITM*. In fact the association of the personal pronoun "we" with the characterisation "travellers" reinforces the representative role of the *NFITP* while undermining the competing *ITM*. In this way D6 leaves no margins of interpretation: Travellers belong only to the "we" group while it is implied that Travellers are in a subordinated and underrepresented position in the *ITM*. What she indirectly maintains is that ethnicity is a top priority in a non-Traveller ("their") agenda pursued by the *ITM* for Travellers, who instead disagree "very strongly" with the view that "a solution to all *our* many problems will come" from it (note the superlative degree of the adverb which intensifies the extent of Travellers' disagreement). The sentence at the opening of the fourth paragraph constitutes a strong affirmation of Travellers' agency and central role in decision making within the *NFITP*: "We have made our priorities (...)". The placing of "We" as the acting grammatical and logical subject of the sentence constitutes a much stronger affirmation than just saying more neutrally "Our priorities are (...)". If we link this paragraph with the previous one a contrast is obtained between what *they*, the *ITM*, have

placed at the top of *their* agenda as the solution to all *our* many problems (i.e. ethnicity), with which *we* Travellers differ very strongly, and what *we* (Travellers) have made as *our* priorities (i.e. the promotion of Travellers' rights to (...). A similar statement on Travellers' independence, agency, assertiveness and centrality within the *NFITP* is in the sixth and last paragraph that concludes D6. "At *our* meetings nearly all the talking is done *by Travellers* [assertiveness and centrality], no one tells us what to say [independence], and the settled people *whom we* have asked to join us are those who have proved to us over many years of work with us in local areas that they have only the interests of the travellers [sic] at heart [Travellers' agency as opposed to settled people's subordinated position]". The second paragraph already stated that settled people are in numerical inferiority within the *NFITP*. Strategically, the latter are inserted as the grammatical transitive object within a relative subordinated sentence in which "we" (i.e. Travellers) are the grammatical acting subject: "(...) and the settled people *whom we* have asked to join us (...)". By virtue of this grammatical construction settled people are portrayed as totally subordinated to Travellers and hence playing a role of ancillary support, whereas Travellers are depicted as independent and assertive active agents. Travellers' assertiveness and reflective skills are asserted again in the fourth paragraph where they are placed as the acting subject of two coordinated transitive sentences. These clarify that "The majority of travellers [sic] regard themselves and *want* to be regarded as Irish Travellers, and *we* fear any further labels being attached to us until *we* are sure that they are real and will be of benefit to *us* in *our* fight to obtain *our* rights". "The majority of travellers" at the opening of the sentence, who self-define as Irish Travellers and request this designation from the others, overlaps with the following "we" who "fear any further labels (...)" until there is a proof of their scientific validity and political instrumentality for Travellers' rights fulfilment.

Construction of Irish Travellers

As has already emerged from the previous section, Travellers are constructed as being mostly affiliated to the *NFITP*, which is hence elevated to the role of 'the' legitimate national Traveller representative organisation. They are portrayed as active subjects, characterised by agency, assertiveness, independence, reflexivity, and as being centrally engaged in a political struggle to obtain their rights according to a self-selected list of priorities. According to this depiction, they strenuously resist any external attempt to impose on them any further alien labels.

Ideological construction and implied assumptions

Overall, the comparison between the *NFITP* and the *ITM* established in D6 aims at both legitimising the former as the Traveller representative organisation nationwide while indirectly delegitimising the latter. This effect is reached by means of the use of the discursive strategy of the ideological square, composed of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Accordingly, the positive aspects about the *NFITP* are stressed (its national reach with members drawn from 23 counties; its organisation of regional meetings preceding the national meeting planned for May; the consistent proportional numeric majority of Travellers over settled people; and so on). Instead, their potentially negative aspects are ignored (the *NFITP* continues the historical line established from the *NCTP*, and before that, from the *Dublin Itinerant Settlement Committee*, which had also been dominated by settled people and was accused of being patronising and assimilatory in its approach). D6 contains no positive concessions to the *ITM*, whereas its drawbacks are stressed or hinted at indirectly: allegedly it is a small group of local reach and its setting of 'Traveller ethnicity' as the priority and solution of Travellers' problems is influenced by settled people. Equally, all the positive qualities of the competing organisation are hidden: no mention goes to the prevailing Traveller membership within the *ITM*'s steering committee. In addition, T8's conclusive affirmation of Travellers' assertiveness and independence at the *NFITP*'s meetings may be to a certain extent debatable since they were backed by long-term charismatic settled benefactors who probably exerted a considerable degree of influence on Travellers. Moreover, T8 indirectly implies that Travellers are not dominating the *ITM* meetings.

7.4. Martin Ward's stances on 'Traveller ethnicity'

7.4.1. Analysis of D7: '*Working for Positive Change: Martin Ward'*

Description

The bulk of D7 consists of Martin Ward's first person description of his professional involvement and work in favour of Travellers' rights. This is introduced by a short note in third person which locates this profile within an ongoing series highlighting activists' tireless work for Travellers' rights and specifies Ward's current professional and political roles. Previous issues had already focused on other Travellers such as Martin Collins and Rose Marie Maughan.

Ward first talks about his current job at the local level as a manager of a local Traveller organisation (Western Traveller and Intercultural Group) by mentioning challenges, achievements and issues. Secondly, he moves onto the local political sphere mentioning his involvement in Tuam's town council as both a councillor and as second-term forthcoming mayor. Third, he refers to his involvement in several committees at local, regional and national level. Fourth, he talks about the importance of education and life-long learning for himself and Travellers in general. Fifth, he expresses pride in his Traveller background and satisfaction at Travellers' increased cultural awareness and pride in their Traveller identity. Finally, he addresses the thorny question of Travellers' ethnic status calling for an internal debate among members of the community led by Traveller organisations (*Pavee Point*, *ITM* and *NATC*).

List of topics

T1) Ward's self-description as a manager of the *Western Traveller and Intercultural Group*;

T2) Specification of his tireless commitment to the organisation's growth, rooted in his belief in the importance of a strong Traveller leadership with regards to work with and for Travellers;

T3) Acknowledgement of his advantage in benefiting from the excellent support of staff and board of management;

T4) Affirmation of the deep significance of work for his life (as a "vocation" rather than as a mere "job") and concern with timely solution of Travellers' issues (hence his frustration at impasses and delays in such regards);

T5) Acknowledgement of cooperation secured with local institutions (VEC, County Council, FAS and other bodies) with resulting ongoing positive work.

T6) Specification of his personal involvement in all the highlighted issues as a Traveller and as a local politician (elected councillor and incoming mayor of Tuam);

T7) Expression of contentedness at his fellow councillors' support during his previous extremely busy term as a mayor;

T8) Information on his leading role within the *National Association of Traveller Training Centres* (*NATC*) and his participation in eighteen other (local, regional and national) committees with a real and or potential positive impact on Travellers;

T9) Expression of his belief on the strategic role played by education for the advancement of Travellers and for the benefit of all;

T10) Provision of informational details on his own long-lasting personal educational path sustained by his belief in the value of life-long learning;
T11) Expression of his pride in his Traveller roots and acknowledgement of increased cultural self-awareness among young Travellers as well as pride for their Traveller identity;
T12) Belief in the necessity of Travellers' addressing the question of ethnic identification in light of the increasing use of this word by Traveller groups despite widespread Traveller opposition to this concept and confusion in this regard;
T13) Affirmation of the necessity to consider implications and potential benefits of the adoption of this concept for themselves as a cultural group;
T14) Call on national Traveller organisations (*NATC*, *Pavee Point* and *ITM*) to initiate a discussion on this topic with Travellers at local level.

Topics can be broadly regrouped into three themes: his professional profile; his vision for Travellers' advancement and for the benefit of the whole (Irish) community; and finally Travellers' cultural self-awareness, pride in their collective identity and questioning of their ethnic characterisation.

The first thematic group in turn can be divided into three sub-sections: descriptive information on his professional and institutional roles and positions; values, beliefs and attitudes underpinning his approach to work and, last, observations on his work environments. T1, T6 and T8 are primarily descriptive as they provide information on his various occupations, respectively with regards to private employment (T1) and roles as public representative, as chair of the *NATC* and member of many other committees at various levels (T6 and T8). T2 and T4 focus on his commitment to the local Traveller organisation and to Travellers' advancement, which have deep significance for his life. They appear to merge with his personal identity: "To me work is a vocation not a job".

In addition, he stresses the paramount importance of having Travellers in a leading position in work with and for Travellers but he also points to the beneficial contribution of highly supportive staff members and board of management. As stated in the *WTIA* website, this is a mixed, Traveller and settled organisation, in which both components cooperate and share their commitment to Travellers' equality and rights. This work is being paid back by successful outcomes: the establishment of positive

relationships with public bodies (VEC, County council, *FÁS* and others) and the development of "a lot of positive work" in his area of the county.

Moreover, all his many professional settings are characterised as benefiting from an extremely supportive environment, as acknowledged in T3, T5 and T7. He displays an overall very conciliatory attitude towards institutions and mainstream Irish society coupled with only a very polite and controlled expression of frustration for delays and impasses in progressing Traveller issues with regard to accommodation, employment, discrimination, youth, education and others (T4). Martin Ward's conciliatory attitude towards public institutions is crucial in understanding his overall approach and draws him closer to the historical line assumed by the *NFITP*, which dismissed militancy and aggression. Other sources on his views confirm this: for instance, in *The Irish Times*' it is observed: "He [Martin Ward] believes in challenging discrimination *discreetly*" [emphasis added]. In this sense he somehow continues the conciliatory work, which was embraced by this Tuam-based organisation since its beginnings. For instance, in the aftermaths of the *NCTP*'s dissolution, Moriarty declared to the press "After twenty years down the road I know we just have to work with the traveller [sic] and the settled people" (Cummins, 1990, 4). Similarly, on occasion of Mongan's appointment as Tuam town councillor, the journalist MacDubhghaill (1997, 2) pointed to her "strong belief in the need for reconciliation on both sides" on which "Tuam has led the way".

The second subgroup consists of two topics (T9 and T10), which are strictly interlinked: education is presented as "the way forward" for Travellers and he urges Travellers to consider and act upon this urgently for their collective benefit. The expression "for all us" is likely to include not only the Traveller component but the whole Irish society. His success story (T10) is used as to confirm the possibilities of life-long education. This again continues a historical line with the Tuam-based Traveller organisation, the *NFITP* and the *NCTP* (see Section 7.3), characterised by an insistence on the importance of education for Travellers.

Finally, the last subgroup marks Martin Ward's attempt to establish an intra-Traveller debate over ethnicity. This point is built on a preliminary affirmation of his Traveller pride and by an acknowledgement with satisfaction of the flourishing of such pride and cultural awareness among Traveller youths. This view is backed up by other declarations in the Irish press in which he remembers with affection his early childhood in Traveller camps and his current fluency in Travellers' Cant. However, in Ward's view, the language of pride and culture can exist also without the discourse of ethnicity.

T11 is hence crucial in delinking pride in Traveller background and cultural awareness from ethnicity. For him 'Traveller ethnicity' is first a matter of Travellers' collective choice. T12 puts such a decision clearly into Travellers' hands: it is a question that has to be answered by "Travellers on the ground". His call for an internal dialogue is justified by the exposure of what he sees as a problematic situation in T12: the concept of ethnicity is being increasingly used by Traveller groups despite many Travellers being unclear on its meaning as well as being opposed to the notion. Ward draws attention to the instrumental rationale of such a choice: for him Travellers should choose on the basis of a consideration of ethnicity's potential benefits for their community. Hence D7 is concluded by an open appeal to the main national Traveller organisations to facilitate this debate among Travellers (T14).

Overall, D7's topics share a primary focus on positive aspects and an overall conciliatory and dialogical attitude towards all components of Irish society, whether these are institutions at any levels, work colleagues, other politicians or Traveller themselves. Within the whole text there is only one reference to his frustration when Traveller issues are delayed or at an impasse. This is quite interesting, especially in light of the examination of other data subsequently written by him, which suggest a hardening of his attitude towards the other national Traveller organisations (I will return to this point later in this chapter).

Semantic environment and lexical choice

The term "ethnicity" does not occur in D7 whereas the corresponding adjective "ethnic" appears once associated with the noun "minority" as the object of "one of the questions which has to be answered by Travellers", i.e. "whether we, as a group, are an ethnic minority in Irish society or not? [sic]". This is subsequently referred to as "this word" and as "the concept" [implied "ethnicity"], which has been used by "more and more Traveller groups", yet opposed by "many Travellers". This affirmation establishes a contrast between "Traveller groups" and "many Travellers". The latter refers to individuals whose views are not reflected by these Traveller groups. Dissenting individuals are among "Travellers on the ground", with whom, as specified in the last line of D7, the main national Traveller organisations should initiate an internal discussion on their view on the ethnic categorisation. The expression "Travellers on the ground" calls into being the (absent but implied) opposed category of Travellers at the top, hence, a kind of Traveller elite that is detached from those on the ground and which

corresponds to the aforementioned “more and more Traveller groups”. In this passage, Ward seems to indirectly imply that Travellers groups constitute an elite which have not engaged with “Travellers on the ground” but have unilaterally adopted this word and concept to which “many Travellers are opposed” since “they are not clear on the meaning or do not have an understanding of this issue”. Hence, he highlights a discrepancy between individual Travellers’ opinions and their advocacy and representative local and national groups. This is interesting also in light of the fact that he is himself member of Traveller groups and bodies.

Furthermore Ward does not attempt a definition of ethnicity nor positions himself in favour or against the attribution of this notion to Travellers but casts it as an open question to be answered collectively by his community. Crucially, such a collective decision should be made, according to D7, not so much on the basis of objective knowledge (since there is no reference to scholarly theories in D7) but rather according to strategic instrumental considerations, namely its practical implications and potential benefits. As for D7, 'Traveller ethnicity’ ultimately rests on Travellers’ collective action and democratic decision-making with the mediation of the main Traveller NGOs: hence, ‘Traveller ethnicity’ is a subjective and contested possibility, not an objective fact. Evidently this contrasts with the previous set of data drawn from the *ITM*’s ethnicity campaign and *Minceirs Whiden*’s policy document (see Chapter Six, Section 6.5).

Finally, Travellers’ characterisation as “a cultural group” does not appear as dependent upon its ethnic categorisation. Their overlapping is ultimately dependent on Travellers’ collective decision. Equally, pride for Traveller identity and cultural self-awareness can thrive among Travellers even without ethnic recognition.

With regards to lexical choice, it must be noted an overwhelming preference for attributions with a positive nuance which contribute to the construction of a generally positive picture of the context in which his Traveller activism, political and professional activities have taken place. The level of support from his staff and board of management at the Western Traveller and Intercultural Development Association is “excellent”; the relationship built with institutions and other relevant bodies is “positive”; “a lot of positive work” is ongoing in his area of the county; his fellow councillors were and are “supportive” during his terms as mayor; most of the committees he is involved in “can and do have a positive impact on Travellers”. His personal account is that of a tirelessly committed worker for whom work is a vocation animated by his care for his fellow

Travellers. He is "lucky" to be surrounded by cooperative and supportive people; "glad" to benefit from such widespread support and, finally, "proud" of his "Traveller Background"; he finds pride and self-awareness on the increase among Traveller youths. There is only one instance of expression of a negative feeling, frustration: "at times I, like everyone, can feel frustrated that issues are not moving or being dealt with fast enough. Issues such as employment, Accommodation, Discrimination, Youth, Education and of course there are many more concerns". His frustration is nonetheless mitigated by the temporal adverb "at times" and by the generalisation "like everyone". Ward does not include the State's denial of 'Traveller ethnicity' as a source of frustration. Furthermore, it is immediately largely counterbalanced by the much longer aforementioned enumeration of positives anticipated by the adversative and temporary words "But at the same time".

Construction of Irish Travellers

On the one hand, D7 explicitly provides a profile in narrative first-person of a specific, exemplar Traveller activist who is a role model for other Travellers. On the other hand, it also indirectly conjures up an image of the Traveller collectivity with its internal debates.

Accordingly, his career and life path, marked by many professional and political successes, is built upon tireless commitment to his fellow Travellers, an investment in life-long education, efforts in building up positive relationships with institutions and colleagues and a special dedication to his people. His success somehow confers him an expert position from which he is legitimated to give advice to the other members of the community, spell out his vision for their future and address intra-Traveller concerns. His professional standing is also coupled with an affirmation of pride in his Traveller origins; he is not a victim of double consciousness nor has built his success on hiding his Traveller identity. On the contrary, he has explicitly brandished his Traveller pride and is satisfied with the discovery that such pride and cultural self-awareness is thriving among many young Travellers too. His positive self-presentation, which occupies at least two thirds of the whole text, is a preliminary to his address of two important issues of concern. These are his vision for Travellers' future advancement as rooted in education and life-long learning and his preoccupation with the widening gap between Traveller groups' discourses and the contrasting perceptions among Travellers. Thus Travellers appear to be parted into two main blocks, which are loosing touch with one

another: "Traveller groups" and "Travellers on the ground". These are regarded as having diverging views with regard to Travellers' categorisation as an ethnic minority and varying levels of understanding of the attached meaning, implications and potential benefits. Hence, he seems to imply that members of groups are disconnected from Travellers on the ground, even if they are Travellers themselves. Conversely, he implicitly suggests that he is both on the ground and a member of Traveller groups. In D7 "Travellers on the ground" are recognised an active role and invested with the responsibility of collective democratic decision-making.

A final consideration goes to the portrayal of Traveller youth. This emerges as positive, considering his remark on the increase of pride and self-awareness among young Travellers. This depiction clearly clashes with the high incidence of suicide among young Travellers and the *ITM* and *Minceirs Whiden*'s focus on young Travellers' identity crisis (as per D2).

Ideological construction and implied assumptions

The ideologically most interesting aspect of this text is its context of location. Martin Ward's own intervention is hosted within an issue of the *ITM*'s newsletter. The *ITM*'s willingness to profile and publish the view of a critic of the ethnicity quest might suggest an attempt at conciliation on their behalf. On the other hand, Martin Ward turns this media space into an opportunity to elicit an internal debate on ethnicity from the very organisation that, together with *Pavee Point*, has been central in promoting and propagating the ethnic understanding of Travellers. The overall positive self-presentation of his achievements as a Traveller activist, professional and public representative, crafted for three-thirds of the whole text, builds up to the positing of an important question to all Travellers, while inviting the *ITM* that hosts his view to facilitate such debate. However, in D7 Ward does not overtly express his personal view on ethnicity. His views are made explicit in the next two data analysed below.

7. 4.2. Analysis of D8: *'No: Travellers are not an ethnic minority, says Martin War*d'

Description

This text is included within a two-page forum dedicated to the intra-Traveller debate on ethnicity ('The Big Debate: Ethnicity', pp.14-15). The magazine hosting this debate is under the remit of the then *NATC* (now *Involve*) of which Martin Ward is chairperson. However, among *NATC*'s members diverging views on the ethnic route

coexist. Its vice-chairperson, Michael McDonagh, is one of the *ITM*'s founding members, and a strong promoter of Travellers' official ethnic recognition. Two leading voices within the community are given space to argue for their respective positions in this regard. Ward's view against 'Traveller ethnicity' is contrasted to its endorsement by the *ITM*'s chairperson of the time, i.e. Catherine Joyce.

This debate is published six months after D7 and, unlike that, it contains an explicit positioning of Martin Ward against the ethnic route. There can be many explanations for this change, including the different context of publication and publisher. However, the timing is significant: while D7 preceded the *ITM*'s decision to launch an ethnicity campaign, taken in June 2008, D8 followed it.

The structure of D8 is the following: first, the notion of ethnicity is problematised because of its historical temporality and of its elusiveness with regards to meanings and connotations. Second, the pro ethnicity argument is discussed and contrasted with a counter-argument. Specifically, it is described as being based on the British government's official ethnic recognition of Irish Travellers according to their congruence with the set criteria of common ancestors, language, religion, history and so on. Such argument is then opposed in light of the British conferral of the ethnic status to all Irish people according to the same set of criteria. As a counterargument he draws a parallel between the British government's refusal to recognise ethnic status to Scottish Travellers and the Irish government's resistance towards ethnicity for Irish Travellers. In his view this parallelism rests respectively on their Scottishness and Irishness. Third, the importance of Travellers' debate and collective decision-making is stressed; fourth, the position of the majority of Travellers is presented as indifference to their ethnic categorisation, ignorance about its meaning and, as in his case, insignificance among their priorities. Hence, ethnicity is cast as a non-issue for Travellers compared to a range of more pressing practical concerns on which Traveller groups should instead be focused. Fifth, its recognition would constitute just another label attached to Travellers, which would make no difference for Travellers in terms of practical advantages for them as a people. Sixth, official ethnic recognition presents more cons than pros because it would play into the game of those within Irish society who would prefer not to recognise Travellers as truly Irish. In his view, given his pride for both his Irish and Traveller heritage and his responsibility towards the former, embracing ethnicity could be interpreted as disrespectful to Travellers' Irish heritage.

List of topics

T1) Problematisation of ethnicity as a word being circulated around for the past twenty years, with varying meanings and connotations according to different people, and, hence, to be used with serious consideration;

T2) Some Traveller organisations and individuals believe in Travellers being an ethnic minority in Irish society basing their argument on the criteria applied on occasion of the conferral of the ethnic status to Irish Travellers in the UK.

T3) Even settled Irish people are accorded ethnic status in Great Britain according to the very same set of criteria, whereas Scottish Travellers are denied ethnic status by the British government supposedly by virtue of their Scottishness. Similarly, the Irish government could be denying Irish Travellers the ethnic status because of their Irishness.

T4) Declaration of his belief in the need for debate according to which this issue should be discussed by all Travellers.

T5) The vast majority of Travellers, including him, are not concerned about their ethnic categorisation, do not understand its meaning and consider it as the last of their priorities.

T6) Focus should instead be put on the existing more pressing issues and concerns.

T7) It would provide only another label whose difference for Travellers as a people is questionable.

T8) Ward expresses pride in both his Irish and Traveller heritage and a sense of responsibility towards his Irish roots, which he intends to protect.

T9) The ethnicity route will be more detrimental than beneficial.

T10) There are people in Irish society opposed to Travellers being recognised as true Irish.

T11) He has no intention of playing the ethnicity card, which may be interpreted by many as being disrespectful to his truly Irish heritage.

The issue of ethnicity is necessarily the focus of D8. Thus it is explicitly or implicitly present in all the topics. For instance, in T6 ethnicity constitutes the taken for granted second term of comparison implied by the "more": "There are *more* pressing issues and concerns [than ethnicity] (…)".

The structure of D8's topics is underpinned by logical interconnections that build up an overall argument against the ethnic route starting from a general theoretical problematisation of the word itself to more specific discussions of its application to the specific case of Irish Travellers in Ireland. The latter, which occupy most of the text, deal with an exposition of Traveller ethnicity advocates' main arguments followed by his counter-arguments. It proceeds then to the necessity of all Travellers' involvement in such a debate, especially considering that most of them are totally unconcerned with their ethnic recognition and ignorant about this notion. Finally, he concludes with the questioning of ethnicity's contribution to positive change for Travellers coupled with an affirmation of its negative consequences.

In D8 Ward does not attempt to offer a workable definition of ethnicity but limits his comments to its problematisation, exposition of the pro-ethnicity argument and his counter-argumentation. His avoidance of a definition may be dictated by the limited space for making his point and the complexity of the topic. Despite this, T1, even if superficially, touches concerns that are raised in contemporary critical literature on ethnicity. He hints at complex debates over ethnicity's conceptual temporality and relative novelty, problematic nature, fluidity and elusiveness (see Chapter Two). His consideration about the necessity for a serious consideration of ethnicity echoes concerns with the ambiguous potential of such notion, which is open to both emancipatory uses and abuses (see, for example, St Louis, 2009).

In addition, T2 and T4 make it clear that for Ward Travellers' ethnic categorisation pertains to the realm of subjectivity rather than objectivity; it is a construction, a label that Travellers must discuss to collectively decide whether they want it or not. The statement "there are Traveller organisations and individuals who *believe* that Travellers are an ethnic minority in Irish society" [emphasis added] casts ethnicity as a debatable belief as opposed to a fact. D8's T2 and T4 demonstrate Ward's grasp of the political valence of ethnicity due to its subjective, discursive and instrumental connotations. Hence, his insistence on the necessity of facilitating a deliberation among all Travellers on this topic is notably in line with the principle of people's self-determination articulated in the UNCERD Recommendation N18 (1990). Simultaneously, however, he appears to hold a commonsensical understanding of ethnicity tainted with nationalist undertones (as per T2, T3, T11 and T12) according to which the ethnic attribution would prevent one from full belonging to the national

community. The section below additionally points to 'racial' nuances, perhaps attached to ethnicity within D8.

T2's explanation of the main pro ethnicity arguments (as well as his exposition of his counter-arguments) is somewhat simplistic and primarily aimed at undermining the credibility of the contending position. He claims that what the pro ethnicity advocates substantially argue is that Irish Travellers have been proven as an ethnic group on the basis of an objective set of criteria in England and Northern Ireland and hence the same recognition should be granted in the Republic of Ireland. Against such position, he objects that the recognition of Irish Travellers as ethnic in Great Britain is not so significant since all Irish people, whether settled or Traveller, are recognised as ethnic there, anyway, and according to the very same criteria. With this statement he probably hints at their national origins as the factor ultimately determining their ethnic status (i.e. they are not British). According to the suggested interpretation, all Irish people (both settled and Traveller) are ethnic abroad and non-ethnic at home. This is reinforced by the parallel he draws between the lack of recognition of Scottish Travellers' ethnicity[72] in Britain and Irish Travellers' ethnicity in Ireland (T3). He supposes that in both cases the reason for such official resistance is their respective nationality: "Is it [Scottish Travellers being not provided with the same recognition] because they are Scottish and recognised as this by their British counter-parts? Would this be the very same reason that the Irish government has not provided the Irish Travellers with the very same status?". For this oppositional parallel to make sense, readers must associate ethnic status with implied meaning "of foreign origins" or "non-national" or "racially different". The implied assumption is that those of other 'races' or foreign origins meet the criteria for ethnic recognition in a host country, be it Ireland or Great Britain. Accordingly, the underpinning assumptions are that ethnic status and national identification are mutually exclusive and that ethnicity is determined by foreign origins. Therefore since Irish Travellers are fellow nationals in Ireland and recognised as this by their Irish counterparts they have not been provided with the ethnic recognition, which pertains to those of a different 'race' or foreign origins. However, the use of interrogative sentences rather than affirmative ones might cast his explanations as hypotheses rather than certainties. Alternatively, they might be

[72] Nonetheless, in 2000 the Scottish Human Rights Commission convened that Scottish Travellers had to be regarded as an ethnic group for the purposes of law despite some resistance to such classification, both among a portion of Scottish Travellers themselves and some politicians and public representatives. For further information see McKinney (2003).

interpreted as rhetorical questions and hence they could stand for affirmative declarations.

The implied contrast between "ethnic" and "national" is indirectly confirmed by the last points made in T10 and T11. What he argues there is that Traveller groups' demands for official ethnic recognition could be interpreted as disrespectful to their 'true' Irish heritage and roots, thus indicating a refusal to assume their responsibilities as Irish citizens. He also believes that ethnic demands would meet the expectations of those who would prefer Travellers to be denied Irishness, by undermining their 'true' Irish identity. These passages make it clear that for Ward "ethnic" is antithetical to "true Irish" or at least it corresponds to 'less Irish'. In this way ethnic recognition could contribute to (symbolically) excluding Travellers from the national community to which they 'truly' belong because of their common Irish heritage. This reasoning also implies that ethnicity is singular: accordingly, people can only have one, either Traveller or Irish. But the corollary of this statement is that those with foreign roots do not 'truly' belong to the national community, are not 'truly' Irish. Hence the same logic that legitimates Travellers' full inclusion into the national community also implies the partial exclusion of those without Irish roots. Therefore, the combination of T2, T3, T11 and T12 demonstrates how easily the discussion of ethnicity can slip into the murky terrain of national belongings with their inclusive and exclusionary implications.

Ward's concerns with ethnicity's potential to erase or weaken Travellers' Irishness and to increase general hostility towards Travellers might be reflecting, and in turn co-producing and reinforcing, existing fears among Travellers that they may concretely lose their Irish nationality and their citizenship rights if they are granted the ethnic status. D3 and D4 indirectly confirm the diffusion of such fears among Travellers by addressing these doubts within a series of questions and answers.

Furthermore, Ward seems confident that Travellers are indifferent to the ethnic quest, which, in his opinion, is instead pushed on Travellers by settled people (as per T5). This is a contention that he has often reiterated and against *ITM*'s spokespeople in radio, newspapers and TV interviews[73]. Furthermore, historical continuity on this point can be traced back to the 1980s. A similar allegation was implicitly made by Mary Moriarty in D6 when she insisted that at the *NFITP*'s meetings nearly all the talking was done by Travellers and nobody told them what to say (see Section 7.4). In addition,

[73] See, for example, *The Irish Times*, 31/03/2009, p.17 ('Traveller Irish or Irish Traveller? The arguments for… and against'). In particular consider his statement: "Let us not have settled people pushing an agenda on the Traveller community".

on the occasion of the planned Traveller flag/logo referendum, Traveller activist Bernard Sweeney claimed that this was not a settled people's idea, probably to rebut any potential allegations in this regard.

Martin Ward also opposes ethnicity as a (stigmatising) label (as per T7) because of its bias towards groups' collective differences, which facilitates the overlooking of their many communalities, similarities and capacity for intercommunication. This can be noted for instance, in the pro ethnicity position of Catherine Joyce[74], which was published just beside Ward's one within the same reportage.

A subsequent intervention by Ward on this topic in *The Irish Times*[75] confirms this point. He claims that ethnicity means that "you are totally different" and that "in pursuing the ethnic status we are just pushing ourselves away from the settled community". Ward's fear perhaps is that once such "label" of difference is introduced and attached to them, it will be defined in absolutist terms beyond the progressive intentions of Traveller activists and their advocates. This new label could be used towards reinforcing and hardening a polarised dualism in Irish society rooted in stereotypical perceptions and prejudice. Similar fears have been expressed by other Travellers too. For instance Winnie McDonagh[76] declares to be cautious about the ethnic quest, considering that "If people [Travellers] think it [ethnic status] will make them be treated more *negatively* and more *separately*, they might think they would be better to stay where they are"[emphases added]. Such external and racist convictions of Travellers' negative collective difference which already animate some Irish people's desire to strip Travellers of their citizenship rights would be matched by the internal convictions of their difference from the rest of Irish society so strengthening and deepening the boundaries between the two groups.

Against this potentially polarised construction of Traveller/settled relations, Ward opts for a more conciliatory one in which both differences and similarities are

[74] In Joyce's piece the words "different/difference", attributed to Travellers, occur six times within the first three short sentences whereas there is no mention of Traveller/settled similarities or common roots and heritage in any part of her contribution. In addition, there is no reference to Travellers' attachment and allegiance to the Irish nation or their sense of closeness with the settled counterpart. Their relationship is sketched as one of inherited cultural difference and social distance, as if they constituted two parallel but never intersecting worlds.

[75] See again 'Traveller Irish or Irish Traveller? The Arguments for… and against', in *The Irish Times*, 31/03/2009, p.17. The opinions of four Travellers are collected and juxtaposed within this piece. Unfortunately the alternation between direct and indirect speech does not allow to clearly demarcating the journalist's intermediation from the interviewees' statements. For this reason the text was not used directly as a first datum within this study. Yet, some of its direct speeches are in line with the previously examined data and serve to further clarify Ward's position against ethnicity.

[76] Her position is also quoted in 'Traveller Irish or Irish Traveller: Arguments in favour… and against', in *The Irish Times*, 31/03/2009, p.17.

accounted for. He seems to have carved a double identification in which his Irish and Traveller roots sit comfortably beside one another: he sees himself as equally Irish and Traveller. In other subsequent instances he even gets to the point of putting his Irishness before his Traveller identity: "My loyalty is to Ireland first and the Traveller community second, we're Irish Traveller not Traveller Irish"[77]. He claims that "we are part of a social group within Irish society" and that "there are an awful lot of similarities between the Traveller community and the settled community"[78]. Comparative reading of other statements by Martin Ward on the Irish press[79] confirms his belief in Travellers' profound closeness and similarity with settled Irish people, his strong emotional attachment to and sense of responsibility towards the Irish nation and his understanding of recent cultural change as equally affecting both the Irish and Traveller components of society. Accordingly, in an article on Travellers' pilgrimage to Knock he is quoted as discussing young Travellers' modernity by saying that "Young Travellers have become so modern. There are less marriages. There are a lot of single girls and a lot of single lads (…)". "Travellers' attitudes are very Irish. They are Irish through and through".

Furthermore, Ward considers the legal remit of the ethnic status as a limit. His understanding is that, given its circumscribed use in law, it will not broadly affect people's general attitudes in society. In his view, Irish people might be externally forced to comply with legal obligations not to act discriminatorily towards Travellers or to correct or compensate their wrong-doing; yet, they will still nourish negative feelings towards Travellers. In his opinion, real change for Travellers can happen only if attitudes towards Travellers within mainstream society change: "Ethnic status is not a magic wand. I don't see how it would change people's attitudes. We can enact all the laws we want, but until people change their attitude to the Traveller community nothing is going to happen"[80]. However, he does not explicitly indicate an alternative effective means for changing people's attitudes. From some of his other statements we can hypothesise that he believes that more discreet engagements with settled people can be

[77] See *The Irish Times*, 31/03/2009, p.17 ('Traveller Irish or Irish Traveller? The arguments for… and against').
[78] See *The Irish Times*, 31/03/2009, p.17 ('Traveller Irish or Irish Traveller? The arguments for… and against').
[79] See, for instance, Donnellan, 2001 (*The Irish Times*, 27/02/2001, p.8); Gilmore, 2003 (*The Irish Times*, 07/07/2003, p.2) and Hourihane, 2006 (*The Tribune*, 13/08/2006).
[80] See *The Irish Times*, 31/03/2009, p.17 ('Traveller Irish or Irish Traveller? The arguments for… and against').

more effective than openly confrontational ways[81]. Again, there is a historical continuity in this approach.

Despite the long time-gap (nearly twenty years), a recurring pattern among the anti-ethnicity advocates can be identified. This consists in the association of opposition to the ethnic status with a more conciliatory approach towards State's institutions and dominant Irish society. Furthermore, the declaration of laws' ineffectiveness[82] in changing people's attitudes/hearts is not unique to Martin Ward: it had been already expressed not only by another prominent Traveller activist, Ellen Mongan[83], but also by a campaigner for Traveller rights, Sean O'Riain (2000).

In his memoir of his involvement in the *South Dublin Travellers Support Group*, O'Riain (2000, 100-104) defended the achievements of the initial pro Traveller charitable mobilisation and ascribed the decline of charitable and voluntary involvement of people to the professionalisation of pro Traveller organisations. This translated, in his view, into a loss of the local bases among 'ordinary' people, who previously mobilised in solidarity with Travellers and struggling against the well-organised, loud and visible anti-Traveller pressure groups. While appreciating the important political work carried out by Traveller organisations in promoting equality, human rights and influencing policy, he also pointed out that "legislation is just one method of building a more perfect society and, perhaps, laws can be changed more easily than hearts" (O'Riain, 2000, 102). O'Riain saw as paramount the formation of an active network of groups of 'ordinary' people welcoming Travellers in their midst, so that they could "fearlessly work together to oppose ignorance and prejudice, hatred and rejection and replace them with a movement towards community, understanding and acceptance".

Compared to D7's prevailingly neutral tone, D8 represents a more explicit positioning of Ward against the ethnic stance. D7 advocates a consideration of potential implications (advantages and disadvantages) of the ethnic route whereas D8 explicitly affirms the certainty of its cons together with a questioning of its pros.

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[81] See Donnellan E. (2001, 8) in *The Irish Times* (27/02/2001). This article mentions his belief in tackling incidents of anti-Traveller discrimination "discreetly" by consultation and negotiation between the involved parties rather than confrontationally by hitting the newspapers' front-pages. Ward himself was refused a drink on occasion of his election as Tuam's town commissioner but he stated that the problem was quickly solved by talking and did not occur again.

[82] More generally, this point would also seems to echo a longstanding debated within other groups who face discrimination re whether law or cultural change are more effective approaches to such problem.

[83] See Kelleher, L. (26/07/1998), 'We're travelling second class' in the *Sunday Mirror*. In particular, consider her statement: "Introducing legislation to protect our rights would help to a certain extent but it won't change people's attitudes".

Semantic environment and lexical choice

The noun "ethnicity" appears four times in D8 while the corresponding attribute "ethnic" occurs only three times and is always associated with the noun "minority". It is contextualised with reference to the legal field ("ethnic minority" is alternatively referred to as a "status" and coupled with the verb/noun recognise(d)/recognition).

The first two occurrences of the noun are located at the beginning of the text within a definitional context: as such it is the subject of an intransitive sentence. It is presented as a "word", which then constitutes the grammatical subject of a passive relative sentence. However, logically it constitutes the object of the subordinated sentence, since it passively receives the action rather than actively accomplishing it: "Ethnicity is a word that *has been bandied* around for the last twenty years or so"[emphasis added].

Ethnicity's predication is completed with further details such as "to different people it [ethnicity] has different meanings and connotations". Even in this case the implied ethnicity, expressed through the deictic pronoun "it", is only the grammatical subject of the sentence whereas the logical subject of the action is "different people". After this characterisation comes his warning: "Ethnicity is something that *cannot* be *dealt with* lightly and *has* to *be viewed* in a serious manner"[emphases added]. Again, despite being the subject of the main sentence, the use of passive verbs makes it the logical (direct and indirect) object of two human actions: people (specifically Travellers) are the implied real agents, who cannot deal with ethnicity lightly and who have to view it in a serious manner. In the two remaining instances ethnicity is presented in similar ways. Accordingly, in its third occurrence the whole gerundive figurative expression "Going the route of ethnicity" that is the grammatical subject of the action "will do more damage than good", implies a human agent, i.e. Travellers. Finally, ethnicity occurs within the figurative expression "playing the ethnicity card"- a phrase that also has negative colloquial connotations as it will be observed below.

D8's formulation of ethnicity is in striking contrast with the one drawn by the pro ethnicity data. In the latter set of data ethnicity is presented as an acting entity which determines (as per D3/D4) or shapes (as per D5) people from outside, whereas for D8 ethnicity is an object of human actions and a discursive means, open to various interpretations, time-relative and therefore to be handled with caution. Specifically, the expression "playing the ethnicity card" is reminiscent of the more common alternative "playing the race card". The use of this expression seems to constitute a clue for D8's equation between ethnicity and 'race', so suggesting a discursive overlap between

ethnicity, foreign nationality and different 'race'. Usually the expression "playing the race card" is resorted to in politics to morally sanction unfair and ethically wrong practices: e.g. politicians who are accused of playing the race card are those who instrumentally avail of widespread racist stereotypes against a group for the purpose of winning support from the electorate. In this sense, Ward seems to implicitly attribute ethically questionable connotations as well as potential detrimental effects ("which many may interpret as disrespectful to our true Irish heritage") to the use of ethnicity as an instrumental means for pragmatic ends. Accordingly, it appears plausible that ethnicity within D8 is being implicitly understood as a euphemism for 'race' and hence opposed as such.

The concluding paragraph contains another reference that suggests his interpretation of ethnicity as antithetical to (or at least erosive of) 'authentic' national identity. The preceding sentence in fact mentions the existence of Irish people who would deny Travellers the recognition as "true Irish", so stripping them of their full membership of Ireland's national and political community. In this way Ward suggests that playing the ethnicity card, hence Travellers' pursuit of their ethnic recognition, would meet the aspirations of racist people: ethnic status would make Travellers not truly Irish, besides mounting anti-Traveller hostility. The lexical choice here is very important: playing the ethnicity card may be interpreted by many [Irish people] as "being *disrespectful* to *our true Irish heritage*" [emphasis added]. Previous passages within D8 suggest that Ward himself shares this belief together with the belief that as an Irish Traveller he has "a *responsibility*" to his "Irish roots" which he "intend[s] to *protect*" [emphasis added]. The language of pride, respect and protection, consistently applied to Traveller culture within the pro Traveller ethnicity material, is here extended also to Travellers' Irish roots and heritage in D8. For Ward, being Irish -and being recognised as true Irish- seems to be a crucial component of his very identity besides his Traveller roots, to be protected against both Travellers and non-Travellers.

The attribution of 'racial' nuances to ethnicity is suggested also in other interventions made by Ward in the Irish press. As already considered, Ward rejects it as "just another label"[84], according to the dominant everyday stigmatised usage of this notion within contemporary Western societies. Even in official discourses, ethnicity has often become a euphemism for the discredited 'race'. Ward's objections to Travellers' ethnic categorisation imply a commonsensical and hegemonic use of ethnicity,

[84] See *The Irish Times*, 31/03/2009, p.17 ('Traveller Irish or Irish Traveller? The arguments for… and against').

according to which ethnicity assumes nuances of absolute otherness and irreconcilable difference. Against mainstream society's racist rejection and segregation of Travellers as an alien and internally homogeneous group stereotypically marked by a negative chain of equivalencies, Ward reclaims for Travellers their closeness to and communality with the settled Irish counterpart by virtue of their common Irish roots and heritage and full belonging to the Irish national community[85]. In his view, Travellers want to be regarded as 'true' Irish and settled people's fellow men and women. When Ward contends that ethnicity would be just another label attached to Travellers he also rejects any stigma attached to it, which would be added to the many other negative stereotypical labels already externally attributed to Travellers.

Construction of Irish Travellers

In D8 Ward portrays the Traveller community as internally divided over the issue of ethnicity. Such a division is expressed by discursively enacting a contrast between the beliefs of Traveller organisations and individuals. He also takes side with the latter, by casting himself as the spokesperson of the "ordinary Traveller", whose view he claims to share: "To the *ordinary Traveller* they haven't a clue what it means to most it would be the last thing on their mind. I know it is to *mine*". His choice of words and syntactical structure is clear and close to spoken English, and thus affirms his more grounded position.

Nonetheless, discursive examination demonstrates that he does not contest the *ITM*'s identification of Travellers as a distinct cultural group with its own specific culture. In D8 he even refers to the Traveller community with the expression "a people" ("What difference will it [official recognition as an ethnic minority] make to *us* as *a people*?"[emphases added]), which contains a quite strong connotation of internal cohesion and communality, often used as a synonym of the term "nation". Hence, it seems that he contests more the "ethnic" (as a synonym of 'racial'[86]) attribution rather than the "minority" category. In other occasions he defines Travellers as "a part of a social group within Irish society"[87]. His quarrel is not with recognising Travellers' cultural specificity and expressing pride in it; most of his difficulties seem rather to lie

[85]In this regard see 'Traveller Irish or Irish Traveller? The Arguments for… and against', in *The Irish Times*, 31/03/2009, p.17.
[86] Interestingly, "ethnic" and "racial" overlap within British legislation as it is demonstrated by the fact that both categorizations are subjected to the 1976 Race Relations Act and that Irish Travellers have been recognised as an ethnic group in England but as a racial group in Northern Ireland.
[87] See *The Irish Times*, 31/03/2009, p.17 ('Traveller Irish or Irish Traveller? The arguments for… and against').

with the pro ethnicity discourses' rhetorical and strategic downplaying of Traveller/settled similarities and deep common historical and cultural roots. For Ward, Traveller identity seems to be a variant of Irishness rather than an independent, separated and self-sufficient identity.

D8 is revelatory of Travellers' deep dual loyalty to both the Irish and Traveller components of the Irish Travellers' identity. Ward's mention of his sense of responsibility towards his Irish roots sheds light on his civic consciousness by not only advocating Travellers' rights but also recognising their duties towards their nation-state. The fact that Ward has previously self-identified with 'ordinary' Travellers and purports to speak on their behalf, can suggest that even what he speaks in the first singular person ("I am proud (…), but I also believe (…) and I intend (…)") he claims to expose the stance of 'ordinary' Travellers. By virtue of this extension, the image of Travellers he proposes is that of responsible Irish citizens, socially and culturally close to their settled counterpart (indeed regarded as their "fellow Irishmen and women" with whom they share "a true Irish heritage"), who not only demand the just fulfilment of their full citizenship rights and respect for their Traveller identity and culture, but also intend to protect their role of loyal and respectful members of the common national community, by proudly abiding by their duties and refusing to play the ethnicity card.

Ideological construction and implied assumptions

As I have already pointed out throughout the examination of D8, Ward uses this media space to spell out his argument against Travellers' pursuit of their official ethnic recognition and to call once again for a debate on this issue among all Travellers. In doing so, he tells readers of his belief that such a quest is theoretically problematic and practically disadvantageous for Travellers, as well as alien to 'ordinary' Travellers' concerns. His intervention thus serves persuasive goals as well as informative ones. Hence, he does not only reproduce opinions of Travellers "on the ground" but also intends to influence them. This is mostly evident within his exposition of pro-ethnicity advocates' main argument (i.e. the occurred ethnic recognition of Irish Travellers under British law) and prompting of his counterargument:

"Their argument goes on to state that the British government has *recognised* the *Irish Travellers* as an *ethnic minority*, as we meet *all the credentials*, common ancestors, common language, common religion and it goes on. But the *settled Irish* have the *very same recognition* under British law and the *same criteria* apply to our fellow Irishmen and women. / I also wonder at this stage why the Scottish Travellers have not been provided with the same recognition? [sic] Is it because they are Scottish and

recognised as this by their British counter-parts? Would this be the very same reason that the Irish government has not provided the Irish Travellers with this very same status?"

The information he provides in such regard is ambiguous and more geared towards weakening such argument rather than presenting accurate facts. While it is correct that all Irish people are accorded ethnic status in Great Britain, his information is incomplete and vague (strategies of implicitness and incompleteness) since it facilitates the incorrect understanding that they are recognised as belonging to a single and same ethnic group. Instead, Irish Travellers in Great Britain are considered as an ethnic group per se and not simply by virtue of their Irishness. In other words, (settled) Irish and Irish Travellers would be classified as both ethnic, according to the same criteria, yet, as belonging to two distinct classifications[88]. Moreover, with regards to the specific parallel drawn with Scottish Travellers, he makes no reference to the fact that Scottish Travellers and Gypsies have been recognised as an ethnic group in Scotland in 2001[89]. Hence, Ward's exposition is ideological, responding as it does more to persuasive goals than to plainly informative ones.

Furthermore, D8's textual analysis revealed that Ward's rejection of the application of the notion of ethnicity to the Irish Travellers partly (but not exclusively) rests on racialised and nationalistic assumptions about Irishness and on an overlapping between ethnic difference and 'racial' difference. Indeed, even though his opposition to ethnicity is rooted in an awareness of this notion's subjective dimension and problematic theoretical and practical implications, it seems that a racialised and nationalistic understanding of ethnicity and Irishness underpins his stance too. Accordingly, it rests on assumptions about 'true' Irishness, which is reserved to those of Irish roots and heritage, hence those with an Irish 'racial' background. In turn, there is also an overlap between 'race' and national identity: those who are 'racially' the same also 'naturally' belong to the same nation. From this it follows that Irish Travellers cannot be ethnic, since ethnic commonsensically means 'racially' different and of foreign origins, whereas Travellers are true Irish people as they truly belong to the same 'race' and nation as the settled Irish. Hence, both Irish Travellers and settled Irish are

[88]For more information, see the Irish Human Rights Commission position paper on Traveller ethnicity (2004) and McVeigh (2007).

[89]See in this regard McKinney (2003). The case of their ethnic recognition was discussed in Scotland in 2000 and the Scottish Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament eventually published its first report in June 2001, whose second recommendation convened that they had to be regarded as an ethnic group for the purposes of law and policy, despite some resistance to such classification, both among a portion of Scottish Travellers themselves and some politicians and public representatives.

regarded as ethnic in Great Britain, by virtue of their common belonging to the Irish 'race' and a foreign nation, whereas they are both true Irish at home.

The notion of 'authenticity' as applied to national identity indirectly calls into being the opposite category of 'inauthentic' Irish, which in turn results to be appropriate for those of racially different and foreign background. This assumption implicitly entails as its corollary that Irish citizens of non-Irish ancestors are not true Irish, or less Irish. In this way a hierarchy is established between 'true/authentic' and 'false/inauthentic' Irish people.

7.4.3. Analysis of D9: '*Ethnic status would not be good for Travellers'*

Description

This letter to the editor of the local newspaper *Tuam Herald* is written by Martin Ward on behalf of himself and of the Western Traveller and Intercultural Association, which he chairs (since the address provided at the end corresponds to Brú Bhríde, the premises of the Tuam-based Traveller group).

The central theme of Travellers' ethnic recognition is presented as an agenda being pursued unilaterally by three national Traveller organisations behind the back of unaware Travellers. He then mentions his recent engagement as part of *NATC* in discussions of this issue at ministerial level and asserts his objection to such recognition based on his fear that it will be an additional label and disadvantageous to Travellers vis-à-vis other numerically larger ethnic minority groups. He then expresses his concern that the official position paper on Travellers' ethnic recognition, requested by the then Minister for Equality Mary White, would be drawn without consultation with Travellers themselves, given that these national Traveller groups did not engage in real debate with the community. Subsequently he moves on stressing that *NATC* still has not taken a position in this regard whereas the Tuam's *Western Traveller and Intercultural Group* opposes it, is concerned about it and will inform local Travellers accordingly. Against this, he advises Traveller organisations to concentrate on real issues.

Finally, in the last third of the letter he offers a concrete example of the disastrous consequences for Travellers (especially the most marginalised ones) of the unilateral consultation provided by the previously mentioned national Travellers organisations with regards to the Traveller Education Strategy. These are charged with having precipitated the eradication of the Traveller Training Centres and are ascribed a central role in the dismantling of Traveller education initiatives.

Topics developed within the text

T1) Travellers' identification as an ethnic minority is an agenda pursued by three of the allegedly national Traveller organisations without Travellers' discussion of it.

T2) It is his belief that the majority of Travellers is unaware of ethnicity's meaning and unconcerned with this issue.

T3) He has participated to an official discussion of various views on ethnicity involving the *National Association of Traveller Centres (NATC*) and the Department of Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and hosted by the Department of Justice.

T4) He personally does not welcome such official recognition as in his opinion it constitutes just another label and, given Travellers' numerical inferiority, puts Travellers at a disadvantage vis-à-vis other minorities who will as a result also be regrouped within the same ethnic category.

T5) He is concerned that the forthcoming position paper on ethnicity commissioned by the Minister Mary White would not reflect the view of Travellers themselves since the other national groups have pursued it without establishing an inter-Traveller dialogue on this issue.

T6) *NATC* has currently no position since the debate needs to happen.

T7) The Tuam's *Traveller and Intercultural Development Group* is unsupportive and wary of the introduction of ethnic categorisation for Travellers and will inform the community about this coercive plan.

T8) It is his strong belief that Traveller organisations should deal with real issues.

T9a) The same Traveller groups advocated the closure of Traveller Education Centres, opposed only by *NATC*.

T9b) Reduction of places and closure of some centres has had negative effects on the most marginalised Travellers, setting them back another decade, as *NATC* had warned.

T9c) These organisations should pursue Travellers' wants, instead of their own agendas.

T9d) The acceptance of their proposals by the Department of Education has led to the disappearance of special Traveller initiatives (some already gone and some being phased out soon).

T9e) While educational services have been terribly curtailed for the whole (Irish) community, Traveller Education initiatives have been completely wiped out.

D9 is characterised by a polemical attitude towards the three unnamed national Traveller organisations, whose national remit and representativeness is being challenged as noted in the section below. Despite an only implicit reference to them, it is clear from D9's internal references (their involvement in the consultative process for the Traveller Education Strategy) and from their long established role within Traveller politics that they are *Pavee Point*, the *ITM* and the *NTWF*.

D9 offers a negative portrayal of the allegedly undemocratic and manipulative practices of such organisations, i.e. negative other-presentation. This effect is obtained thematically by insisting on two complementary aspects of their ethnic pursuit: these organisations' stubborn and unilateral pursuit of their agenda allegedly behind the back of unaware Travellers and the lack of real debate on this important issue among Travellers themselves. These two aspects are included in over half of the topics, either individually or combined together: T1, T2, T5, T6 and T9c. This negative portrayal culminates in T9's assertion of the deleterious effects of these groups' practices, as exemplified by their advice for the Traveller Education Strategy (2006) regarding the phasing out of Senior Traveller Training Centres and the elimination of segregated educational provision for Travellers.

Furthermore, T8 and T9c suggest what Traveller organisations should concentrate on instead of pursuing ethnic recognition; this consists in focusing on the issues which are relevant for Travellers and advocating their requests. Hence, the previous set of topics (T1, T2, T5, T6 and T9c) is complementary with this second set (T8 and T9c) in the sense that the former highlights the problem within national Traveller organisations' practices whereas the latter prescribes correctives.

The final topic, T9, which takes over the last third of the text, holds these Traveller organisations responsible for the phasing out of Senior Traveller Training Centres and for the whole demise of special education for Travellers. Many details about this detrimental measure (T9a to T9e) are provided, thus suggesting a worrying precedent for what could happen if ethnic recognition was obtained. By drawing this parallel between a present negative policy change and a possible future one, he stresses the possible outcome if these organisations act unilaterally without consultation with

Travellers. The implicit message of this parallel is that if Travellers let them get away with it again, this newer initiative will elicit disastrous outcomes for the community.

This polemic over the phasing out of Traveller Training Centres and other segregated educational services (and its implied parallel with the ethnic contention) hints at another debate regarding the role of education and reveals diverging views between what he presents as a Traveller elite and "Travellers on the ground". To what extent should NGOs suggest and support policy changes that, irrespective of their underpinning rationality, are unpopular among the broader community, especially the most marginalised and disadvantaged strata? Alternatively, should national Traveller NGOs support services that are appreciated by the majority of Travellers even when they have founded reasons to believe that in the long run they might hamper Travellers' social integration and advancement within Irish society?

Martin Ward's view, as per D9, appears to be that Traveller organisations can be considered of national remit only if they establish consultation with their local bases and receive from these their mandate for their advocacy role vis-à-vis the Irish State. His prescriptive remark that they should pursue the policy issues that Travellers raise at local level instead of following their own agendas suggests that for Ward these NGOs are not doing so.

Given D9's overall polemical and delegitimising goals with regards to the main national Traveller organisations, the discussion of ethnicity itself is very marginal and left to the background. Indeed, it is only briefly touched upon within T4, where he mentions two reasons for his opposition to Travellers' ethnic categorisation.

While the first reason was already present within the previously examined documents, i.e. the rejection of ethnicity as another label, the second appears for the first time in D9. This is a more strategic consideration: at the moment the Republic of Ireland has not set up legal parameters for the recognition of ethnic groups, hence currently there are no ethnic groups legally recognised as such. The very recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority would determine the necessary recognition of all the other ethnic minorities living in the State, which are numerically larger than the Irish Traveller community. In this way the latter would proportionally lose out because affirmative action measures tend to be assigned in quotas, which usually depend on the size of each group. This argument demonstrates how for Ward the acceptance or rejection of the ethnic label should be guided by strategic considerations of what serves

the best interests of Travellers, in a historical line with past opponents of the ethnic route.

Instead of exploring the notion of ethnicity, Ward provides in D9 a picture of where the main NGOs and stakeholders stand: T1 refers to the three main national Traveller organisations, which are behind the ethnic quest; T2 addresses Travellers' general alienation from this pursuit; T3 refers to *NATC*' s recent discussion of this topic at ministerial level; T4 spells out his personal opposition to the introduction of the ethnic categorisation for Travellers; T5 mentions the position paper on the implications of Travellers' ethnic recognition commissioned by the minister Mary White and his related fears that it will be unreflective of Travellers' views; T6 and T7 provide information on the official positions taken by the other Traveller organisations he is involved in at national (T6) and local (T7) level.

T3 and T6 refer to *NATC*'s negotiations and still neutral position with regard to ethnic recognition, due to the needs for an internal debate. But why has *NATC* not discussed this issue yet with their local bases? Why have they waited so long without coming forward with an official policy statement on the important issue of Travellers' ethnic recognition? The possible clue to such delay comes from another document published roughly simultaneously as D9, *NATC*'s 2010 Annual Report: in the chairperson's foreword (p.2) Ward acknowledges the divergence of opinion and lengthy discussions on the issue of ethnic recognition between himself and the *NATC*'s vice-chairperson, Michael McDonagh, a long-date campaigner for Travellers' ethnic recognition and founding member of the *ITM*. Despite this discrepancy, he says, they have reached common grounds:

"While our personal opinion differs, we are *both in agreement* that firstly this is a decision that members of our community should be informed on *in a balanced and straight forward way*. Secondly how their opinion is informed *should not be driven by any organizational or individual belief*. I have *grave concerns* that *this may not happen in a balanced manner* as similar to the process of the Traveller Education Strategy"[emphases added].

This statement partially overlaps with some of the points made in D9: it similarly draws a parallel between the 'unbalanced' process of consultation that led to the phasing out of Traveller Training Centres and a possible similar path regarding the ethnic issue (T9). D9's preoccupation at the lack of "real debate" on ethnicity within the Traveller community resonates with this text's "grave concern" that "this may not happen in a balanced manner (…)", i.e. that "members of our community" might not be

informed "in a balanced and straightforward manner" but "their opinion" might "be driven by organizational or individuals' beliefs".

Another recent document, *Involve's* (new name for *NATC* since 2011) Strategic Plan 2011-2014, again stresses existing concerns about 'ordinary' Travellers being manipulated into the ethnic pursuit by the other national Traveller groups and about the lack of a national voice and visibility for Travellers who are not aligned with the current national Traveller groups). Especially at a time when "the issue of defining Traveller culture and identity has given rise to much debate, confusion and general misunderstanding" (*Involve*, 2011, 17), *Involve* intends to "actively promote opportunities for Travellers to participate in debate on identity issues in an atmosphere that generates the *honest* perspectives of Travellers" (*Involve*, 2011, 17)[emphasis added]. Indeed, *Involve* intends to "establish a forum that will facilitate the meetings of Travellers who currently do *not* have their voices heard on a national level [emphasis added]" (*Involve*, 2011, 15). Finally, it plans to develop a policy document with regards to Travellers being defined as an ethnic group (*Involve*, 2011, 19).

D9's repetitive use of the adjective "real" in tandem with "debate" or "discussion" as something missing is matched by *Involve*'s stated commitment to provide for Travellers a space for "honest" disclosures of their perspectives on their identity and on the ethnic dilemma. The juxtaposition of these two texts suggests that this organisation, or at least its chairperson and the management, regards as unreal, the kind of debate so far promoted by the other national Traveller organisations.

What is alleged is that Travellers have so far been denied the opportunity to honestly express their views with regards to the issue of ethnic recognition since they have not been involved in real consultation by those organisations and individual advocates of the ethnic route. Against such background it vindicates the existence of dissenting Travellers whose voices are currently not represented at a national level. For them a new forum is being established; in addition, *Involve* also plans to produce its own policy document on the topic of ethnicity.

Hence what kind of role does Ward envisage for *NATC*/*Involve* within Traveller identity politics? Can *NATC*/*Involve* be defined as a national Traveller representative organisation, given its specific (formal and informal) educational remit? What kind of challenges or obstacles does it face? This organisation has existed since the early 1970s and its primary areas of intervention were Travellers' vocational training, youth work and, since 1992, the production of the magazine *Voice of the Traveller*. Despite the fact

that Ward does not explicitly call it a national Traveller organisation, D9 contains implicit claims: for example, the information that *NATC* was involved in discussions on the issue of ethnic recognition at ministerial level, coupled with a subsequent reference to the "the other national groups" implies that *NATC* is a national Traveller group.

I believe that D9 anticipates the emergence of *NATC*/*Involve* as another competing subject within the scene of Traveller identity politics. Despite its more limited educational remit, it appears to move to challenge the national representativeness of the three main national Traveller organisations. This hypothesis is substantiated by other documentation published in the same period. For instance, Martin Ward's aforementioned foreword to the *NATC*'s 2010 Annual Report explicitly acknowledges such ongoing conflict by stating:

"(…) Our position as a National Traveller Organisation is continually challenged by a self-selected group of organisations and individuals whom [sic] perceive themselves as the sole representative of the Traveller Community in Ireland. I feel it is timely that after prolonged efforts to build relationships with them we should now invest our energies in setting out our vision for the future for Travellers in todays [sic] Ireland.
With our proposed new name and strategic plan we must now focus on our work ahead and *forge new partners* of similar thinking on that journey".

This passage signifies Ward's deep frustration at the failure of *NATC*'s attempts to engage as equal partners with the other national Traveller organisations as well as at the waste of time and energies ("after prolonged efforts"). These are accused of looking down on *NATC* and challenging its role as a Traveller national representative organisation.

In explicitly acknowledging this ongoing conflict with the other national Traveller organisations, this statement clearly marks a shift in *NATC*'s tactics, at least according to Ward. It represents the end of their mediation and negotiation phase with the other national Traveller groups and the beginning of a new approach: "the search for new partners of similar thinking on that journey". Probably the decisive factor for embarking on this new route was the irrevocable wiping out of *NATC*'s core vocational service, its nationwide training centres, on the input of the other national Traveller organisations. The main Traveller organisations did advocate such policy move. For instance, *Pavee Point*[90] produced a position paper on the Traveller Training Centres in February 2006 in which it called for the provision's total demise within a five-year time

[90] For further detail see Pavee Point (2006) *Position Paper on Senior Traveller Training Centres*.

span. The *ITM*[91] also expressed critical views on segregated education and on the uneven quality standards among various Training Centres nationwide.

Nonetheless, the Value for Money Review of Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres Programmes conducted by the Department of Education and Science made "a strong argument for the continued allocation of public funding" to Senior Traveller Training Centres for the next ten-fifteen years for adult Travellers aged eighteen and over (Department of Education and Science, 2008, 241). Interestingly, this review highlighted their effectiveness in recruiting adult learners (although with a gender unbalance) and in supporting "the development of soft skills and the acknowledgement and respect of Traveller culture" (Department of Education and Science, 2008, 240). Moreover, despite the significance of national Traveller groups' concerns with segregated provision for young and adult Travellers, these centres seemed to be still highly appreciated within large sections of the Traveller community and to serve a vital social and cultural function[92].

The contraposition between the main national Traveller representative organisations and *NATC*/*Involve* over the future of Traveller Education Centres presents a paradox: it appears that those organisations that advocate ethnic recognition for Travellers on the basis of their distinct culture and identity support the closure of these educational services despite their function as a fulcrum for the reproduction and reinforcement of Traveller identity and traditions and as a vital social outlet for the community. On the other hand, *NATC*/*Involve*, which has over many years committed itself through its educational centres to the perpetuation of Traveller culture and identity and the development of Travellers' self-esteem, is instead dubious on the ethnic pursuit.

The desired establishment of *NATC*/*Involve* as a stakeholder with regards to Traveller national policy issues is confirmed by the foreword of its 2011-1014 Strategic Plan, where James O'Leary, its chief executive officer, states that they "seek to ensure

[91] The *ITM* discusses diplomatically its role regarding the closure of Senior Traveller Training Centres. In its 2011 Position Paper on Cuts to Traveller Education, a document criticising the Irish State's dismantling of Special Traveller education, it states "while consultation took place with regard to the phasing out of Traveller Specific Training Centres there was no specific consultation regarding an exit strategy".

[92] In this regard, see Foley, M. 2008, An Evaluation of the role of Senior Traveller Training Centres (unpublished dissertation) Dublin Institute of Technology, available online at www.arrow.dit.ie/aaschssldis/23. After an assessment of these institutions' strengths and weaknesses, this study recognised their still vital function for the Traveller community, especially the older members and made an argument for the reinvention rather than the demise of STTC in line with changing needs of Travellers in contemporary society. Besides STTCs' weak aspects (i.e. low progression rates to further education or work) these institutions appeared to offer a crucial educational and social outlet for young and adult Travellers and a fulcrum of Traveller cultural reproduction and social support.

the strategic and sustained development of our youth services, Voice of the Traveller magazine and *our independent, informed stance on national issues* pertinent to the Irish Traveller Community [emphasis added]"(O'Leary, 2011, 1).

Though, *Involve*'s strategic plan combines criticism on the modalities of pursuit of the ethnic route with promotion of Traveller culture and identity in the singular mode. For example, its Strategic Aim 6, entitled "Traveller Culture and Identity", focuses both on promoting/supporting landmark projects that "effectively showcase the historical significance of Travellers in Irish society" and on developing an informed and representative policy on Travellers' definition as an ethnic group. The problematisation of the ethnic quest is coupled with a strong emphasis on Traveller cultural and social pride as a significant historical component of Irish society. The Strategic Plan suggests that *NATC*/*Involve* has some awareness of the plurality of coexisting identities within individuals: teenage and young person identities are acknowledged as deserving attention besides Traveller identity.

Semantic environment and lexical choice

The terms "ethnicity"/"ethnic" occur respectively three and two times within D9, even though they are both referred to an additional time, once through the use of the deictic pronoun "it" and the other time by means of the paraphrase "being recognised as such". The first occurrence of the expression "ethnic minority" is at the opening of D9 as the specification of the "agenda being pursued by three of the so-called National Traveller Organisations". This agenda is specified as being "to have Travellers identified as an ethnic minority". Hence, here Travellers' ethnic identification is presented as the pursued plan of these groups' political action rather than as a fact.

Indeed their agency is sustained by the use of the passive verb which renders the agenda of Travellers' ethnic identification the logical transitive object of actions attributable to "three of the so called National Traveller Organisations". On the other hand, ethnicity is presented as a word whose meaning is unknown to Travellers ("The majority of Travellers would, I believe, not have a clue what ethnicity means (…)"). It is also associated with varying combinations of the word "issue": namely, it is referred to as "an issue"; "an issue which is not raised at a local level"; "an important issue"; "an issue which is being forced on them without their consent". Furthermore, its contraposition to the "real issues" that the national Traveller organisations should instead deal with, such as "anti-social behaviour, accommodation, training and

employment", implies ethnicity's status of unreal, i.e. non-existent issue, hence a non-issue for Travellers at local level or at best only a minor one.

Otherwise, ethnicity is referred to as an object of discussion among various stakeholders over which there is no unified understanding: "We discussed the issue in relation to ethnicity and put different views across and individual positions were also discussed". Specifically, his personal position about ethnicity is that of opposition to this recognition for Travellers as it is "just another label" and also for its other detrimental implications. Finally, the last occurrence of ethnicity locates it as the transitive object of the *Western Traveller and Intercultural Development* action ("do not support").

In line with previous texts, D9 confirms Ward's passive understanding of ethnicity as an object of human action as opposed to the first set of data's articulation of it as an entity provided with agency and determining people's behaviour and identity. D9's insistence on the word "issue" points to its problematic aspect, i.e. the issue is the persisting intra-Traveller controversy over the ethnic pursuit and the application of such label to the Irish Traveller Community.

Throughout D9 the lexical choice is particularly dismissive of the three main national Traveller organisations and their practices. It appears to constitute a determining element in Ward's attempt to undermine such groups and challenge their role as major representatives of the Traveller community's views and expectations nationwide. While none of these NGOs is explicitly mentioned by name, the reference to their responsibility for advocating the closure of Senior Traveller Training Centres leaves no doubts on their identity. Such polemical attitude betrays a certain degree of exasperation and anger.

Delegitimising discursive strategies are present from the first line where these NGOs are referred to as "three of the *so-called* National Traveller Organisations" [emphasis added], so casting doubts on the validity of this designation. Throughout the text, Ward maintains this line of argument. For instance, stating that ethnicity is "an issue that is *not* raised at local level" [emphasis added] suggests that such groups are out-of-touch with their local bases since they pursue issues which have not been solicited by their local members. Towards the end of the text, in the context of the closure of Traveller Education Centres, he again makes a similar and complementary remark: "I also believe that these organisations should advocate *what Travellers want*, *not* be *running with their own agendas*" [emphases added]. He substantiates this

criticism by insisting on their lack of meaningful consultation with Travellers. This is obtained through the use of the attribute "real", twice in negative expressions ("without (…)") and associated respectively with the words "debate", and "say" and once in a positive expression regarding the "real issues" that the national Traveller organisations should instead deal with. Hence, the pursuit of Travellers' identification as an ethnic minority group is happening "without a *real* debate within the Traveller Community"; furthermore, Ward's "biggest concern" with regard to the ministerial position paper on the implications of Travellers' ethnic recognition is that "this could happen *without* members of the Traveller community having a *real say* on the issue, the other national groups have *not* had *any dialogue* with Travellers in relation to this important issue, they have *decided to plough ahead regardless*". Again, a few lines below, his accusation is even stronger: such Traveller groups have allegedly imposed the ethnic agenda on Travellers without their own consent. The local Traveller organisation he chairs, which, is unsupportive and wary of Travellers' ethnic recognition, "will inform local Travellers about this issue which is being *forced* on them *without their consent*".

Shortly his overall point is that locally based Travellers have not been given a chance to have a real say and to be involved in a real debate since the other national Traveller organisations have decided to force this issue on them, handling this issue in the same way as they did for the Traveller Education Strategy and the suggested closure of Traveller Training Centres and elimination of Special Traveller Education initiatives. On the contrary, "NATC currently have no position" with regards to Travellers' ethnic recognition since this debate still "*needs* to happen" [emphasis added]. The choice of the verb "need" stresses the fundamental role of debate for Ward, already affirmed in D8 ("I believe in debate"). What he implies here is that the official position of *NATC* will be based on a prior process of consultation with their local bases rather than preceding it. He implies that *NATC's* official position will be determined democratically. This short statement effectively establishes a contrast between the wrong procedures followed by the criticised other national Traveller organisations and the democratic approach preferred by the one that he himself chairs.

Construction of Irish Travellers

D9 offers a picture of the fractured landscape of Traveller identity politics. It contributes to the individuation of various organisational and institutional stakeholders with contrasting opinions on Travellers' ethnic recognition.

Overall D9 constructs a polarisation among centralised national Traveller organisations on the one side and "ordinary" local Travellers on the other: on the one pole are located Traveller intellectuals and activists who run the three main national Traveller NGOs whereas on the opposed pole stand a putative opponent represented by ordinary local Travellers, who, despite being unaware of these organisations' plans and unconcerned with their ethnic recognition, pay the price of the policy changes advocated by the aforementioned NGOs (e.g. the demise of Special Traveller Education Initiative and the demand for official ethnic recognition of the ethnic status to Travellers). Finally, D9 also suggests certain closeness between the settled and Traveller components of Irish society with its conclusive mention of "the whole community", meaning with this expression the entire Irish society: "In relation to education there have been terrible effects on *the whole community*, but Traveller Education initiatives have been completely wiped out". The attribute Irish seems to be taken for granted in this passage. Ward does not feel that he needs to specify what community he is talking about, despite the fact that the rest of the letter is exclusively focused on the Traveller community itself. This textual omission might indirectly confirm his inner belief in their reciprocal proximity, affirmed in the previously analysed data: they are not regarded as two self-sufficient and independent blocks but as two interrelated parts of the same close-knit national community.

Ideological construction and implied assumptions

As argued in the previous sections, D9 is underpinned by a delegitimising rationale with regards to the three established national Traveller NGOs. D9, by being a letter to the editor that was published in the *Tuam Herald*, works as a persuasive means to build consensus against Traveller ethnicity among the public. It represents the beginning of Ward's campaign to "inform local Travellers about this issue which is being forced on them without their consent". The delegitimation of the aforementioned national Traveller organisations is obtained by means of the overall strategy of negative other-presentation (which comprises two moves: the exposition of the negatives and hiding of the positives about them), coupled with the overcompleteness about their faults and incompleteness about their merits.

In the previous sections I have already listed many instances of these NGOs' negative portrayal and exaggeration of their faults. With regards to the incompleteness on their merits, D9 contains no mention of the fact that these organisations are also to

the forefront also in dealing effectively with the "real issues" represented by accommodation, health, education, employment, anti-social behaviour and so forth. Moreover, the local Traveller NGOs affiliated to the *ITM* did vote in favour of the *ITM*'s ethnicity campaign in occasion of the organisation's annual general meeting in 2008. Nonetheless, their demands for recognition began many years before the official ethnicity campaign was launched and criticism about the lack of dialogue with Travellers has come even from some pro ethnicity Travellers activists. In addition, my examination of D3 and D4 confirmed that they were geared more towards persuading Travellers to support the ethnic route rather than gathering their own personal views on this issue.

Moreover, D9 witnesses the existing tensions among Traveller activists and their respective organisations with regards to the allocation and management of public funding for policy initiatives. It might be possible that the aforementioned Traveller NGOs had hoped to redirect public funding withdrawn from the Senior Traveller Training Centres to what they perceived as better educational initiatives. This move of course would have elicited *NATC*'s defensive reaction and counterattack. Competition appears to exist also at the level of representativeness of the Traveller voice vis-à-vis the Irish State. *NATC*/*Involve* has begun to vindicate its own function of representation of 'ordinary' Travellers, including some of the most marginalised Travellers, who bear the worst effects of discrimination and exclusion and might lack the confidence to avail of mainstream educational services. The internal power play emerging from the examination of D9 confirms the existence of a plurality of Traveller voices within the Traveller community.

7.5. Comparison between past and present questioning of 'Traveller ethnicity'

Martin Ward's arguments against 'Traveller ethnicity' (D7 to D9) can now be collated with Mary Moriarty's stance of 1991 (D6) and other declarations/documents of that period produced by Mary Moriarty herself, the *NFITP* and other protagonists of that time such as Sister Colette Dwyer. This can reveal the existence of persisting themes that have underpinned Traveller internal opposition to ethnic categorisation for over two decades. It appears that many of these arguments overlap.

First, both past and present sources insist on the alienation of the majority of Travellers from the ethnic quest/self-definition and on this basis challenge the

legitimacy and representativeness of the Traveller national NGOs' pursuit of the ethnic route as their top priority.

Second, both Traveller spokespeople contrastively point to Travellers' prioritisation of other concrete issues such as accommodation, education, discrimination and so on.

Third, both affirm Travellers' centrality and agency in their self-definition while directly or indirectly suggesting that the pursuit of Travellers' ethnic recognition constitutes a settled agenda externally imposed on Travellers.

Fourth, both question ethnicity as a further "label" because of its irrelevance for Travellers, its presumed meaning of 'racial otherness', which allegedly clashes with Travellers' Irishness, and because of its feared negative implications of increasing social separation between Travellers and settled people. Simultaneously, they are instrumental in their evaluation of the ethnic route: it would be worth being pursued only if proven to be beneficial to their rights. As noted in the analysis of D6, the divisive issue of 'Traveller ethnicity' is touched upon in three of the topics, respectively T4, T5 and T6. The *NFITP's* argument does not limit to call for a scientific scholarly proof of the application of such a contended notion to Travellers but also insists that it should be instrumental to the full achievement of Travellers' rights. In other words the contention is not so much about knowledge per se but about its strategic function in Traveller politics, its utility for a practical and political goal, namely the advancement of Travellers' rights to accommodation, education, employment and an end to their discrimination. The *NFITP* precisely questions the *ITM*'s core argument that "the solution to all our many problems will come" from ethnicity.

Furthermore, the consultation of additional documents of that time confirmed their conflation between 'ethnic' and non-Irish and/or 'racially other' as a coexisting factor at the roots of Traveller opposition to the ethnic label, together with the belief in Traveller/settled closeness by virtue of their common Irish background. This highly resonates with Ward's conviction that Irish people, Traveller and settled alike, are ethnic abroad but not at home and that Travellers' attitudes are "Irish through and through".

Fifth, the two spokespeople fully diverge only on one account: the scientific verifiability of Travellers' ethnicity; whereas Moriarty, in line with the *NFITP*'s position, believed that scholarly research on Travellers' origins could confirm or confute their ethnicity, Ward firmly maintains that Travellers' categorisation pertains to

the realm of the subjective, discursive and political and hence does not warrant scientific validation.

Sixth, similarly to Ward's stance, Moriarty and the *NFITP*'s discursive questioning of 'Traveller ethnicity' does not imply a denial of their distinctive culture and traditions or a negation of their strong sense of collective Traveller identity. On the contrary, the importance attributed by Travellers to their sense of collective identity appears to be strongly reasserted. The internal quarrel appears to concern the construction and labelling of such collective Traveller identity.

Seventh, despite the time gap (nearly twenty years), a recurring pattern among the anti-ethnicity advocates is identifiable. This consists of the association of opposition to the ethnic status with a more conciliatory approach towards State's institutions and dominant Irish society. This is exemplified by a rejection of "aggression and militancy", such as per Moriarty, and a belief in challenging discrimination "discreetly" as per Martin Ward.

This comparative assessment confirms a high convergence between past and present questioning of the ethnic route from within the Travelling community. Hence it can be argued that the Traveller internal opposition to their ethnic categorisation has persisted despite the collapse of its national representative organisation, the *NFITP*, in the mid to late 1990s. Yet, it had probably remained under cover until a few years ago.

Nonetheless, the recent successes of the pro ethnicity advocates, especially in the aftermath of the launch of the *ITM*'s ethnicity campaign, might have elicited the public resurfacing of this never extinguished internal opposition. In recent years Martin Ward has emerged as the main spokesperson of such opposition allegedly shared among 'ordinary' Travellers, by means of his public statements in the Irish media and active involvement in such debate vis-à-vis the Traveller representatives from the main national Traveller NGOs and within various State's institutional arenas. However, there are reasons to believe that a more structured collective opposition is being prepared, which might count on some locally based organisations such as the Tuam's *Western Traveller Intercultural and Development Association*. What is not clear is how well these views resonate with those of other Traveller groups.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

8.1. Key insights from this study

Strongly grounded in critical foundations, this study explored the controversy over Irish Travellers' ethnic recognition in the Republic of Ireland from a previously under-explored angle. In developing my analysis, I benefited from academic and activist commentaries on the illegitimacy, anomalousness and culturally genocidal tendencies inherent in the Irish State's continuing denial of the ethnic status of Travellers.

However, I shifted my attention onto a different aspect of this contest about 'Traveller ethnicity': the debate that is occurring within the Traveller community itself. Focusing on documents generated by Traveller organisations and activists, I explored the intra-Traveller debate through the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. In this way my research put Travellers who are on different sides centre stage, examining their respective contributions and the complementarity of their insights in highlighting the strengths and limitations of 'ethnicity claims-making' as a strategy towards equality. The central question of this research was how 'Traveller ethnicity' is variously constructed by Traveller advocates and opponents of its official recognition and with what potential implications for Traveller politics, policies and identities.

This study revealed that 'Traveller ethnicity' has been internally contested within the Travelling community as both a notion and a political strategy since its first introduction on the scene of Traveller mobilisation in the early 1980s. Furthermore, the contention over 'Traveller ethnicity' was found to involve other broader correlated aspects such as issues of leadership, representativeness and geo-political and socio-cultural divisions among Travellers in Ireland.

8.1.1. Attribution of different meanings to ethnicity

The contention on 'Traveller ethnicity' emerges as being anchored in the attribution of different meanings to the notion of ethnicity itself by the contending sides. Through textual examination I ascertained that in campaigning for ethnic recognition Traveller advocates adopt an understanding that is strongly influenced by formulations elaborated within the international human rights discursive framework. Ethnic status, by being enshrined in law, is simultaneously a source of benefit, tension and potential limitation. Accordingly, these organisations' practices are apposite and underpinned by

a logical rationale as they seek to maximise the legal, symbolic and material advantages deriving from this internationally established legal category. Furthermore, this rights framework functions in a culturally transformative way since it conditions their attitudes to Irish dominant culture and Traveller culture according to their compliance with human rights principles. Thus, the preservation of Traveller 'traditional' culture is being rhetorically sustained and practically pursued by these organisations but only to the extent that it does not clash with equality and rights.

On the other hand, pro 'Traveller ethnicity' discourses present essentialised, reified and reductively determinist definitions of 'Traveller ethnicity' and culture as well as a binary polarisation of Traveller and "Settled people" as two culturally different and independent ethnic groups within Irish society. 'Traveller ethnicity' and culture are matched with the criteria for ethnic status recognition. As an international legal category, anchored in traditional anthropological studies, this conception of ethnicity necessarily entails a degree of essentialisation, reification and naturalisation. Accordingly, within the first set of data ethnicity is cast as an active entity that determines Travellers from outside ("Ethnicity is what makes you; YOU" as per D3 and D4) and as a scientific fact that can be objectively proven through a schematic checklist of essential characteristics, that Travellers are shown to match. As a result D3 and D4 tend to portray Travellers as a compact and homogeneous group sharing the same beliefs, values and way of life; one that is juxtaposed to the equally compact and homogeneous group of "Settled people". Similarly, D1 and D2 concur in conveying the image of a coherent politically active community, unanimous in its prioritisation of ethnicity and its demands for official ethnic recognition. D5 reproduces a similar scenario by stating that 'Traveller ethnicity', i.e. Traveller identity and way of life, shapes the needs of Travellers as well as insisting on phenomena of Travellers' inheritance from birth into the community and generational cultural continuity without accounting for simultaneous phenomena of cultural contestation, plurality and change.

Furthermore, I noted that a conflation occurred between the legal category of ethnic status and the theoretical sociological and anthropological notion of ethnicity, thus transferring to the latter the reifying and essentialising aspects characteristic of the former. Critical theorists (e.g Brubaker, 2004; Bulmer and Solomos, 1998; Gilroy, 1993; Hall 1992/1996/2001; Fenton, 1999/2010; Jenkins, 1999; Parekh, 2008; Philips, 2007) question ethnicity's status as an objective entity and as a fixed property of neatly divided human groupings. Such critical formulations regard it as a socially constructed,

historically grounded, dynamic, relational and transactional process of identification on the basis of perceived groups' similarity and difference, as well as a potent social and political resource for racialised and oppressed groups to be availed of in their struggles for emancipation and equality. In this light, the ethnicity advocates' conflation and overlap between the legal category and the theoretical notion is problematic in so far as it tends to deprive dissenting Travellers (and Travellers in general) of their agency and choice in self-identifying as ethnic. In this way it implicitly renders ethnicity akin to 'race' with its determinist and reductionist legacy.

Specifically, the *ITM*'s 'Traveller ethnicity' material (D3 and D4) marks a step towards the ideological naturalisation of 'Traveller ethnicity' as a self-evident 'fact' and away from past conceptualisations which included elements of choice within Travellers' definition as "ethnic". In turn, *Minceirs Whiden*'s policy document (D5) goes even further. It not only denies Travellers' choice over their ethnicity but also refuses to acknowledge the political and instrumental dimension of ethnicity when it states "ethnicity is not a political tool to secure human rights from the state (…)".

Instead, early advocates of Travellers' ethnic recognition did acknowledge the political component of choice in Travellers' pursuit of ethnic status. For instance, O'Connell (1994, 112) pointed to the social constructedness of ethnicity and recognised an element of choice in it, even though he insisted that ethnicity was not only about that:

> "It is through the processes of interaction with other cultural groups, whereby certain features are interpreted as giving a group its identity, that ethnicity is *constructed*. (…) While acknowledging that there is a *subjective dimension* in recognising one's distinctive identity as different from that of others, as well as an *objective process* whereby others select traits which form the basis of differentiation, ethnicity is *not just* a matter of *personal choice*."[emphasis added]

Kenny (1992, 28) regarded identity as a dynamic process of working out, making choices, individually and collectively, rather than a thing passively inherited and passed on from one generation to the next as per *Minceirs Whiden*'s policy statement. In this regard consider her statement:

> "To say that Travellers are a nomadic ethnic group with the right to travel if they wish (…) is just to accord this group their right to cultural space within which they can *work out* their identity and within which to *make choices*, individually, as families or collectively. Unless they can take pride in that cultural space the *choices* will be damaged."[emphasis added]

On the other hand, this contrast between natural fact and choice finds some interesting parallels in debates about homosexuality: some activists fear more fluid definitions of

sexuality on the ground that choice is equivalent to lifestyle which is perceived as having less value than an identity that is given or pre-ordained.

However, *Minceirs Whiden*'s discursive move could be also interpreted as a political strategy in itself, aimed at reinforcing advocates' claims for official ethnic recognition. The issue with it is that the circulation of pro 'Traveller ethnicity' discourses also has potentially constitutive consequences for Travellers' constructions of themselves, for their relations with mainstream society and for the formulation of public policies. Overall, by strategically adopting the discourses of ethnicity and culture formulated within the international human rights arenas, pro 'Traveller ethnicity' campaigners risk naturalising a static and homogeneous version of what is a historically acquired and internally plural and contested identity, thus incurring slippage from strategic claims to ontological constitutive effects. This move is facilitated not only by the existing specific cultural traditions but also by the widespread practice of anti-Traveller racism, which renders 'Traveller ethnicity' painfully real for Travellers in their everyday experience. In this regard, Hall's paradox on the impossibility and necessity of ethnicity (see Chapter Two, Section 2.11) seems to offer insight on Irish Travellers' predicament.

The analysis of the pro 'Traveller ethnicity' data also suggested conflation and overlap between 'Traveller ethnicity', culture and identity so that the three expressions are often used interchangeably. This conflation tends to reductively collapse the various dimensions of collective and individual identities into the ethnic one, overlooking the plurality, fluidity and situationality of identification processes, while assigning agency to reified entities and simultaneously depriving Travellers themselves of agency.

Furthermore, pro ethnicity advocates' construction of 'Traveller ethnicity' and culture is characterised by a rhetorical bias towards their collective difference so that similarities and interconnections between Travellers and non-Travellers within Irish society are backgrounded. Despite this, comparative assessment of other material produced by the *ITM* and *Minceirs Whiden*'s extensive acknowledgement of the internal heterogeneity characterising the Travelling community suggests that their essentialism and reification of 'Traveller ethnicity' and culture might be strategic. Nonetheless, during the analysis it was observed that D5 displays some tension between the acknowledgement of the existence of internally diverse needs among Travellers and the attribution of agency to ethnicity and culture in shaping the needs of the Travelling community. In fact, while the first refers to internal diversity with regard to Travellers'

needs, the latter instead hints at homogeneity of needs among Travellers since they are allegedly shaped by their shared culture and identity, which are in turn equated with their ethnicity.

Notwithstanding the strategic rhetorical focus on Traveller cultural continuity, Traveller activists' political practice itself provides concrete proof of their culturally transformative and emancipatory contribution to Irish society in general and to the Travelling community in particular: by adopting the equality and human rights framework as underpinning principles of their politics, they act as catalysts for cultural social change geared towards the diffusion of a culture of acceptance and valorisation of diversity and respect for subaltern minority groups both within broader Irish society and within the Travelling community itself.

On the other hand, Traveller opponents of ethnic recognition regard ethnicity as an optional "label", whose scientific objectivity is yet to be proven (as per D6) or contested (as per D7 to D9), whose meanings are multiple and variable, and whose adoption or rejection should be decided upon by all Travellers through an open and democratic debate. Their wariness of labels is understandable for a racialised group who has been already ascribed a chain of stereotypical negative characteristics. The fear persists that, once the collective label is widely accepted, it will be open to abuse and attach to Travellers additional stigmatising racialised connotations.

The diachronical problematisation of ethnicity within Traveller politics assumes a strongly instrumental connotation in both its first historical manifestation between the 1980s and 1990s and its most recent one. In fact, there is a consistency across this second set of data in stating that Travellers' collective choice in adopting or rejecting the ethnic label should be justified by its effectiveness in serving Travellers' interests and assisting them in the quest for equality and rights. In so doing, they seem not only to implicitly adopt a socio-constructionist subjective understanding of 'Traveller ethnicity', which stresses human agency and dialogical collective self-identification, but also to recognise its political and instrumental valence.

The statements by Martin Ward do not present a theoretical definition of ethnicity. Instead, he contends that its theoretical complexity and the coexistence of multiple competing definitions renders it distant and uninteresting for the majority of Travellers and, he contends, allegedly alien to their concrete everyday problems. Accordingly, ethnicity is a non-issue and is regarded as such by the majority of

Travellers in comparison with the more important, concrete and real concerns affecting their lives.

In addition, ethnicity is opposed for its assumed meaning of total difference, which does not do justice to the "awful lot of similarities between the Traveller community and the settled community"[93]. Pro 'Traveller ethnicity' advocates' discursive bias towards Travellers' difference, though perhaps strategic and rhetorical, and the consequent understatement of the many commonalities between Irish Travellers and the majority Irish population is taken at face value, and feared, for its potential in reinforcing Travellers' social distance, isolation and exclusion from the majority Irish population.

Nonetheless, the "ethnic" attribution appears to be rejected also because of its presumed equation with 'racial' and non-Irish and its association with otherness and deviance in popular use. The data analysed in Chapter Seven appears to posit "ethnic" and "Irish" as mutually exclusive, or at least to see in the ethnic characterisation a weakening of Travellers' 'true' Irish heritage and roots. Particularly the analysis of D8 demonstrates how easily the discussion of ethnicity can slip onto the murky terrain of 'racial' differences and national belonging when the presumed meaning of ethnicity is tainted with racial and nationalist undertones. Ward's rejection of the ethnic categorisation appears to be animated by an attachment to communal Irish roots and a desire to protect them from external (commonplace racist discourses demanding the denial of Irish citizenship to Travellers) and internal attacks ('Traveller ethnicity' advocacy's discursive insistence on Travellers' collective difference and independence). His determined defence of Travellers' 'authentic' Irishness is also set against the backdrop of other Irish people "who would prefer if we were not recognised as true Irish". Interestingly, the language of cultural protection that ethnicity advocates apply to the preservation of the Traveller heritage is used by Ward with reference to Travellers' Irish roots.

Despite its problematisation of Travellers' identification as an ethnic minority, the second set of data still refers to Travellers as "a people", a "cultural group" and as a "national minority", whose cultural specificities and traditions are proudly valued and celebrated by opponents of the ethnic route. Hence, in this regard pro and anti ethnicity advocates occupy common ground.

[93] See *The Irish Times*, 'Traveller Irish or Irish Traveller', 31/03/2009.

The elusiveness and fluctuation of the notion of ethnicity, considered at length in Chapter Two, appear to be confirmed by the textual examination carried out in this study. Ethnicity is confirmed as having a dialectical potential by functioning both as a means for emancipation and self-fulfilment but also standing on uncertain and dangerous terrain, given its elusive character. Its contiguity and overlap with 'race' in both popular and official discourse, its conflation or association with culture in an unclear relationship and, finally, the essentialisation, reification and racialisation of both notions, once they are invoked in discourses, must not be underestimated in their reactionary potential.

Nonetheless, the critical and deconstructive approaches, which were presented in Chapter Two, seem to indicate a possible way around the impasse entailed by the constitutive dangers of identity politics, while retaining its significant strengths. This can be achieved by embracing a new strategic identity politics (Parekh, 2008), a sort of "multiculturalism without culture" (Philips, 2007), anchored in critical analysis and awareness of the dangers and strengths of identity-based politics, which, to borrow from Hall (1992, 254-255), works "with and through difference", and which thereby defines itself through "dialogue, and dissent, debate and disagreement", so reflecting the internal diversity of the putative groups. Theoretical supporters of this new critical identity politics, which is close to the strategic essentialism advocated by some feminists, include Calhoun (1995), Hall (1992/1996/2001), Parekh (2008) and Philips (2007). Calhoun (1995, 204) has also insisted on the possibility of transcending the divide between essentialism and deconstructionism by simultaneously deconstructing and claiming identities. Although this combined operation constitutes a source of tension, it might be necessary that the two approaches always coexist (Calhoun, 1995, 204). His view is extensively quoted below:

> "Our task must be to remain seriously self-critical about our invocations of essence and identity. This means among other things paying attention to the agonistic, fractured, problematic aspects of identity. (…) The struggles occasioned by identity politics need to be understood, however, not as simply between those who claim different identities but within each subject as the multiple and contending discourses of our era challenge any of our efforts to attain stable self-recognition or coherent subjectivity." (Calhoun, 1995, 204)

8.1.2. 'Traveller ethnicity' questioned as an effective political strategy

'Traveller ethnicity' is also debated among Travellers in terms of its effectiveness as a political strategy for Travellers' equality in Irish society. In this regard the two Traveller sides have diametrically opposed views.

On the one hand, the pro 'Traveller ethnicity' material examined in Chapter Six concurs in presenting Travellers' ethnic recognition as a necessary precondition for emancipatory change in Irish society. Hence, it is pursued as the most effective political strategy for Travellers' equality and human rights. It is seen as constituting a precious instrument with which to legally challenge anti-Traveller discrimination and as having exclusively beneficial symbolic and practical consequences. These would include the legitimation and valorisation of Travellers and their culture within Irish society; their representation within the Irish political system; affirmative action measures in terms of cultural protection, education, employment and so on. Equally, any potential drawbacks highlighted by Traveller opponents are denied tout court.

On the other hand, Chapter Seven's textual examination clearly indicates that 'Traveller ethnicity' is strongly opposed as a political strategy due to its presumed ineffectiveness in Travellers' quest for equality. While D6 and D7 cast doubts in this regard, D8 and D9 are more direct in presenting ethnicity as detrimental for Travellers by simultaneously questioning its benefits while asserting its negative drawbacks. In fact it is described as having no guaranteed positive effects while potentially constituting another stigmatising label of Otherness and increasing the social separation between Travellers and non-Travellers and the latter's hostility towards the former. Finally, Ward also pragmatically considers the proportionally small size of the Traveller community vis-à-vis other larger minorities in Ireland and suggests that Travellers' ethnic recognition would elicit the recognition of these other groups too. In this way Travellers could be disadvantaged in comparative terms with respect to distribution of resources and affirmative action measures among the various ethnic groups.

8.1.3. Broader power struggles behind the contest on 'Traveller ethnicity'

Apart from divergence over the meanings attached to ethnicity and over its effectiveness as an emancipatory strategy, the analytical chapters suggest that the intra-Traveller contention over 'Traveller ethnicity' might be symptomatic of broader long-lasting power struggles between distinct Traveller organisations and their prominent activists. These struggles concern leadership of Travellers and their representative mandate vis-à-vis the Irish State and its institutions. At stake are their respective influence over State policies and also, equally important, the adjudication of financial resources.

The findings also suggest that 'Traveller ethnicity' support for, and opposition to, 'Traveller ethnicity' has historically emerged and been clustered around specific geo-political nodes. Pro ethnicity campaigners initially centred in the Dublin-Navan area and expanded nationwide with the diffusion of *ITM* membership among local Traveller organisations. Opponents seem to have had their organisational focal point in Tuam, even though they initially extended their influence over the national territory where the *NFITP* had capillary diffusion.

This divide seems also to follow socio-economic and politico-cultural axes, at least according to Ward's assertions. If so, pro ethnicity advocates would be represented by politicised intellectual and professional Traveller elites, whereas opponents would be found mainly among "Travellers on the ground"/"ordinary Travellers", whom Martin Ward claims to represent.

8.1.4. Contest as reflective of different approaches to Travellers

This study indicates that intra-Traveller tensions over ethnic recognition tend to be part of, and reflecting of, ongoing tensions with regard to their favoured organisational strategies and approaches to working with Travellers. Such tensions relate to different styles of engagement with Travellers -charitable and case-based vs. professional, community development and human rights; varying attitudes towards State institutions and the majority population -conciliatory vs. oppositional- and choices regarding social policies and services -in favour vs. against the maintenance of Traveller Training Centres. Chapter Four's historical overview of Traveller politics in Ireland, Chapter Seven's textual examination and the assessment of additional documents from the past three decades indicate that a divide within the field of Traveller political mobilisation emerged in the 1980s and was never fully overcome. In particular, the comparative analysis of D6 and D7 to D9 demonstrates a certain continuity of discourses between the *NFITP*'s oppositional stance in the early 1990s and Martin Ward's recent positions. It does not seem to be merely coincidental that the only long-lasting organisation that survived the collapse of the *NCTP*, i.e. the *NATC*/ *Involve* (founded in 1976), neutral, so far, over the ethnic controversy, has recently been mooted as an alternative forum for Travellers, whose views are currently not reflected by the official positions taken by the triumvirate of *Pavee Point*, the *ITM* and the *NTWF* (see analysis of D9).

Textual examination carried out in Chapters Six and Seven suggests that both sides tend to ideologically exaggerate the extent of Travellers' agreement with their particular positions and strategies. While D1, D2 and D5 insist on Travellers' unanimous and democratic decision-making in demanding ethnic recognition and set ethnicity as the core priority for all members, D6, D7, D8 and D9 contain contrasting assertions on the disinterest, ignorance of and indifference to ethnicity on behalf of the majority of Travellers. Hence, the 'truth' lies probably somewhere in between, confirming that Travellers are a heterogeneous group and they have various and partially diverging and contrasting views on the issues that affect them.

It is also likely that pro 'Traveller ethnicity' discourses and oppositional ones have reciprocally influenced one another. This phenomenon may have contributed to creating on both sides understandings of Travellers' identity which simultaneously acknowledge, though to varying degrees, not only their cultural specificity and distinctive collective identity but also their Irishness. Moreover, their reciprocal criticism of being dominated by settled people seems to be pushing both sides within Traveller politics towards carving out a more central role for Travellers themselves, to seek their active participation, involvement in and assertiveness of their own collective self-definition. In this sense, the current impasse could be beneficial and open the way for a new future for Traveller politics: one in which influence and power move from the hands of a limited number of Traveller and non-Traveller activists, professionals, intellectuals and academics, to become shared in a more democratic, dialogic and participatory way within the broader community.

8.1.5. Significance of Irishness and Traveller identity for Travellers

Overall most of the selected data, directly (in D6 to D10) or indirectly (in D3 and D4) suggests Travellers' simultaneous allegiance and attachment to both their Traveller and Irish identities. This is also confirmed by the two other events referred to in Chapter One, which stressed the symbolic importance attached to flags.

Textual analysis indicates that the strategic rhetoric of Travellers' cultural difference and independence can assume undertones of social separation that appear to be problematic for some Irish Travellers. Specifically, it clashes with their conviction of the deep historical connections and closeness between Travellers and 'settled' people as two variants within the same united community. This conviction entails that not only Travellers belong to Ireland and Ireland belong to Travellers, but also that Travellers

and ‘settled’ people belong to one another as the inseparable constitutive components of Irishness. Hence, the ethnic characterisation seems to be questioned for its potential pushing of Travellers under a solitary and single label (this expression was used in a *Facebook* conversation), obscuring communality and closeness and further erasing their individualities as persons. This view appears to signify a high degree of reconciliation between Travellers and Irish identities for some Travellers.

This study also indicates that, similar to other racialised and discriminated against groups, Travellers’ sense of identity carries deep traces of their historically rooted experience of inferiorisation, discrimination and exclusion. Within Traveller politics, both the demand for ethnic recognition and the opposition to it among Travellers plausibly stem from and constitute two opposite responses to the same long historical process of Traveller inferiorisation, racialisation, and subjection to a combination of assimilatory policies with exclusionary practices. On the one hand, advocates of ‘Traveller ethnicity’ have embraced this notion in response to assimilatory tendencies by proudly stressing their positive collective difference, the value of their cultural traditions and by demanding their recognition and protection through the conferral of ethnic status.

On the other, opponents of ‘Traveller ethnicity’ have resisted their racist Othering and exclusion from Irish society by reclaiming their historical contribution to the very roots of Irishness while rejecting ethnicity as a stigmatising label of Otherness perpetuating their binary opposition to the Irish majority population.

In turn, the various tendencies which prevailed in subsequent phases of Traveller mobilisation have inevitably influenced individual Travellers’ self-understandings and constructions of their identities and life scripts in a dialectic of colonisation and appropriation with different possible combinations. The closeness to Irish people and attachment to their Irishness of some Travellers might come from personal experience and might also have been influenced by the discourses on their brotherhood disseminated by the volunteers within the *Itinerant Settlement Movement*. In turn, their discovered closeness with other nomadic people in Europe and the world is influenced by the discourse of ethnicity promoted by the advocates of Travellers’ ethnic recognition. The following statement by Fay (1992, 52) is revealing in this regard:

“Travellers *would* see *many differences* between themselves and Gypsies however an increasing number are looking beyond the image they may have of Gypsies eating snails or having several wives to the fact that Gypsies are also discriminated against in the same variety of ways that Travellers are. It is *only now* that Travellers are making links with Gypsy groups and focussing on the fact that they have *more* in

common with *Gypsies than* they have with *settled people*. The links with Gypsies and an appreciation of Gypsy history and heritage is being positively promoted in a variety of ways e.g. through *some training programmes* and *courses* and *events* organised by the Traveller Women's Forum." [emphasis added]

8.2. CDA's contribution to the interpretation of this debate

The adoption of the Critical Discourse Analytical framework permitted me to interpret this intra-Traveller contest on 'Traveller ethnicity' as an ongoing ideological struggle within the Travelling community, particularly between distinct national Traveller organisations and their affiliated activists, over the definition of their collective identity(-ies) and their wider relationships, as well as over the choice of appropriate policy measures to meet their collective needs.

Specifically, the discourse of 'Traveller ethnicity' as *ITM*, *Pavee Point,* the *NTWF*, and, more recently, by *Minceirs Whiden*, appears to have achieved some momentum within an ongoing ideological struggle for its naturalisation as a commonsensical and self-evident 'fact'. Nonetheless, despite their apparent advantage, the battle is not yet fully won, either vis-à-vis the Traveller contenders or the Irish State. With regard to more recent developments, I drew attention to the evolving role of the national Traveller organisation *Involve* (formerly *NATC*) as a future forum for debate among Travellers whose views on their collective identity are currently not reflected by the other national Traveller NGOs.

But, as for any ideological struggle, even in this case contending discourses on 'Traveller ethnicity' are sites of power struggles whose stakes are not only words but reach beyond words. Specifically, these discourses seem to enact intra-Traveller struggles over power and resources. Hence, at stake is also the internal exercise of power, articulated as leadership over the heterogeneous Traveller community and as representativeness vis-à-vis the State; the adjudication of resources; the adoption of certain policy approaches over others; and finally the consolidation of certain subject positions for individual Travellers to draw upon as life scripts.

The theoretical consideration of discourse as simultaneously a product of social structures and a co-productive factor of social life (rather than mere medium of communication) has potential implications for the exploration of the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity'. This theoretical assumption allowed me to explore these discourses as communicative interactions occurring within a specific Irish historical context, where they are simultaneously shaped and influenced by long-term unequal Traveller-oppressive social relations of power on the one hand, and involved in their

change, on the other. It also permitted me to connect this Irish-specific instance of a minority's struggle for recognition to a broader network of social practices and institutions (and their discourses), which include identity-based mobilisation and international human rights fora, such as the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. In this regard, it highlighted the appropriation, by Irish Traveller NGOs, of human rights discourses on ethnicity and culture formulated within the aforementioned international bodies and these discourses' potential impact on public policies dealing with Traveller issues, Travellers' collective and individual identity construction and relations with mainstream Irish society.

Thus, the 'Traveller ethnicity' discourse variously intercepts with Travellers' material activities, mental phenomena and social relations and processes at various levels. The recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group involves not only the representational level: the consolidation of a particular construction of Traveller collective identity, culture and needs as different, distinct and independent of mainstream Irish society. Potential implications of 'Traveller ethnicity' also pertain to Travellers' "ways of acting" and "ways of being", according to Fairclough's (2003) tripartite characterisation of discourses and assertion of their co-constitutive role in social reality. Indeed, the discourse of 'Traveller ethnicity' is acted out against State assimilatory discourses and practices in an attempt to legitimise Travellers' traditions such as nomadism, the Traveller economy, relevance of family ties and so on. In this sense, it constitutes an act of resistance and self-assertion by certain Travellers and their representative organisations. Furthermore, its recognition is regarded as providing Travellers with an additional legal tool with which to defend themselves against racism and discrimination. At the same time it is lived by other Travellers as an act of imposition forced upon them by pro ethnicity advocates. In this sense 'Traveller ethnicity' is contested within the Travelling community by those Travellers who perceive ethnicity as a stigmatising label, a discourse that acts negatively upon them. Accordingly, it is regarded by Traveller opponents as having counterproductive effects on their lives: increasing the social distance between the sedentary and Traveller components of Irish society by marking them out as "totally different" and obscuring their reciprocal commonalities and connections, hence feeding Irish society's hostility and providing a narrative of victimhood for Travellers.

In turn, at the micro level, individual Travellers, to various extents, engage with such discourses for and against 'Traveller ethnicity' in a dialectic of appropriation and

colonisation so that these discourses ultimately impact on their ways of being, acting and representing, individually and collectively, as well as on their relations with mainstream society and, conversely, also on attitudes towards Travellers within mainstream society.

8.3. Location of this study vis-à-vis dominant trends in research on 'Traveller ethnicity'

By choosing to examine the intra-Traveller debate on 'Traveller ethnicity' I defied the dominant trend in academic and policy research on this topic, which tends to overlook disagreements among Travellers themselves on the issue. As I previously acknowledged, scholarly consensus in sidestepping this intra-Traveller controversy is motivated by progressive intentions: the will to side with demands for Travellers' public recognition, rights and emancipation within Irish society. This is coupled with the acceptance of the view that such progress is dependent largely, or exclusively, upon the recognition of Travellers' ethnic status, especially in an international context where this legal category has been established as a compensatory measure for groups historically and structurally subjected to racial discrimination and oppression. Hence, Irish academic commentators usually identify with Traveller advocates of ethnicity because the latter are demanding a legal status they are entitled to and which should function as a legal resource against discrimination and as leverage for affirmative action policies.

Yet, in other European countries where such status has been recognised there are some warnings about the dangerous implications of the ethnicisation of minorities within EU legislation. For instance, the recent escalation of ultranationalist violent attacks on Bulgarian Roma in Bulgaria has been explained by some sociological studies as being rooted in the European context of a widespread reinforcement of culturalist discourses, exemplified, at EU level, by the establishment of the ethnic category and, at national level, by the official adoption of education, health and cultural policies that privilege the ethnic over the social[94].

Furthermore, there are documented instances of Roma activists reflexively discussing their own roles in socially constructing Roma collective identities and acknowledging the potentially ambivalent implications of their practices. For example, Gheorgie (1999, 157-163) insists that the new stratum of Romani intellectuals like himself should be the subject of scholarly investigation and research in order to evaluate

[94] In this regard see Cécile Canut (2011) 'La voie périlleuse de l'ethnicitation des Roms en Bulgarie' (11/10/2011) in *Le Monde* (14/11/2011).

the outcomes of their involvement in the ethnogenesis of Roma identity, i.e. the process of transformation from a stigmatised social identity into a legitimised cultural ethno-political one:

> "It is clear to me that I do play with my own identities. Sometimes I am a sociologist travestying a Gypsy, sometimes a Gypsy travestying a sociologist –so I play with it, so people are playing with their identities all the time; that capability is part of the resources with which we meet necessities. (…) When we play with these identities, institutions, resources and so on (…) it is clear that we are in a process of ethnicity building similar to that termed in political science 'nation building'. This constructed identity is a crutch, a political crutch. We are trying to build now a political identity of being Roma, being Gypsy, working with political institutions. (…) I am associated with them [Gypsy entrepreneurs] in their political activism although I have my own criticisms of this kind of actor, criticisms rooted in the tradition of university academic life but also fuelled by the tensions found in the politics itself (…)".

He also expresses his decreasing satisfaction with the strategic language of affirmation, adopted since the 1960s-1970s, which he views as being based on the "ritualistic presentation and interpretation of history only from the point of view of discrimination and victimisation". Gheorgie (1999) contends that this constitutes part of the reality, but not all of it.

In the Irish context, those who problematise the ethnic route and/or reveal the intra-Traveller disagreement over 'Traveller ethnicity' typically risk being regarded as being against Travellers' interests, even if they are Travellers themselves. In particular, the latter are often dismissed as passive victims of racism who, having internalised the oppressors' devaluation of their culture, have low self-esteem and accept their assimilation into mainstream Irish society (e.g. Fay, 1992; O'Connell, 1994, 117). Some opponents of 'Traveller ethnicity' within mainstream society may be inspired by conservative, assimilatory and racist motivations. Similarly, there might be a number of Travellers who reject the ethnic route because of internalised low self-esteem and subsequent adoption of the dominant majority's devaluation of "Traveller culture". Indeed, as noted in Chapter Three, the historical context of Irish colonisation and nationalist-led independence, with its correlated structural and ideological factors, has left deep traces in the collective identity construction of the whole Irish population and, specifically, Irish Travellers.

Nonetheless, as my study suggests, there are plausible theoretical and strategic justifications for some of the reservations about 'Traveller ethnicity' as much as there are sound reasons behind pro 'Traveller ethnicity' advocacy. Hence, I intend to rectify this academic oversight of Traveller opponents of 'Traveller ethnicity'. My focus on

both Traveller sides reflects the conviction that Travellers who oppose ethnic recognition should not be ignored tout court or denied a priori agency and insight. As human beings and Travellers, they have a right to voice their dissent and express their arguments. Some Travellers have spelled out the rationale behind their opposition to the ethnic route. Many of their arguments resonate with theoretical insights from the fields of ethnicity, culture and identity politics, which have acknowledged the dialectical potential of these concepts. Such concepts may be problematic, both theoretically as notions and politically as strategies for equality, especially in the contemporary world, which is characterised by a generalised cultural bias due to the convergence of the culturalisation of racism and the racialisation of culture (in this regard see Chapter Two).

Travellers' recognition need not be consequential on and rooted in a narrow, static, determinist and reductionist understanding of ethnicity, culture and identity, which has the potential to freeze their cultural distinctiveness in an a-temporal and mythic fixity, so naturalising and reifying their historically acquired collective identity. Despite the Traveller-only forum's progressive goals, the implicit and indirect prioritisation of a 'traditional' Traveller identity within Section Two of its Policy document could paradoxically contribute to indirectly sustaining the stigmatisation, exclusion and misrecognition by Travellers themselves of subaltern Travellers and their identities, referred to in D5 as "non-Traditional Travellers", "LGBT Travellers" and "disabled Travellers", "Traveller women" and "young Travellers". In other words, the politics of recognition does not have to be identified with a politics of identity conceived in the singular mode: the valid assertion that Travellers' nomadic tradition and its contribution to Irish society should be celebrated and acknowledged by the Irish State and broader society, does not require any determinist explanation which dangerously denies individual choice by depicting Travellers as shaped by their ethnicity and culture and reductively characterised by a singular and inherited identity.

Oppressed minorities, such as Irish Travellers, are rightly claiming respect and substantial equality and contesting structural inequality. They are rightly denouncing their oppression and trying to obtain some measure of reversal with which to approach real equality. They are rightly defending nomadism as an equally valid way of living against institutional and societal attempts to suppress it. But its pursuit is not incongruent with the acknowledgment that it is primarily the ideology and practice of racism, rooted in a conviction of Travellers' inherent collective internal sameness,

difference from majority society and inferiority which has so far denied Travellers choices by forcing them into segregated spaces and lives at the social, economic, cultural and political margins of Irish society.

Similar dilemmas have been faced elsewhere by other subaltern groups/minorities who are engaged in emancipatory identity politics, as noted in Chapter Two with specific reference to the international Women's Movement and the British Black Movement. Equally, Irish Travellers' discourses against their ethnic recognition defy easy and simplistic explanations. Rather this thesis ascertains that they confirm the ambivalent implications of identity politics, the ambiguity of ethnicity and its dangerous overlap with the contiguous erroneous notion of 'race', and the historical complexity, multiplicity and contingency of collective social identities, which are constructed along multiple and cross-cutting lines of difference and similarity.

8.4. An Irish exemplification of identity politics' dilemmas

Ultimately, I believe that the existing internal debate among Travellers over the official recognition of their ethnic status constitutes a relevant contemporary Irish example of the more general dilemmas and issues emerging within any kind of identity-based politics. From this perspective, both positions and their tensions can be regarded as complementary and constructive. They concur in revealing the existing strengths and weaknesses of a politics anchored in collective identity claims. As we have seen in Chapter Two, other collective movements, such as the Women's Movement and the Black Civil Rights Movements in the US and in Great Britain, have already faced similar internal dilemmas and have been labored by internal conflicts and contestations over the public representation and construction of the 'group identity', as well as over the strategic means to achieve equality. These issues have emerged both at a theoretical and practical level and they have been highlighted through academic writings often by scholars from minority backgrounds: e.g. Stuart Hall's formulation of the paradox on the necessity and impossibility of ethnicity; Gilroy's rejection of academic use of the notions/terms of 'race' and 'culture' because of their connivance in the perpetuation of racism; and activists' polemic stances: e.g. minority, lesbian and disabled women's contestation of the hegemonic construction of the collective category of 'women' up to the deconstruction of the very category of the subject itself. Equally, the points made by both sides of the 'Traveller ethnicity' divide warrant serious attention without being dismissed a priori, because together they potentially contribute to Travellers' path to

emancipation. They could open the way for the simultaneous acceptance and deconstruction of 'Traveller ethnicity'.

Furthermore, such contention on this hotly felt issue can serve as a reminder of the internal diversity existing within any given 'group', the differing allegiances, priorities and strategies. Specifically, the very diversity of Traveller voices indicates the necessity to guarantee the right to dissent and pluralism within any given 'group' of people. The plurality of Traveller voices hints at the plurality and fluidity of contemporary Traveller identities and, simultaneously, must challenge the equally bounded and reductive notion of 'settled' community.

8. 5. 'Traveller ethnicity' as a matter of Travellers' self-determination

The issue of 'Traveller ethnicity' is a matter of self-determination for Irish Travellers. Ultimately, it is not up to the Irish State or to academics to decide whether Travellers meet or do not meet all the 'objective scientific criteria' to be classified as an ethnic group. Furthermore, the expression "objective scientific criteria" should be avoided altogether, in my opinion, because of its dangerous closeness to past criteria of pseudo-scientific racial classification. Some recent events have already confirmed the overlap between 'racial' and 'ethnic', scientific and political with regards to 'Traveller ethnicity'. For example, in June 2010, the Traveller advocate Rose Marie Maughan, during a discussion on 'Traveller ethnicity', hosted by Pat Kenny's TV programme[95] "*Frontline*" dedicated to Travellers, answered affirmatively to the question posed by the journalist on whether or not her blood was different from his blood. In 2011, the TV series *Blood of Travellers*, publicised the research on forty DNA samples taken from Irish Travellers, that was recently carried out by Jim Wilson, geneticist from Edinburgh university[96]. The DNA analysis of the Travelling community was regarded as having proven that it is "a distinct ethnic minority who separated from the settled community between 1,000 and 2,000 years ago", since its genetic traits, although internally very diversified (nearly as much as the sedentary counterpart), cluster closely together. Furthermore, it also asserted that settled Irish people are their closest relations and that there is no connection to the Roma Gypsy community in continental Europe. According

[95] The programme, shown on 28/06/2010, is accessible at http://www.rte.ie/news/av/2010/0628/thefrontline.html.

[96] In this regard see 'It's in the genes: Blood of the Travellers', in *Voice of the Traveller*, June 2011 (pp.24-25) accessed at on 13/09/2012 at 14.20 pm at http://www.involve.ie/voice-of-the-traveller/past-issues.

to this study the ethnic definition seems to rest on genetics, i.e. biology, and hence to approximate 'race'. This 'objective' definition of Travellers as an ethnic minority on a biological basis casts 'Traveller ethnicity' as scientific rather than political. While in the current climate this classification serves a progressive political aim –Travellers' emancipation and equality, it is not guaranteed that in the future it might not be used for regressive goals by other actors. Therefore, in order to retain its emancipatory potential, ethnic classification should rest on subjective self-identification and political mobilisation by Travellers themselves. This principle of collective self-identification as ethnic was also enshrined by the UNCERD Recommendation N8 (1990), as noted in Chapter Six.

Interestingly, the *ITM*, after the broadcasting of this TV series, declared: "Travellers have long believed in their distinct and separate *culture*"[emphasis added]. However, the linking of biology and culture can have problematic implications, as history has demonstrated. On the other hand, the former Olympic boxer and presenter of the aforementioned TV series, Francis Barrett, concluded: "That's great. I'm always clear that I'm an Irishman first". These two statements once again confirm the double simultaneous significance of both Traveller distinctiveness and national belonging as sources of identification for many contemporary Travellers, as has emerged from the data analysed in my study.

The internal dissent on the issue of 'Traveller ethnicity' has the potential to work as a divisive force among Travellers, to the advantage of regressive policies supported by a vocal anti-Traveller lobby within the mainstream Irish population. However, it could also be the occasion for a collective and inclusive re-thinking and construction of Travellers' collective identity that would function as the basis for a shared political mobilisation involving the majority of Travellers. Indeed, a reciprocal engagement by Travellers on both sides of the divide could foster the recognition of strengths and weaknesses of both approaches and possibly bring into existence new shared visions simultaneously affirmative and deconstructive, which take into account and represent the concerns and aspirations of all the individuals who proudly regard themselves as Irish Travellers, Travelling people or Tinkers[97].

Finally, it is paramount to keep in mind that Traveller activists on both sides are thoroughly committed to the cause of Travellers' equality and recognition in a pluralist Irish society. Especially, they want young Travellers to be spared the discrimination,

[97] For instance, Patrick Nevin refers to himself as a "tinker" rather than "Traveller", since this was his proudly cherished family tradition (see Parsons 2010 in *The Irish Times*, 16/08/2010).

segregation and abuses that have been a familiar feature of their own childhoods. They are trying to contribute to a new society in which young Travellers can be proud of themselves, can access the same services as the other young people, whatever their aspirations for the future, whatever form of accommodation they choose, whatever pattern of employment they follow.

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Appendix I

Brief overview of national Traveller organisations relevant for this study

This study makes reference especially to five national Traveller organisations that have been influential for the development of Traveller politics, policies and that have been involved in the debate on 'Traveller ethnicity'. These are Pavee Point, the Irish Traveller Movement, the National Traveller Women's Forum, Minceirs Whiden and NATC/Involve. The first three, all campaigning for the official recognition of the ethnic status to Travellers, are long-established and generally recognised by the Irish government, institutions and media as the legitimate representatives at national level of the Irish Travellers. The more recent Minceirs Whiden, whose prominent Traveller members are also involved in the aforementioned NGOs, has not yet reached its goal of becoming the first national Traveller representative group. Finally, the national role of Involve as a representative organisation of Travellers nationwide, beyond its narrower educational and youth work remit, has been restated by representative members. Below follows a brief description of these national Traveller associations. Nonetheless, for an exhaustive account of their man initiatives, their respective websites and numerous publications should be consulted.

Pavee Point *(formerly Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group)*

Established in 1983-1984 as the Dublin Travellers' Education and Development Group (DTEDG), then renamed Pavee Point Travellers' Centre in 1995, is a non-governmental organisation, comprising of a partnership of Travellers and members of the majority population, who are committed to human rights for Irish Travellers and aim to address the needs of Travellers as a minority group, with a distinct culture based on nomadism and experiencing exclusion and marginalisation. Since its inception it has adopted a human rights and community development approach, on the conviction that real improvement in Travellers' living circumstances and social situation requires the active involvement of Travellers themselves whereas members of the majority population on the other hand should "address the widespread prejudice, discrimination and racism that prevent Travellers from participating as equals in society" (Citizen Traveller Campaign, 2000, 182). It acts as a pressure and lobbying group at national level, besides being involved in policy formulation, research and delivery of Traveller initiatives (e.g. the Traveller Primary Health Care Project).

Irish Traveller Movement

Founded in 1990, it constitutes a national network of local Traveller organisations and individuals (both Travellers and non-Travellers) working with Travellers. It affirms a strong commitment to Travellers obtaining full equality in Irish society, which, in their view, is strongly dependent upon the recognition of Travellers as a minority ethnic group. It has a democratic structure through which local organisations are given opportunities to contribute to decision-making and agenda-setting within the national movement/platform. Local member associations can nominate candidates and vote for the board of management (called Central Group, with a compulsory Traveller majority) as well as suggest in advance motions and topics for the Business Plan to be discussed at the Annual General Meeting. In addition, the organisation has a number of Regional Membership Workers[98] organised on a regional basis who function as a liaison between the local groups and the national board of management in order to guarantee a two-way (bottom-up and top-down) practice of communication and work. Regional Development Workers have also other functions: they constitute a support for local organisations in terms of help, expertise, capacity building, information and awareness rising, facilitation of links and solidarity among local groups, building of alliances with other actors and facilitating the interaction with local government and statutory and advisory bodies where Traveller representation is relevant. The ITM has established a legal unit, which has played a pivotal role in challenging anti-Traveller discrimination in various fields through the courts system.

National Traveller Women's Forum

Established in 1988, it consists of an alliance of Traveller women and Traveller organisations from throughout Ireland. It focuses specifically on issues of primary concern to Traveller women, challenging sexism, domestic violence, racism and promoting gender equality within Irish society. Its work involves policy formulation, lobbying and campaigning, training and capacity building, information dissemination and exchange, annual forum events, networking and support (Citizen Traveller Campaign, 2000, 181). It has established links with mainstream women's organisations and with Traveller NGOs, such as Pavee Point and the Irish Traveller Movement.

[98] For further details on the organisational structure and functioning, check the ITM's website www.itmtrav.ie/network/regionalnet.

NATC/Involve

Founded in 1976 as National Association of Traveller/Training Centres, it adopted the new name in 2011, as a result to the State-imposed closing down of all the Travellers training centres. It had originally a strictly educational and vocational remit. However, its role progressively expanded to embrace Traveller youth service. It claims to constitute another national Traveller representative organisation, driven by "full cognisance of Traveller culture and identity", not only "respond[ing] to the changing needs of society towards Travellers" but also proactive in ensuring that "Traveller culture and heritage is cherished for the community"[99]. In management's view, such representativeness derives from its "direct daily contact with over 1,500 Traveller families nationwide", and its involvement on a range of national committees and bodies. Nonetheless, its role as a national Traveller representative organisation appears to be challenged by the above listed three national Traveller NGOs.

Minceirs Whiden

Established informally in 2004, it benefits from the endorsement and support of the Irish Traveller Movement and Pavee Point (e.g. check the ITM's 2005 Policy Statement). It was officially launched at a ceremony in Dublin's Mansion House on 27 November 2008. This historic moment was marked by the symbolically strategic choice of the venue –where the first Dáil took place. Official recognition of Travellers' ethnicity is at the core of this organisation's priorities together with the long-term aim of promoting and creating a platform for their community[100]. Its mission is "to promote an understanding and recognition of Travellers as a minority ethnic group in Irish society who are proud and confident of their identity"[101]. It counts eight hundred Travellers registered as members of its assembly (legislative and policy body) while its council (executive body) is composed of seventeen members. This forum has increased

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[99]These direct quotations are taken from the NATC website and were accessed on 22/06/2011 at www.natc.ie/about-us/history.php and www.natc.ie/about-us/index.php.

[100] See pp.6-7 of *Changing Ireland*, Issue 28, Spring 2009, available at www.changingireland.ie/Issue28.pdf.

[101] For more details check Minceirs Whiden' s policy report (2010, 5) available at http://minceirswhiden.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Policy-Minceir-Whiden_24pp1.pdf (accessed on 30/10/2010). Information on Minceirs Whiden is also available at www.changingireland.ie/Issue28.pdf .

its activities[102] in recent times and published its first policy statement in 2010. It is composed of an assembly and a council. Membership to the assembly is open to all Travellers over eighteen-year old (younger Travellers can attend meetings but not vote) and prominent members are trying to enhance the involvement and participation of Irish Travellers from across the country (It counted seven hundred and fifty members in 2009). It meets at least twice a year and its function is to elect the council and elaborate policy measures which then the council will have to actively pursue and promote vis-à-vis the Irish State and its institutions. The council consists of twenty-one members elected or selected by the assembly every two years (their mandate can be reiterated for a second term only in order to favour power sharing and avoiding the identification of the organisation with its top representatives) in accordance to the criteria of geographical and gender balance. This organisation is independent but benefits from the support of both ITM and Pavee Point.

[102] For instance, it was involved in the organisation of events for the 2010 Traveller Pride Week; furthermore, in April 2010 it demanded an official apology on behalf of the Irish State for its repressive and discriminatory policies towards Travellers.

Appendix II

Texts of the analysed data

Datum 1

Travellers vote unanimously to petition for ethnic status:
Major State Bodies and Human Rights Groups Support Travellers Demand for Ethnic Status

Travellers have today voted unanimously to support a national petition to become recognised as an Ethnic Minority group.

Traveller groups attending the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) AGM in Letterkenny committed to signing the petition, which will be submitted to the Government for action.

Major State Bodies and Human Rights groups such as the Equality Authority and the National Consultative Committee for Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) have also said that they will support the campaign and sign the petition.

It is now expected that the petition will take a number of months to compile and will be submitted together with a Position Paper outlining the rationale and evidence to support the case to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
The chairperson of the Irish Traveller Movement, Catherine Joyce, said becoming recognised as an ethnic minority group is one of the core aims of Travellers and she believes together with the support of major State and Human Rights groups they will have a strong case to make.

Ms Joyce also said; "I warmly welcome the Government recognition of Travellers as an Ethnic Minority Group is a priority for the Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC), when it meets the United Nations Human Rights Committee to discuss Ireland's next official report on its civil and political rights record. This will be examined by the UN next month in Geneva.

When we were developing our current Business Plan the Irish Traveller Movement asked members what they felt was the most important issue facing the community and overwhelmingly the answer was the need to secure ethnic status. There is also a lot of independent analysis and evidence which fully supports our case."

Niall Crowley, CEO of the Equality Authority, said the Authority would support the Irish Traveller Movement's petition and added that "the definition of Travellers needs to be more widely articulated in national policy and programmes if Travellers are to achieve full equality in practice across all areas of policy and provision."

Amnesty International also agreed to sign the petition and promote it. Executive Director of Amnesty International's Irish Section Colm O'Gorman said: "Amnesty International fully endorses this petition and we urge our members and supporters to join the campaign".

The Director of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) Phillip Watt said it also fully supported the petition: "The NCCRI is disappointed that the Government does not explicitly recognise Travellers aa an ethnic group and will sign this petition to help highlight the issue."

The conference's keynote speaker, Co-oridinator of South Tyrone Empowerment Programme, Bernadette McAliskey said that she would also be signing the petition: "This is a step towards making a serious challenge to the racism against Travellers. I will be honoured to sign this petition."

Ms. Joyce said ethnic status would bring many clear benefits to the Traveller community.

"Ethnic status would provide greater protection of Travellers cultural independence under law. This would include official recognition of Traveller culture in the provision of housing, education, health services. For example, nomadism would have to be properly catered for in housing provision.

It also would have implications in terms of ensuring Traveller representation in the political system. Furthermore, there is also an important symbolic meaning of Traveller Culture becoming validated as bith distinct and valued within Irish society."

Datum 2

ITM Ethnicity Petition

Petition Target: Everyone

The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) is calling on the Irish Government to recognise Travellers as an ethnic minority group. Catherine Joyce, chair of the ITM said: "Ethnic status would provide greater protection of Travellers cultural independence under law". This would include official recognition of Traveller culture in the provision of housing, education, health services. For example, nomadism would have to be catered for in housing provision. It also would have implications in terms of ensuring Traveller representation in the political system. Furthermore, there is also an important symbolic meaning of Traveller culture becoming validated as both distinct and valued within Irish society".

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Recognition of Traveller Ethnicity would:

Send a strong message to Travellers that their cultural heritage and place in Irish society has due recognition and worth. For Travellers, especially young Travellers, it would go towards addressing the crisis in identity they face and redeem a sense of pride and esteem in their cultural identity

Provide greater protection of Travellers' cultural independence under European and International Conventions already ratified by the Irish Government. This would include official recognition of Traveller culture in the provision of housing, education, health services. For example, nomadism would have to be properly catered for in housing provision.
Have implication in terms of ensuring Traveller representation within the Irish political system.

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Have implications in terms of ensuring Traveller representation within the Irish political system.

Datum 3

ITM's Traveller Ethnicity leaflet

TRAVELLER ETHNICITY (written twice, horizontally and vertically)

What makes us Travellers?

. Born into family
. Religion
. Language
. Beliefs/values
. Way of life
. Culture
. History

WHAT DOES ETHNICITY MEAN?

Ethnicity is a fancy word which means:

What makes you; YOU

EVERYONE HAS AN ETHNICITY

Ethnicity:	What makes you a Traveller?
Family	Family
Religion	Religion
Language	Language
History	History
Culture/way of life	Culture
Beliefs/values	Beliefs/Values

Irish Ethnic Minority Group;

Travellers are an Irish ethnic minority group because we are a small Irish community who share the same culture / way of life, language, belief values and history.

However, this ethnic minority status is not recognised by the government.
It is a basic human right to have our ethnicity and identity recognised.

Issues affecting Travellers Today:
. Culture not recognised or valued
. High levels of racism and discrimination
. Not able to travel anymore
. Traveller identity not recognised in schools
. We die younger than country people
. Not many people will give us a job

What would change if our ethnicity was recognised?

. Things wouldn't changeover night but we would have more protection under international human rights law and under equality laws and the Constitution in Ireland.
. The government would be placing a value on our culture; oter people in society may see Travellers more positively.

Accommodation:

. Nomadism would be recognised.
We could use our status as an ethnic minority to campaign and put pressure on the government to create laws that respect the Traveller culture and strike down laws that attack our culture.
. Local authorities are already obliged to provide proper Traveller accommodation but have failed to do so.

If Travellers were recognised as an ethnic minority we could put pressure on Councils to provide this accommodation by using international law as a campaign and lobbying tool.

Culture:

. Government would have to protect Traveller Culture from dying out. They may provide funds to keep travelling alive, for the teaching of Cant to Traveller children etc.

Discrimination/Racism:

. We would have the same level of protection under international laws as all other ethnic groups around the world.

Education:

. Traveller Culture may be recognised in schools.
. Traveller Culture may be taught to all children in schools.
. More Travellers may stay on in education.
. Children whose families travel may not lose out on education.

Employment:

. Traveller Economy – value placed on Travellers who trade, deal in scrap/horses as a way of making a living not a way of crime.
. Sometimes Travellers don't get jobs because they are Travellers. We would have more protection under the current law to challenge this and could even see the introduction of positive discrimination laws that encourage employers to provide jobs to Travellers through government funded schemes.

Health:

. Because Traveller Culture would be recognised Traveller's living conditions could improve, therefore Travellers' health could improve.
. Traveller culture could be included in design/delivery of health services.
. Travellers could live longer.

Politics:

In Romania, Hungary and Roma Gypsies are recognised as an ethnic minority group so the government there have to keep places for Roma gypsies in their Government. The same could happen in Ireland if Traveller Ethnicity was recognised.

Would it mean I would not be Irish anymore?

No, Travellers are born in Ireland which makes us Irish –nothing can take that away!!

BEING IRISH IS OUR NATIONALITY,
BEING A TRAVELLER IS OUR ETHNICITY.

If I am getting social welfare benefits, will my benefits be affected?

No, like everyone, Travellers are means tested to see if they are entitled to receive social welfare. Everyone is examined on the basis of their means (ie: how much money they have) and not on their identity. So if a Traveller is entitled to receive social welfare benefits they will.

Would it separate Travellers and Settled People further?
No. If Traveller ethnicity was recognised by Settled people they may start to understand Travellers better which may bring Travellers and Settled people closer together.

How to get involved in ITM's Ethnicity Campaign
If you would like to support Travellers seeking recognition of their ethnicity you can do so by contacting ITM offices on 016796577 or by logging on to our website www.itmtrav.ie where you can sign a petition to recognise Travellers as an ethnic minority group.

Datum 4

Traveller Ethnicity film's transcription

Lady (L.): "Hi Jim"

Jim (J.): How ya?

L.: Listen, I picked up this leaflet today at work and I thought you might be interested in it. Have a look. It is about a campaign being run by the Irish Traveller Movement at the moment. Basically they are calling on the Irish government to recognise Travellers as an ethnic minority group.

J.: What is an ethnic minority?

L.: Well, ethnicity is just a fancy word that describes what makes you you. You know, things like your family, your history, your background, your language, your religion, your values and beliefs, your culture, your lifestyle. So being part of an ethnic minority group just means that you are member of a small community who shares the same lifestyle and background.

J.: You know, it's not easy being a Traveller in Ireland today. We face high levels of racism and discrimination; our culture is not valued and is not respected by or the government or even in our service provision like schools and HSEs and local

authorities and so forth. If we were recognised as an ethnic minority, what would change for us?

L.: Well, things would not change overnight but what would happen is that the Irish government would be finally placing a value and respect on Traveller identity and Traveller culture so things like nomadism would be respected and valued and actually seen as a valid way of living, not as a backward way of living that seems to belong to the past. So the Irish government and local authorities would have to provide transient sites so Travellers could travel from place to place like we did in the olden days and also we could use our ethnic status to challenge laws such as the trespass law that actually criminalises us for being nomadic.

J.: Oh, so that will mean that our government would have to protect our culture.

L.: Exactly, and things like the Traveller Economy would also have to be protected and resourced for, so it also would be valued as a way of making a living and not seen as a way of crime and also Travellers who don't get jobs simply because we are Travellers would have more protection under equality laws to challenge this.

J.: Would that change our Irishness if we are recognised as an ethnic minority?

L.: No, because when you think about this Irish Travellers are born in Ireland so that makes us Irish; so being Irish is our nationality and our Traveller identity and way of life is our ethnicity so nobody can take away the fact that we are Irish.

J.: Would that separate us even further to the settled community if we are recognised as an ethnic minority?

L.: No, I think, if our ethnicity was recognised people would understand us more as individuals and as a community so I think it would actually have the opposite impact, it would actually bring us closer together as Travellers and Settled People within Ireland.

J.: Was Traveller ethnicity recognised, would that have an impact or an effect on our social welfare or medical card?

L.: No, because, like everybody else, Travellers are means tested on how much money we have so, again, if Travellers are entitled to receive social welfare we would receive it.

J.: I think it is a great way of getting Travellers recognised as an ethnic minority.

L.: Me too. And it is about time we did. We would never have it if we don't demand it.

J.: Would you like a cup of tea?

L.: I would love one. Any biscuits?

[Undistinguished chat and laughter follows]

Datum 5

Minceirs Whiden's 2010 Policy Statement

SECTION ONE:
Introduction to Minceirs Whiden [pp.5-6]

Human rights are not negotiable, so the price that people sometimes have to pay to protect them is never too high. [repeated on every page, at the side]

MISSION

Minceirs Whiden was established in 2004 by a group of Travellers to promote an understanding and recognition of Travellers as a minority ethnic group in Irish society who are proud and confident of their identity. Minceirs Whiden seeks full participation and inclusion of Travellers in the economic, social, political and cultural life of Ireland.

STRUCTURES

Minceirs Whiden is a Traveller only forum, open to all Travellers in Ireland, where Travellers can come together as a community to talk about the issues we face and create ways that we as a community can overcome our exclusion within Irish society. Currently we have two structures as follows:

1. **The Assembly is made up of members of Minceirs Whiden who elect the Council.**

The Assembly's role is to:

. Elect or select the membership of the Council;
. Decide the policy objectives of Minceirs Whiden.

The Assembly meets a minimum of two times a year and members must be over 18 years of age to vote, although Travellers under 18 years of age can attend and participate at the meetings.

2. **The Council is made up of 21 Travellers either selected or elected by the registered members of the Assembly. The role of the Council is to:**

. Implement the policy and workplans;
. Be accountable to, report to and take direction from the Assembly.

Membership of the Council is for two years and members, including officers, can be reappointed / re-elected for a further two years maximum. The Council shall, if necessary, co-opt Travellers and will ensure there is a geographical and gender balance. The Council, through a secret ballot, will elect /select a Council leader for 2 years, who will be also eligible for re-election/selection for a further 2 years maximum. Members must be over 18 years of age.

We seek to:

.Unite Travellers;
. Address divisions amongst Travellers;
. Promote a collective voice and a political platform for Travellers;
. Promote Traveller culture and ethnicity and our role in Irish society;
.Work together in solidarity with nomadic and excluded groups, both nationally an internationally;

. Work in the spirit of cooperation and solidarity with Traveller organisations in pursuit of our objectives, while retaining our independence and autonomy;
. Seek recognition and consultative status with the State carrying out the work as set by the Assembly.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCUMENT

This document sets out Minceirs Whiden's policies on core issues affecting Travellers' lives. The document puts Traveller ethnicity at the centre of the policy issues that it promotes. Minceirs Whiden believes that without the official recognition of Travellers as an ethnic nomadic group within Irish society, Travellers' rights in all the other areas of their lives will fail to be delivered on.

Ethnicity is central to Traveller identity. Without this understanding across services and society, Travellers will continue to be treated as a group who are different because they choose a certain lifestyle rather than a group who were born into and inherited their ethnicity and identity which their right and entitlement to exercise.

In many areas of Irish society, Travellers continue to be viewed as 'drop-outs' from the famine who chose their poverty and social exclusion. If the truth was recognised and understood, Travellers would be celebrated as a distinct ethnic group with a long nomadic tradition and much to offer Irish society.

Travellers' lives in Ireland are about struggle for recognition and for their rights to be realised. This is not an easy journey, but Travellers in all their diversity (women, men, Travellers with a disability, gay and lesbian Travellers, young Travellers, older Travellers) refuse to be overlooked.
Minceirs Whiden is committed to ensuring that all Travellers' voices are heard and our issues acted upon. A human rights approach is central to how Minceirs Whiden view the world around it. For example, rights for Travellers will not be fully achieved unless Traveller women can achieve their full potential supported by their own community. Minceirs Whiden's work is about creating opportunities for us to voice our diversity, challenge each other and fight for our full rights to be realised. In line with this approach, Minceirs Whiden will work in solidarity with other NGOs seeking to achieve full equality for other oppressed groups.

The issues that are addressed in the following document are interrelated and the achievement of rights for Travellers in one area directly impacts on another area. For example, the achievement of the delivery of culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation will ensure that nomadism is facilitated and Travellers' health and education is improved.

This document is set out in four sections as follows:

Section Two describes the importance of ethnicity to understanding the Traveller community and the issues we face. The recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group is critical to the future survival of the community and to addressing the identified issues.

Section Three sets out the diversity of needs within the Traveller community. It describes how the lack of voice and rights for lesbian gay bisexual and transgender Travellers within the community and externally reinforces the discrimination they

experience. It also sets out the experience of Travellers with a disability, Traveller women, non-traditional Travellers and young Travellers[103].

Section Four provides an overview and brief introduction to some of the issues facing the Traveller community. It sets out the actions Minceirs Whiden hopes to achieve in various areas over the coming years such as politics, education, accommodation, health, employment, Traveller conflict and drug misuse.

SECTION TWO:
Traveller Ethnicity [pp.7-8]

WHO ARE IRISH TRAVELLERS?
The 2006 Irish Census counted 22,435 Irish Travellers (0.5 percent of the total national population). However, more realistically the number of Travellers in Ireland could number 30,000.[104]

Irish Travellers are an ethnic minority group who have been part of Irish society for centuries. They have a value system, language (cant or gammon), customs and traditions based on a nomadic tradition which makes them a distinct group both to themselves and to others and set them apart from the sedentary population. The increased politicisation of Travellers has enabled them to retain their identity as an ethnic group in the face of much opposition and pressure to conform to settled society.

Our experience of low social status and exclusion –which prevents us from participating as equal in society- is mostly due to the widespread hostility of settled people towards us. This hostility is based on prejudice which in turn gives rise to discrimination and affects Travellers in all aspects of their lives.

Travellers' experience is also about celebration of their cultural heritage and traditions. Despite the persistent hostility towards the community, Travellers are to the fore in sharing their culture with Irish society.

ETHNICITY
The core issue facing Travellers is their recognition as an ethnic group. '*Traveller ethnicity is a key factor that has to be taken into account in identifying and responding to the needs of the Traveller community. Culture and identity will shape the needs of a group. Policies and programmes that respond to the needs will only be effective to the extent that they take into account the culture and identity of the group concerned.* '[105]

At a European and international level, Travellers are recognised as a distinct ethnic group. [106] At a national level, many human rights bodies and academics support Travellers' ethnic status. However, the Irish government do not officially recognise Travellers as an ethnic group and refer to Travellers as a cultural group. "Irish

[103] Non-traditional Travellers refers to Travellers who chose not to travel, marry young, who are not religious, etc.
[104] The recent All Ireland National Traveller Health Study which is due to be published shortly will provide a more accurate picture of the numbers of Travellers living in Ireland today as the study proactively targeted Travellers living in all types of accommodation.
[105]Equality Authority, Traveller Ethnicity, An Equality Authority Report, 2006, p9.
[106]Council of Europe: Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racism and Discrimination. Government's first report under the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2004).

Travellers do not constitute a distinct group…in terms of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin."

This position undermines Travellers' claim to their distinct culture and the measures required to protect Travellers' human rights. It also impacts on the delivery of policies, programmes and services that affect Travellers lives. For example, services that are required to meet Travellers' specific cultural needs may be seen by service providers as being a 'cultural choice' rather than a right that is legitimately based on ethnicity as enshrined in European and international law. Therefore, it is easy to dismiss Traveller culture and the services that are required to support their needs as 'lifestyle choices' rather than a right based on their needs as an ethnic group.

MINCEIRS WHIDEN BELIEVES:
Travellers should be recognised as an ethnic minority group in their own right fir the following reasons:

. Members of an ethnic group have cultural continuity where customs, values, norms and traditions are passed from one generation to the next. This gives people a sense of belonging, a sense of identity, a sense of being part of a community;
. Traveller culture is not secondary or dependent on settled culture, but a distinct and unique culture in its own right;
. Travellers' ethnicity is not a political tool to secure human rights from the state as these rights should be granted automatically;
. Ethnicity is a fight for the survival of the Traveller community;
. The recognition of Traveller ethnicity would ensure that services are provided by right.

ACTIONS
Minceirs Whiden will:

. Create debate among Travellers through its own forums on ethnicity and develop a consensus on a key set of demands to secure our status;
. Support existing campaigns and put in place new campaigns to lobby the Irish Government for due recognition and amend for past neglect of their rights, for example, a Truth Commission;
. Seek specific consultative status for Minceirs Whiden with the government to advise them on all aspects of law and policy affecting Travelles;
. Undertake direct actions such as protesting and other strategies to demand full recognition as an ethnic minority group;
. Lobby at an EU and international level to put pressure on the Irish government to respond;
. Link with other ethnic groups facing similar struggles and develop joint actions.

SECTION THREE:
The Diverse Needs of Travellers [pp.9-12]
The Traveller community is not a homogeneous group. Though not a definitive list, differences can arise by gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, disability, religious beliefs, political beliefs and health conditions (e.g. an older Traveller woman with a disability). It is critical that the differences among Travellers become visible, are recognised, voiced and their needs addressed to ensure that their human rights and equality are achieved. It is important that Travellers embrace diversity within our community in supporting each other to overcome our struggle. The following deals with

some of the diverse needs of Travellers. However, over time and in response to emerging needs, Minceirs Whiden will respond appropriately.

TRAVELLERS WITH A DISABILITY

Similar to members of other minority ethnic groups, Travellers with a disability are forced into prioritising their disability over their ethnicity. This phenomenon is not a choice by Travellers, rather a necessity to access service provision.

In Ireland, all service provision and social policy regarding people with a disability are developed, delivered and promoted from a settled perspective. While Travellers are afforded protection under the Disability Act 2005 which is a positive action measure designed to advance and underpin the participation of people with disabilities in everyday life, culturally appropriate services for Travellers with a disability are rare.
Travellers with a disability are protected under the Equal Status Act 2000 as amended by the Equality Act 2004 which prohibits discrimination in access to service provision by membership of the Traveller community and by disability.

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) TRAVELLERS

LGBT Travellers experience tensions and struggle in gaining acceptance within their own community, within social groups and within community and voluntary organisations. For example, due to isolation and racism, it is very difficult for gay and lesbian Travellers tobe involved in national gay or lesbian organisations.

LGBT Travellers experience racism and lack of understanding in dealing with services. Often the discrimination they experience is on many levels. Firstly, by their ethnicity as a Traveller, secondly by gender, thirdly by age, fourthly by their sexual orientation. In reality, little is known of the experience and needs of LGBT Travellers and this situation needs to be rectified.

LGBT Travellers come within the protections of the Equality Act which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of membership of the Traveller community and sexual orientation.

NON-TRADITIONAL TRAVELLERS

Non-traditional Travellers are Travellers who may not have held onto all of our cultural traditions, for example, Travellers who chose not to travel, not to marry young, Travellers who are not religious. As a community we must embrace and respect diversity within our community. This also applies to Travellers who have varying political views.

MINCEIRS WHIDEN BELIEVES:

. All Traveller policies –health, education, accommodation, employment or a celebration of culture- must be embedded in a commitment to inclusion of the diverse needs of all Travellers;
. All Travellers are equal and should be accorded the respect they deserve within and outside the community;
. The discrimination experienced y Travellers with a disability and LGBT and non-traditional Travellers within the community cannot be tolerated;
. All forms of inequality must be challenged to ensure the human rights of all Travellers are progressed.

ACTIONS

Minceirs Whiden will:

. Acknowledge, recognise and support the work of Travellers with a disability;

. Promote the acceptance of diversity and individuality within the community;

. Create forums for debate and support for all members of our community to increase the visibility and knowledge of the issues being experienced by Travellers with a disability, LGBT Travellers and non-traditional Travellers;

. Challenge the stigma and shame experienced by Travellers with a disability within the community and outside of the community to help create the conditions whereby Travellers with a disability can achieve full equality;

. Challenge the stigma and shame experienced by LGBT Travellers within the community and outside of the community to help create the conditions whereby LGBT Travellers can achieve full equality;

. Challenge the stigma, shame and exclusion experienced by non-traditional Travellers within our community to help create the conditions whereby non-traditional Travellers are both accepted and recognised as Travellers within our community and within society.

TRAVELLER WOMEN

The 2006 Census recorded 11,500 Traveller women living in Ireland which make up 51 per cent of the total Traveller population and 0.27 per cent pf the total Irish population. Traveller women play an important role in their immediate family and the wider Traveller community. While women in Ireland experience many inequalities due to sexism, Traveller women face added inequalities due to racism and discrimination. Traveller women experience three levels of discrimination.

1. Sexism within the Traveller community;
2. Sexism from the settle population;
3. Racism from the settled population.

Historically, within the Traveller community women were the primary carers. This is slowly changing as women are now aware and availing of a range of opportunities outside the home. For example, Traveller women have taken a lead role in promoting Travellers' human rights within Irish society. Traveller women are starting to challenge the sexist attitudes within the Traveller community. In terms of changes within the community, Traveller women are and need to continue to develop a lead role in bringing about change in the status of Traveller women.

Traveller women suffer from sexism ad racism both within the community and the wider society. For instance, lack to access to services like toilets, water, electricity and refuse collection has a huge impact on Traveller women. In the majority of cases, it is Traveller women who collect water, take care of the home, and ensure that children go to school in these appalling conditions. They bear the brunt of these injustices. In the man, it is Traveller women who have to access services such as social welfare, schools and health authorities in terms of children's health. They are at the receiving end of discrimination that Travellers are facing in this country. This is shown in the following facts:

. Traveller women die on average twelve years younger than settled women due to poor health and lack of access to health services:

. 64 % of Traveller women are unemployed;

. Traveller women have to carry the responsibility for their families;

. Domestic violence has been tolerated (or is still prevalent) within the community.

The National Women's Strategy (2007-2013) imagines 'an Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential, while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life'. The objectives and actions in the NWS fall under these themes:

. Equalising socio and economic opportunity for women;
. Ensuring the well being of women; and
. Engaging as equal and active citizens.

The extent and complex nature of the inequalities facing Traveller women are acknowledged. While the document lacks targets or time-scales in key areas affecting women there is a commitment to positive action measures such a the Equality for Women's Measure.

VIOLENCE AGAINST TRAVELLER WOMEN

Traveller women suffer both physical and mental violence from within the Traveller community, the State and from settled people. Domestic Violence is a critical issue within the community that is not acceptable and needs to be addressed.

. "*While the situation for all women who have to leave their home in search of a violence-free life is difficult, Traveller women experience additional dilemmas which make it more difficult for them to access help and support and explore their options. This is brought about by a combination of discrimination in services and professions (institutional and individual) and a lack of culturally appropriate provision*"[107]

Institutional discrimination exacerbates the situation for a Traveller woman in fleeing violence in the following ways:

. Lack of access to GPs, Accident and Emergency services, crisis services, refuges and related support services;
. Traveller women experience difficulties in accessing information and legal options due to literacy barriers;
. The often conflictual relationship between the Gardai and the Traveller community makes it very difficult for Traveller women to access help from the Gardai which has a direct effect on women's se of the judicial system;
. Traveller women often find themselves having to make the choice between seeking protection for themselves and protecting their community from external criticism.

Key to addressing some of these issues is tackling racism within service provision through training and education of providers to deliver their services in a manner that is culturally appropriate. "In order to achieve more culturally appropriate services (for Traveller women), the provision of training to increase both awareness and skills amongst service providers is needed. This should include awareness-raising regarding racist attitudes and provision of culturally appropriate services through which Travellers' culture is understood, respected and valued.

MINCEIRS WHIDEN BELIEVES:

. Sexist, gendered roles within the community need to be challenged;
. The controlling attitudes towards women's bodies that oppress Traveller women need to be tackled;
. Honour and shame patterns of behaviour are linked with girls' and women's lack of rights and choices;
. The status of single Traveller women is often one of isolation from within families and the wider Traveller community;

[107] Traveller Health, A National Strategy 2002-005.

. Homophobic attitudes towards lesbian Travellers are very prevalent within families and the wider Traveller community;
. Traveller women are often caught up in family feuding through male and family violence.

YOUNG TRAVELLERS

The Traveller community has a very young population. The 2006 Census showed that:
. 41 % of Travellers are under the age of 15 years;
. 62 % of Travellers are under 25 years.

In addressing the needs of young Travellers, we must consider the diversity that exists amongst this group and in doing so ensure that our responses are appropriate.

While all of the issues outlined in this document impact on young Travellers and need to be addressed from a youth perspective, specific issues that affect young Travellers are:
. Persistent discrimination and racism;
. Confusion in their identity due to the lack of recognition of Traveller ethnicity;
. Lack of retention in second level education;
. The increase in drugs misuse among the Traveller community;
. Increase in suicide among young Traveller men;
. Lack of access to mainstream youth services and facilities;
. Lack of access to future opportunities in terms of employment;
. Lack of participation in decision-making structures that affect their lives;
. Travellers getting married young.

A key strategy that has been used by Traveller organisations to support young Travellers to address these issues is undertaking youth work wit young Travellers. In many cases, this is about the personal, social and educational development of young people.

It requires young people to participate voluntarily and make a commitment to it. The following values of youth work should raise the confidence of young people, help them to make a contribution to society and promote their identity as citizens:
. Empowerment of young people;
. Equality and inclusion;
. Respect for all young people;
. Involvement of young people in decision-making;
. Partnership;
. Voluntary participation.

Minceirs Whiden supports this approach to working with young people and this value base will inform its work with young Travellers.

MINCEIRS WHIDEN BELIEVES:

. Young Travellers have a lot to offer in the growth and development of Minceirs Whiden;
. Young Travellers need to be supported to actively participate in Minceirs Whiden and many other structures to ensure their voice is heard;
. The diversity of young people needs to be respected and encouraged;
. The key issues affecting young Travellers need to be addressed to ensure their full participation in Irish society.

ACTIONS

Minceirs Whiden will:

. Target, resource and support young Travellers to participate in Minceirs Whiden;
. Ensure that young Travellers are represented on all the decision-making structures of Minceirs Whiden;
. Support young Travellers to prioritise the key issues they want Minceirs Whiden to work on;
. Devise strategies with young Travellers involved in Minceirs Whiden to tackle the key priority issues;
. Run a series of events with young Travellers on the key issues that affect their lives;
. Support young Travellers' representation on a range of forums to ensure their voices are heard;
. Create a space where young Travellers can discuss the issues of young marriages.

Datum 6

TRAVELLERS RIGHTS

Sir- Re the article on January 27th and other media coverage of the meeting of the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM).

As a traveller myself, I would be grateful if you would record the existence of this federation, which came into being when the National Council for the Travelling People voted to disband itself last November.

The federation is a really national organisation, with affiliated members from 23 counties, which comprise four or five times as many travellers as settled people. We have heard from people who were at the ITM meeting that most of those who attended were from Dublin and Navan, as were all those who spoke on Morning Ireland on ŔTE News and are quoted in the morning papers.

Our federation is so nation-wide that we are at present organising in regional meetings and will not be holding our first national conference until May. We travellers would differ very strongly with the ITM's placing of the ethnic nature of travellers at the top of their agenda, from which, as one of them said on the news recently, the solution to all our many problems will come.

We have made our priorities the promotion of travellers' rights to (1) accommodation of their choice, (2) access to education at all levels, (3) an end to discrimination against us, and (4) the establishment of real research into the origins of travelling people, which will prove whether or not we are an ethnic minority group. The majority of travellers regard themselves and want to be regarded as Irish Travellers, and we fear any further labels being attached to us until we are sure that they are real and will be of benefit to us in our fight to obtain our rights.

We have no quarrel with the ITM but we have very different aims and methods of achieving them, which is what caused the split in the first place within the National Council for Travelling People.

At our meetings nearly all the talking is done by travellers, no one tells us what to say, and the settled people whom we have asked to join us are those who have proved to us over many years of work with us in local areas that they have only the interestsof travellers at heart.

Yours, etc.,
MARY MORIARTY
National Federation of Irish Travelling People,
53 Dublin Road,
Tuam
Co.Galway

Datum 7

Working for Positive Change: Martin Ward

This is the fourth on our series of profile on activists that are working tirelessly for the rights of Travellers. The issue focuses on Martin Ward, who is manager of the Western Traveller and Intercultural Group (formerly Tuam Travellers Education Group), Chair of the National Association of Training Centres (NATC) and is also an elected councillor in Tuam, and will serve his second term as town mayor this year.

I am currently employed as manager of the Western Traveller and Intercultural Development Group. I have worked tirelessly to develop and strengthen this organisation. As I believe that a strong Traveller-led organisation is most important, for any area where work with and for Travellers is paramount, I am lucky in the sense that I have excellent support from all staff and board of Management.
To me work is a vocation not a job. I do care what happens to my fellow Travellers, and at times I, like everyone, can feel frustrated that issues are not moving or being dealt with fast enough. Issues such as employment, Accommodation, Discrimination, Youth, Education, and of course there are many more concerns.
But as the same time, we have built up a positive relationship with the VEC, Co. Council, FÁS and other relevant bodies and a lot of positive work is on-going in my area of the county.
I, as a Traveller, and elected councillor in my own area, have and am dealing with all the above. I am the incoming Mayor of Tuam Town Council this June. I last served the term as mayor in 2004/2005 I found that year extremely busy. I am glad to say that my fellow Councillors were and are supportive.
I am currently Chair of the National Association of Traveller Training Centres (NATC). I am also involved in 18 more committees both local, regional and national, most of these committees can and do have a positive impact on Travellers. I believe that education is the way forward for Travellers and I feel the sooner Travellers consider this and take it seriously the better for us all. I am currently doing a Business and Enterprise course with the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology. I have previously completed courses such as a Diploma in Community Development with NUI Galway and a Cert in Youth Work studies. I have also attended other courses as I believe that learning and education is for life. I am proud of my Traveller background and I find many young Travellers are more aware of their culture and are also proud of the fact that they are Travellers. One of the questions I believe that has to be answered by Travellers is whether we, as a group, are an ethnic minority in Irish society or not? More and more Traveller groups are using this word, yet many Travellers are opposed to the concept. They are not clear on the meaning or do not have an understanding of this issue, I believe we have to look at the implications and or what benefits to us as a cultural group we will derive from it. I would call on Traveller organisations mainly NATC, Pavee Point and the ITM to discuss this with Travellers on the ground.

Datum 8

No: Travellers are not an ethnic minority, says Martin Ward

Ethnicity is a word that has been bandied around for the past 20 years or so.

To different people it has different meanings and connotations.

Ethnicity is something that cannot be dealt with lightly and has to be viewed in a serious manner.

There are Traveller organisations and individuals who believe that Travellers are an ethnic minority in Irish society.

Their argument goes on to state that the British Government has recognised the Irish Travellers as an ethnic minority, as we meet all the credentials, common ancestors, common language, common religion, common history and it goes on. But the settled Irish have the very same recognition under British law and the same criteria apply to our fellow Irishmen and women. I also wonder at this stage why the Scottish Travellers have not been provided with the same recognition? Is it because they are Scottish and recognised as this by their British counter-parts? Would this be the very same reason that the Irish government has not provided the Irish Travellers with this very same status?

I believe in debate and this is an issue for all Travellers.

The vast majority of Travellers are not concerned whether they are an ethnic minority within Irish society. To the ordinary Traveller they haven't a clue what it means to most it would be the last thing on their mind. I know it is to mine.

There are more pressing issues and concerns and I believe we need to focus on these important concerns. What difference will it make to us as a people? I believe if provided it will be just another label.

I am proud of my Irish and Traveller heritage but I also believe I have a responsibility to my Irish roots and I intend to protect that. Going the route of ethnicity will do more damage than good. There are people within Irish society who would prefer if we were not recognised as true Irish. I have no intention of playing the ethnicity card which many may interpret as disrespectful to our true Irish heritage.

Datum 9

Ethnic status would not be good for Travellers

Dear

There is an agenda being pursued by three of the so-called National Traveller Organisations to have Travellers identified as an Ethnic minority. This is happening without a real debate within the Traveller community. The majority of Travellers would, I believe, not have a clue what ethnicity means and it is not an issue that is raised at local level. I attended a meeting with the NATC (National Association of Traveller Centres) and the Dept of Rural and Gaeltacht affairs and the Dept of Justice recently. We discussed the issue in relation to ethnicity and put different views across and individual positions were also discussed.

My position currently is that I would not welcome Travellers being recognised as such as I believe it's just another label. I also have a fear that we then would be put into the same category as other minority groups, who then would have to be recognised as an ethnic group also and Travellers being such a small group would definitely lose

out. I am aware Minister Mary White is having a position paper drawn up on the whole subject, and she with her department will look at all views. The biggest concern I have is that this could happen without members of the Traveller community having a real say on the issue, the other national groups have not had any dialogue with Travellers in relation to this important issue, they have decided to plough ahead regardless.

NATC currently have no position on this debate which needs to happen. The Tuam group Western Traveller and Intercultural Development do not support ethnicity and would be wary of its introduction. We will inform local Travellers about this issue which is being forced on them without their consent.

I strongly believe that the national Traveller organisations should deal with real issues such as anti-social behaviour, accommodation, training and employment. I would like to state also that the closure of Traveller Education Centres was advocated by these same Traveller groups. The lone voice which opposed this was NATC, and the consequences of the reduction in participant places and the closure of some centres is having a negative effect on the most marginalised Travellers at present. We did try to make people aware of this; this will set some Travellers back another decade without effective educational and training intervention. I also believe that these organisations should advocate what Travellers want, not be running with their own agendas. I have to state that since their proposals were accepted by the Dept of Education, the special Traveller initiatives are completely gone, for example the following services are completely gone or being phased out in the near future: Traveller Preschool Service, Visiting Teachers Service, Resource Teachers, School Transport Service, Senior Traveller Training Centres. In relation to education there have been terrible effects on the whole community, but Traveller Education initiatives have been completely wiped out.

Yours,

Martin Ward

Brú Bhríde

Tuam