REPRESENTATIONS OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

IN THE IRISH PRINT MEDIA

By

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Chapter One

Introduction

"The modern multicultural, multicoloured world has finally hit Dublin and we can no longer see Ireland as a green pasture packed with white faces" (Gray, 1998:9)

This study examines media representation of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland. The research is based on a detailed content analysis and discourse analysis of media coverage of the issues involved in immigration in five national newspapers over selected periods. The contention of this work is that much of new public opinion has originated from, and gradually gained strength through, the ideology of the Irish print media.

Immigration into Ireland is a relatively new phenomenon. Only in the last decade have significant numbers of asylum-seekers and refugees moved to Ireland, to a situation where, for the native population, actual contact with non-Irish people has been limited, because of the country's geographical isolation and its minimal experience with refugees from previous situations of civil strife. Much has changed in the past 5 years. Now one of the most talked about topics is the issue of immigration. Recent years in Ireland's history have been exceptional in this regard; from being in a permanent state of agitation, at times near hysteria, concerning emigration from the country since the foundation of the independent Irish state in 1921, we have moved in less than a decade, to being engrossed by the prospect of people wanting, actually choosing, to enter the state instead. How do we as a nation, well versed in emigration, and all that this phenomenon entails, react? In

times of emigration, Ireland lamented its loss of population, and again in the 'brain drain' in the 1980's. Curiously, in times of immigration, we have not witnessed a celebratory reaction from the population. In similarity with the British experience of immigration, the main problem with immigrants is that they "tend to be economically useful but socially unwelcome. Irish migrants to Britain and elsewhere have felt the impact of this status for over a century and a half". (MacGreil, 1996:136). This chapter will discuss the issues surrounding the transformation of Ireland's population from a "basically well-integrated, cohesive society with no great divisions of creed, class, colour or race," (Ryan, 1984) to a multicultural society in which refugees and asylum seekers have arrived in significant numbers.

Many Irish people argue that, because of our history of colonial domination, we are a more tolerant, welcoming and sympathetic society. However, if we study the history of Irish social policy towards refugees and asylum-seekers, it becomes obvious that the state has not always been as welcoming as we would like to imagine. Farrell Corcoran poses a very relevant question: "Given the general perception that we are a generous people, committed to higher than average financial contribution to overseas development programmes and disaster relief funds, how can we expect Ireland to be to inward migration, particularly to those displaced by civil turmoil in Africa and Eastern Europe?" (Corcaran, 2000:29) It seems that the answer may be that because refugees and asylum seekers are here to seek help, they are seen as 'taking from' the community as opposed to 'giving' to the community (this does not imply that they cannot give as well); they are representatives of our responsibilities of joining the global economy - responsibilities that

we are not sure we want. There is an opportunity to demonstrate good human rights practice, an opportunity for asylum seekers to contribute to Irish society both in terms of their skills and their culture, and an opportunity for Ireland to become a more pluralist and multicultural society. However, many people in Irish society have not embraced this opportunity. There is evidence to support the view that large proportions of our population have negative attitudes towards the refugees and asylum seekers arriving to this country. Indeed, events of the past few years have had a profound effect not only on asylum seekers but also on all members of ethnic minorities living in Ireland.

> Whether they are Irish citizens or not, non-white residents have borne the brunt of a heightened sensitivity about race and colour. Racial abuse has become almost commonplace, and the veneer that allowed Irish people believe they lived in a tolerant society has been stripped away (Cullen, 1999:45).

Representations of refugees and asylum seekers by the media and attitudes of the government have, to a significant extent, fuelled these negative attitudes. Gillespie claims that there are "alarming signals of a fortress mentality developing among the state and political elites involved in the negotiations, playing to attitudes of racism and xenophobia in response to recent immigration, so much so that one can legitimately ask whether EU policy is genuinely committed to protecting rather than excluding immigrants" (Gillespie, 1998:9) Indeed, Eilis Ward argues that "from the early years of the state, it was clear that Ireland never saw itself as offering a protective mantle to stateless persons". (Ward, 1996:132) This negative attitude towards displaced people can be seen as early as a 1945 Department of Justice memorandum which stated that

because Jews "do not become assimilated with the native population like other immigrants, there is a danger that any big increase in their numbers might create a social problem" (quoted in Ward 1996:133). In November 1956, Ireland signed the 1951 UN Convention on Status Relating to Refugees and agreed to accept a quota of Hungarian refugees. Subsequently, 539 Hungarians arrived in Ireland on the basis that "they would be suitable on grounds of race and religion, to ensure assimilation," (Ward, 1996:136) and were "literally dumped in disused army huts" in the middle of the Irish countryside. (McGovern, 1990:127). Ward points to the "unwillingness of the state to provide adequate housing, accommodation, work and schooling for the refugees". (Ward, 1996:140) In 1973 and 1974, 120 Chileans were accommodated here and in 1979 the Irish government decided to accept a quota of Vietnamese refugees. Once again, these people fared little better than the Hungarians - there was an absence of any resettlement strategy by the Irish government.

Since the early 1990s the Irish government has had to rethink its policy on refugees and asylum-seekers for various reasons. Firstly the state is obliged under the 1951 UN Convention and as a member state of the European Union to legislate for refugees. Secondly, the state has become more open in policy to programme refugees, such as the Bosnian Resettlement Programme and the recent Kosovan refugees, because of the widespread media coverage of the conflict in these areas and the public sympathy it aroused. In situations like this, the government must respond to the sympathies of the public. Finally, the numbers seeking asylum in this country have increased significantly from just 31 applications in 1991 to 10,938 applications in 2000. The applicants for

asylum are predominantly from Eastern Europe and Africa. The following table presents the figures for the countries of origin of the majority of refugees and asylum-seekers arriving in Ireland.

Table 1.

Applications for a declaration as a refugee - by nationality

Nationality	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Nigeria					1	9	665	1729	1895	3404
Romania	2	12	5	37	178	428	857	998	2226	2384
Czech Rep									23	403
DR Congo/Zaire			2	6	14	112	704	246	272	358
Moldova			17		7	8	43	32	275	388
Russia				13	11	53	110	83	175	327
Algeria				2	47	65	343	178	273	296
Ukraine			1	2	7	17	70	67	129	248
Poland				1	1	1	18	116	600	242
Sierra Leone			1				48	53	175	206
Kosovo			1	2	8	81	87	127	272	198
Angola					3	55	139	104	172	191
Lithuania				1	1		9	13	49	189
Bulgaria	1				1	3	39	31	111	153
South Africa				2	1		2	10	44	143
Somalia	2	1	6	6	30	139	258	75	123	138

(Figures supplied by the Department of Justice)

The increase in numbers seeking asylum seems dramatic and indeed has been used by some politicians and anti-immigration campaigners to ignite a moral panic about a small country being 'overwhelmed' by a 'tidal wave' of asylum seekers. In 1992, 39 people applied for asylum and 14 were approved; in 1997, 3,800 applied and 332 were approved. These figures are tiny by international comparison: the UK alone has a waiting list of 52,000. Various suggestions have been made as to why Ireland is experiencing this increase in immigration. Commentators cite the 'Celtic Tiger' economy of Ireland, the humanitarian work of Mary Robinson and the 'generous' social welfare payments as reasons why Ireland is attractive to would-be asylum-seekers. In trying to explain this increase, Paul Gillespie points to a changing pattern of population movement in Europe as a whole. He attributes this to "post-war period labour shortages, ex-colonial migratory flows and more recently the flow of refugees and asylum seekers from political collapse have, in western Europe, turned the tide and in the process have reversed the ethnic homogenisation of nation state populations" (1998,10).

Tony Champion and Russell King examine in greater depth the trends to be found in the wider European experience of migration.

> Europe is now being dramatically affected by new forms of international migration … Migration itself is an increasing global phenomenon, prompted by demographic, political and economic pressures which are expressing themselves at ever wider scales and greater intensities, leading to an increasing diverse set of geographical origins and causal contexts for the immigrants flowing into, or trying to enter, the countries of (mainly Western) Europe. In its turn migration has far reaching

implications for the countries involved, both directly through its impacts on population size, composition and geographical distribution and through its wider impacts on key policy areas such as labour supply, infrastructure, social welfare and cultural harmony (1993:45).

Their conclusion as to the causes of this increased migration is that:

The momentous political events of the last few years, the rise of 'post-Fordist' methods of production, the emergence of the 'information economy', the passage through the 'second demographic transition' towards the possibility of a declining population of native Europeans, and continued advances in global transport and communications constitute a powerful set of macro forces shaping migration flows... (1993:48).

The authors point out that three types of migration have been affecting Western Europe since the early 1980's,east-west migration, third world labour migrants, and refugees.

(A)East-West migration: The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of Communist rule in its former satellite states has created a potential migrant pool of approximately 430 million people (Champion & King, 1993:48). "The main reason for this migration potential lies in the large numbers of people being affected by economic hardship, as well as the possibility of political instability and ethnic discrimination" (Champion & King, 1993:49). The case of Yugoslavia graphically demonstrates the potential for population movement occasioned by political and ethnic upheaval.

(B)Third World labour migrants: Rising, and increasingly young, populations in Mediterranean countries bordering the EU such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and

Albania, are increasingly trying to gain entry to the EU through Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy. These latter countries are experiencing rapidly ageing populations and a dramatic decline in fertility rates. Overall a 1993 estimate indicated possibly 3 million immigrants in the countries of southern Europe that "only 20-30 years ago were countries of mass emigration" (Champion & King, 1993:51). Once within the EU "these migrants could readily move to other EU countries" (Champion & King, 1993:51).

(C)Refugees: Champion & King point out that it can be a difficult task to differentiate between refugees and labour migrants, and "that many European governments believe that political refugees are merely labour migrants in disguise" (Champion & King, 1993:51). Yet during the "1990s the plight of refugees has seldom been out of the public eye" (Champion & King, 1993:51) with widely reported dislocations of people caused by wars in the Middle East, the former Yugoslavia and beyond. Despite the efforts of the EU to reduce the number of asylum seekers applying for refugee status the actual figures continued to rise in the early 1990s and seem set to continue to do so.

Adrienne Collins detects a worrying trend emerging from this desire of EU governments to reduce the numbers of asylum seekers and refugees being dealt with, "as governments address issues relating to refugees in terms of immigration control, while human rights issues are sidelined" (1997:97) Many of these developments, in the early to mid 1990s, seemed to be peripheral or even irrelevant to Ireland and Irish interests. However, according to Breda Gray, "The shift from emigration to immigration is, indeed, an

epochal change in European social history over the last 50 years. Perfectly understandably, because of Ireland's belated development, it is only now directly affecting this country" (Gray, 1998:66).

Whatever the various reasons there are for migration to western Europe and to Ireland in particular, Eilis Ward argues that "when the figures began to dramatically change, the state was ill equipped to deal with, and institutionally ignorant of, the complex needs of asylum seekers." (1998:48) Because of the increase in numbers applying for refugee status in Ireland, the Irish government has had to incorporate new legislation for refugees, culminating in the Refugee Act, 1996. The most important and most powerful influence on refugee policy comes from the Minister for Justice and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. State agencies are also developers of social policy in their role as providers of services. The Eastern Health Board provides an example of this with the setting up of the Refugee unit to meet the basic income maintenance, accommodation and health needs of asylum seekers. The most influential government agency in the development of social policy for refugees since its establishment in 1991 has been the Refugee Agency. This agency has commissioned research on the language needs of refugees and is currently establishing an independent refugee housing association to respond to the housing needs of refugees with a status.

According to Joe Moran, "The basis of all refugee policy, including social policy for refugees, is protection. Protection, at its most fundamental, is immediate physical safety

and security. In terms of social policy this is reflected in the state's response to these basic needs by making policy decisions on the provision of shelter and food" (Moran, 1999:276). This protection is offered to all persons seeking refuge in Ireland, this is the basic provision which is made for all. Whether or not a person receives more benefits or becomes integrated in Irish society depends on the status of that person. In Ireland there are different approaches to asylum-seekers, refugees and programme refugees. The definitions of these terms as offered by the Refugee Agency Report 1996 are:

1. **Programme Refugee** - a person who has been invited to Ireland on foot of a government decision in response to humanitarian requests from bodies such as the United Nations High commission on Refugees (UNCHCR)

2. **Asylum Seeker** - a person who seeks to be recognised as a refugee in accordance with the terms of the 1951 convention relating to the status of Refugees

3. **Refugee** - a person who fulfils the requirements of the definition of a refugee under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

It seems in Ireland that there is priority policy in terms of what the state has to offer to refuge seekers. Programme refugees get first priority, then refugees and lastly asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are given only the most basic requirements of accommodation, food and basic welfare payments, because the state argues that "as asylum seekers are allowed to stay in the state only on a temporary basis while their claim is being processed it would be inappropriate for the state to give aid to non-nationals to assist integration into the state" (Department of Justice information leaflet, 1996:6). For those with refuge

status, the objectives of social policy are to meet basic requirements of food, shelter, health care etc and to resettle and integrate refugees. According to Joe Moran, "The principles on which these objectives should be built are protection, the prevention of marginalisation and isolation, the promotion of meaningful lives, and the promotion of equal opportunities". (1999:287). He argues that successful integration is fundamental if living meaningful lives is to be achieved. For O'Regan successful integration means that "the refugee is able to participate to the extent that he/she needs and wishes in all of the major components of the new society without having to relinquish his or her own identity". (1998:121)

One of the most contentious aspects of Irish government policy regarding refugees and asylum seekers is that of dispersal. This policy refers to the process whereby those seeking refuge are dispersed to towns and communities around the country. The people in question have no choice as to where they will be located; the decision is at the discretion of the government. Before the policy of dispersal was in place, refugees and asylum seekers were concentrated in the inner city of Dublin in particular. This compounded the problems suffered by the most disadvantaged of Dublin's population. The areas of Dublin where disadvantage was most prevalent were the same areas where refugees on rent supplements located themselves as these areas were usually the most affordable.

According to Jason King, the "tenor of recent refugee legislation and thrust of public opinion has been predominantly negative in tone towards asylum seekers, refugees, and

economic aliens, and was engendered under the sign of crisis" (1998:50). He points out

that the main reason for the 'speedy passage' of Ireland's Immigration Bill, 1999,

according to the Minister of State for Justice, Mary Wallace, was the need to protect Irish

society form the "inflows of criminal elements" (Irish Times, July 2, 1999). From this it

can be noted that the media are not solely responsible for manipulating public opinion

and stigmatising refugees and asylum seekers. Both the government and the media are

agents of associating immigrants to Ireland "not with human rights violations but

economic survival strategies, competition of limited resources and outright opportunism,

as the 'spillover' of other nation's poverty puts Ireland's capacity to sustain its own

populace under strain" (King, 1998:52).

There is currently much confusion and lack of clarity about the whole issue of

immigration in Ireland. It appears that the Irish government failed to successfully plan for

the imminent rise in immigration to this country. Also it appears to be the case that

legislation has been put in place as a response to immigration and not in anticipation of it.

As a result of this, the population of Ireland and the refugees and asylum seekers

themselves can easily lose track of progress in policy. Joe Moran argues that the "Irish

social policy for refugees has been to date ad hoc and lacking in strategic management or

planning...[this] can add to the already widespread confusion which exists about refugees

in the public mind and amongst service providers". (1999:282) There are still many myths

surrounding the whole issue of immigration that the Irish population believe. One such

myth is perpetuated by the repeated outcry that refugees and asylum seekers are 'spongers'

or 'scamming'. This myth is prevalent precisely because the government has been slow to

inform the public at large about the difference in status between refugees and asylum seekers. The public needs to be informed more clearly that asylum seekers are not allowed to work while their application for refugee status is being processed.

Another argument that groups such as the Immigration Control Platform put forward is the idea that refugees and asylum seekers somehow have freely chosen to leave their country of origin. Irish citizens who are against immigrants in significant numbers seem to be more aware of the 'pull' factors into Ireland than the 'push' factors from their countries of origin. The 'pull' factors include the welfare system, the labour shortage, the 'Celtic Tiger'. There appears to be a general consensus that refugees are poor, which supports the view that they 'choose' to come to Ireland because of the 'booming economy'.

Refugee-related issues appear on the Irish media agenda only in recent years and the spread of opinion is similar to that found in other Western European countries. The tabloid press veers periodically towards inciting moral panics, with headlines which go far beyond the content of their stories ('Refugee Rapist on the Rampage!' 'Refugee gang bust!' 'Refugees housed in top Dublin hotels!') but nevertheless play a significant role in information processing from newspapers by programming readers with a preferred reading and interpretative plan. A biased representation of refugees is less obvious in the broadsheet press but analysis of its discourse reveals linguistic subtleties that corroborate many of Van Dijk's (1991) conclusions about racism and the press elsewhere. According to Paul Cullen, "the response of the Irish media to the arrival of large numbers of asylum seekers in recent years has been characterised by inconsistencies, inaccuracies,

exaggerations and generalisations. In their search to find stories to fill a quiet news-day, newspapers have on numerous occasions denigrated an entire category of vulnerable people" (1999:37)

It is very normal to find refugees discursively positioned as helpless people leading joyless lives, passively depending on state institutions. Rarely are they seen as active agents who speak up for themselves and rarely are they referred to as potential contributors to Irish society, as professionals or employment providers. In the absence of such points of view, the contrast between 'us' and 'them' gets sharper and there emerges the deeply-rooted racist ideology, discursively linked to aspects of globalised television imagery, that depicts immigrants as 'sponger' groups, forming a semi-permanent underclass of unassimilated foreigners, living parasitically off the hard work of the natives.

Although the numbers of refugees coming to Ireland are comparatively small, it seems that many people have accepted media representations, which have used the 'flood' metaphor to describe the recent increase in refugee numbers. Furthermore, many people seem to believe that refugees coming to this country are acquiring income by illegitimate means: by exploiting the social welfare system and begging, even though they have independent resources. As Philip Curry points out, "many people believe that most refugees coming to Ireland are bogus fortune hunters...potential for welcome appears to be countered by beliefs that suggest that most refugees are undeserving and counterfeit" (1998: 146).

This research aims to deconstruct the Irish media's representation of refugees and asylum seekers, employing the methodologies of content analysis and discourse analysis. The study will demonstrate and analyse the ideology behind the print media and will present examples of some of the ways in which the issue of immigration in Ireland is represented. As already pointed out the Irish print media is not solely responsible for manipulating public opinion on this issue. However, it is clear that the media has a powerful role to play in setting agendas of discussion for the Irish public. This study was inspired by a desire on the part of the researcher to analyse newspaper articles concerning the issues surrounding immigration in order to gain an insight into the dominant ideology behind each newspaper's façade.

Chapter Two

Review of the literature

The literature on press reporting of minority issues has drawn attention to several theoretical aspects of communication. Authors point to abstract concepts such as language, discourse, representation, ideology, consensus and power, which operate in often hidden and subtle ways in the media. Available literature on the print media's treatment of immigration issues also points to the various ways in which newspapers represent immigrants in a manner which may reflect the dominant ideology of the newspaper groups. This chapter will provide an overview of what the supporting literature has to say about the media – both Irish and European and how it represents the topic of immigration.

Language

The recognition that language is not merely a reflection or expression of social processes and practices but a *part* of those processes and practices has been highlighted by the supporting literature. It has long been recognised that the use of particular language contributes to the representation of an issue or a group of people. Norman Fairclough, in *Language and Power,* observed that "the exercise of power in modern society is increasingly achieved through ideology (ideology will be discussed at a later stage) and more particularly through the ideological workings of language" (Fairclough 1989:2). He argues that language is a part of society, and not somehow external to it, and that language is a socially conditioned process.

Stuart Hall argues that representation is inseparable from language: "In language we use signs and symbols...to stand for or to represent to other people our concepts, ideas and feelings...representation through language is therefore central to the processes by which meaning is produced" (1997:1). M.A.K.Halliday, a key figure in critical linguistics, is concerned with "language as an institution, as a vehicle and a symbol for the social structure" (1978:181). Like Halliday, Roger Fowler in *Language in the News* regards language as essentially active and constitutive rather than merely reflective of a pre-existing social 'reality'" (1986:26). Fowler also accepts Halliday's proposition that all language simultaneously performs three functions:

1. the *ideational* (communicating information, ideas, thoughts and opinions),

2. the *Interpersonal* (expressing relations between or among participants); and

3. the *textual* (whereby language 'makes links with itself and with the situation and discourse becomes possible" (Fowler 1991:69; quoting Halliday 1971:334).

For the purposes of this research the first and second functions are most relevant "since critical linguistics is particularly concerned with the ordering of experience and with the mediation of social relationships and values" (1991:69). Fowler goes on to provide a number of 'analytic tools' relating to the ideational and interpersonal functions of language, some of which will be discussed at a later stage. These 'tools' include transitivity, for example the use of nominalization in headlines of articles, which include passive verbs such as 'allegation' or 'development' etc. lexicalisation, another 'analytic tool' refers to "the existence of a word for a concept...and of sets of words for families of concepts" (Fowler 1986:151). Fowler argues that the type or number of words that relate to a given concept can give us insights into significant features of the culture and society

in question. An example that he offers is the use of overlexicalisation - the use "of a profusion of terms for an object or concept" (such as 'refugee', 'asylum seeker', 'immigrant', 'economic migrant'). Fowler argues that lexicalisation is "an integral part of the reproduction of ideology" and is "the basis of discriminatory practice when dealing with so-called 'groups' of people as 'women', 'young people', 'ethnic minorities', and so forth" (1991:84).

With regard to the *interpersonal* function of language, one aspect which Fowler highlights is *modality*. Modality refers to the 'comment' or 'attitude' of the source of the text and is either explicit or implicit in the stance taken by the writer. He outlines four types:

1. *truth* (what has happened, is happening or will happen);

2. *obligation* (what 'ought to' or 'must happen');

3. *permission* (something 'may' or 'can' happen) and

4. *desirability* (implicit in obligation or permission but also capable or being communicated explicitly, for example 'it would be right/wrong/wonderful etc. if something were to happen'.

Fairclough (1989), argues that implicit authority claims such as 'we must' or 'we should', perhaps found most often in editorial or opinion columns, make modality a matter of ideological interest. This grammatical device gives the impression that the paper is speaking on behalf of itself, its readers, and indeed all 'right-minded' citizens. Finally, Fowler warns against an overliteral application of the above 'analytic tools' because "a preponderance of passives, for instance, or of clauses lacking in human agents, or of

generic sentences, plural nouns, or whatever, will mean one thing in one context and another in another" (1981:90).

Discourse

Another theoretical aspect of communication is discourse. Analysis of discourse takes us beyond the formal analysis of the workings of language towards an analysis of the rules and practices which shape and govern what we say. Stuart Hall defines discourse as:

> Ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic or practice: a cluster (or *formation)* of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of thinking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society...'Discursive' has become the general term used to refer to any approach in which meaning, representation and culture are considered to be constitutive (Hall 1997:6).

So discourse is comprised of a body of knowledge or a set of ideas about a particular phenomenon or topic. This research, therefore, will explore the knowledge or ideas about 'refugees' and 'asylum-seekers' which 'circulate' in society, especially as reflected in the media. Foucault argues in *Power/Knowledge* that each society has its own "types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true" (Foucault 1980:131). The discourse of a society is perhaps generated or originates from the dominant institutions or elites in society. This will be discussed shortly. Foucault argues further that discourse is "embodied not only in theoretical texts or empirical instruments but also in a whole set of practices and institutions" (1997:7). In the case of refugees and asylum seekers, for example, the discursive knowledge is embodied in the media, the government, the prison

system, the social care services and so on. In all of these cases, there are complex institutions, which embody sets of ideas about refugees and asylum-seekers. Therefore, as Van Dijk argues, "discourse plays a crucial role in ideological formulation, in communicative reproduction, in the social and political decision procedures and in the institutional management and representation of social issues" (1985:7). According to Roger Fowler, discourse is ideology which originates socially and institutionally and is encoded in language. He argues that "Sun readers might not be able to write like a Sun leader writer, but in a real sense they know the discourse and its meanings in advance" (Fowler 1991:44).

Representation

This brings us to another theoretical aspect of communication that has been highlighted in sociological writings - representation. The study of representation in the media must begin with recognition of the fact that the media select events for reporting. Real events are no intrinsically newsworthy - events only become 'news' when selected for inclusion in news reports. Therefore, selection of news immediately gives us a partial view of the world. Roger Fowler argues that "selection is accompanied by transformation, differential treatment in presentation according to numerous political, economic and social factors" and shows a realisation that "the world of the Press is not the real world, but a world skewed and judged" (Fowler 1991:11). According to Stuart Hall, representation is the process by which members of a culture use language to produce meaning. Hall rejects the notion that language *reflects* meaning in favour of the notion that meaning is *produced* or constructed - thereby placing the responsibility for the

production of meaning with the audience (1997:24,25). This notion is derived from the work of Ferdinand Saussure who pointed to the 'arbitrariness' of 'signs' or 'words' (Saussure: 1960). This recognition of the arbitrary nature of the 'sign' opens representation to the constant changing of meanings, "to the constant production of new meanings, new interpretations" (Hall, 1997:32). So the representation of a particular topic or phenomenon may be negative or positive, depending on how an individual interprets the various arbitrary 'signs'. This recognition of 'unfixed meaning' may account for the interpretation, for instance, of a newspaper article as displaying a negative representation of refugees, even if the article is written with the best of intentions.

Ideology

Perhaps one of the most prevalent aspects of communication which the various authors have examined is the concept of ideology. Many authors who have studied ideology have a particular interest in exploring how ideas can actually sustain and reproduce *systems of domination,* relations of unequal power. Eagleton argues that ideology is "a set of discursive strategies for legitimating a dominant power" (1994:8). According to John B. Thompson, ideology refers to "the ways in which meaning serves, in particular circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical - what I shall call 'relations of domination'" (Thompson, 1990:7). He goes on to provide a schematic outline of ideology's 'modes of operation'. Five modes of operation are suggested: legitimation, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation and reification. Illustrated overleaf is Thompson's table of these 'modes' and an explanation

of these terms follows. These explanations are scarcely expanded by the author as Thompson offers a very good explanation of the 'modes of operation' himself.

Table 2.1

General modes of operation	Some typical strategies of symbolic construction
Legitimation	Rationalisation Universalisation Narrativisation
Dissimulation	Displacement Euphemisation Trope (Synecdoche, metanymy, metaphor)
Unification	Standardisation Symbolisation of unity
Fragmentation	Differentiation Expurgation of the other
Reification	Naturalisation Eternalisation Nominalisation/ passivisation

Modes of operation of ideology

(Source: Thompson 1990:60)

Ideology which gives *legitimation* to an existing system of relations of domination may do so by Rationalisation ('it's reasonable'; 'it makes sense'), Universalisation ('it's in all our interests'), or narratavisation ('it's part of our tradition, part of the way we are'). *Dissimulation* (whereby relations of domination are hidden) can take the form of displacement (transferring attributes associated with one person, group or object to another), Euphemisation (the use of more favourable or positive designation) or a trope - i.e. a figurative use of language - such as a metaphor (application of a term or phrase which is not literally true).

Unification attempts to give individuals a sense of collective identity. *Fragmentation,* however, involves differentiation (emphasising particular types of difference or distinction) and expurgation of the other ('casting out' of the enemy). Finally, *reification* presents relations of domination as inevitable through such strategies as Naturalisation ('that's just the way it is'), Eternalisation ('that's the way it always has been, and always will be') or such grammatical devices as Nominalisation and passivisation, which serve to "delete actors and agency" (1990:66).

Norman Fairclough argues that the "operation of ideology can be seen in terms of ways of constructing texts which constantly and cumulatively 'impose assumptions' upon text interpreters *and* text producers, typically without either being aware of it" (1989:83). An example which he gives of this imposition of assumptions is when a journalist begins an article with *The Soviet Threat to Western Europe...*, the journalist presupposed there *is* a Soviet threat. (Fairclough, 1989). He goes on to argue that ideology is most effective

when its workings are least visible. He believes that "invisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as the background assumptions which on the one hand lead the text producer to 'textualise' the world in a particular way, and on the other hand lead the interpreter to interpret the text in a particular way" (1989:85) and concludes that "ideology works through disguising its nature, pretending to be what it isn't" (1989:92).

According to Frank Reeves in *British Racial Discourse*, "ideology is a discursive system seeking to justify a particular state of affairs or course of action"; "and ideology is a relatively enduring set of publicly expressed beliefs" (1983:32,33). He argues that "descriptions, evaluations and prescriptions are combined together to convince the audience that the means and ends of certain social behaviour and, in particular, political behaviours are right (or wrong)" (1983:32). He refers to the process of justification manifested in ideology and to the effects of justification which can 'legitimate' a course of behaviour. Roger Fowler concludes that "because the institutions of news reporting and presentation are socially, economically and politically situated, all news is always reported from some particular angle. Anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position" (1991:5). In an influential essay on the 'rediscovery of ideology' in media studies (1982), Stuart Hall highlights the ways in which the mass media help to 'shape the whole ideological environment' so as to make certain things - systems, structures, relationships - seem 'universal, natural'. He adds:

This movement - towards the winning of a universal validity and legitimacy for accounts of the world which are partial and particular, and towards the grounding of these particular constructions in the taken-for-grantedness of the 'real' - is indeed the characteristic and defining mechanism of 'the ideological' (1982:65).

Hall argues that newspapers need to make events intelligible by invoking background 'frames of reference' which embody certain key assumptions about society and how it works. One pervasive set of assumptions is captured by the term 'consensualism':

Consensus

'Consensual' views of society represent society as if there are no major cultural or economic breaks, no major conflicts of interest between classes and groups. Whatever disagreements exist, it is said, there are legitimate and institutionalised means for expressing and reconciling them (Hall et al.1978: 55). This means that there is a pattern to what items get covered and what gets *said* about what gets covered or what is not said. Hall argues that the ideology of the coverage is usually invisible, "unless we deliberately set out to ask, 'what, other than what has been said about this topic, *could* be said?' 'What questions are omitted?' 'Why do certain other questions never appear?'" (Hall et al.1978:65). Not all newspapers adopt the same stance on given issues or topics, but each paper will use a characteristic 'mode of address', determined largely by its perception of its own readership. The language used tends to be *"The newspaper's own version of the language of the public to whom it is principally addressed"* (Hall et al.1978: 61). Each newspaper, therefore, has a distinctive 'public idiom'.

According to Roger Fowler, the ideology of consensus - 'everyone agrees that', is political and economic in origin; "it springs from the need of government and business to relate to a population which (a) in general terms accepts the rightness of the status quo and (b) holds certain specific beliefs (the values of family life, for example)" (Fowler, 1991:52). 'Consensus' assumes that within a group, there is no difference or disunity in the interests and values of any of the population. Consensus is built around a set of beliefs or values, and not facts. Fowler argues that "whether of not the interests of workers and of capitalists do actually coincide, consensus stipulates that they do" and believes that "articulating the ideology of consensus is a crucial practice in the Press' management of its relations with the government and capital on the one hand and with individual readers, on the other" (Fowler, 1991: 52). Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Muriel G. Cantor in *Media, Audience and Social Structure,* offer the Neo-Durkheimian school of thought which argues that "the experience of audiences with the mass media provides people with a sense of connection to the collective whole that few other institutions today can rival" (1986:73). So it seems that the social values which are most underlined in newspapers are consensual and supportive of the status quo. News has a nationalistic and ethnocentric bias in the choice of topics and opinions expressed and in the view of the world assumed or portrayed. This can mean, by implication, that minorities become differentially marginalised, ignored or stigmatised.

Another important strategy or feature of consensualism is that of the construction of the 'other' - those who are *different* from 'us'. The paradox of consensualism is that the maintenance of the image of society as harmonious relies to a large extent on the idea of a

sense of community, of shared identity, of (usually unspoken) 'we' or 'us'; but this very idea itself, relies for its effectiveness on a set of shared assumptions (again usually unspoken) about the 'other'. There appears to be a pattern to the way in which the difference or otherness of a variety of groups is represented.

Hall draws attention to a number of features, which characterise what he calls 'the spectacle of the other'. One such feature is the structuring of images and representations according to a set of binary oppositions. One example he offers of this feature is the opposition between qualities or attributes of 'us' on the one hand and 'them' on the other, e.g. opposition between 'civilisation' (white) and 'savagery' (black) (1997b:243).

Roger Fowler also examines the paradox or contradiction of consensualism: "the 'we' of consensus narrows and hardens into a population which sees its interests as culturally and economically valid, but as threatened by a 'them'" (1991:51). He argues that stories in newspapers, which exemplify the negative attitudes and behaviours, thought to be characteristic of 'them' (e.g. deviants, refugees, 'perverts', 'subversives', etc) seem to be more newsworthy than everyday stories of normal folk. In addition, he asks, "why do the papers affirm a united Britain, while daily vilifying large numbers of its population?" (1991:54).

Power

Theoretical concepts such as ideology, language, representation and consensus are all, to a very large extent, governed and nurtured by the dominant institutions and elites in

society. Denis McQuail, in *Mass Communication Theory,* argues that "the media, by commission or omission, do tend to serve the interest of those who already have more political and economic power in society, especially where these are in a position to use the media for their objectives" (McQuail, 1983:121). Ball-Rokeach and Cantor put forward the view of neo-Marxists who argue that the media are "'hegemonic', persuasive rather than coercive, and vital rather than supplementary to ruling-class power" (Cantor & Ball-Rokeach, 1986: 71). According to them, the media often operate subtly, not by pounding propaganda into people's consciousness, but by creating a commonsense understanding of the world.

Anthony Piepe et al., in *Mass Media and Cultural Relationships,* state that "Press ownership and control in Britain is wholly capitalistic, and its editorial outlook is, on the whole, conservative. Television tends to present news and current affairs in evaluative contexts which support the status quo" (Piepe et al.1978:43). Norman Fairclough highlights what he calls the '*hidden* power' in media discourse: "The media operate as a means for the expression and reproduction of the power of the dominant class and bloc. And the mediated power of existing power-holders is also a *hidden* power, because it is implicit in the practices of the media rather than being explicit" (Fairclough, 1989:51). He further argues that it is very obvious that the sources used for newspaper articles are not equally representative of all social groupings in the population and concludes that the "balance of sources, perspectives and ideology is overwhelmingly in favour of existing power-holders" (1989:51). Van Dijk claims that "ethnic minority group members... are shown in stereotypical roles and situations, with prevailing negative evaluations, and

from a dominant perspective, if they are represented at all" (1987:40). According to Roger Fowler, the most convenient sources for journalists to consult are institutions and persons with official authority and/or financial power; "'accessed voices' are the views and styles of a privileged body of politicians. These sources provide the newspapers with modes of discourse which already encode the attitudes of a powerful elite" (Fowler, 1991:49). Finally, Michael Schudson notes that "the media provide not thoughts but a background for thinking that makes it possible for ruling groups to win genuine consent without using brute force" (Schudson, cited in Ball-Rokeach and Cantor (eds.), 1986: 73).

News is not a natural phenomenon emerging straight from 'reality', but a product. It reflects, and in return shapes, the prevailing values of a society. News reports are not immutable, unchanging and obvious. They do not 'report themselves'. News reports may be manipulated, manufactured and suppressed. With regard to reporting on ethnic minority issues, the media - the Press in particular, may present images which reflect the view or ideology of the news reporter or the dominant institutions and elites.

Media representation of immigrants in Britain and other countries

Having recognised the existence of a dominant ideology behind newspapers, it becomes necessary to discover the manner in which this dominant ideology manifests itself in news reporting. Newspapers make people aware of certain topics, and suggest the degree of importance that different events and issues have by the amount and prominence of coverage that they give them. One of the earliest research into the area of media and ethnic minority reporting was carried out by Paul Hartmann and Charles Husband in 1974

on newspaper coverage of immigration and race relations in Britain. They observed that race in Britain was portrayed as being concerned mainly with immigration and the control of entry of coloured people to the country, with relations between white and coloured groups, with discrimination and hostility between groups, with legislation, and with the politician, Enoch Powell. They proposed that one effect of this emerging news framework has been that the perspective within which coloured people are presented as ordinary members of society has become increasingly overshadowed by a news perspective in which they are presented as a problem (1974:144). On the basis of their research (this research included detailed content analysis of British newspapers and also interviews with subjects to determine if and how public opinion is derived from media representations), they noticed that although prejudice and discrimination were commonly condemned and deplored in the Press and much of the editorial comment showed a concern for improving race relations, the subjects whom they interviewed "had a very strong sense derived from the media, that coloured people represent a problem and a threat, expressed particularly in concern over immigrant numbers, the possibility of trouble and over resentments and anxieties" (1974:145). This theme of threat is reiterated once more when the authors argue that "while maintaining on the one hand the visibility and vitality of official egalitarian values, news coverage has tended to emphasise those aspects of the situation in which coloured people appear essentially as a threat and a problem" (1974:146).

Indeed, the idea that foreign people constitute a social threat has become one of the unspoken assumptions of the news framework. This is an aspect of reporting on ethnic

minorities that many authors have emphasised. Cohen & Young draw attention to the importance of 'news value' for reporters when selecting stories and they realise that stories of conflict, threat and deviancy all make news. They argue that events that carry or can be given connotations of conflict or threat are more newsworthy than others. They ague that "the way race-related material is handled by the mass media serves both to perpetuate negative perceptions of blacks and to define the situation as one of intergroup conflict" (1973:291). UNESCO published the results of a content analysis of headlines dealing with racial matters in the British press in 1973. This research found that words to do with conflict occurred in association with the word race 18% of the time and violent words were associated with the word race 15% of the time. Examples they gave of this included 'Race Hate' and 'Race Clash'. The study suggested that such combinations of words presented race in the context of trouble, perhaps creating an image of race as a problem. Similarly. Hartmann and Husband found in their research, that 'race' was frequently combined in headlines with 'conflict' or 'violent' words, so that race came to be associated with hostility, violence and dispute. Gurevitch et al, in *Culture, Media and Society,* that "the news framework is constructed around the problem of the black presence and within it news values revolve around conflict and tension" (1982:285).

Critics of media coverage argue that there has been undue concentration on the manifestations of tension and conflict in the reporting of racial minorities in the British Press. Van Dijk (1984) believes that "news makers tend to favour negative topics for groups and countries that are ideologically or ethnically distant, different or deviant" and argues further that "the standard news items about ethnic minority groups imply or

suggest that minorities cause social, cultural and economic 'problems' for the dominant (white) in-group" (1984:361). Troyna, in *Public Awareness and the Media,* (1981) concluded that contrary to 1960s reporting, the news focus in the mid-1970s changed from immigration problems to problems perceived to result form the presence of these immigrants in the country. So, qualitatively, the coverage essentially remained the same: from an 'external threat', minorities now became treated as 'the outsider within'.

Based on their research on the German Press, Ruhrmann and Kellmer (1987), found that local papers constructed foreigners as criminals, as a threat to national German resources, as a problem, and as essentially passive in their decisions and behaviour. They concluded that crime and violence were major issues associated with immigrant workers, especially Turks. In conclusion to the theme of threat and conflict, Van Dijk argues that "from the point of view of a 'white man's world', minorities and other Third World peoples are generally categorised as 'them', and opposed to 'us' and, especially in Western Europe, as not belonging, if not as an aberration, in 'white society" (1991:21).

Many critics of minority reporting observe that the media have concentrated on the threat perceived by the white majority to be implicit in immigration. They observe, too, that the media has neglected the extent of discrimination and disadvantage experienced by immigrants and black people except in so far as these very conditions seem to contribute towards the supposed threat, for example, by fostering anti-social behaviour. This observation is borne out by Dennis Howitt, in *Mass Media and Social Problems,* who observes that "the mass media are cited as sources of ideas about the *problems* caused by

coloured people more frequently than as sources of *knowledge about good things* about the black immigrant" (1982:108). Van Dijk, similarly, notices that minorities continue "to be associated with a restricted number of stereotypical topics, such as immigration problems, crime, violence...and ethnic relations" (1991:245).

Many writers draw attention to the fact that new reporting on minorities will emphasise themes of threat and conflict without equally emphasising the underlying reasons for such conflict. Hartmann and Husband observe that the American news media respond quickly and with keen interest to the conflicts and controversies of the racial story but "for the most part disregard the problems that seethe beneath the surface until they erupt in the hot steam that is a 'live story'" (1974:149). They point to the media's failure to provide background information to reports on minorities; the failure to delve beneath the news to discover the underlying conditions which may cause conflict. Again, Hartmann and Husband show a recognition of the fact that "the underlying processes of urban living and the 'reasons' for prejudice and discontent are on these criteria less amenable to manipulation into good news items than are manifestations of violence, crime and individual tragedy which are the more visible symptoms" (1974:159).

Jensen and Jankowski, in *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication* (1991), also notice that it is characteristic of a right-wing tabloid that little attention is paid to the social or political background of the events, whereas relatively many insignificant details are given. What Galtung & Ruge (1965) have called 'personification' refers to the tendency of the news media to present events in a way which

sets persons or groups of people as the focus of attention and enables the events to be explained as resulting from the actions of individuals. Perhaps this tendency is demonstrated by the failure of the print media to discuss events in terms of 'social forces' and 'structural features of society'. In other words, personalised events can be illustrated with photographs or film of the participants but 'social forces' of 'institutional racism' is much more difficult to present simply in newspapers.

The literature supports the view that the media, by focusing almost exclusively on the manifestations of conflict, has influenced its reader-audience in its perceptions of immigrants and foreigners. The literature points to the agenda-setting powers of the media, which will be discussed shortly. Cohen and Young argue that "while the media seem to play a major role in establishing in people's minds the association of colour with conflict, their role in providing the kind of background information that would help make the race relations situation, including its conflict elements, more understandable, is relatively small" (1973:300). Sections of the majority population may be largely or entirely dependent (especially in areas where contact between the white majority abd immigrants are low or non-existant) on the media for their information about minority groups, and heavy emphasis on negative stories will inevitably lead to a distorted picture.

Hartmann and Husband propose that "the way events are reported helps structure expectations of how coloured people will behave or how race relations develop" (1974:155). They notice that subsequent events that conform to the expectation of minority group behaviours stand a better chance of making the news than do those that do

not and that new events may be interpreted in terms of existing images, even if the existing image is inappropriate. They argue that events are newsworthy if they can be "interpreted within a familiar framework or in terms of existing images, stereotypes and expectations. The framework and the expectations may originate in the general culture or they may originate in the news itself and pass from there into the culture" (1974:155). They draw attention to the potential for harm that negativeness as a news value in the coverage of race relations has; it means that positive stories of harmonious race relations are less likely to be carried than stories of racial conflict, and the negative behaviour of minority groups becomes more newsworthy than their positive achievements. Hartmann and Husband conclude that the negative portrayal of 'coloured' people in the British Press has a significant influence on their future integration into society:

> Coloured people have not on the whole been portrayed as an integral part of British society. Instead the press has continued to project an image of Britain as a *white* society in which the coloured population is seen as some kind of aberration, a problem, or just an oddity, rather than as 'belonging; to the society (1974:145).

It has been argued that the print media has powers of 'agenda-setting' for the public. As mentioned earlier, the media, by selecting (or ignoring) certain news topics for print, inform the public of news relating to immigration and racial minorities. Several writers have observed that the media, by highlighting certain social 'problems', can actually exacerbate the problem or bring it to the forefront of the public consciousness. Van Dijk (1991) argues that the mass media provide an ideological framework for the interpretation of ethnic events, and that this framework may also act as a legitimation for prejudices and

discrimination against minority groups. Thus, he recognises that "the strategic sentence 'you read it in the paper every day' is a weel-known move in the argumentative defense of prejudices expressed in conversation" (1991:7). People who use this legitimation argument, he believes, may read about, and selectively remember, events that they interpret as 'proving' the negative characteristics of minority groups.

Michael Parenti, in *Inventing reality,* argues that the media sets "the issue agenda for the rest of us, choosing what to emphasise and what to ignore or suppress, in effect, organising much of our political world for us. The media may not always be able to tell us what to think, but they are strikingly successful in telling us what to think about" (1993:23). In addition, he states that for many people an issue does not exist until it appears in the news media:

> There are many things about which we may not have a predetermined opinion. Lacking any competing information, we often unwaringly embrace what we read or hear. In those instances, the media are not merely reinforcing previously held opinions, they are implanting new ones (1993: 24)

Van Dijk, similarly realises that the Press "through its specific discursive and cognitive strategies of selection, emphasis, focusing, exaggeration, relevance assignment, description, style, or rhetoric has a powerful role in the final definition of the situation" relating to immigrants and ethnic minority members (1991:42). He adds that even when leading politicians sometimes formulate the events with due restraint as a 'problem', the tabloids may in their own terms redefine them as a drama. Thus, Van Dijk highlights the

agenda-setting capacity of the print media - for many people who do not follow political developments closely, the tabloid press may be the only source of knowledge of a situation and thereby can set the agenda in these people's minds. Hartmann and Husband argue that insofar as the media have helped disseminate the idea that racial minorities or immigrants present a threat to society, "it is reasonable to suggest that they may have helped create a conception of the situation among the public far more conducive to hostility towards coloured people than acceptance of them" (1974:112). They assert that the Press "have not merely reflected public consciousness on matters of race and colour but have played a significant part in shaping this consciousness...while maintaining on the one hand the visibility and vitality of official egalitarian values, news coverage has tended to emphasise those aspects of the situation in which coloured people appear essentially as a threat and a problem" (1974:146).

Critics of the British Press have observed the manner in which immigrants have been somehow blamed for the presence of racism and have also observed the manner in which the Press emphasises the numbers of immigrants arriving to a country. One example of such treatment is the Tamil 'Invasion' which Van Dijk (1991) has highlighted. During the first few months of 1985, large groups of Tamil refugees appeared at the borders of several countries in Western Europe, soon followed by other Third World refugees. These events hit the headlines of the media to such an extent that "what was initially a group of people practically unknown to the majority of the population, soon became a prominent object of public attention and discussion" (1991:2). Van Dijk argues that a panic among the political and cultural elites in Western Europe regarding these

'economic' migrants soon led to a media panic, which in turn inspired large-scale popular resentment. He observes the repeated strategy in the Dutch Press of giving 'per day' or 'per week' estimates of arriving refugees, suggesting a strongly cumulative effect, which has negative implications. This allows conclusions to be drawn about the numbers of immigrants who would come 'if this trend would continue'. He also analyses the widespread media use of the metaphor 'flood', which he believes to be an even more effective and stereotypical way to emphasise numbers or masses. Classifying immigrants as a natural disaster, according to Van Dijk, has the effect of dehumanising its referents: "The suggested inference...is that policies should be enacted that should 'stop' such a flood" (1987a: 372). He concludes that "the public at large thus acquires a media-constructed set of beliefs that leaves little alternative than to conclude that the acceptance of refugees would be catastrophic for the country" (1987a: 375).

Hartmann and Husband have also examined the presentation of immigrants as threatening in the British Press. A headline from the Daily Express on 5th August 1972 stated that 'Britain was threatened yesterday with a flood of Asians from East Africa'. This, as we shall see later, is a recurring image which can be observed in the Irish Press' treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers. Another interesting element in this form of reporting which Hartmann and Husband highlight is the idea that more immigrants arriving will increase social tension and racism - thereby insinuating that victims of racism are somehow responsible for racist acts against themselves. They examine an excerpt from The Times on 14th August 1972 which states that 'immigrants already settled here stand to suffer more than anyone else from a rate of new immigration greater than the social body

of the host country can digest, or than its prejudices can tolerate'. This argument seems to imply that because of British 'concern for tolerance', the British must refuse to accept more coloured immigrants 'for the good' of already settled immigrants. Hartmann and Husband recognise that in a racist society a greater number of immigrants would probable increase the frequency, and possibly the degree of racism but their criticism of this particular excerpt and race reporting in general is that "no-one has suggested that the problem lies not with coloured immigrants, but in white racism" (1974:186).

A similar argument regarding the restriction of foreign Jews into Britain was put forward by the British media in the 1930s. The Sunday Express on the `19th June, 1938 stated that "there is an influx of foreign Jews into Britain. They are overrunning the country". The argument put forward was that it is only by preventing refugees from overrunning the country that Britain can 'continue to treat well those Jews who have made their homes among us'. Andrew Sharf, in *The British Press and Jews under Nazi Rule*, argues that one basic assumption emerges from arguments such as these - if more Jewish refugees means, or might eventually mean, more anti-Semitism in host countries, then the cause of anti-Semitism was the Jew. This argument has been seen to reoccur in Ireland with groups like the Immigration Control Platform calling for restrictions on refugee numbers. It has also been suggested by some in Ireland that we were not a racist society until immigrants started arriving here in significant numbers - once again implying that it is the presence of the foreign person that brings out racism and that the blame does not lie with the native population. Similarly, Cohen and Young argue that prejudice is not the result

of immigration, it is built into the culture; "the very notion of 'tolerance' implies that there is something nasty that requires special virtue to put up with" (1973: 23)

British, American and other European countries' media reaction to immigration might be said to display some of the features of a 'moral panic' as defined by Stanley Cohen in his classic study of the media's construction of the Mods and Rockers as 'folk devils' (1980):

> Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media, the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible (Cohen 1980:9).

Cohen also draws attention to another element of race reporting which the relevant literature has highlighted; the use of quotes and sources which are derived from the dominant majority. Van Dijk (1991) has observed that the white authorities, especially the police and the politicians, are the major speakers in the Press, defining the ethnic situation. He has found through detailed content analysis of the British Press that "not only will minorities be less quoted, but if they are quoted, these quotations will tend to be accompanied more often by opinions of white sources or otherwise be presented with reservation in the Press. He argues that "minorities often speak in the Press through

mediation, for instance through more credible or more accessible white politicians, lawyers, or action groups who defend their 'case'" (1991:154).

Representation of immigration in the Irish media

The limited amount of literature available on the Irish media's representation of refugees and asylum seekers examines many aspects of coverage which critics of the British and other country's media have observed. Philip Watt, co-ordinator of the European year against racism in Ireland, claimed in 1997 that the Irish media misrepresented the refugee situation in three important ways:

1. By regularly suggesting that Ireland was experiencing a flood of refugees

2. By associating refugees with begging, petty theft and crime

3. By frequently repeating the claim that many asylum-seekers, especially the largest group, Romanians, were bogus, only coming to Ireland to exploit its social welfare system (Watt 1997)

He argues that some of the coverage of refugees could be "best described as irresponsible and at worst outright racist in content. Other reports have been balanced and well researched only to be undermined by the application of an alarmist or sensationalised headline or subheading" (Watt 1997). He draws attention to the use of alarmist headlines, which often set the tone of the reports, irrespective of their actual content. He also observes that the metaphor of 'floods' of refugees is a widespread device used by the media but argues that although it is a very effective device it is both alarmist and inaccurate; "Yes, there has been a rapid increase in the numbers of asylum seekers

applying for refugee status. but the numbers are starting from a very small base. the overall numbers are negligible compared with many other countries...the vast majority of the world's refugees live in neighbouring countries to their own" (1997:29).

Nadette Foley. in an article entitled 'A Challenge to Ireland. Developing an Appropriate Response to Refugees (Focus. 1997) states that "we have witnessed endless unqualified statements in the print media relating to asylum seekers and refugees. and a level of negative campaigning generally which has amounted to harassment of a minority of foreign residents living in Dublin" (1997:4).   Similarly. Philip Curry suggests that "although the numbers of refugees coming to Ireland are comparatively small. it seems that many people have accepted media representations. which have used the flood metaphor to describe the recent increase in refugee numbers" (1999: 146). According to Jason King "more recent constructions of refugees 'flooding into Ireland'...shift the discourse to apprehensions of strained resources that are figured in terms of an imminent natural disaster" (2000: 44). King insightfully observes how the Irish media represented emigration from Ireland during the 19th century "in terms of national depletion. fluid seepage and loss" and envisioned Ireland as " an *organic* entity. whose steady loss of people they imagined as a form of degenerative illness or social haemorrhaging" (2000: 44).   In contrast. King points to the paradox that immigration in Ireland has not been constructed in a reversibly optimistic manner. "the reverse flow of increasing asylum-seekers coming into Ireland tends to be imagined as a form of immigrant inundation. a population stream that threatens to *drown* the nation in place of its traditional drainage" (2000: 44).

King argues that metaphors of fluidity. like that of refugees flooding into Ireland. increase hostility towards migrants. bring pressure on governmental agencies to control and contain the perceived 'influx' of immigrants. and may give rise to hostility against "visible minorities long settled and established in the country. all because of often misleading presumptions about their economic impact upon Irish society" (2000:51). King's main argument here is that the metaphors employed by the Irish print media to describe immigration into Ireland should not be 'refuted' but 'refigured': "in a manner more sympathetic to the plight of Ireland's economic aliens. asylum-seekers. and refugees" (2000: 57). He argues. for instance. that terms such as 'floods' and 'tides' could. perhaps. be exchanged with 'streams' and 'trickles'. In *Metaphors we Live By*. Lakoff and Johnson state that "metaphors may create realities for us. especially social realities...in most cases. what is at issue is not the truth or falsity of a metaphor but the perceptions and inferences that follow from it and the actions that are sanctioned by it" (1980: 156-158). Indeed. the Irish literature on this topic collectively mentions that calamitous imagery equating recent immigration with a form of natural disaster has been the recurrent theme in headlines such as '5000 refugees flooding into Ireland' (Irish Independent. may 29th. 1997) and 'Services face overload as refugee flood continues' (Business Post. 18th May. 1997).

Damien Kiberd argues that "parts of the media may have provoked suspicion and animosity among people of previously open minds whose own historic experience should have promoted understanding of the problems encountered by economic migrants and refugees" (1999:7). Indeed. as we shall see with the presentation of data in this research. this argument relating to economic migrants from Ireland is one which has been

repeatedly offered by those newspapers journalists who have been committed to anti-racist reporting. but perhaps has not been emphasised enough. According to Andy Pollak. the treatment of the refugee issue by the Irish newspapers "did a considerable amount to change the benign. if ignorant. attitude of most Irish people to refugees into something much more volatile and potentially dangerous in the short space of less than twelve months" (1999:34).

Another form of Irish media representations of refugees and asylum-seekers. which the literature highlights. is what Philip Watt refers to as the association of refugees with begging. petty theft and crime. Also examined is the repetition of the claim that many asylum-seekers. especially the largest groups such as Romanians and Nigerians are bogus/illegal and here to exploit out 'generous' social welfare system. Andy Pollak gives and example of an article from the Irish Independent on 5th May 1997 which had the headline 'Gardai move on dole fraud day trip 'refugees". He argues that "from the outset the paper's emphasis was on alleged link between 'refugees' and crime. Paul Cullen. too. offers a report by the Evening Herald in 1997 which reported that 'large numbers of work-shy people from Eastern Europe and beyond are trawling the internet to see which European country had the best social welfare system' (2000: 38). Another headline selected for discussion by Cullen was on the front page of the Sunday Independent on 9th August 1998. which proclaimed: 'Asylum-seekers fake torture - Nigerian plot to falsify torture and rape evidence for asylum'. Cullen draws attention to the fact that the story was based on "anonymous sources and contained mostly vague detail of the alleged plot"

and concluded that the headline" defamed an entire nation. mimicking the worst anti-Irish excesses of the British Press" (2000: 38)

Yet another dubious report which Cullen draws attention to appeared in the Wexford People on the 29th July 1998 and claimed that there was a fear in Wexford 'that some young male asylum-seekers are intent on striking up deep personal relationships with impressionable young local girls. fully aware that a baby would ensure a passport to permanent residence in this country' and concluded that 'the annoyance of many ordinary Wexford people who are struggling to make ends meet is understandable when they see new arrivals dressed in the latest designer shirts and jeans. eating their meals in a down-town restaurant and relaxing on the balcony of their apartment in an exclusive block. with the bills for their entire way of life being picked up by the Irish taxpayer" (2000: 39). Cullen adds that "even at the height of this media frenzy. Wexford never had more that 200 asylum seekers living there!

Philip Curry also examines the effects of the portrayal of refugees and asylum-seekers as ungenuine: "Many people believe that most refugees coming to Ireland are bogus fortune hunters...potential for welcome appears to be countered by beliefs that suggest that most refugees are undeserving and counterfeit" (1999: 146). Jason King describes how the fact that refugees come to Ireland because of a well-founded fear of persecution abroad becomes increasingly overshadowed "by perceptions of asylum-seekers as economic agents. who misrepresent their displacement in terms of human rights violations to cloak their exploitation of Ireland's supposedly generous social and economic entitlements"

(2000: 44). Philip Watt believes that persistent labelling of refugees as devious has contributed to the atmosphere of fear and xenophobia which already exists in our society. He argues that little or no evidence is provided in papers to back up the argument that the majority of those seeking asylum are economic migrants but that "the lasting impression from these reports is that not only are refugees exploiting out services and sponging off our welfare system. they are also effectively denying the vulnerable access to shelter. and women access to maternity hospitals" (1997:29). He believes that the general consensus of the Irish media on the issue of immigration has been one of the main elements in misinforming public opinion: "Influx. bogus. illegal. outburst or simply as one counciller in south Dublin put it in his bit to be elected - 'anti-social'- this is the pervading image of refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland.

The literature points also to the Irish print media's failure to properly analyse and convey the issues involved in immigration. except perhaps when they are carrying out in-depth searches for isolated scandals (Watt. 1997). Paul Cullen asserts that the media in general have failed to internalise or properly analyse the issues involved and that there is an 'unmistakable shallowness' to much of the coverage. even when it is favourable to the new arrivals. He also highlights the fact that few newspapers have mentioned that Ireland receives proportionately fewer asylum-seekers that its European neighbours and that virtually no evidence of fraud or organised smuggling have been produced.

Andy Pollak claims that there were too many "sensational headlines. misleading statistics. unsourced claims. and often plain demonising of asylum seekers. Refugees. a small.

frightened and powerless group in Irish society [had] no comeback against the big guns of the country's most powerful media combine" (1999:39). Paul Cullen reiterates this argument when he points out that "journalists have written their refugee stories safe in the knowledge that these nameless. wordless. powerless people are in no position to seek redress" (2000: 42).

At the annual conference of the Irish Refugee Council. 1997. Mary Robinson emphasised the importance of the media having a "very rounded and therefore complex approach to asylum seekers and refugees. It is not the matter of soundbites and simplification' they tend to lead to attitudes that are cold. that are racist. that are lacking in understanding". Jason King argues that "nothing has a more immediate impact on the lives of refugees in countries of first asylum and resettlement that public opinion. fuelled by media representation. and the rhetorical strategies that are often employed to incite feelings of hostility and even acts of violence against them" (2000: 43).

However. Philip Watt shows a realisation that it is too simplistic to blame the media entirely for the rise in racism in Ireland - "there had and continues to be balances and well informed critical analysis by some journalists and of course the media have a duty to report issues of public interest and importance". He does. however. recognise that "the way that issues related to refugees have been raised has lead to accusations that section of the media have at times seemed to act like racist cheerleaders" (1997:37).

ChapterThree

Methodology

Introduction

This study is primarily concerned with analysing the Irish media's representation of refugees and asylum seekers. The obvious and relevant methodologies that can be utilised in my research are content analysis and discourse analysis. According to Berelson, "Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952: 18). Content analysis is concerned with analysing the content of headlines and reports in terms of themes.

Discourse analysis, on the other hand, is not as concerned with the actual content of texts as it is with the language which is employed in texts and the ideology which is encoded in that language. Discourse analysis is more concerned with concealed and latent meanings as opposed to the manifest content of articles. This form of analysis also examines what is missing from a text or taken for granted. It sees the need to identify and understand the particular discourse in which a text is encoded. Discourse analysis, then, perhaps goes further than content analysis in that it relates 'content' to the wider structures of meaning in a society.

By employing both of these complementary methodologies this research aims to provide insights into the ways in which Irish newspapers have represented refugees and asylum

seekers. The most obvious advantage of both of these methodologies is their unobtrusiveness. In some research, the presence of the researcher can influence findings. Both methodologies, too, leave the researcher with few ethical responsibilities. In terms of actually collecting data, content analysis and discourse analysis are relatively systematic methodologies and relatively easy to organise. However, we cannot completely escape the impact of the researcher on research design. Roger Nett asserts that "The researcher himself is a variable in the research design. He influences the course of any research he undertakes, and his actions are in turn structured by the broader society in which he lives". (Roger Nett, 1968, p.2-3)

Content Analysis

Content analysis of mass media has been employed for studying the domain of public information, as an important factor in the shaping of public reaction and in an agenda setting capacity to policy making. This research aims to provide insights into the manner in which newspaper texts can affect public opinion. According to R.A. Berger, "Content analysis is an indirect way of making inferences about people. Instead of asking them questions, we examine what they read or watch and work backwards, assuming that what people read and watch are good reflections of their attitudes, values, and so on" (Berger, 1991:26).

According to Robert Weber, the process of content analysis relies on four stages; measurement, indication, representation and interpretation. (Weber, 1990). Measurement refers to the process whereby one can, for instance, carry out a content analysis on the

frequency of a word or phrase in headlines or texts. Indication relies on an inference of an unmeasured quality or characteristics form the text. In other words, this part of the process is less measurable; the researcher must draw his/her own conclusions from what the writer is saying in a text. Representation and interpretation are both concerned with forming a theoretical or abstract meaning from the text.

According to Beardsworth, the process of content analysis consists of five basic steps, namely, research design, frame design, coding, sampling and data analysis. (Beardsworth, 1980). The research design is what he terms the 'master plan'. The research should be comparative in nature, comparing different sources, (newspapers in this research) or comparing different years or months. The frame design consists of the set of categories to be employed for the classification content. When coding the researcher must decide how various features of the material should be classified. When sampling the researcher must define clearly the population of press items about which he/she is making estimates. Finally, data analysis refers to the sorting and analysis of the data that has been collected.

Discourse Analysis

The second methodology employed in this research is that of discourse analysis, a methodology which is concerned with the latent or implicit meanings in a text. Discourse refers to the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part. (Fairclough, 1989). The production of texts is influenced by knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social worlds inhabited, values, beliefs and assumptions. In other

words, discourse is socially generated and conditioned by other parts of society. These influences shape the way in which texts are produced and interpreted.

According to Fairclough, where types of discourse function in a way to sustain unequal power relations, they are functioning ideologically. He argues that ideological power, the power to project one's practices as universal and 'common sense' is exercised in discourse. He states that "In discourse people can be legitimising (or delegitimising) particular power relations without being conscious of doing so" (Fairclough, 1989:41). Wetherell and Potter propose that "discourse analysis focuses, above all, on quintessentially psychological activities - activities of justification, rationalisation, categorisation, attribution, making sense, naming, blaming and identification" (1992:24).

Roger Fowler argues that news is a construct, which is to be understood in social and semiotic terms. He acknowledges the importance of language in this process of construction. For Fowler, discourse is essentially ideology, which originates socially and institutionally, encoded in language. Discourses are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic or practice. Discourse refers to the process of a formation of ideas, images and practices that provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society. (Fowler, 1991)

The discursive approach to analysing newspaper content, according to Stuart Hall,

Examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practised and studied (Stuart Hall, 1997: 6).

The recognition that language is a socially conditioned process and that language contributes to the domination of some people by others has led to the development of the practise of discourse analysis. Van Dijk points out that "Discourse analysis provides us with rather powerful, while subtle and precise, insights to pinpoint the everyday manifestations and displays of social problems in communication and interaction" (Van Dijk, 1985: 7). Such everyday problems may include discrimination or prejudice.

Mary Sykes argues that in order to demonstrate that an act of discrimination has occurred, three things need to be shown; that differential treatment of one or two parties has occurred, that this treatment is less favourable to one of the parties and that the grounds for the differential treatment were racial or ethnic ones. One of the difficulties in demonstrating that discrimination has occurred, she points out, is that although there are plenty of instances where treatment would be universally recognised as unfavourable (e.g. in the use of derogatory racial labels), there are also cases where different audiences would fail to agree on whether the treatment of a group was favourable or unfavourable. Their judgement would depend on their view of the world, their ideology. (Sykes, 1985).

When we analyse discourse, we are not just referring to explicit utterances (e.g. explicitly hostile statements), but rather we are referring to the grammatical form in which the content is expressed, and also the choice of vocabulary chosen by the writer.   On occasions, as we know, the content of a particular article or text may favour a party while the treatment of them in vocabulary or syntax may be unfavourable.

According to Sykes, then, discourse must be analysed both on semantic (meaning) and syntactic (grammatical) levels.   On the syntactic level it is necessary to study patterns of transitivity in the text.   Transitivity indicates the relationships between participants and processes and is therefore of importance in representing causality.   In the case of articles regarding asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland, for example, we must study whether these people are subjects of verbs, and hence agents, or if they are simply experiencers or patients, and hence passive.   Sykes believes that the agency or consciousness of a subject in a text can be further eroded by the passive construction of verbs in a sentence, i.e. when the agent of a sentence has been deleted as in "are asked to leave Ireland".

On a semantic level, Sykes argues that,

> The achievement of the image of (black) immigration constituting a generalised threat for the future is aided by a lexicon and syntax that powerfully dehumanise their referents, represent them as an undifferentiated and faceless collectivity involved in mechanical and inevitable processes such as immigration, growth and concentration (Sykes, 1985, p.95).

This study will focus on two elements of this semantic analysis which seem to be most dominant in terms of the discourse relating to immigration in Ireland. Firstly, it is of crucial importance to analyse the overwhelming dominance of the term immigrant and its derivations such as refugee and asylum seeker, in the discourse of Irish newspapers. These terms, I will argue, have the effect of homogenising their referents. The terms immigrant, refugee and asylum seeker do not show a recognition of the diversity of cultures and situations from which the people in question come.

Secondly, this study will carefully analyse the use of terms with nonhuman associations to refer to both people and the processes in which they are involved. These terms, I propose, can be loosely divided for the purposes of this study. We can analyse firstly the use of terminology more usually reserved for inanimate objects. This terminology is perhaps economic in its nature. Words and terms used to describe immigration such as 'rate of intake'. 'inflow', 'outflow', 'influx', 'the total', etc are "almost the language of industrial or agricultural production processes". (Sykes, 1985, p.98). This terminology, it will be argued, minimises the role of immigrants as active conscious human agents.

The second area of inanimate terminology that has been employed in the discourse of newspapers is perhaps more interesting and powerful. It is the process whereby the immigrant 'crisis' in Ireland is described in terms of an imminent natural disaster. Metaphors relating to 'floods', 'swamping' and 'spreading', for instance, may give the reader the impression that Ireland's economy and culture may drown or become diseased

as a result of immigration, particularly if this discourse is repeated over several issues and newspapers. According to Sykes,

> The apparently invincible nature of this natural process both maximises the element of threat and at the same time justifies mechanical interventions such as stopping the 'inflow' and reducing the size of the population by repatriation (Sykes, 1985: 98).

Discourse analysis, therefore, is a very important element in my methodology. Treatment in discourse that systematically implies mechanistic behaviour, inability to reason or to act meaningfully, effectively dehumanises its subjects and should be regarded as unfavourable treatment. Similarly, any discourse which treats large numbers of people as though they were homogenous, thus denying human variety, must be analysed. On a syntactic or grammatical level, patterns that systematically deny their human subjects the normal range of specifically human attributes should be regarded as degrading, regardless of well-meaning of behalf of the writer.

For Stuart Hall, "if the media function in a systematically racist manner, it is not because they are run and organised exclusively by active racists", but that they are "powerfully constrained by a particular set of ideological discourses" (Stuart Hall, 1990: 20). Thus an analysis of the ways indirect racism still exhibits itself in our newspapers may lead journalists to pay attention to the representation of actors in news events and to pay due regard to the subtleties of their style. As Van Dijk argues, "Because the media provide the daily discourse input for most adult citizens, their role as a prevailing discourse and

attitude context for thought and talk about ethnic groups is probably unsurpassed by any other institutional or public source of communication" (Van Dijk, 1987: 41). The discourse of Irish newspapers in their treatment of topics relating to refugees and asylum seekers must be analysed and studied in order to examine if there are implicit and subtle varieties of racism and discrimination in the Irish media.

The central objective of this research is to analyse the ideological discourse in Irish newspapers relating to the topics of refugees, asylum-seekers and Ireland's immigration 'crisis'. The Irish media's representation of these issues and the human beings affected by these issues must be deconstructed using the methods of content analysis and discourse analysis, in order to examine whether a negative discourse manifests itself in our print media.

Sources of the Data

The medium researched in this study is that of the Irish print media - newspapers. It was decided to monitor five Irish national papers, The Irish Times, The Irish Independent, The Evening Herald, The Irish Sun and The Irish Mirror. This sample gives a very reasonable cross-section, including as it does two broadsheets which have very distinctive identities, The Evening Herald, which is a very widely read evening paper, and two tabloids; thus allowing for a 'comparative dimension' as Berger (1991,p.92) recommends. It was initially decided to base the research over selected months of the year 2000 in order to get current and up to date data on media representations of refugees and asylum seekers in

Ireland. This proved itself to be too limited a sample of texts and therefore the timespan of newspaper coverage of this topic was expanded.

Ultimately, it was decided to monitor the selected Irish newspapers for four full months in 1996 and in 2000. This research expanded to include newspaper articles in 1996 so that changes in media representation, if any, over the space of three to four years could be recorded. The months selected to analyse were January, May, June and October. These were selected on the basis that they were relatively evenly spaced out. May and June, in particular, were selected because of a desire on the part of the researcher to discover if reporting on the issues surrounding immigration in Ireland was somehow more alarmist during the summer when most immigrants arrive here. When collecting data for the study, the focus was exclusively on news stories and editorials. The research was limited to the news pages of the papers (i.e. excluding features, arts, entertainment and the sports sections).

Content analysis

The next stage of the methodology was to divide the texts or articles into manageable categories in order to analyse them. The research focused firstly on the content of newspaper headlines and subheadings. Secondly, the newspaper articles were divided up into preformulated categories depending on thematic content. Finally then, articles were again divided up into categories relating to vocabulary and grammar employed.

Deductively, on the basis of experience and reading a list of 'key words' was constructed and every headline or subheading which contained any of those key words was selected for analysis. There were nine original 'key words' in all: refugee, immigrant, immigration, asylum- seeker, asylum, racism, race, racial and racist. This resulted in a large sample of headlines and subheadlines, from which sub-samples were then created and analysed as required. After selecting each story for analysis on the basis of 'key word', other information was recorded, not only from the headline itself but from the body of the news story. For instance, notes were taken of every adjective placed adjacent to 'key words' such as 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker'. Notes were also taken of sources consulted and whether or not the articles in question were simply news reporting or opinion based. Based on information gleaned from this note taking, a classification of eleven subject areas relating to theme in headlines could be devised. The categories are listed below.

1. Reporting on numbers of refugees/asylum seekers arriving and applications made

2. Housing crisis

3. Dispersal

4. Welfare issue/ employment issue

5. Birth rates of refugees/asylum seekers/ disease

6. Scams/bogus appeals/crime

7. Voices of refugees/asylum seekers

8. Irish racism

9. Church and refugees/asylum seekers

10. Editorials/opinion columns

11. Surveys on Irish attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees.

The other variables recorded in the content analysis were:

1. Newspaper

2. Month

3. Exact date

4. Location (front/back/inside

5. Photo

6. Transitivity (agent/patient/both or neither)*

* It is in the nature of newspaper headlines that often the transitivity is highly complex.

Discourse analysis

When the content analysis was complete, several newspaper articles were selected on the basis that they drew attention to aspects of representation which a quantitative analysis could not reveal. Preliminary categories were drawn up to aid the researcher to organise certain trends encoded in language in the representation of refugees and asylum seekers. These categories are of articles which include:

1. Examples of the homogenising use of terms 'immigrant', 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' and the adjectives juxtaposed with these terms.

2. Examples of 'economic' language in reference to the issue of refugees and asylum seekers.

3. Examples of a 'natural disaster' discourse in reference to the issue of refugees and asylum seekers.

One methodological aim throughout was to look for what information is *not* there but could be there. Foucault (1972) spoke of the 'not-saids' of discourse. Van Dijk has also observed that

> The analysis of the 'unsaid' is sometimes more revealing that the study of what is actually expressed in the text...Many ideological implications follow not only because too little is being said, but also too many irrelevant things are being said about news actors. The well-known example in news reports about minorities is the use of ethnic or racial labels in crime stories (Van Dijk, 1991, p.114).

Thus, discourse analysis was applied as a methodology following the content analysis of newspaper headlines and thematic content of articles. Content analysis and discourse analysis "cannot reveal the intentions of those who created the text or the effects that messages in the text have on those who receive them", (Neuman, 1997, p.279), but both methodologies can shed much light on the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the Irish media and the prevailing ideology behind these representations.

Chapter Four

Content Analysis I: Representation of refugees/ asylum seekers

This chapter presents the results of two related investigations: a content analysis of newspaper articles relating to refugees and asylum seekers, and a qualitative analysis of a selected number of news stories which illustrate the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the Irish media. The Irish Independent, The Irish Times, The Evening Herald, The Irish Sun and The Irish Mirror were monitored for four separate months in 1997 and 2000: January, May, June and October. The main focus was the headline, although further relevant information was gleaned from the news story itself. As explained in Chapter three (Methodology), stories were given a detailed classification using 12 categories. The level of attention given to each category in all newspapers combined was as follows:

1. Political reporting - 18%

2. Number of refugees - 8%

3. Housing 'crisis' - 7.6%

4. Disease/ birth rates - 5%

5. Scams/ crime - 16.6%

6. Racial attacks - 4%

7. Irish racism - 11.3%

8. Church and refugees/ asylum seekers - 2.6%

9. Surveys on attitudes - 1.6%

10. Employment - 5.3%

11. Voices of refugees - 2%

12. Editorials - 10%

Table 4.1 presents the amount of coverage devoted to the various themes in the five newspapers during the periods covered in 1997 and 2000.

Number of headlines

	Independent	Times	Herald	Sun	Mirror	total
Political reporting	17	22	5	8	2	54
numbers	10	8	3	2	1	24
Housing 'crisis'	6	13	4	0	0	23
Disease/birthrates	7	4	2	1	1	15
dispersal	5	3	2	4	0	14
Scams/ crime	20	11	9	9	1	50
Irish racism	9	14	7	4	0	34
Church	3	4	0	1	0	8
surveys	2	3	0	0	0	5
employment	4	9	3	0	0	16
Voices of refugees	0	4	2	0	0	6
editorials	2	13	8	5	2	30
Total	85	108	45	34	7	279

It is worth noting from this table that the Irish print media has concentrated on reporting crime, bogus appeals etc. almost as much as it has on political reporting on the refugee issue. Also worth noting is the fact that the Irish newspapers highlight such criminal and problem activities of refugees/ asylum seekers more than they do the problem of Irish racism, which many regard as the greater problem facing Irish society today. This is an aspect of minority reporting which Van Dijk (1991) has observed: "if the press endorses the ideology that legitimates white group dominance, it may be expected that it will ignore, discredit, marginalise or problematise anti-racist positions and groups" (1991:241)

We now turn to exploring some of the main themes relating to refugees and asylum seekers in the Irish print media. Seven main themes are identified:

1. Number of refugees and asylum seekers

2. The housing crisis

3. Policy of dispersal

4. Employment

5. Health/ disease

6. Scams/ Bogus claims/ Crime

7. Voices of refugee/ asylum seekers

Most of the articles which appear in the Irish print media regarding refugees and asylum seekers are examples of political reporting. What is meant by this, in the context of this research, is those articles concerning government policy formulation, EU directives on the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, and any reports which usually objectively

describe governmental developments in this area. As a result of the nature of this kind of reporting, most political reports found in the sample were objective. Therefore, the ideology of the newspapers did not seep through usually objective articles. However, two conflicting exceptions to this rule have been selected for commentary.

One example of such an exception appeared in The Irish Times, in an article entitled *Appalling scenes of refugees in the rain*, on 16/10/97. This article contains the quotation "the disgraceful treatment of a large number of refugees outside the Dept. of Justice recently was reminiscent of Ellis island at its worst". Although the quote belongs to an anonymous political commentator, and is not the voice of the journalist, it does appear that the journalist has actively sought a quote which matches his/her own feelings. This conclusion has been drawn on the basis of the headline employed. It is quite obvious what the view of the writer in this instance is toward the treatment of refugees at the hands of the Irish government. This, it could be argued, is an example of the ideology of the newspaper coming through otherwise objective reporting.

Another such example of the attitude of a newspaper towards refugees came from The Evening Herald in an article entitled *Why immigration will be a key battleground at election time*. This article includes the lines "its time for all the political parties to show some real leadership. Communities around the country have been taking to the streets to protest when the government policy of dispersing immigrants has begun to affect their lives". What is clear here is that this particular writer (or, we may deduce, the newspaper

as a whole), is against the dispersal of refugees nation-wide. The tone of the article seems to support those communities who 'have been taking to the streets'.

Overall, however, this research found very few cases of political reporting which was anything but objective and informative.

1. Number of refugees / asylum seekers

The print media has widely been observed to play the 'numbers game' when representing immigration and the arrival of refugees into a society. The publication of numbers of people arriving to a society, applications made for asylum and forecasting of numbers expected to arrive in the future contribute to the 'numbers game' which Van Dijk (1991) and Hartmann and Husband (1974) and other writers have drawn attention to. Those authors argue that the use of numbers and figures such as these may unduly frighten those members of the society who are prone to feeling threatened by immigrants. The publication of statistics and figures, Van Dijk (1991) argues, has a very strong cumulative effect on the reader, especially if terms such as the 'flood metaphor' are used. The effect of terms such as 'flood' will be discussed in the chapter on discourse analysis. The lasting effect on readers, according to van Dijk, is that they become convinced that their society may *drown* as a result of immigration.

The content analysis carried out in this research on the reporting on numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in the Irish print media revealed some surprising results. Firstly, there appeared to be less emphasis on the reporting of exact figures for the arrival of

immigrants in the Irish tabloids than anticipated and secondly, there was a divergence

between the two broadsheets on this topic. In 1997, The Irish Times and The Irish

Independent reported the 'influx' of refugees and asylum seekers in a similar manner.

Both newspapers discussed the numbers arriving to Ireland in a somewhat alarmist

manner. However, by 2000, The Irish Times had modified its manner of reporting. On

26/05/97 a headline *Influx of asylum seekers causes concern* was carried. This article

offered information that many asylum seekers "are entering the country illegally or

staying on longer than their original entry visa allowed". Similarly, on 30/10/97, the Irish

Times carried an article with the headline *immigration reaches record levels*. However,

the Times, in 1997, also published an article on 06/06/97 entitled *Irish proportion of non-*

citizens is among lowest, says OECD which emphasised that "Ireland has one of the

lowest proportions of foreigners among Western countries, according to the OECD". So,

even though The Times can be accused of playing the 'numbers game' in 1997, it can be

argued that the paper still emphasised the numbers of refugees in Ireland in the context of

numbers arriving in the EU.

In 1997, The Irish Independent published some alarming and exaggerated headlines

regarding the numbers of refugees arriving in Ireland. On the 23/05/97, the headline

Growing fears at surge in asylum seekers appeared. This article declared that "the

country is on the brink of a major refugee problem. On present trends, the country would

face a population of 20,000 asylum seekers within five years". (note current figures).

The article goes on to inform the reader that "the largest group are Romanians, many of

whom are gypsies" (Note the irrelevance in the latter part of this sentence!). In

comparison to actual figures from the Dept. of Justice, the forecasting of 20,000 asylum seekers seems to be very exaggerated.

On 29/05/97, The Independent had a large headline on its front page: *Demand for curb on tide of refugees*. This report examines the 'soaring' number of refugees arriving in Ireland "estimated to reach 6,000 this year. When compared with actual figures of 3,883 asylum applications it is obvious that these are exaggerated figures. Certainly, this research has noted several articles such as the two already discussed, in the Independent, which quote statistics and figures without adequately explaining to the reader where such facts come from. Indeed, many facts and quotes appear in the Irish Independent, which are entirely unsourced. Similarly, in May 1997, on 31/05/97, a report with the headline *Taxpayer to face bills of £20 million for refugee flood* was published in the Independent. This report claimed that "the genuine refugees, account for only 1 in 10 by international standards…" Once again, this article is an example of the Irish Independent's failure to provide sources for their facts and figures. It is unclear where the figure '1 in 10' came from as it is unclear who predicted the bill of £20 million!

By 2000, the Irish Independent seems to be continuing in its use of exaggerated figures and predictions with headlines such as *asylum seeker number set to hit record 12000* (24/01/00). This particular article explains where the figure 12000 comes from: "More than 700 asylum seekers arrived here in the first three weeks of January…leading to a projection of a record 12000 for the year". Does this summary adequately explain to the average reader why the figure 12000 is arrived at? The article further argues that Ireland

"has the second highest refugee intake in Europe". A few days earlier, on 22/01/00, a headline claimed that the *immigration level may reach 180,000 within decade*, in which the article states that "the next twelve years will see the largest movement of people into Ireland since the 17th century". Once more, the figure of 180,000 is unsourced and, it may be argued, alarmist in its nature. Finally, on 08/01/00, a headline was carried which summarises the number of asylum seeker applications in 1999 as having 'topped 7,700'. Surprisingly, The Irish Times report on 1999 figures carried the headline *almost 8,000 sought asylum in state last year*. This particular article outlines that "the number of asylum claims made in 1999 is almost double the total for 1997, and about 3,100 more than 1998" – emphasising the cumulative effect of immigration. A further article from the Times on 14/01/00 carries the headline *over 500 granted refugee status last year.* This article informs the reader that "more than 500 people were granted refugee status in the Republic last year, entitling them to live and work permanently in the state and receive health, education and other services on the same basis as Irish nationals", but does emphasise that "of the 5,248 cases for refugee status determined last year, 4,737 people were refused".

The impression got from studying the content of articles in The Irish Independent and Irish Times is that while both of these broadsheets carried some alarmist headlines in 1997 regarding the numbers of refugees arriving in Ireland, The Times has modified its concentration on numbers and increases in asylum applications and has strove since 1997 to present the numbers in context and not in an unsourced fashion as can be observed in the Irish Independent.

As stated previously, one surprising result of this research was that the tabloids did not appear to quote numbers of refugees and asylum applications in headlines and articles as much as was anticipated. On June 6th 2000 the Evening Herald carried a headline *'Too many' Asylum seekers,* which, if read alone, can inform and affect public opinion. However, close reading of the article revealed that the 'too many' reference was to do with the dispersal of refugees to a small village in Cork which apparently could not cope with its new arrivals. On 26/10/00 an article was published in The Evening Herald with the headline *42 asylum seekers on ferry,* which went on to inform us that "this is one of the largest groups to land here". Apart from this statement, this particular article is well informed and accurate. However, one article in The Evening Herald on 23/05/97 had the headline: *Refugee trickle becomes a flood.* This is exactly the kind of alarmist discourse which was anticipated by the researcher and will be discussed in the following chapter.

The Irish Sun is not blameless for playing the 'numbers game' but as already mentioned, the sample selected for content analysis revealed far fewer examples of the indiscriminate use of statistics and figures than predicted. One obvious example of 'the numbers game' displayed by the Irish Sun was the headline *'stampede' of refugees* on 12/06/97. This particular article is based on a report from the Homeless initiative which claims that Ireland is "the only EU state experiencing a large-scale increase in the number of applications from asylum seekers" . However, the report went on to add that "Ireland's exceedingly low starting base must be taken into account". This afterthought could have been quoted first as it is common knowledge that many readers of newspapers fail to read full articles! Similarly an example of The Irish Mirror's reporting on the 'numbers game'

occurred on 28/05/97 in an article which states that the "trickle of asylum seekers now finding their way to our shores has become a flood as the boom gathers pace", obviously insinuating that the reason that asylum seekers arrive to Ireland is to exploit our 'generous' welfare system and not because they genuinely require asylum.

2. Housing 'crisis'

Upon embarking on this research, several articles concerning the housing 'crisis' caused by the immigration of refugees and asylum seekers were anticipated in the Irish print media. Indeed, The Irish Independent in particular appears to construct issues relating to refugees and housing/ accommodation in terms of crisis or conflict. Headlines such as *New campaign to tackle refugee housing crisis* on 19/01/00 and *Immigration housing row looming* on 04/01/00 provide evidence for this assertion. In the former article, the reporter states that "the upsurge in refugees and other asylum seekers in recent times has created an unprecedented accommodation crisis", suggesting that is is entirely the fault of refugees that accommodation is difficult to find in Ireland, particularly in Dublin because all but 800 of more than 10,000 people currently seeking refugee status live in the capital". A further headline which utilises the phrase 'row looming' appeared in the Independent on 11/05/00: *Row looming about where refugees may be detained* , implying imminent problems surrounding the accommodation of refugees. One further method of negative reporting observed in the Irish Independent on 23/06/00 is the method whereby a newspaper presents the reader (assuming that the reader is a taxpayer) with figures regarding the cost of refugees: *Taxpayers to give £70 each for asylum seeker shelter.* This figure has been calculated from a statement from the government which states that

"the government expects to be paying for the accommodation of 12000 asylum seekers in 2000". The headline is very effective if its aim is to inform the reader of his/her personal cost of housing refugees and thereby creating a negative impression of refugees. An article appeared on the front page of the Independent on 12/06/97 with the headline *Refugee flood to spark home crisis, report warns,* in which the reported argues that refugees and asylum seekers are "putting enormous strains on services for the homeless". One wonders how many articles were carried regarding the plight of the homeless Irish in the Irish Independent before refugees began to arrive here. Has the Independent always been so concerned about our homeless?

In contrast to the Irish Independent, The Irish Times, on the basis of the sample selected for the purposes of this study, has not presented refugee accommodation under the sign of crisis. The approach of The Times has been one of objective reporting. The Times, too, has made an effort to approach this subject from the point of view of refugees themselves, as demonstrated in an article on 06/01/00 with the headline *Bosnian refugees unable to break out of rented housing trap, says report.* An effort, too, has been made to quote sources which sympathise with the experience of refugees. One illustrative example of this is in an article on 10/10/00 with the headline *Refugee housing plan criticised, in* which a nun, Sr. Joan Roddy "claimed that the application and review process continued to make asylum seekers feel unwelcome". Further on in the article, Mary Sutton from Trocaire puts forward the argument that "with our prosperity now and the Irish tradition of helping instead of hurting, we must change our tune". Apart from articles such as these, with regard to refugees and housing, The Times has carried such headlines as

Space now for asylum seekers in new centres on 28/06/00 and *Refugee housing planned at Dublin airport site* (02/10/00). Headlines such as these can hardly be accused of displaying an agenda with regard to refugees and accommodation.

Curiously, the issue of refugees and housing is a topic which appears to have been avoided by The Irish Mirror and The Irish Sun. Perhaps it is coincidental that such articles were not published in the selected sample. The Evening Herald, too, appears to have glossed over this issue apart from one particularly alarming two-page report on 23/05/97 with the headline *Refugee trickle becomes a flood* and subheading *Emergency housing for asylum seekers now costs more than for natives*. Note the concern for our 'natives' similar to the Independent's concern! This article claims that "more money is now being spent on emergency accommodation for asylum seekers in Dublin than on accommodation for the city's native homeless". Again, one wonders whether The Herald has always been so concerned with the homeless Irish! This study argues that articles such as this particular one do inform and influence public opinion. Certainly, this researcher has often been involved in conversations regarding denied resources for the Irish homeless because of refugees. It appears that members of the public can often be influenced to believe that refugees are almost completely responsible for the fact that we have a homeless population here. Perhaps it would be of interest to research how much attention was directed towards the plight of the homeless prior to refugees arriving to Ireland, in the Irish print media.

Besides the aforementioned two page spread, the only other examples of The Herald's discussion of refugees and housing were on the dates of 5&6 of October, 2000 in which the following headlines were carried: *Nigerian seeks order on house* and *Evicted Nigerian woman wins right to return to house*. Notice the irrelevant use of the word 'Nigerian' (such irrelevancies shall be discussed in the next chapter). These two reports followed a particular refugee's experience of accommodation in Ireland and are another example of The Herald's interest in following individual and personal stories as opposed to generalised reporting.

3. Dispersal

One other area of reporting on immigration in the Irish print media is the controversial topic of dispersal of refugees and asylum seekers. Indeed, this is a favoured area of reporting in The Irish Independent and The Irish Sun in particular. On Friday, Jan 7th 2000, an article entitled *Proposals for moving refugees to regions 'stalled'* was printed in The Irish Independent. Once more, the reader is exposed to the familiar device of stating the cost of refugees for taxpayers: "taxpayers are facing a potential £100 million bill if the government has to buy or lease suitable accommodation for the refugees arriving at a rate of 1,000 a month". It is unclear what sources were contacted in the search for such figure. Also unsourced is the quote "Dublin is stretched to the limit with 2,500 refugees in emergency accommodation and a further 7,000 housed by the Eastern Health Board". By May 7th, 2000 the policy of dispersal was under way and the Independent carried a report about it, entitled *Villagers cannot veto immigrant influx*. The report states how "the accommodation of 10,000 asylum seekers in Dublin over the past two years has already

seriously affected council housing lists". It goes on to discuss how asylum seekers are being dispersed nation-wide but that "asylum seekers have no say in where they will go, and in the past, some have refused to board the bus out of Dublin". After giving us this information, The Independent then informs us that "there are now 1,500 people on the Dublin Corporation homeless list" and quotes Mr.King of the Homeless division:"in the past we could find suitable accommodation for a person in advance of an eviction date, but now these people usually experience homelessness".

The unspoken argument here is that asylum seekers do not deserve to be fussy about leaving Dublin when we are experiencing a homelessness crisis. As argued earlier, it would be of great interest to carry out a content analysis on the amount of attention given in The Irish Independent to the subject of homelessness in Dublin prior to the immigration in Ireland rising. Certainly, this article does seem to imply that refugees and asylum seekers are the reason that we have a homeless problem in Ireland. Another article in The Irish Independent on 15/05/00 was to do with the arson attack on a hotel for asylum seekers in Clogheen, Co. Tipperary: *Asylum seeker hotel hit by fire for second time.* Although this article was predominantly objective it does implicitly support the local people's concern with the arrival of immigrants into their community - "the main concern locally is that the village, with a population of just 400 people, could not cater for 35 plus asylum seekers". The implications of the use of language in this particular sentence will be discussed in the chapter on discourse analysis. In a particularly alarming article on May 18th, 2000, the Irish Independent can be accused of inciting hatred or at least animosity towards refugees and asylum seekers. The headline, *Asylum Seekers*

reject rural life in half an hour, certainly gives the impression that refugees are fussy, ungrateful and undeserving, as well as creating the idea that they are flippant and ignorant ("in half an hour"). This article goes on to inform us that "the pleasures of country living here have been rejected by a group of asylum seekers from The Congo who want to be housed in Dublin", but concludes with "last night they were firmly told they must accept the offer of accommodation in en-suite rooms with television sets in the purpose built house, or find their own homes". The outlining of the 'luxury' accommodation to us, the 'taxpayer', is highly negative and must surely be an example of Said's writings on 'us' and 'them'.

In The Irish Times, the reporting of the topic of dispersal was handled in a far different manner. Of three reports on dispersal, two positively describing the arrival of refugees to two different rural locations, and the third criticising the dispersal of refugees. It may be concluded, on the evidence of these two articles, that The Irish Times has been 'pro' refugees' in its approach to this particular subject matter.

On Jan 25th, 2000, The Irish Times printed a headline *Refugees are made welcome by locals in Clonakilty* - The tone of the article is positive from the outset. The article states that "they have been keeping mostly to themselves, but their potential as new members of a West Cork community is about to be realised". It goes on to give examples to the reader of the potential for enriching and enhancing the community:

"One youngster has joined a local soccer club and is thought to have great potential. Two others have joined the local singing club...Two of the refugees who were given clothes by local townspeople recently went to their rooms to try them on and found a £5 note in a pocket. They immediately brought the money to reception and when they were told to keep their good luck, they went into town and bought a box of chocolates for the hotel staff"

Although there is, perhaps, a somewhat patronising tone in this article, (as finding a £5 note in an item of clothing is hardly newsworthy if it is an Irish person concerned!) it cannot be accused of being anything but positive towards refugees. It certainly represents refugees in a much more positive light on this subject matter than the Independent.

A second article on dispersal and location of refugees in Ireland, appeared in The Irish times on Monday, Oct 2nd, 2000. Its headline was *Dispersal of asylum seekers criticised* and the article itself is highly critical of the policy and of the treatment by some racists of refugees. This particular article highlights the experience of refugees in Galway; "several of them have already had bad experiences in the city centre, but said that they understood that "Irish people are just not used to black people yet". The Times also sought out a pro-refugee source in the shape of Kevin Higgins, co-editor of *The Burning Bush Journal* (a liberal magazine). Higgins is quoted as saying that "the sight of 'niggers out' in large red letters on walls all around the city centre drove several nails into the coffin of Galway's so-called 'cosmopolitan', 'bohemian' image" and "A hundred thousand welcomes! As long as he is not Romanian". The Times does not shy from observing the often contradictory friendly image of the Irish people.

Finally, a short article, *Asylum Seekers settle in Athlone*, appeared in The Irish Times on 12th Oct, 2000. We are informed that "about 100 asylum seekers from 8 countries are settling quietly into the controversial centre in Athlone, Co. Westmeath where local travelling families objected to the development earlier this year". The travelling families had objected (rightfully) to the speedier accommodation of refugees in Athlone. What is emphasised in this article is the idea that the refugees are 'settling quietly'. In other words, the Times implies subtly to the reader that the refugees themselves are not the cause of the problem and, more importantly, are not continuing the problem by 'settling quietly'.

Dispersal of refugees is not a favoured topic of reporting for the Irish Herald or The Irish Mirror. No examples were found in The Mirror and only one article in The Herald, on 18th may 2000. This article was based on the story of 15 Congolese asylum seekers who had been dispersed to Donegal but had returned to Dublin where they wanted to remain. However, they were very swiftly sent back to Donegal. This article, entitled *Congo refugees bussed back to Donegal* is very similar to the Independent's *Asylum seekers reject rural life in half an hour* article. Very similar is the sentence " a group of 15 Congolese asylum seekers who rejected country living in Co. Donegal were on their way back to the North West from Dublin today". This reporter sought a quote from an anonymous department. spokesperson who had argued that "there was an acute shortage of accommodation and with 1,000 asylum seekers arriving in Ireland every month, individuals could not be allowed to dictate where they wanted to live...it was

unacceptable they should make themselves and their children homeless by refusing the accommodation".

It can be argued that The Irish Sun has published the most highly inflammatory articles with its treatment of dispersal of refugees. One article, however, which proves to be an exception to this appeared in The Sun on Sat, May 20th. The headline was *Don't wreck happy haven for refugees*. In this article The Sun has sought a quote from a pro-refugee priest from the aforementioned Donegal community, who "'felt sorry' for the Congolese and stressed the problem 'wasn't their fault'". Besides this single article, three others were on the topic of dispersal and could be regarded as highly inflammatory. One such article, on May 19th, 2000, carried the headline *Shuttle of Rage* with the subheading *Refugees fury over move back to the west. Refugees sent back*. The main argument is actually physically highlighted by the use of italics: *"the whole system would become totally unworkable if asylum seekers were to dictate where or where not to accommodated*. This quote, along with the language employed in the headline, makes it very clear to the reader exactly what stance The Sun is taking on this issue.

Another such offensive report was on the 25/05/00: *007 village in asylum seeker row; We're under threat from refugee tide*. This report states that "the tiny village where 007 star Pierce Brosnan is due to hold his wedding reception is in uproar over a flood of refugees" and quote a local who argues that "the concerns of the majority are being suppressed and censored by the media". This quote is very reminiscent of Van Dijk's

(1991) argument that the media will often disguise the transmission of ideology behind the smokescreen of a quote from an anonymous source.

Perhaps the most biased article that The Sun printed on this topic was on 08/01/00: *Not so quiet; Refugees head for film village.* The article begins with stating that "the village used as the setting for the John Wayne film, The Quiet Man, may not be quite so peaceful in the near future...up to 25 of the refugees now flooding into Ireland are expected to be put up in the Mayo-Galway border village of Cong". The language employed here obviously requires more commentary and will be attended to in the chapter on discourse analysis. However, what is very clear is the message: the presence of refugees disturbs peace.

4. Employment of refugees/ asylum seekers

Many examples of reporting on the employment issue of refugees and asylum seekers were initially anticipated when this research was embarked upon. However, surprisingly, this was not a topic which the Irish print media has focused on, judging on the basis of the sample selected. Between the broadsheets, the amount of coverage on refugees and employment was quite balanced: seven articles in the Irish Independent and eight in The Irish Times. The Evening Herald ran three stories on this topic, while The Irish Sun and Mirror do not seem to have focused on this area at all.

The Irish Independent printed objective reports which are usually quite short. It is very difficult to determine the prevailing ideology and attitude behind these reports, with

contradictory headlines such as *Immigrants 'vital to wage inflation fight'* on 12/06/00 and *Jobless migrants to get £700-a-week* on 12/01/00. The latter headline is very misleading - it is only when the body of the report is read that we learn that these 'jobless migrants' are actually South African workers who were brought over to Ireland to work, but their contract was broken, leaving them with compensation. However, if the headline is read alone (as is often the case when people are scanning newspapers), the impression the reader is likely to get is that refugees are in Ireland to receive welfare and money, while giving nothing back to the community.

The Irish Times has focused to a large extent on the fact that Ireland *needs* a refugee and immigrant workforce to fuel our 'booming' economy. Emphasising this point, it can be argued, presents the reader with a much more positive image of immigrants. One such positive article appeared in The Times on 05/06/00: *FAS gets jobs for asylum seekers.* This report informs us that "about 35 of the first group of 100 people to attend the asylum seekers unit had found a job within weeks" and that "Mr. Donnelly [of FAS] said he was very pleasantly surprised by the skills levels of job-seekers". The article concludes by quoting Mr. Donnelly who argues that "the best way of integrating anyone into a society is to give them a job, and they are very excited about the prospect of working".

A similar article on the same day, with the headline *A third of those allowed to work have jobs*, argues that allowing asylum seekers to work would "be fairer...rather than having them seen as spongers, and it would allow them to assimilate into the population a lot better". From the evidence of these two articles, it is obvious that The Times is

committed to eroding stereotypes of refugees as 'spongers' and presents the idea of asylum seekers working and contributing to our economy in a highly positive manner.

On 31/10/00, the article *Asylum seekers voice desire to work* was printed in The Irish Times. This article is an excellent example of the effort made by The Times to correct the stereotype of refugees as lazy and parasitical. This article states that "2/3 of 85 asylum seekers interviewed by UCD academics had completed 2nd level education or had some kind of 3rd level qualification. More than 1/5 of those surveyed were in higher or lower managerial positions before they left their native countries" and only "7 per cent were unskilled". Most importantly, the report concludes by stating that when "asked about employment preferences, people said they would consider anything...they constantly emphasised their flexibility if given the opportunity to work and their desire to contribute to the local economy".

In 1997, The Times pointed out to its readers that Europe's economy required an immigrant workforce: *Immigrant and female labour vital for future* (20/10/97), which states that "the recruitment of non-western immigrants and more women will have to be considered to meet Europe's workforce needs in 15 or 20 years". It may be concluded that The Times displays an optimistic attitude towards the prospects of an immigrant workforce in Ireland's economy.

One article from the sample of Evening Herald newspapers, on 06/01/00 stated *Job seeking refugees getting a fare deal at last*. This article was printed on the same day as

the personalised account of Romulus the bus driver (mentioned later in the section on 'voices of refugees'). It may be concluded that The Evening Herald is supportive of the idea of refugees and asylum seekers working, and indeed the Herald has not printed any articles which are not supportive of the employment of refugees.

In conclusion, the employment issue of refugees and asylum seekers was not focused on to as great an extent as expected and overall, the Irish print media has been supportive of the idea of these people being allowed to contribute to our economy.

5. Disease/ health

The Irish media's treatment of health issues of refugees and asylum seekers has been perhaps one of the most interesting and revealing areas of this content analysis. The Independent carried six articles regarding disease/ health issues of refugees in the sample selected, as opposed to three articles in The Times. As anticipated, the tabloids carried the most alarming headlines concerning this issue.

The Irish print media has concentrated on the reporting of infectious diseases and birth rates of refugees. On the 19/01/00, the headline *Doctor's plea to test asylum seekers for hepatitis virus* appeared in the Irish Independent. The 'leading' doctor (there is no other identification provided) quoted claimed that "refugees have a 50 times higher rate of hepatitis B than Irish citizens and should be offered incentives for testing". This is clearly a case of scaremongering and the fact that the doctor remains unidentified leaves the article seeming dubious. The article further claims that "7 per cent of refugees who have

been tested to date are positive for Hepatitis B which is highly infectious". This would appear to be a far more realistic statistic than the former. Why does it appear further down in the article? Is this an example of a hidden agenda?

A similar article to the previous one appeared in The Independent on 16/10/00 with the headline *Minister rules out compulsory screening for refugees*. The article states that "only 60 per cent of refugees are currently availing of voluntary tests of TB, hepatitis and HIV". What is obvious by its omission is the lack of a corresponding statistic for voluntary testing of the Irish population. One wonders if the percentage of Irish tested for such diseases would be nearly as high as that of the refugees. In fact, it could be argued that the percentage of 60 is actually quite high but that the use of the word 'only' at the beginning of the headline leaves an impression on the reader that the statistic is to be interpreted as far too low. On the same day, (16/10/00) the Irish Times carried the headline *Only 60% of refugees avail of health screening*. This headline may be criticised for the same reasons as the Independent report.

A further article appeared in the Irish Independent on 02/06/00 with the headline *10 per cent of refugee women carrying infection*. This is an example of investigative journalism, which surveyed the National Maternity hospital in Holles St., Dublin. It seems that the journalist of this article sought this information with the hope of finding shocking statistics, as no other newspaper reported this information, implying that this information was not released generally to the press. The article also reports that "pregnant refugees did not seek medical treatment until they were 30 weeks into their pregnancy, nearly

twice as late as normal". The inference here is that pregnant refugees do not care for their unborn child as much as Irish pregnant women. What is not argued is that perhaps the societies from which these women come from do not provide early antenatal care. This could be the reason why refugee women do not seek medical treatment as early as Irish women.

Another example of investigative journalism in The Independent on this topic appeared on 24/06/00. Again, Dublin's maternity hospitals were consulted in order to provide the headline *Birth rate soars among refugees*. According to this report, "4 babies are being born every day to asylum seekers at Dublin's maternity hospitals, according to new figures obtained by the Irish Independent which show soaring birth rates among non-EU nationals". Once more, we are given no evidence as to how this figure was arrived at. Similarly, we are presented with no proof that "birth rates among asylum seekers are now 8 times higher than rates among Irish women". The article concludes "given this trend, medical staff and immigration officials now believe Irish citizenship laws are being exploited and some asylum seekers are coming here to gain Irish nationality for their children". What medical staff and immigration officials specifically stated this? This study argues that The Independent, by presenting unsourced quotes such as these, is perhaps putting forward its own opinions and agendas, using such 'immigration officials' etc. as a smokescreen. Very similar to the above article was an article in The Evening Herald on 17/10/00 which had the headline *Pregnant asylum seeker surge*, in which the article argues that "pregnant asylum seekers are now turning up at one of the country's busiest maternity hospitals already in labour, posing major problems for staff". Certainly,

with articles such as the aforementioned, the impression the reader is likely to get is, as Philip Curry puts it, "refugees...are effectively denying...women access to maternity hospitals" (1997:29).

Surprisingly, The Irish Times has also treated the subject of refugees and health in a similar manner to The Independent, although to a much lesser extent. On 24/01/00 the headline *Incentives for health screening considered.* This article states that "following the detection of a high rate of infectious disease among refugees and asylum seekers the Eastern Health Board is to consider introducing an incentive programme to try to get more people to come forward to be screened". However, The Irish Times does go further, to give a balanced account of this incentive programme, by emphasising that

> "the motion did not refer to refugees in particular. It read: 'that the Eastern Health Board seeks the immediate introduction of an incentive to maximise the uptake of voluntary screening of infectious diseases".

The final article concerning health issues and refugees in The Times had to do with the needs of refugees: *Needs of refugees emphasised at physiotherapist's conference.* However, this was a very short article. The Times has focused on and highlighted the health issues surrounding refugees and asylum seekers to a far lesser extent that the Independent. Hence, perhaps, we may argue that The Independent exercises an agenda of emphasising the 'dangers' and 'disease' of refugees in order to create a negative impression, thereby widening the chasm between 'us' and 'them'.

Of the tabloids, The Irish Mirror supplied is with the most alarmist of all headlines concerning refugees and health on 19/01/00 with the headline *Hepatitis B timebomb*. The implications of the language employed here will be discussed in the following chapter. The subheading of this article was *deadly virus carried by 1 in 10 refugees*. This article claims that "of the refugees who go for screening and test positive, almost 20 per cent remain untreated and do not even respond to the issue of several recall letters". This quote does nothing to praise the 80 per cent of refugees who *do* seek treatment. Rather, the focus here is on those 20 per cent who do not. The inference with regard to the failure to respond to letters is that these refugees are somehow ignorant, rude or careless – no mention is made of the fact that many refugees do not speak the English language. The article ends with a shocking statement from a Dublin GP, (who wishes to remain anonymous, unsurprisingly!) who claims that "we are sitting on a timebomb". The implications of a quote such as this are obvious and hardly require commentary.

6. Scams/Bogus appeals/crime

As mentioned earlier in the review of the literature, Hartmann and Husband concluded that the presentation of immigrants as ordinary members of society "has become increasingly overshadowed by a news perspective in which they are presented as a problem" (1974:144). Similarly, Van Dijk believes that "the standard news items about ethnic minority groups imply or suggest that minorities cause social, cultural and economic 'problems' for the dominant (white) in-group" (1984:361). Finally, Philip Watt, from the Irish Refugee Council, as highlighted earlier, claimed that the Irish media has misrepresented the refugee situation in three important ways, two of which were by

associating refugees with begging, petty theft and crime and also by frequently repeating the claim that many asylum seekers, especially Romanians, are bogus, only coming to Ireland to exploit its social welfare system (Watt, 1997).

Certainly, this research has revealed several examples of articles which support these authors' arguments. All of the newspapers selected for scrutiny have carried significant numbers of articles on this topic, many of which create negative impressions of our new immigrant population. Perhaps one of the more interesting features of this area of reporting is in the presentation of refugees and asylum seekers as 'bogus'. Indeed, the word bogus is found in several articles across the sample and is heavily ideologically loaded. In this research, the ramifications of the use of this particular adjective will be analysed in the following chapter on discourse analysis. For the purposes of this particular chapter, the use of articles with the theme of 'bogus' applications for refugee status will be presented, although the commentary on such articles will be reserved until the next chapter.

Andy Pollack argues that The Irish Independent has represented asylum seekers and refugees in three ways:

1. The articles concerning immigration are written by the paper's security correspondent,

2. The Independent uncritically quotes Garda and government sources and

3. The Irish Independent emphasises that the main reason for refugees coming to Ireland is to take advantage of our supposedly 'generous' welfare system (Pollack, 1999:36).

The Irish Independent has provided us with several classic examples of the word association caused by the repeated pairing of the terms 'refugee' and 'bogus'. Some of these examples include *New Anglo-Irish deal to stop bogus refugees* (12/06/00), *Crackdown on scams by bogus asylum seekers* (front page, 13/06/00), *Romanian police to spearhead crackdown on illegals* (13/05/00) and *Crackdown on 2,000 'sponger' refugees (07/06/97)*. The last example contains such quotes as " the department of justice clampdown comes amid fears of a huge influx of immigrants attracted here by the country's generous welfare payments", "there has been a public outcry since Ireland became the target for refugees trafficking groups because of its liberal welfare laws" and "it is estimated there are about 1,000 Romanians awaiting asylum decisions and international experience shows that 90% of them are likely to be illegal". Firstly, the question must be asked as to how the Independent can conclude that "there has been a public outcry" and "fears of a huge influx of immigrants"? If there has been a public outcry, is this the result of the influence of the media on public opinion? Are we experiencing a vicious circle in our reaction to the 'influx' of refugees? Secondly, one wonders how the Independent arrived at the statistic that 90% of Romanian refugees are "likely to be illegal". Surely, statistics such as these may create a highly negative impression of refugees, and in particular Romanian refugees.

As with the topic of asylum seeker accommodation, the Independent, here again uses the device of mentioning the cost of refugees to taxpayers. On the 11/05/00, the article *New deal to curb asylum seeker scam* announced "a new deal to stamp out a bogus asylum seeker scam and save huge amounts of taxpayer's money". This article, by highlighting

the cost of refugees, supports the idea that strict limits should be placed on the entry of refugees to this country, as the innocent 'taxpayer' cannot be expected to pay for such people.

On January 8th, 2000, The Irish Independent printed an article entitled *Grappling with the refugee crisis*, which describes the experience of refugees queuing up at Mount Street welfare office. The journalist reports on the people whom he has observed in the queue: "There are Nigerians, some with suspiciously British accents, others in authentic ethnic dress and jewellery". Does this journalist believe that if a 'refugee' is dressed in western clothes, he/she is not genuine? This is certainly the inference being made here.

On Friday, May 19th, 2000, a classic example of a biased, inflammatory and irresponsible headline was printed by the Irish Independent: *Only 2 out of 5,000 Nigerians genuine*. This conclusion is drawn solely from the fact that "almost 5,000 Nigerians have applied for asylum here since the start of 1998 but so far only 2 have been successful – and they were both on appeal". The implications of statements such as these hardly require commentary.

The Irish Times has also run many articles relating to refugees and asylum seekers and crime. However, The Times has concentrated to a much lesser degree on the phenomenon of 'bogus' refugees. In fact, only two articles from the sample dealt with this topic. Both of these were very small and also highly objective – they are both simply cases of news reporting: *400 deportation orders issued by O'Donoghue* (1/06/00) and

French police halt refugees for Ireland (22/05/97). Surprisingly, The Evening Herald has also printed articles on refugees and crime but no examples of exposing 'bogus' refugees were discovered in the sample selected. The same is true for The Irish Mirror. The Irish Sun, however, cannot be said to be blameless in inciting and arousing the suspicions of the general public towards asylum applicants. Reports such as *New moves on bogus refugees* (1/05/00), which state that "government figures reveal that up to 75% of asylum seekers are making bogus claims" without providing sources for the statistics, certainly plays a large role in informing public opinion. Again, *Bogus refugees face the boot* (7/06/97), which informs the reader that "up to 500 migrants, mainly Romanians, are to be booted out of the republic", has a similar effect.

The Irish Sun, as already stated, often chooses to select the personal stories of individuals to print. On 11/01/00, an article on two Romanian rugby stars was carried with the headline, *asylum bid theory as rugby pair go missing.* This report tells us that "two Romanian rugby stars have vanished after playing in Ireland. And last night there was mounting speculation that the pair were planning to seek asylum here". However, it is only by the time that the very last sentence (in much smaller print that the first) is read that the reader learns that "the Dept. of Justice, gardai in Galway and the Romanian Embassy said they had no evidence that the pair had sought asylum". A further inflammatory report in The Irish Sun with the headline *Refugee run to Ireland is foiled* and subheading *34 Romanians nicked* on 23rd May 1997 gives the initial impression that Romanians are not to be trusted when entering the country. It is only when the reader examines the article itself that it is revealed that " a gang smuggling refugees into Dublin

has been smashed by French police". This article begs the question: why is it that the criminals in this case were not specified as traffickers in the headline? In other words, why did the Irish Sun decide to denigrate an entire population by simply referring to these criminals as Romanians? This is very reminiscent of Paul Cullen's argument that headlines can defame an entire nation.

Apart from articles on 'bogus' refugees and asylum seekers (which will be discussed in far greater depth in the chapter on discourse analysis), the Irish print media has also proven itself to be very caught up in creating a negative impression of refugees as criminals. Typically, when a refugee/ asylum seeker is involved in a crime, their country of origin is highlighted in the headline. Examples of this in The Irish Independent include *Nigerian gang top suspects in latest drugs bust* (08/012/00), *Nigerian baby inquest on hold* and *25 Indian nationals sent to Mountjoy* (both 21/10/00). Also on 21/10/00 appeared a headline *30 months for underage sex* with "A LIBERIAN..." immediately following. This, I have selected for commentary as it is very unusual for broadsheets to begin an article with the capital case. In this case The Irish Independent obviously wanted to make it very clear to its readership exactly where the criminal in question comes from. These examples of articles seem to support the views of Hartmann and Husband, who in 1974, argued that "the news media respond quickly and with keen interest to the conflicts and controversies of the racial story but, for the most part, disregard the problems that seethe beneath the surface (1974:158).

An article in The Independent on 20/10/00 *foreign children now account for 1/3 of city's beggars*, states that of these children "virtually all are from the Romanian gypsy community, with a small number from Bosnia". a similar article was carried on 23/05/97, which stated that the "Gardai are increasingly worried at the growing involvement of refugees in street crime and prostitution and the increasing numbers begging on the pavements". However, as Pollack notes, "there was not a single direct quote from a senior Garda officer or a single example of conviction against a refugee to back up this very strong allegation" (1999:37). This report goes on to argue that "the asylum traffic is also being exploited by an organised gang of mainly Nigerians and Algerians who are exploiting the laws here to pose as refugees and fiddle social welfare benefits".

From analysing the Irish Independent alone, it becomes clear that newspapers can and do influence and inform public opinion. Certainly, the Independent has frequently represented refugees and asylum seekers as being associated with crime and fraud. In particular, it appears that The Independent has selected Romanians and Nigerians (being the largest and most visible of refugee groups) and has carried many reports which link refugees from these nationalities with crime.

The Irish Times, perhaps surprisingly, is also not entirely guilt-free of associating refugees with crime. Headlines such as *Asylum seeker sent to jail* (27/06/00), *Police inquiry on Romanian refugees* (04/06/97), *Garda says refugee threatened to shoot* (24/05/97) and *Romanians seeking political asylum get suspended sentence for attack on man* (04/06/97), it can be argued, echo the strategy of the Independent of informing the

reader exactly where the people in question are from and thereby contributing to the creation and nurturing of negative stereotypes.

A particularly surprising article to do with refugees and crime appeared in The Times on 26/05/97 with the headline *shopkeepers say theft by Romanians is snowballing* which states that "although the trouble is caused almost exclusively by Romanians, everyone tends to confuse the issue by calling the thieves 'refugees' or 'Bosnians'". What is the Times telling us here? That we should only be suspicious of refugee Romanians and not refugees in general or Bosnians? That Romanians cause trouble? Clearly, it cannot be argued that The Times can be entirely guilt fee of representing refugees in a negative light. Andy Pollack points out that in the previous May, the Times had quoted a Dublin street trader who said "if you look in their heads, from the youngest up, you'll see £500 or £600 worth of teeth, all in gold". Pollack makes the point that he does not suggest that "such appalling comments should not be reported - all I'm saying is that somewhere in our newspapers - and I haven't seen it yet - some editorialist or commentator should point out that it was just such attitudes which created the atmosphere leading to the euthanasia programmes and death camps in Germany and Austria in the 30s and 40s" (1999: 40,41).

The Evening Herald, too, has carried very similar articles. On 01/06/00 the headline *Nigerian fined for attack on gardai* appeared. However, this particular report did emphasise the fact that "he had no previous convictions and had never been in trouble since he arrive in Ireland". On 10/10/00 a story ran regarding the scandal of an 18 year old Romanian girl who was 'abducted' from her home in Dublin. This particular story

argued that the abductors are "believed to be rogue refugee status seekers targeting people from within their own community". Curiously, this article appeared on the same day that the Herald had an editorial entitled *tackling ugly issue of racism*, which argued that "action in the media, but also on the ground, is the only way to tackle this ugly problem"!

Finally, one article of 20/05/97, quoted shop traders on Camden Street who had been interviewed regarding their experiences of refugees an crime: "You can't turn your back on them for 2 minutes. They're absolutely rapid," said one fruit and veg stallholder; "they're about the best shoplifters that I've seen in a long time, and I'm a long time in Camden St". These quotes, naturally enough, are unsourced. One wonders what effect an article such as this one would have on entrepreneurs in Ireland. Would they become extra vigilant of foreign people in their businesses following such a report?

The Irish Sun and Irish Mirror have also run similar reports. On 26/06/97, the headline *Refugee on attack rap* appeared in the Sun, as well as *asylum seeker caged for £40 k cannabis plot* (27/06/00). The Irish Mirror, on 14/01/00 printed the headline *refugee beat up wife after stabbing man*. The implications of the emphasis on the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' are of great importance and interest and shall be presented and analysed in the following chapter.

7. Voices of refugees/ asylum seekers

Content analysis of media reporting on immigration in Ireland reveals that refugees and asylum seekers themselves are rarely referred to as sources of information regarding

immigration and integration in our society. Van Dijk (1991) has drawn attention to the fact that such people's grievances, if reported at all, are usually reported through the voice of lawyers and immigration support groups. Sources usually cited to highlight the experiences of immigrants in Ireland include the Irish Refugee Council, Gardai, politicians and various other non-governmental organisations such as Harmony. As argued by writers such as Van Dijk (1991) and Hartmann and Husband (1977), minorities themselves rarely find a voice in the media. Therefore, it is unsurprising that this study has found very few reports which present with direct observations from refugees and asylum seekers themselves.

Indeed the five national newspapers selected for analysis, only three had reports which referred directly to refugees and asylum seekers for quotation. Two of these include The Evening Herald and The Irish Mirror. In both papers only one report was found from each which actually quoted a refugee or asylum seeker directly. Coincidentally, both of these reports were published on 06/01/00. It is important to note also that these two reports are very optimistic in tone. The report from The Evening Herald on 06/01/00 carries the headline: *Romulus calls halt to racial tension*, with the subheading: *Barriers break down on buses*. This report draws attention to a refugee who has been working as a bus driver. The report states that "in the 14 months since he [Romulus] began working in Phibsboro garage he has only encountered one racial incident during which he was verbally abused by a couple on his bus" but that "despite his enthusiasm for the Irish, Romulus has noticed our attitude towards foreigners has got worse in the 6 years since he arrived". Apart from the latter observation, the tone of the article is optimistic regarding

the attitude of the Irish towards immigrants. This article is an example of what Galtung and Ruge (1965) referred to as 'personification'; the tendency of the news media to present events in a way which sets persons or groups of people as the focus of attention and enables the events to be explained as resulting from the actions of individuals. The alternative is to discuss events in terms of such abstractions as 'social forces' and 'structural features of society', a task which the media finds much more difficult.

The Irish Mirror, on the 06/01/00, carries a large spread with the headline: *Enduring the daily misery of being a desperate refugee in Ireland* with the subheading: *Spotlight on the waifs who wait for a new life*. The language employed in the headings is degrading and patronising – this will be discussed in the chapter on discourse analysis. Once again, the tone of this article is positive regarding the reaction of the Irish to foreigners: "All of the refugees – the vast majority of them Romanians and Nigerians – love Ireland...Most say they've experienced little or no racism since they arrived here".

The Irish Times, it appears, is the only newspaper, which has referred directly to refugees and asylum seekers in order to allow them to verbalise and express their experiences in Ireland, and, by doing so, perhaps helps to counter stereotypes and assumptions. An article on 06/01/00 with the headline *Bosnian voices in Ireland* carries a quote from a Bosnian which expresses very well the unsettling experience of forced emigration; "I have a feeling of being homeless in Bosnia and in Ireland". An article entitled *Using faith to feel at home* on 14/10/00 visits an African church in Dublin and highlights the importance of a place to worship for refugees and asylum seekers (in this case Africans)

where they can "begin to develop some sense of community in a strange and sometimes hostile land". One African is quoted as saying, "without this place to come to, we would all be very depressed here". A Nigerian woman describes her initial experiences in Ireland and emphasises how important a place of worship is for her: "All of a sudden I had no-one. People would stare at me, they wouldn't sit next to me on the bus, they'd make crude remarks…things are much better now, but I don't think I could have adjusted without this place".

A report in The Irish Times from Friday, June 6 1997 carries the headline *Refugees 'appalled' by growing public criticism.* It is an example of a rare occasion in which refugees actually have the opportunity to defend their case to the Irish media. The article draws attention to the dismayed and critical reaction of refugees and asylum seekers to public opinion of immigration. The report emphasises that "such forthright criticism is rare among refugees, most of whom find it polite to keep their head down and to shower their host state with praise". The report highlights the voice of Khalid, a refugee male who states that he will be "very faithful and honest for the kind Irish land" but argues that those criticising the increase in refugees coming to Ireland have forgotten the reasons why they flee here.

> 'I told them I had a flat, my family and a good job in Yugoslavia. Why would I give up all that for some social welfare here…I don't want to get benefit anymore. I have told FAS to find any job for me, even cleaning dishes', says this qualified physicist".

Perhaps the most revealing article which The Irish Times offers in this sample is a large feature from 17/06/00, which carries the quote *"On the bus, the people look, spit bile and talk about sponging, stealing their jobs"* as a headline. This article consults not a refugee or asylum-seeker, but an Indian born female doctor and her Irish born daughter, in order to reveal the assumptions of "racism Irish-style, racism far removed from deprived inner-city areas". The article states that Dr Mary Toomey has lived in Ireland for 37 years: "so why is she picked out of airport queues and why do some people call her daughter a nigger?" and goes on to state that "Mary and Aoife can tell stories about racism in South Dublin to equal any in a country village". Dr Toomey mentions an anonymous woman who has been leaving messages on her phone for three months saying "there's no room for foreigners in this country – you must get out fast".

Therefore, it appears that The Irish Times is the only newspaper from the sample which has made any reasonable attempt to air the voice of refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland. Additionally, it has been the only paper (on the basis of the sample selected) which has presented the negative experiences of refugees and asylum seekers and minorities (in the case of Dr. Toomey and her daughter) as expressed by themselves. In contrast, it seems that The Evening Herald and The Irish Mirror would like us to believe in the notion that Ireland is still the 'land of a thousand welcomes', while The Irish Independent and Irish Sun have failed almost entirely to consult refugees and asylum seekers in their treatment of immigration in Ireland.

Chapter five

Content Analysis II: The issue of Irish racism

1. Irish racism

All of the newspapers selected for analysis have discussed the phenomenon of Irish racism. Where they differ in depends on the number of articles which they produce and the amount of attention given to the topic and whether they discuss generalised racism or isolated incidents. What was expected initially was that the broadsheets, The Irish Times and The Irish Independent, would perhaps treat generalised Irish racism and that the tabloids would perhaps be prone to highlighting particular sensationalised incidents. This part of the content analysis does not include editorials or opinion columns on Irish racism. These will be discussed at a later stage.

Certainly, the most surprising finding on this area of reporting was how little attention The Irish Independent has given to the topic of Irish racism. We found only three examples of how this newspaper has treated this very broad topic, in contrast to twelve articles in the Irish Times. The Irish Independent's glossing over of this very prevalent aspect of Irish society, perhaps gives the reader of this paper, the impression that racism in Ireland is a trivial if not non-existent phenomenon, which poses little threat to the new arrivals.

One example of the Irish Independent's treatment of the topic appeared very early on in this research, on 25/01/00 with a headline *Racism is a major test for government.* The

journalist draws attention to the "concern that modern Ireland is showing signs that racism could become quite ugly. Many immigrants to this country, legal and otherwise, have spoken about racist remarks and abuse being levelled at them and their children". The article goes on to argue that "what many people may not fully realise or appreciate is that the newly emerging and prosperous Ireland needs, and badly needs, significant inflows of immigrants". The journalist emphasises that "there needs to be a sustained effort to educate people and encourage tolerance for the rapidly changing face of Irish society". This is a relatively well written and well intentioned article, but curiously, articles similar to this are extremely rare in the Irish Independent. The next time the Independent treated this topic was in October 2000, specifically 25/10/00, with a tiny, bottom-of-page article with the heading *£4.5 million to be spent fighting racism,* regarding a public awareness campaign announced by John O'Donoghue, Minister for Justice. The article declares that "this initiative demonstrates the government's commitment to combating racism through informing public opinion...it will promote a more tolerant society." The final example of the Independent's discussion of Irish racism was on the 24/05/00 with the heading *Seen as guilty until proven innocent.* This article discusses the problems faced by refugees and asylum seekers when arriving to Ireland, and seems to be sympathetic to the problem that "some people don't have documentation because they literally had to flee in the night" and that "others are too traumatised or too embarrassed to talk about their experiences especially if sex abuse is involved". This article also draws attention to everyday Irish racism by mentioning that "you may still notice on crowded Dublin buses that the seat beside the black person is empty despite the people swaying on the crowded aisle".

Regardless of the good intentions and effort to provide a balanced account of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in these articles, the lasting impression for the reader of the Irish Independent is either that Irish racism is practically non-existent or meagre in its manifestations. Certainly, the Irish Independent has chosen to highlight the problems *caused* by refugees and asylum seekers far more than the problems which they *face* in Irish society.

In contrast, it appears that The Irish Times has discussed the phenomena of Irish racism in much greater depth and on more occasions than the Irish Independent. The Irish Times often adopts a strategy of appealing to the Irish people to welcome immigrants to our society by highlighting past Irish experience of economic and political emigration. In an article on 27/06/00 with the headline *Hume launches a new anti-racism protocol for party's candidates,* attention is drawn to a study by the Statistics and research Agency which "highlighted a worrying growth in racist attitudes". The device of rhetorical questioning is utilised to invoke the empathy of the reader: "Now, when other nations find themselves faced with the same hardships and injustices which we have faced, should we not understand their plight and treat them with respect and understanding?"

On 11/10/00, the Times printed the full text of Mary Robinson's speech to the World Conference against racism on the occasion of the European conference against racism and intolerance, a speech, which the Independent curiously failed to report on. Robinson's speech is clearly anti-racism and challenges so called 'Irish generosity' - "this [immigration] is a challenge which should be met with generosity of spirit and respect for

the inherent dignity of every human being...but the sense I have is that a generous response is not forthcoming - quite the contrary".

Shortly after its printing of the Robinson speech, on 14/10/00, The Times carried two articles on Irish racism. The first, with the heading *commitment to tackling racism*, quotes John O'Donogue's commitment to "the creation of an environment which recognises refugees as persons who enrich society". The second article carries the headline *Reputation of Ireland abroad tarnished*, and quotes an anti-racism campaigner who states that "there is a whisper going around the black community in Britain that Ireland is not displaying the sort of understanding that people would have expected of it in terms of anti-discrimination". The article refers to the novelist Mr Gunter Grass who "made an impassioned attack on his nation's [Germany] inhumane treatment of asylum seekers" but also refers to Philip Watt of the Irish Refugee Council who describes Irish racism as 'more naive' and so there is an optimistic tone at the end of the article when it is stated that "there are significant opportunities for us to avoid what is happening in the rest of Europe" regarding racism.

The Irish Times also carried several articles on Irish racist attitudes towards immigrants as early as 1997, when refugees and asylum seekers began to appear in Ireland in significant numbers and when the problem of racism began to manifest itself. In an article on 28/05/97 on refugees and racism, The Times stated that "we have seen vigilantism in response to refugees" but "we must also avoid such a response to refugees". This is an example of an often used device of the Times which is usually found in

editorials/opinion columns - the device of the obligation type of modality, (what 'ought to' or 'must happen'). (Fowler: 1991). This device will be discussed in the chapter on Discourse Analysis. On 13/06/97, an article with the headline *Irish attitude to foreigners criticised* quotes the minister for state for foreign affairs who stated that "the 'ugly' racism which manifested itself during the general election reflected the need for a strong debate on where Irish people's values now lay". Similarly, the Times quoted Senator David Norris on 14/06/97 who "attacked the 'nasty, xenophobic' attitude of sections of the media and the public on the refugee issue".

Perhaps one of the most important articles on Irish racism which appeared in The Times was on 21/06/97 with the headline *Media blamed for creating tensions over refugee issue*. The article quotes Philip Watt of the Irish Refugee Council, who "said that some of the [media] coverage "can at best, be described as irresponsible and, at worst, outright racist in content". It is demonstrated in this article that The Irish Times does not wish to shy away from the topic of Irish media racism. It appears that The Times discusses media racism, perhaps because it is safe in the knowledge that it has generally failed to carry "alarmist or sensationalised headlines or subheadings" except in a few rare examples, which will be discussed shortly. Having researched the newspapers selected for this study, The Irish Times appears to be the only paper which has consistently discussed the problem of Irish racism in a general manner.

The Evening Herald, in contrast, seems to prefer to highlight particular, usually extreme examples of Irish racism. The Herald has, on the basis of the sample selected for

research, chosen to discuss isolated and violent examples of how racism manifests itself and by doing so, gives the reader the impression that racism is to be associated with a small number of violent people rather than being widespread and prevalent. On *Saturday*, May 6, 2000, The Evening Herald carried a 2-page spread on Irish racism, having consulted extreme racists on Dublin's Parnell Street. The spread has the main headline of *I hate blacks, go home* with the subheadline *'Cead mile failte' to a new Ireland of racist taunts and violent abuse.* As mentioned previously, the journalist bases the article on the comments of street passers-by, more especially that of an elderly man who shouted: "Ya Nigger, ya black bastard, go home! I hate yez!" This study argues that isolated, extreme quotations such as these do not serve to properly examine or discuss the more prevalent, subtle forms of Irish racism which are perhaps as dangerous and insidious as the aforementioned elderly man's explicit racism. By referring to and highlighting only extreme forms of racism, the reader may be left with the impression that other, more subtle, forms of racism can be tolerated. It may be argued that quotations relieve the reporter of responsibility for the views expressed even though he/she may have chosen the quotation because it is what he would have liked to have said.

One article from the Evening Herald carried the headline *Racist Nightmare* with the subheading *Dublin's Muslims are spat at, stoned and abused.* This article focuses on just one Irish woman's experience of being Muslim but concludes that "Dublin women who converted to the Muslim faith are being subjected to a frightening litany of racist abuse on the streets of the capital".

On 12/06/00, The Evening Herald carried several articles on the racist attack on a family of two parents and their twenty-year old son. Again, the paper has chosen to emphasise an isolated incident in its treatment of Irish racism with headlines such as *Four held after race stab attack,* and shouts of "'Niggers out! Niggers out!'" and *They slashed Dad to ribbons.* On the following day, The Evening Herald continued with a two page spread containing the headlines: *We must act now to protect the new arrivals in our country from mindless threats and violence* and *fear and loathing on the streets of Dublin,* continuing to emphasise the violent and physical forms of racism, which, prevalent and threatening as they may be, fails to properly analyse or address the subtle and underlying forms of racism in our society. On 13/06/00, we find a headline *I thought they'd kill me.* The article discusses a young Nigerian man who "bears the scars of a brutal attack when he was set upon by thugs in a Dublin chip shop" and states that "it's all a far cry from the image of a kind, religious nation which he thought he would find when he fled his native Nigeria". Even though this particular article does highlight the contradictory nature of Ireland's image abroad - "I thought Ireland was a place that had brought Christianity to other countries" - the lasting impression which the reader comes away with when interpreting The Evening Herald's treatment of Irish racism is that racism is the result of violent, extreme 'thugs' and not a problem of society as a whole.

One of the few times The Irish Sun has discussed racism in Ireland was with its story of a hotel for refugees and asylum seekers in Clogheen, Co. Tipperary, burned in a 'racist' attack on 15/05/00: *Asylum hotel hit by second 'racist' blaze.* The fact that the word 'racist' is in brackets in the headline here seems to suggest that the Sun is slow to blame

racists for the attack and that the blame on 'racists' is in some way dubious. On the following day the headline *Storm over fake race-hate letter* appeared regarding a racist letter distributed among houses in Clogheen. The article mentions how "hoaxers have been whipping up race hate with a bogus letter telling people they must accommodate refugees in their own homes". A further sentence begins by stating "one of the sickest paragraphs reads...", clearly an example of the ideology of the journalist coming across in what should be objective reporting. The fact that the word 'sickest' is used obviously makes it clear to the reader that incidences such as those in Clogheen should not be tolerated, but yet again, this paper has selected only extreme and isolated occurrences of Irish racism to discuss.

Of the tabloids selected for research purposes, The Irish Mirror is the only one which discusses Irish racism in a general way, albeit on only one occasion in this sample. On the 14th June, 1997, the Mirror carried the headline *Ireland for all.* The article argues that "racism is rarely mentioned in Ireland, lost in the argument over religious tolerance" and states that "we have the ability to absorb the newcomers in a way that will enrich and improve all our lives. *Those who try to blame our new friends for their own failings should not be welcome in a nation whose greatest export has always been people.* In similarity with The Irish Times, The Irish Mirror appears to have made the effort to point out to its readers the contradictory nature of racism in a country which has experienced large-scale emigration. However, overall, The Irish Times appears to be the only newspaper, on the basis of the sample selected, to address the rise of Irish racism in an adequate and generalised manner.

2. The Catholic Church and refugees/ asylum seekers

The coverage of the topic of the Catholic church's opinions of refugees and asylum seekers in the Irish print media is of interest because it is one of the few areas where we may find comparisons between the two broadsheets, The Irish Independent and The Irish Times. Apart from these two newspapers, the other three have focused far less on the opinions of the Catholic Church in their coverage of immigration issues. From the sample selected, the Independent printed three articles regarding the church and refugees/ asylum seekers. The Irish Times printed two - both of which were very similar to the two reports from the Irish Independent.

On Weds., June 14th, an article appeared in The Irish Independent entitled *Bishops send out warning on tough rules for refugees.* The bishop's statment is quoted as saying that "it would be more humane and cost-effective to reduce the backlog of asylum seekers and refugees here than to introduce highly dubious security measures", and their views on deportation are printed: "while accepting that deportation is inevitable, the bishops' committee has expressed concern about the trauma faced by those who have spent several years in this country, including children who have settled at schools". Similarly, The Irish Times, in its article of the same day, quoted the bishops as saying that "cutting down processing times would send a clear contrary signal, and do so in a more humane and cost-effective way than such highly dubious measures as importing police officials..." On 11/10/00, the Independent ran an article regarding a bishop who had spoken out against racism: *Archbishop hits 'satanic racism born of fake tolerance'* and similarly The Times carried the headline *Archbishop in call for effort to fight racism* on the same day.

Although it appears that The Independent carries the more dramatic of the two headlines, both articles are examples of objective reporting. The final article which The Independent printed on the topic of the Catholic Church and refugees was on 15/06/00: *Nun claims state may be fuelling race hate*. This article carries on in a similar vein to the previous two; "the government could be contributing to racist attitudes because of the language it uses when referring to asylum seekers, it was suggested yesterday by a representative of the Catholic bishops". Sr. Joan, the representative, is quoted as having said that "people largely took their cue from what the government said. However, in the case of the current asylum seekers, the message was coming through that they were illegal or bogus or on a scam". It can be argued that media ideology influences public opinion to just as great an extent as government ideology, if not more so. As argued earlier, the Irish Independent has repeatedly constructed refugees as 'bogus' in its representation of immigration. The irony here is that it has printed an article blaming the government for racist attitudes, when it also could be seen as being responsible for such attitudes arising too.

However, overall what are worth noting are the points of similarity in the treatment of the Catholic Church and refugees between The Irish Independent and Irish Times. It may be concluded that the Irish media has provided objective, if not pro-refugee reporting in its handling of this issue.

3. Editorials/ opinion columns

The Irish newspapers selected for scrutiny have all, at various times, and to varying degrees, discussed racism and attitudes to immigrants in their editorial/ opinion columns. The Irish Times has discussed these topics to the greatest extent, often speaking directly to readers and urging them to contemplate all of the issues surrounding immigration.

The Times is the only newspaper which has made a real effort to discuss the reasons why people seek asylum - thereby emphasising that refugees are not all simply 'economic migrants'. Andy Pollack, in 'An invitation to racism?' in Damien Kiberd's Media in Ireland: the search for ethical journalism. aruges that "it was not until the spring of 1997 that the refugee story began to take off. That April stories began to appear regularly about the alarmingly rapid increase in the number of asylum seekers. However, The Irish Times warned of the need to keep a sense of proportion about this 'supposed immigration problem'" (1999:34). He quotes an editorial of The Irish Times on 18th April, 1997:

> The State is not about to be overrun by a tidal wave of foreigners who will undermine the daily fabric of our lives. Compared to any of our EU partners, we are dealing with scarcely more than a trickle of immigration. Ireland still has fewer - far fewer- asylum seekers than most other European countries. If nothing else, the current phenomenon only serves to underline how we have conspicuously failed to take out fair share of refugees and asylum seekers in the past.

In an article on 13/01/00, The Times highlights that the *Horror of situations refugees flee from* [is] *overlooked.* This report states that "issues such as wars, repressive regimes and

generally intolerable situations" are rarely discussed with regard to refugees". It goes on to argue that "many of the foreign faces we see on our streets are here because they have fled from hellish situations" and reminds us that "some of our so-called economic immigrants today are fleeing from calamities as devastating as out Great Famine". Finally, it reinforces its argument that "some are fleeing from oppression and war of unimaginable horror". In a very similar article on 03/10/00 the headline is *Torture is not grounds for asylum here*. This editorial begins by noting that "in the rush to separate economic migrants from what the Minister for Justice and The Taoiseach like to call 'genuine asylum seekers', it is often forgotten that the world is a vicious place and that it produces millions of people whose fear of prosecution is all too well founded". This is a highly informative and debate-arousing article which requires a lengthy quotation, as it supports many of the views of this research:

> The official attitude seems to be that evidence of state violence against citizens in far-off places is to be treated with such extreme scepticism that even the physical scars of torture can be obliterated if the victim tells an inconsistent story...In the case of a Nigerian woman arrested and raped in custody, the authority found that, though 'this must have been a dreadful ordeal' , the rape was merely 'a criminal act perpetrated by the guards'...on these grounds, a Jew who managed somehow to escape to Ireland from a Nazi concentration camp would have been sent back on the basis that his persecution was merely a 'vindictive act' without political implications

This editorial and editorials such as these are vital to challenge stereotypes of refugees as merely 'economic migrants'.

The Irish Times, in its editorials, has also drawn attention to the benefits which immigration can bring. An editorial on 31/10/97 carries the headline *Immigrants do not have to be seen as a problem*, which points out that "the absolute assumption was that an Irish person should have a right to go and work in the US" during the Famine, "yet its not an assumption we always apply to other people coming to Ireland". A further editorial on 30/05/97 highlights the contradictions and double standards of Irish racism: *Race issue reflects shameful double standards*;

> "Certainly in Dublin, and to a lesser extent elsewhere, resentment against immigrants from Africa and Eastern Europe has been simmering under the surface...we are...talking about at most 3,000 people in two and a half years 'swamping a population of three and a half million...However shameful the retailing of clichés about immigrants is in any part of the world, it is doubly so in a country which has always assumed its citizens have the right to live anywhere...we went through paroxysms of national outrage at the plight of illegal Irish economic migrants in America...now we can barely restrain ourselves from putting up signs saying 'no dogs, no Romanians'...the fact that the migrants will be coming to, rather than leaving, Ireland, will simply be a mark of the fact that we have arrived in the developed world. The fact that at the first sign that this might be about to happen we become so hysterical that we forget our own history is, however, a reason to wonder whether we are fit for it...it is not immigrants who undermine a civilised society, but racists.

Another editorial, which supports the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers to this country, appeared on 21/06/00. This editorial was entitled *Trafficking in humanity*. This

column argues that "the recent government decision to automatically finger-print asylum seekers creates a negative image of asylum seekers in the public mind" and that

> The one certainty that exists in relation to refugees and immigrant workers is the long-term financial and social benefits they bestow on their country of adoption. Given our own experience as a people, we should recognise that and act accordingly. There is still time to adopt a more humanitarian approach.

The Irish Times has devoted much space in its editorials to treating the topic of Irish racism. One outstanding article, which speaks out against racism, was printed on 14/06/00: *Tide of racism rises*. This article speaks directly to the reader and gives strong advice on how to react to racism and is a very good example of what Thompson has referred to as the *obligation* type of modality.

> "People must speak out at every turn, saying loud and clear, that racism is wrong. And when ordinary people hear casual expressions of a racist nature, and where it is safe for them to do so, they should speak out firmly and reject the ugly assumptions that underpin such prejudice. The great majority of Irish people are not racist. They should not be afraid of showing it".

On the following day, 15/06/00, the Times speaks out directly against some of the government policies regarding refugees and asylum seekers in the editorial *A gruesome memorial to a failure to shout 'stop'*. This article argues that:

We have a government which seems bent on labelling refugees as alien, different, threatening to our society. Already we refuse to allow them to work, disperse them without warning into fearful and perplexed communities, give them vouchers instead of cash. There are proposals to fingerprint new arrivals and to incarcerate them in flotels. Newspaper headlines warn us of hordes of refugees...not surprisingly, perhaps, we see the result of all this in the increasing number of racial attacks on people deemed to be different from us

It is very clear, from the evidence of the above quotation that The Irish Times does not consider itself to be part of that media which 'warns us of hordes of refugees'.

A further editorial called *resisting racism* on 14/10/00, argues that Ireland has a "pressing need to welcome newcomers who are willing and ready to join the labour force and make constructive contributions to Irish society". Surely it may be concluded that The Irish Times has devoted an ample amount of space to dealing with the issues surrounding immigration in its editorials and opinion columns. It has treated at length the topics of backgrounds of refugees/ asylum seekers, Irish racism, contradictory attitudes of the Irish toward refugees/ asylum seekers and the positive contributions which immigrants can provide for this society,

In contrast, the remaining newspapers from the sample appear to focus mainly on Irish racism in their editorials and opinion columns. When editorials regarding immigration do appear, it is usually in reaction to a recent racist attack, such as the racist attack on a family of three on Pearse Street last year.

Ironically, on the same day that The Irish Independent carried the article *Crackdown on scams by bogus asylum seekers* on its front page (13/06/00), its editorial/ news analysis carried the heading *Racial attack a tragedy waiting to happen.* Perhaps it could be argued that the tragedy was waiting to happen because of negative media representations of immigrants! The editorial argues that

> The question as to whether Ireland is a racist society need no longer be asked...Irish racism includes calls by groups such as the Immigration Control Platform to 'look after our own first', ignoring both the fact that Ireland is far from being a mono-culture, and the opportunities that being a multi-ethnic society can bring...present day Irish racism is directed against asylum seekers, seen by government and media as 'bogus' and 'illegals'

It seems ironic that the Independent points to the negative portrayal of refugees in the media on the same day as printing the headline *Crackdown on scams by bogus asylum seekers*!

A further editorial, from the Irish Independent, worthy of commentary, was printed two days later on 15/06/00 on *The threat of racism.* This article is also inspired by the racist attack on Pearse Street. It states that

> The increase in the number of physical and verbal attacks is as unquestionable as it is shameful. But how much of it owes its origin to the proliferation of targets? A person of a different colour makes an easy mark for violent louts. In his absense, might they not as readily choose

some other victim?   The actions of the ignorant and the vicious do not prove prejudice among the general population

The inference here is that the near fatal attack on the English father of a black son living in Dublin is not an indicator of racism in Ireland. The reporter is insinuating that the perpetrators of the attack would be likely to attack any weak target, whether black or not. This comment trivialises the whole episode and the journalist seems to be convinced that it is not representative of a general problem of racism in Ireland. In fact it could be argued that the journalist here is in denial that the problem of racism exists in Ireland at all.

The Evening Herald, too, seems to print editorials on immigration and racism only when a racist attack has actually occurred. It is as if the Herald and the Independent feel the need to speak out against racism at such times but not at times when no violence has occurred. Perhaps it could also be argued that these newpapers feel a responsibility to print such articles as a 'token gesture' to match the reaction of the general public.

One such article in The Herald occurred after the attack on Pearse Street on 12/06/00 entitled *The evil in our midst*. This particular article is almost as vicious in tone as the attack itself! "The stabbing...is deplorable...the dark spectre of racism is not to be underestimated and the penalty...must be savage".

Another effort to discuss Irish racism in The Evening Herald was on 01/05/00. The editorial is entitled *Shame of racist attack* and it concerns a racist attack on a Nigerian owned shop on Dublin's Parnell Street. The article begins well with the statement that

"the racist attack on a Nigerian-owned shop in Dublin was as predictable as it is unacceptable". However, the article's content becomes worrying at the point when the writer states that "people are naturally worried about the rate at which asylum seekers and refugees are coming into this country". Why should we be 'naturally worried?' Can the Evening Herald be accused of scaremongering in this statement? The journalist goes on to argue that "by and large, the migrants arriving here are people seeking a new and better life. That may make them 'bogus' in strict legal terms, but it does not give Irish people the right to attack them and their property". What is being implied here? Is the writer informing us, the readers, that most of the people seeking refuge here are 'bogus'? It appears that we are being told not to attack immigrants, but perhaps, rather subtly, it is confirmed to us that we are right to feel that most refugees are taking advantage of our country's resources.

It may be argued that The Irish Sun and the Irish Mirror have printed quite sensitive and well argued, albeit few, editorials with regards to the negative reaction of some Irish people to refugees and asylum seekers. If it were not for some of the alarmist articles printed in these newspapers, it could be argued that the two exercise an ideology of welcoming newcomers to this country while criticising Irish hypocrisy.

One such editorial appeared in The Irish Sun on 30/05/97 with the heading *Now it must be our turn to aid people driven from their land* and is deserving of quotation at length:

We've got a bit of a cheek, haven't we? We ought to be the last people on earth to complain about foreigners seeking refuge among us. *So why now, when foreigners in need arrive on our shores, are we displaying such anxiety and, indeed, dare I say, racist tendencies?* The fuss in recent days over the numbers of Romanians being smuggled illegally into Ireland was indicative of a large dose of hypocrisy. Romanians - many of them gypsies and are here to beg, I have no doubt. And its difficult for locals to accept that. *But our animosity isn't just for the beggars. We appear to be also against foreigners with money. Racism is evil, so lets be tolerant*

Although the tone of this article is predominantly positive towards the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers, was it really necessary for the journalist in question to mention the fact that many of the Romanians are gypsies who 'are here to beg'? What is also worrying is the statement "*but our animosity isn't just for the beggars*". This statement implies that the Irish people are somehow entitled to display animosity towards those who beg.

On 14/06/00, The Irish Sun in its 'Sun says' editorial column urges us to extend a *Welcome hand to newcomers.* The subheading employed here states that *The Irish have the biggest hearts in the world.* This editorial argues that

It is wrong to accuse refugees of using resources that should go to Irish people. Those who flee Eastern Europe, Bosnia and Africa to start a new life do so out of dire necessity. Let's show the world that Ireland is still a caring, compassionate nation…**Give the newcomers a break**

If it were not for headlines carried by the Sun such as *'stampede of refugees'* and *Bogus refugees face the boot*, to name but a few, it could be argued that the Sun is committed to

anti-racist practise. However, the contents of the editorial examined above do seem to be almost a 'token gesture' towards anti-racist practice in the light of such headlines which have often appeared in The Irish Sun.

A similar argument may be made with regards to The Irish Mirror. It too has printed editorial columns regarding 'giving our newcomers a break' while also carrying articles which, it may be argued, almost incite hatred towards such people. On 23/05/97 an editorial was printed in The Mirror entitled *No refuge for racists*, with the subheading *time to offer the hand of friendship*, which tells us that "perhaps now its time to give something back to those who REALLY need it". Similarly, on 14/06/97 an editorial entitled *Ireland for all*, points to the contradictory nature of Irish racism:

> Racism is rarely mentioned in Ireland, lost in the argument over religious tolerance…we have the ability to absorb the newcomers in a way that will enrich and improve all our lives…*Those who try to blame our new friends for their own failings should not be welcome in a nation whose greatest export has always been people*

What is striking about the above article is the patronising attitude towards 'our new friends'. Are these the same people that The Mirror has often labelled as 'bogus' and 'spongers'? The attitude of the Irish print media towards racism is, indeed, condemned in editorials. However, its treatment of the whole topic of immigration, is very contradictory. Unsurprisingly, Hartmann and Husband concluded that their interviewees had a strong sense that immigrants represent a problem even though discrimination was

commonly deplored in the Press and much of the editorial comment showed a concern for improving race relations (1974:145)

4. Surveys on Irish attitudes towards refugees/ asylum seekers

The Irish Times carried out a survey on Irish attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers, the results of which were printed on Monday, the 24th of January, 2000. The results of this survey were highly contradictory and the headline sums up the overall conclusion of the survey: *Substantial majority of voters wants strict limit on refugee numbers*. The results of the survey led the Irish Times to conclude that "a substantial majority of voters, 74 %, want strict limits to be placed on the number of refugees allowed into the state" and that "the support for strictly limiting the number of refugees is strongest in Dublin (83pc) and among older age groups". However, contradictions arise from the fact that "60 pc of voters agree that a more generous approach than at present should be taken to refugees and immigrants in view of our own history of emigration". From the results, the Irish Times has concluded that "it signals that voters were displeased with the inhumane treatment meted out to queuing refugees...while, at the same time, wishing to retain strict limits on the numbers coming into the state" and that the "majority support for a more generous approach appears to contradict the overwhelming support for limiting the number of refugees entering the state".

The Irish Independent also printed an article regarding the results of The Irish Times MRBI poll, on 25th January 2000. This article stated that the poll "illustrated the contradictory nature of public opinion - on the one hand people want asylum seekers and

immigrants to be treated humanely and shown generosity but equally, they want strict limits on the potential numbers of immigrants coming to live in this country". What the Irish Independent goes on to argue is that "what many people may not fully realise or appreciate is that the newly emerging and prosperous Ireland needs, and badly needs, significant inflows of immigrants" and "there needs to be a sustained effort to educate people and encourage tolerance for the rapidly changing face of Irish society". Perhaps it can be argued that the reason the results of the poll were so contradictory is because of the contradictory messages we receive from the print media!

Conclusion

In 1974, Hartmann and Husband concluded that race issues in Britain were represented in the media within a framework which presented immigrants and 'coloured' citizens as a problem. They found that the news media was mainly concerned with topics of racism and hostility between groups, legislation and with control of entry of immigrants into Britain. As can observed in this content analysis, the Irish print media have followed suit. "One effect of this emerging news framework has been that the perspective within which coloured people are presented as ordinary members of society has become increasingly overshadowed" (1976:144). Van Dijk (1991) argues that "the coverage of ethnic and racial affairs in the press...has gradually become less blatantly racist, but stereotypes and the definition of minorities as a 'problem' or even as a 'threat' is still prevalent" (1991:245). This does appear to be a sound summation of the representation of immigrants in the Irish print media, on the basis of the sample selected. Also relevant to the Irish print media is Van Dijk's assertion that "minorities continue to be associated

with a restricted number of stereotypical topics, such as immigration problems, crime, violence and ethnic relations" (1991:245).

Chapter Six

Discourse Analysis

This chapter of the research presents a discourse analysis of the language which the Irish media employ when representing refugees and asylum seekers. When carrying out the research, notes were made of any lexical choices, adjective choices, 'natural disaster' imagery, 'economic' language and the homogenising effect of the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker'. One methodological aim throughout was to look for irrelevancies and what Foucault has referred to as the 'unsaids' of discourse – that information which is withheld from the reader.

The contention of this research is that language affects representation. Choice of particular vocabulary, and agency or transitivity may affect how an article is to be interpreted. It can be argued further that language may reflect the ideology of the newsgroup – usually that of an elite, white, dominant group, whose discourse may affect the general public's opinion of refugees and asylum seekers.

The main categories of this discourse analysis as outlined in the methodology are:

1. 'Natural disaster' language

2. The construction, through language, of asylum seekers and refugees as 'bogus'

3. The use of conflict terms in association with refugees and asylum seekers

4. 'Economic' language

5. 'Homogenising' terms

1. 'Natural disaster' language

This section of the discourse analysis aims to analyse the manner in which the Irish print media has constructed the immigration of refugees and asylum seekers in terms of a 'natural disaster'. This refers to the process of using terms such as 'floods' and 'tides' to describe the arrival of immigrants. Jason King has argued that the use of such terms leave the reader with the impression that our society may drown as a result of immigration. Furthermore, the imagery of natural disaster has the effect of dehumanising its referents, by portraying them almost in geographical terms; thus making it more difficult to imagine refugees and asylum seekers as individuals, who have arrived from divergent situations.

Certainly, The Irish Independent has often employed the use of 'natural disaster' language in describing the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers to Ireland. In this way, their arrival is constructed in a negative manner - as something that is potentially disastrous to Ireland. Listed below are just some examples of The Independent's use of such imagery.

- 29/05/97: *Demand for curb on tide of refugees*

- 31/05/97: *Taxpayer's to face bills of £20 million plus for refugee flood*

- 12/06/97: *Refugee flood to spark homes crisis, report warns*

The word 'flood' literally translates as an "overflow of water onto a normally dry area", but can also mean to "fill to overflowing; come in large numbers or quantities" (Collins Dictionary, 1998). The use of the latter definition to describe the arrival of refugees, it could be argued, is valid, as it is true that refugees have arrived here in large numbers. However, it cannot be argued that the arrival of asylum seekers overall, has filled the population of Ireland to the point of overflowing. The use of the term 'flood' in headlines and articles is

unsuitable and could give the reader the impression that the scale of refugees is disproportionate to actual figures.

The term 'tide' is employed in the first headline: *Demand for curb on tide of refugees*. The word 'tide' provides the reader with the visual imagery of waves and the unstoppable effect of land being consumed and covered with such waves. It may have psychological associations with tidal waves - huge, destructive waves. It can be argued that such imagery may support the idea that such tides or waves must be stopped or 'curbed'. Perhaps the use of this imagery provides implicit opportunities for the ideology behind the newspaper to seep through.

The second headline *Taxpayers to face bills of £20 million plus for refugee flood*, describes the arrival of asylum seekers in terms of a natural disaster which must be paid for by the Irish. The third headline mentioned above: *Refugee flood to spark homes crisis* certainly gives the impression that Ireland is going to be filled to overflowing, to the point of causing homelessness among the Irish. The use of the terms 'spark' and 'warns' here have the effect of increasing the idea of threat and imminent disaster.

Similarly, an article from 26th June 1997 in The Irish Independent contains the line "...in an attempt to stem the flood of asylum seekers and economic migrants". Here, too, the impression is given that our country is being 'flooded' and cannot cope with this natural disaster. The term 'stem' means to "stop the flow of" (Collins Dictionary, 1998). What is The Irish Independent telling us here? Is it suggesting that all immigration must be stopped? It is interesting to notice that the line mentions that both the 'flood' of economic migrants and genuine asylum seekers must be 'stemmed'. Mary Sykes (1985), has argued that the imagery

of natural disaster such as floods has the effect of dehumanising its referents. In the above example, what may be forefront in the reader's mind is the psychological effect which terms such as 'flood' have, rather than the imagery of asylum seekers as human beings. It is as if it is being implied that Ireland will soon need to seek asylum from asylum seekers!

The Evening Herald, too, has presented the arrival of refugees to Ireland in terms of the inevitable forces of nature. In an article entitled *Welcome guests of the nation?* the journalist asks "will the trickle become a flood?" concerning the arrival of asylum seekers. Although it may appear to be an innocent question, it carries ideological implications. The term trickle refers to "a gradual flow" (Collins Dictionary, 1998), a gradual flow that can, perhaps, be coped with. In contrast, the term flood, as previously discussed, is linked to a sudden, potentially disastrous flow. It may also be argued that the word 'trickle' carries an image which is far less threatening and harmful than 'flood'. The use of the questioning device here is also of interest. Following the above question, the journalist asks us "how are we coping with our needs and theirs?" The impression is given that the arrival of refugees is seen as a phenomenon which must be 'coped' with or 'tolerated', and not as one which could potentially enrich our society and provide an essential addition to Ireland's workforce. Again, the use of the word 'coping' reinforces the idea in the public mind that immigration, above all, poses a problem which must be coped with by the indigenous population.

The device of questioning is also employed in the headline of the article: *Welcome guests of the nation?* The subheading is *lining up and feeling just like beggars*. It would appear that this article displays sympathy towards asylum seekers from these headings. However, it is clear from the article that The Evening Herald does not necessarily believe these people to be

"welcome guests of the nation". The report is based upon the journalist's observations at Mount Street, the asylum applications centre. He remarks of some asylum seekers that "while its obvious that they speak English, they insist that they can't to avoid questions". In this one sentence, the journalist presents an image of asylum seekers as devious, crafty, suspect and as people who 'insist' on persistently lying.

By May 23rd 1997, just two weeks after wondering if the 'trickle' would become a 'flood', The Evening Herald has concluded that the "refugee trickle becomes a flood".

The Irish Sun has also used references to nature to describe immigration in Ireland. On 25/05/00, it printed the headline *We're under threat from refugee tide*. The article informs us that "the tiny village where 007 star Pierce Brosnan is due to hold his wedding reception is in uproar over a flood of refugees". The headline, therefore, appears to be the words of one of the local residents. However, this quotation is completely unsourced, leading to the tentative suggestion that it could be indicative of the ideology, (perhaps the hidden ideology which Van Dijk has discussed) of the newspaper group manifesting itself. With regards to the above quotation, it is interesting to observe the image of a 'tiny' village being overwhelmed by a 'flood' of refugees. Such an image seems to justify and provide support for the fact that the local residents are in 'uproar'. Indeed, the article may be interpreted as being in support of those against the arrival of refugees.

The article continues by quoting an unnamed resident who argues that "the concerns of the majority are being suppressed and censored by the media". Although this quotation is not necessarily indicative of the views of the newspaper, the fact that it has been selected and

highlighted perhaps illustrates the viewpoint of the paper. It is as though the Irish Sun believes that is not part of that media which 'suppress' and 'censor' information. What is also worrying is the part of the quotation which states that these are the "concerns of the majority". This is an example of the idea of 'consensus' - views and values which the majority of the in-group in society share. The uses of quotations such as these, it may be argued, contribute to ill-feeling towards refugees by providing subtle support for negative reactions.

A further article from The Irish Sun, on 12/06/97, was simply entitled *'Stampede' of refugees*. The definition of 'stampede', according to the Collins Dictionary is "sudden rush of frightened animals or of a crowd" (1998). The use of this word to describe immigration is obviously exaggerated. Certainly, the word's use is associated usually with animals such as bulls or buffalo and is less often used to describe the movement of rational, individual human beings. Words such as these carry imagery of nature, of destruction and of threatening and dangerous disturbance, and have a dehumanising effect on their referents. The headline is also interesting from the point of view of transitivity: the word 'stampede' is in quotation marks; responsibility for its choice is removed from the journalist. However, it's actual author remains unsourced, rendering agency ambiguous and unclear.

The Irish Mirror has also used metaphors of fluidity to describe immigration. In an article on 28th May 1997 entitled *Refugees light the fuse for election of hate*, the following quotation appears: "the trickle of asylum seekers now finding their way to our shores has become a flood as the boom gathers pace". This sentence seems to treat the arrival of refugees in terms

of impending doom. Asylum seekers are constructed almost as a threatening epidemic which has 'found its way to our shores' - one which has spread, increased and become inevitable.

The only example of this use of reference to nature in The Irish Times was on 14/06/00, in an editorial entitled *Tide of racism rises*. The use of natural imagery is not repeated in the article itself. Therefore, The Times has somewhat subverted the idea of refugees causing natural disaster to the idea that Irish racism is perhaps more threatening for our society. This article provides an example of Thompson's observations of the ideology of a newsgroup employing the obligation type of modality: what we 'must' or 'ought do':

> People must speak out at every turn, saying load and clear that racism is wrong. And when ordinary people hear casual expressions of a racist nature and where it is safe for them to do so, they should speak out firmly and reject the ugly assumptions that underpin such prejudice. The great majority of Irish people are not racist. They should not be afraid of showing it.

Indeed, The Irish Times does appear to be the only newspaper which has consistently kept a sense of proportion in terms of describing the arrival of immigrants to Ireland. It has not succumbed to the use of 'natural' disaster language as the other Irish newspapers have. Indeed, in an editorial on 18th April, 1997, the journalist firmly states that "the state is not about to be overrun by a tidal wave of foreigners...compared to any of our EU partners, we are dealing with scarcely more than a trickle of immigration".

2. Construction of refugees/ asylum seekers as 'bogus'

Certainly, The Irish Independent has relied to a large extent on such imagery, most particularly in the summer months of 1997. On 29/05/97, the headline *Demand for curb on tide of refugees* appeared, accompanied by a particularly alarmist article. With regard to the headline, it is unclear who exactly is 'demanding' a curb on refugee arrivals. Headlines such as these are common in minority reporting, according to John Thompson (1990). He argues that grammatical devices such as passivisation, serve to "delete actors and agency" (1990:66), and are an example of the process of reification – relations of domination become presented as inevitable. What Thompson is arguing is that when newspapers delete agency, in the above headline for example, the impression left on the reader may be that the Irish population as a whole has reached a consensus on what levels the number of refugees arriving here would reach. This is an example of Thompson's argument that the ideology of a newspaper gives legitimisation to an existing system of relations of dominance.

The accompanying article provides the reader with the information that a specific group of people are 'demanding' a curb on immigration – namely, participants in an Irish Independent survey. The result of the survey was that "a clear majority of voters wants new laws to reduce the soaring number of refugees arriving in Ireland". The beginning of the article is typed in bold and in the capital case, i.e. "A CLEAR majority". This device of emphasising a point is not unusual with tabloids but for broadsheets it is. In this particular case, The Irish Independent utilises the device in a very ideological manner – consensus among the Irish population on this issue is presumed and heavily implied.

The latter part of the quotation is also worthy of commentary: "The soaring number of refugees". The choice of the term 'soaring' instead of a term such as 'increasing', could be an ideological one. Mary Sykes (1985) has pointed to the importance of lexical choice in minority reporting. In this particular case, the choice of the term 'soaring' may influence the reader in his/her interpretation of the proportions of refugees arriving. Two further lexical choices in this article are worthy of commentary; "Gardai recently had to be called to a Dublin Eastern Health Board centre to deal with tensions when it was assailed by refugees demanding social benefits". The article fails to describe the long queues in often-harsh weather which refugee applicants experience. Instead, the following sentence jumps to inform us that "in parts of the capital, shopkeepers and stall-holders have complained about begging and goods being stolen by refugees". With regards to the former sentence, the terms 'assailed' and 'demanding', it may be argued, are ideologically loaded. The word 'assail' means "to attack violently" (Collins Dictionary, 1998), and seems to be an exaggerated choice of vocabulary to describe a protest. What seems to be contradictory is the fact that Gardai only had to "deal with tensions" following the Eastern Health Board being attacked violently, and admittedly, the choice of the term 'tensions' instead of 'violence' is perhaps to be praised here. The term 'demanding' also has ideological implications. The impression may be got that refugees are greedy, rude, undeserving and uncivilised from the use of the term. However, in this case, it proves difficult to suggest a term which may replace 'demanding', apart from 'seeking', for example. It may be concluded that sentences such as this one may contribute to a negative representation of refugees and asylum seekers, and certainly fail to subvert the image that they are somehow 'bogus'.

On 6/6/97, an article with the headline *Romanians attracted by welfare* was printed. This headline is interesting from the point of view of transitivity. It is very ambiguous whether Romanians themselves have admitted to being 'attracted by welfare' or whether the quotation belongs to the voice of a politician, a garda or an Irish citizen. In this case the ambiguity may influence a suspicious perception of Romanians as genuine asylum seekers, even though the accompanying article is clear and objective. Indeed, many writers would argue that the headline sets the tone for the article and that the headline is where the prevailing ideology of the newspaper group manifests itself, often in an ambiguous manner.

An article from The Irish Independent on 13/06/00 provides an example of the repeated lexical choice of the term 'bogus' by Independent journalists and editors: *Crackdown on scams by bogus asylum seekers*. The word 'bogus' means 'not genuine' (Collins Dictionary, 1998) and therefore its use is perfectly legitimate when used to describe those 'ungenuine' asylum seekers. However, what is interesting to note is the fact that the term was not in widespread use in Ireland until the media began reporting on refugees. Indeed, its use is usually confined to the discussion of asylum seekers and refugees. It is no surprise now to observe the term bogus juxtaposed against the term refugee but we may not observe the use of it in many headlines in the other realms of reporting. It may be argued that The Independent, and indeed other Irish newspapers, employ the term 'bogus' for a reason. Just as the term 'catastrophe' has more negative connotations that the term 'disaster', even though their meaning is similar, so too the term 'bogus' has more negative connotations that 'ungenuine'. Words which are similar in definition, in meaning, may differ in their strength of connotation, the associated idea or image conveyed by a word. Certainly, the repeated use

of the term 'bogus' is indicative of the ideology of an elite dominant group as Van Dijk (1991) has noted.

In its treatment of refugee issues, The Irish print media has often presented the reader with the information that both genuine and ungenuine asylum seekers arrive in this country. It is with *how* this information is presented in language that this discourse analysis is concerned. On 60/06/00, an article concerning human trafficking in The Irish Times contained a quotation from a chief superintendent who said, "we have to remember that some are genuine asylum-seekers". Although the choice of vocabulary here is not influenced by the journalist, it is still interesting to note the lexical choice of the word 'some' in the quotation. In similarity with the use of the term 'bogus', the word 'some' literally means 'unknown or unspecified' (Collins Dictionary, 1998) and again, its use is legitimate as it is true that it is difficult to specify the exact number of genuine asylum seekers in Ireland. However, it may be argued that the word 'some' creates an impression that there are more ungenuine asylum seekers in Ireland than not, and that the use of the term 'many', which is also valid and legitimate in describing the volume of genuine asylum seekers would create a less negative impression. In other words, although the terms 'many' and 'some' both refer to unspecified amounts, this paper argues that the term 'many' seems to imply a greater number than 'some', thereby disseminating the idea that there are more genuine asylum seekers that many would like to argue.

One example of the construction of refugees and asylum seekers as bogus in The Irish Sun was on 06/05/00: *'Refugee' in court win*. The fact that the word 'refugee' is in inverted commas here is of interest. This device makes it clear to the reader that the Irish Sun is

suspicious of those people who are seeking asylum in Ireland. The use of inverted commas here makes it appear that the fact that this person is a refugee is in some way dubious. Similarly, a quote from the article itself further emphasises this point: "an asylum seeker who claims he was hounded out of Romania". How are the Irish people supposed to trust and believe genuine asylum seekers when reports such as these do them such a disservice?

In a similar example from an article of The Irish Mirror on 23/05/97, the journalist argues that "some [refugees] are here because of the boom (who can blame them..." This quotation is worthy of praise for the lexical choice in this case of the term 'some' *instead* of 'many' for similar reasons as the above Times' quotation. In this case the employment of the word 'many' would perhaps create more suspicion of refugees on the part of the reader. What is also worthy of praise is the latter part of the quotation: "(Who can blame them)". This argument did not necessarily have to be added and it displays empathy and understanding towards economic migrants which is all too often absent in the media.

However, an article from the following day (28/05/97) in The Irish Mirror does not continue in a similar pro-refugee manner. Its headline *Refugees light the fuse for election of hate* will be discussed in the section of this chapter on the use of conflict terms in relation to minority reporting. The article outlines that "while statistics for the economic miracle are undoubtedly impressive, they pale by comparison to the near 5,000 per cent increase in refugees". Certainly, it must be argued that the term "5,000 per cent increase" is overly dramatic. There is naturally going to be a 5,000 per cent increase in refugees in a country which experienced fixed emigration and unemployment for so long and which had such a low starting base of refugee residents until recently. However, this argument is not

emphasised alongside the isolated statistic. The phrase 'pales by comparison', too, has a dramatic effect. It appears to imply that the presence of refugees will lessen the benefits which are to be reaped from Ireland's economic 'boom', and its use and the use of the statistics '5,000 per cent increase' can undoubtedly contribute to ill-feeling among media readers towards immigrants.

The article goes on to argue that "while many of the incomers are genuine asylum seekers, there are plenty more who are simply economic refugees out to take full advantage of our lenient welfare system". Again, the term 'many' and 'plenty more' are worthy of commentary. Once more, The Mirror is to be praised for its lexical choice of 'many' instead of 'some'. However, the choice of the term 'plenty more' to describe ungenuine asylum applicants is unfortunate. The obvious interpretation that the reader will choose here, resulting from the choice of vocabulary of the journalist, is that there are more ungenuine asylum seekers than not. The latter part of the quotation states that economic migrants to Ireland are "out to take full advantage of our lenient welfare system". Economic migrants is a term used to refer to those people who are not fleeing from conflict or danger but in search of better employment and a better standard of living. This article could be said to demonstrate what Foucault meant when he talked about the 'unsaids' in discourse – that information which is withheld or unemphasied. In this case, the information or argument withheld is thus; non-EU migrants are not entitled to work here unless they have refugee status. In other words, they may wish to work (in most cases they do) but they cannot. They have no choice but to seek welfare support while their refugee claims are being processed. Therefore, it is not necessarily the case that they are "out to take full advantage of our lenient welfare system". As one refugee has put is, refugees literally leave their lives behind;

friends, family, culture, in search of a better life. That better life is not necessarily a life of welfare support and food vouchers; "man cannot live on bread alone" (Focus Magazine). That is not the main reason why refugees come here, whatever this particular journalist would lead us to believe. What must be remarked upon in the quotation is the use of the term 'lenient' to describe Ireland's welfare system. Many Irish people may not agree with this description!

The article continues by stating that "Dubliners are hardened to the sight of foreign beggars flourishing carefully prepared letters detailing their tale of woe in the hope that they will produce a cash response"" Again, the choice of vocabulary here has several ideological implications. The quotation begins by saying that "Dubliners are hardened" and goes on to explain why. It is almost as if the journalist wishes to justify and endorse the fact that Dubliners are hardened by a foreign presence in Dublin. Although the presence of beggars with letters is both visible and true, the 'unsaid' here is that there are many more foreigners who do not beg, and indeed the foreign beggars account for a low proportion of immigrants. The choice of vocabulary in the latter half of the sentence is also of interest. 'Flourishing' – dramatic waving motion (Collins dictionary, 1998) suggests a staged, contrived, ungenuine activity, and 'carefully prepared letters' implies the same image. Similarly, "detailing their tale of woe" is highly unfavourable, insinuating as it does that the story of such a beggar is likely to be dubious, if not untrue. Even if such an insinuation is accidental, its patronising tone is surely not.

The article concludes on a dramatic tone, with a quotation from a Garda who states that "the word is out that Ireland is the place to come". This statement implies that once "the word is

out" there is no stopping the imminent arrival of more refugees. The quotation conjures up images of an innocent country which is almost being invaded.

These articles are just some examples of many others in the Irish print media, whose discourse has affected the perception among many Irish that asylum seekers here are to be suspected. Even in articles which explicitly support refugees, the discourse may implicitly insinuate that asylum seekers are not to be trusted. As demonstrated above, transitivity and lexical choice can have an influence on the perception that refugees and asylum seekers are mainly 'bogus'.

3. Conflict terms

One of the most interesting observations which this research has made is that of the Irish media's use of terms of conflict and violence when reporting on issues surrounding immigration. Hartmann and Husband (1974) observed the repeated use of terms such as 'race clash' and 'race hate' in the British media's reporting on minorities. Similarly, the Irish media appear to have followed suit in its employment of such terms. In this way, immigration reporting is constructed around the negative imagery of 'rows' and 'hate'. In its employment of vocabulary of conflict, the Irish media represent immigration as an issue which presents problems rather that as potentially contributing to society. The use of conflict terms in immigration reporting contributes to the creation of an image of refugees and asylum seekers as devious, if not violent, in the public consciousness.

The Irish Sun has utilised conflict terms in its treatment of issues surrounding asylum seekers and refugees to the greatest extent in the Irish. One obvious example was in its 19th May,

2000 edition: *Shuttle of rage*; subheading: *Refugees fury over move back to west*. The choice of the word 'rage' is of interest. The word itself means "violent anger or passion" (Collins Dictionary, 1998). Obviously the journalist did not feel that the term 'anger' would suffice in describing the feelings of the refugees. Instead he/she appears to believe that these people were experiencing rage - a potentially violent and disturbing emotion. The word itself carries connotations of anger which may physically manifest itself. It certainly does refugees a disservice by presenting them as people who experience extreme, violent and perhaps uncontrollable emotions. If the writer in this case wished to present refugees as threatening and to be feared, through language, he/she has certainly achieved the desired effect by employing the term 'rage'.

Similarly, the term 'fury' in the subheading has a similar effect. The word is defined as "wild anger; uncontrolled violence" (Collins Dictionary, 1998). Again, the impression is given that these people are incapable of suppressing violent emotions; their anger is wild, their violence uncontrolled. The lexical choice here is highly reminiscent of Said's writings on 'us' and 'them' (1978). Said argued that in order to create a chasm between in-groups and out-groups in society, it becomes necessary to construct imagery of the out-group as violent, savage, uncivilised, barbaric and tribal. Certainly, the choice of the word 'fury' to describe the emotional response of refugees who are dictated to as to where they will have to live, exemplifies the Irish media's construction of refugees as a 'them' who are set apart from the consensual 'us'. Van Dijk (1991) argues that one of the major factors in the construction of an 'us' and 'them' is through the use of language and discourse. As mentioned in the review of literature, the elite, dominant groups in society have the most influence on discourse and

modes of discourse. It is perhaps not surprising that negative language surrounding 'them' is to be found in the Irish media.

A second article found in The Irish Sun employing a conflict term was the already mentioned *007 village in asylum-seeker row* on 25/05/00, with the subheading *We're under threat from refugee tide*. This article is concerned with the arrival of 40 asylum seekers to Cong, Co. Mayo. The report does not mention any reports of 'rows' or violence between the asylum seekers and local residents, so the use of the term 'row' in the headline is questionable. The word itself means "dispute; disturbance; reprimand" or it may be a verb; "quarrel noisily" (Collins Dictionary, 1998). Although the use of the word may be applicable in terms of "dispute; disturbance", it could be argued that for the most part Irish people interpret the word as meaning to "quarrel noisily".

In terms of transitivity, the headline is of great interest. Agency is very unclear. Who exactly is creating the row or disturbance? We are informed later in the article that the local residents are in "uproar over a flood of refugees". Therefore, it is the locals who have the problem; it is they who have reacted negatively to the arrival of dispersed refugees who have no say in where they are to live. Why then is the word 'row' juxtaposed with 'asylum seeker'? Why is the reader given the impression that it is the asylum seeker who has brought about or caused this 'row'? This headline exemplifies what Andrew Sharf (The Jews under British rule, 1964) has argued about racism and discrimination; the blame for racism or racist attitudes is often placed upon the minorities (asylum seekers in this case) and not with its rightful agents - the racists themselves. Even though this article (and many similar articles found throughout this research) does not explicitly endorse racism or racist arguments, its

choice of vocabulary and transitivity may implicitly support negative attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers.

On 13th May 2000, the headline *Bishop's blast on refugees* appeared in The Irish Sun. This article informs us of "an outspoken bishop [who] has backed his flock over concerns at the influx of refugees into their town". The choice of vocabulary is of interest. The term 'blast': "explosion" (Collins Dictionary, 1998) was perhaps chosen for its alliterative qualities - *Bishop's blast*. However, its effect remains. It is as if this religious man has been somehow forced into the position of exploding by the "influx of refugees". The choice of the term 'outspoken' is worthy of commentary. Why is it that the terms 'hate' and 'row' are so often juxtaposed against 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' but when an Irish person (or member of the dominant in-group) is racist or uncaring they are deemed to be simply 'outspoken'? Outspoken, meaning "tending to say what one thinks; said openly" (Collins Dictionary, 1998), seems too supportive and empathetic towards a member of society who may hold a strong influence over many people and yet used this influence to speak out against asylum seekers.

The use of the term 'flock' instead of 'parish' or 'congregation' is also interesting. The word 'flock' usually conjures images of sheep but is sometimes used to describe congregations of people at religious ceremonies, although rarely in the media. We think of a shepherd minding his flock - helpless, innocent and in need of supervision, direction and protection. Perhaps the employment of this particular term here has the desired effect - we a presented with the image of a bishop who has the concerns and best interests of his 'flock' at heart. Even though the adjective 'outspoken' is used to describe the bishop, it does not seem to be

critical enough of his views. Overall, through the selection of particular language, this article appears to subtly support and share the views of the bishop and his 'flock'.

From the point of view of transitivity, an article from the Irish Sun on 15th May, 2000 is of great interest. In the headline, *Asylum hotel hit by second 'racist' blaze*, agency is highly unclear. This article is concerned with the repeated racist attack on a hotel for asylum seekers in Clogheen, Co. Tipperary. However, the headline provides the reader with no clue as to who is responsible for such an attack. Indeed, the fact that the hotel was deliberately attacked by racists is even deemed dubious by the insertion of inverted commas around the word 'racist', thereby rendering it very unclear to the reader as to who could possibly be responsible for the attack; we are not even sure if it was the action of racists. Transitivity is of great importance. It appears that when the Irish dominant in-group is involved in racist attacks or debates, their identity is usually rendered elusive. In contrast, however, if or when a foreigner is involved in crime or trouble, the Irish media never seems to fail to inform us exactly who was involved and where they come from, even when this information is irrelevant.

An article in The Irish Mirror sample of newspapers which highlights the importance of transitivity and the use of conflict terms in asylum seeker and refugee reporting. On 28th May, 1997 we read: *Refugees light the fuse for election of hate*. It is very clear as to where The Irish Mirror places responsibility for racist attitudes: with refugees themselves. The Irish Mirror insinuates in this one headline that refugees have lit the fuse for an election of hate; refugees have caused Irish voters to become racist; there was no racism in Ireland until the presence of refugees was felt. Again, this article echoes Sharf's argument that the media

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often places responsibility for racism with the minority groups and not with the dominant in-group. This headline does seem to imply that refugees have begun or brought about feelings of hate; they have 'lit the fuse'. Agency is not placed with Irish society or the Irish media. Rather, we are given the impression that refugees cause racism; if there were no refugees in Ireland, Ireland would never have become a racist society.

Also of lexical interest is a further quotation from the article itself: " *the massive influx has forced Dubliners to come off the fence*". 'Massive influx' will be discussed in the following section on the Irish media's use of 'economic' language to describe immigration. In terms of language choice, the use of the word 'forced' in the quotation has consequences. We are given the impression that 'Dubliners' have no choice but to change their views on refugees and react negatively. Responsibility for racist attitudes or actions is effectively removed from Dubliners because they have been 'forced' to 'come off the fence'; they have no choice but to react negatively to asylum seekers because of the 'massive influx'. Once more, Sharf's argument regarding Jews in Britain rings true; societies can tolerate the presence of foreigners if their numbers are small and their stay temporary: To summarise, it appears through analysing this particular article that The Irish Mirror's ideology is one of placing responsibility for racism with those actually experiencing it, and condoning or showing understanding towards those members of Irish society who have racist tendencies.

Interestingly, The Evening Herald does not present immigration in terms of conflict or violence. Articles in The Herald in which conflict terms appear are usually centred around Irish racism and racist attacks. Examples of such headlines include:

12/06/00: *They slashed Dad to ribbons*

13/06/00: *Fear and loathing on the streets of Dublin*

13/06/00: *Shame of brutal attack*

13/06/00: *Racist mob in terror attack on immigrants*

12/06/00: *four held after race stab attack*

In the last example, it is of interest that the only information we are provided with about the instigators of the racist attack is that there were four people involved. One wonders if the Herald, or indeed other Irish newspapers would provide such little information when refugees or asylum seekers instigate trouble or crime. Indeed, the following example from The Irish Times may serve to illustrate that when refugees are involved in crime we are provided with much information about them: *Romanians seeking political asylum get suspended sentence for attack on man* (04/06/97).

Although The Evening Herald does not appear to represent refugees/ asylum seekers in terms of conflict, as we have seen from the above headlines, it does highlight the conflict and violence surrounding Irish racism. These issues do need to be reported, but as with the section on crime in chapter four (Content analysis) the emphasis on crime and negative, violent vocabulary may leave the reader with the impression that the presence of refugees in this country has brought about an increase in the incidence of crime and that, overall, they constitute a *problem* for Ireland.

The Irish Independent, like The Irish Times, has not concentrated on a discourse of conflict and violence with regards to immigration. As we have seen, the Independent appears to employ the more subtle devices of 'natural disaster' language and 'economic' language to

describe the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers. However, one phrase which the Independent employed twice in this sample was that of 'row looming':

04/01/00: *Immigrant housing row looming*

11/05/00: *Row looming about where refugees may be detained*

The use of the term 'row' has already been discussed and requires no further commentary. However, the term 'looming' is of interest. To loom means to "seem ominously close" (Collins Dictionary, 1998). Indeed, the effect of the word 'looming' does have an ominous and worrying effect. For the reader, the use of this word could leave the impression that immigration brings about 'rows' which are worrying, imminent and ominous.

This research has not found any examples of articles in The Irish Times which demonstrate the employment of conflict terms with regards to refugees/ asylum seekers. However, as we shall see, particular discourse and lexical choices of the Irish Times are demonstrated in other areas.

In 1974, Hartmann and Husband found, through content analysis of the British press that immigrants and issues relating to immigrants were often expressed in terms of conflict and violence. So too the Irish press has succumbed to this tendency. As can be observed, the use of a vocabulary centred on violence and conflict may have the effect, whether planned or not, of creating a very negative impression of refugees and asylum seekers as devious, violent people with uncontrollable emotions of anger or 'rage'. This tendency, Said would argue, is demonstrative of the ideological construction in dominant, elite discourse of 'us' and 'them';

this is one of the ways in which dominant in-groups (often the majority in newsgroups) remain dominant.

4. 'Economic' language

Mary Sykes has argued that words and phrases such as 'rate of intake', 'inflow', 'outflow' and 'influx' are "almost the language of industrial or agricultural process" (1985:98). The media, by employing this 'economic' language, effectively dehumanises its referents in the same way as the use of 'natural disaster' language.

The Irish Independent has often employed such 'economic' language. One example of its use is from 23rd May, 1997: *Growing fears at surge in asylum seeker.* The word surge has dramatic qualities here, as does 'growing fears'. The use of the latter term may perhaps encourage those people who feel threatened by asylum seekers by acknowledging a 'consensual' feeling. The article begins by asserting that "the country is on the brink of a major refugee problem". This is a very good example of the construction of immigrants as a problem to be borne by society. The use of the term "on the brink" has an imminent, foreboding quality and certainly does a disservice to those newly arrived asylum seekers. Additionally, the use of the adjective 'major' to describe the refugee 'problem' further emphasises the depiction of refugees as a problem or threat.

The article continues by informing us that "the largest group are Romanians, many of whom are gypsies" and in the following sentence informs us that "gardai are increasingly worried at the growing involvement of refugees in street crime and prostitution and the increasing numbers begging on the pavements". The presentation of information here is interesting

because Romanians are highlighted and may be forefront in the reader's mind when they read of the growing crime rates among refugees. One wonders how the public's perception of Romanians is affected by such a report. Why, also, are we informed of the fact that many of the Romanians are gypsies? Is it because gypsies are less welcomed to Ireland? Is it because the image of a gypsy may be that of a beggar, peddlar or criminal? Stereotyping such as this contributes to the dehumanisation of ethnic minorities, and is a trait of the dominant elite groups in society. Irish travellers have borne the brunt of this stereotyping for decades. The Irish Independent's writer in this case contributes to the arousing of old or continuing prejudice among the Irish towards travellers of gypsies.

On 7th January 2000, the headline *Refugees arriving at a rate of 1,000 a month* is another example of the use of economic language to describe the arrival of refugees. Van Dijk (1991) has argued that the description of arrivals in terms of numbers has a strong, cumulative effect on the reader, perhaps building up a sense of hostility towards what seems like never-ending arrival of refugees. This device is what he has referred to as the 'numbers game'.

In an article on 19th January 2000, with the headline *New campaign to tackle refugee housing crisis*, the following quotation appeared " the upsurge in refugees and other asylum seekers in recent times has created an unprecedented accommodation crisis". Just as the above article's use of the term 'surge' has a dramatic quality, so too does the use of the term 'upsurge' here. The use of the word 'unprecedented' also is very dramatic. It has the effect of creating an image of our country being overwhelmed by an accommodation crisis precisely because of the 'upsurge in refugees and other asylum seekers'. No mention is made of the

other factors involved in this so-called accommodation crisis i.e. migrants who previously would have emigrated but mow move to Dublin to work, increased numbers of students and returning emigrants, and other foreign visitors and workers, both on fixed-term job appointments and casual work. When considered among these groups of people, refugees and other asylum seekers actually account for very little of Dublin's population. However, it is very clear that The Irish Independent would lead us to believe that it is the "upsurge in refugees and other asylum seekers in recent times" which "has created an unprecedented accommodation crisis".

On May 7th 2000, the following headline was printed in The Irish Independent: *Villages cannot veto immigrant influx*. The juxtaposition of the word 'villages' with an 'immigration influx' brings forth images of a small village being overwhelmed by a sudden rush of invaders. Similarly, an article on 24th June 2000, with the headline *Birthrate soars among refugees* has a dramatic effect because of the use of the term 'soars' instead of 'increases' or 'rises'.

The Irish Times has also utilised 'economic' terms in its description of refugees and asylum seekers. On 26th May 1997 the headline of an article on immigration was *Influx of asylum seekers causes concern*. Another article on 30th October 1997 states that *Immigration reaches record levels*, further reducing immigration of asylum seekers to a statistical rather than humanitarian level.

The Evening Herald, like the Irish Independent, printed an article on the birth rates of refugee women entitled *Pregnant asylum seeker surge*. The headline here seems to

implicitly insinuate that asylum seekers may be planning to become citizens of Ireland by having children here.

A very interesting article from the point of view of discourse analysis appeared in The Evening Herald on 1st May 2000. It is an editorial which is criticising a racist attack in Dublin. From the outset the article appears to be very supportive towards asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland: "The racist attack on a Nigerian-owned shop in Dublin was as predictable as it is unacceptable" and "while they are here awaiting a determination on whether or not they can stay, they have a right to live in peace and safety and be treated with dignity and respect". However, on closer inspection the discourse of the article is not as pro-refugee as it would seem to be. The writer argues that "people are naturally worried about the rate at which asylum seekers and refugees are coming into this country". The use of the term 'naturally' is of interest. It does seem to legitimise and take as a matter of course or 'consensus' the fact that people are worried by the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers. Discourse such as this may encourage those with already prejudiced view by legitimating their views. Such reporting may also encourage extreme groups such as The Immigration Control Platform.

The article continues by informing us that "by and large, the migrants arriving here are people seeking a new and better life. That may make them 'bogus' in strict legal terms but it does not give Irish people the right to attack them and their property". The Evening Herald is here perpetuating the idea that the majority of asylum seekers here are not genuinely seeking asylum. However, in the same sentence it covers itself by asserting that racist attacks may not be condoned; thus the Evening Herald cannot be accused of being outwardly racist.

A lexical choice in The Irish Mirror is of interest in terms of 'economic' language. An already mentioned article on 28th May 1997, argued that "the massive influx has forced Dubliners in particular to come off the fence". The word 'massive' has dramatic qualities, creating imagery of unimaginable, indescribable proportions.

As Mary Sykes has argued, these economic terms describe immigration in terms of industrial processes; refugees and asylum seekers become statistical issues; diversity of culture and situations fled from are not an important part of these statistics. Indeed it is to be praised of The Irish Independent that it has at least once shown a recognition of the Irish media's tendency to use 'economic' language when referring to refugees and asylum seekers in an editorial (8th January, 2000): "we are not talking about an import surplus here but about human beings with human needs".

5. 'Homogenising' terms

As outlined in the introduction to this research, the terms 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' mean different things. To recap, 'asylum seeker' refers to a person who is in the process of seeking and gaining asylum; a person who is going through the process of applying for asylum or waiting for such an application to be approved. A 'refugee' is someone who has successfully gone through such an application process and has gained 'refugee status'. The Irish media tends to use both differing terms interchangeably. Every effort has been made throughout this research to refer both to asylum seekers *and* refugees. It comes as no surprise that many Irish people believe that there is no difference between refugees and asylum seekers because the Irish media has never made the differences between them clear.

An example of the media's interchanging of the two terms is as follows:

Refugees head for film village - Irish Sun, 08/01/00

Asylum seekers reject rural life in half an hour - Irish Independent 18/05/00

In this example we can observe how the Irish media use the two terms interchangeably. As we know, those people who have gained refugee status are entitled to live and work in Ireland. They do not have to be dispersed or get social welfare or cash vouchers as asylum seekers do. In other words, it is incorrect of the Irish Sun to state that "refugees head for film village", when the people that they are referring to are, in fact, asylum seekers. It is no wonder that the Irish reader may become confused about the differences.

Conclusion

Language affects representation. Even when an article may be condemning racism and racist attitudes, it may, at the same time, be legitimating such attitudes through language.

The forces of language are very subtle and very difficult to observe explicitly. However, it is of utmost importance to study how language may encourage or legitimate racist discourse. Ideology operates through language. Command of language and access to language is one of the major ways in which elite groups in society perpetuate dominance. Sociology must continue in its use of the very important methodology of discourse analysis.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Statement of research problem

This research has examined the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the Irish print media. Ireland's booming economy of the 1990's, the so-called Celtic Tiger, has attracted a large number of immigrants to a nation more noted in the past for exporting rather than importing surplus populations. Immigrants to Ireland have been of two kinds. One the one hand, over 25,000 non-EU workers per annum have been brought into the State over the past three years through the work permit system. These have come largely from Eastern Europe, the Philippines, South Africa and Malaysia and are legal workers with working visas, who have been allowed to the State to meet the labour shortage. The largest number from any single country has been from Latvia with 3,866 immigrants to Ireland from January 2000 to May 2001 (Department of enterprise, Trade and Employment statistics).

On the other hand are the immigrants who are the subject of this thesis, the refugees and asylum seekers who by one means or another arrive in Ireland without work permits or working visas and apply to the State for asylum. Over the past three years, these have also numbered over 25,000 per annum. The majority are also from Eastern Europe, more especially from Romania and from sub-Sahara Africa, particularly from Nigeria. Whether they succeed in their quest or are eventually deported, they remain in Ireland, sometimes for up to a year while their request for asylum is being processed.

This research has been concerned with the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the Irish print media. When the presence of immigrants became felt in Ireland, many turned to the media for information; information about the rates at which immigrants were arriving, information about policy regarding employment and housing, and information on the reasons as to why refugees seek asylum, whether genuine or not.

The contention of this research is that the Irish print media has not always succeeded in presenting balanced and objective reports on the issues surrounding immigration. This study has analysed several reports which provide images of disproportionate rates of immigrants, crisis' in housing, population and health caused by the presence of refugees and asylum seekers and a sense that the majority of those seeking refuge are 'bogus' or 'ungenuine'. Reports such as these have a negative affect on public opinion.

In Ireland, the majority of asylum seekers and those with refugee status locate in city or urban areas such as Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford etc. For many areas in Ireland, contact with non-nationals may be minimal, but for all the media provides information and a framework for interpreting the features of immigration to this country. For many people the media may be the *only* source of such information. MacGreil has argued that

> Because of the homogenous (in racial terms) nature of Irish society, it can
> be assumed that the origins of our racial prejudices are learned from
> Britain, the US and elsewhere through experience abroad and through the
> constant inflow of biased media presentation of racialist intergroup
> relations abroad (MacGreil, 1996:131).

The reader may be influenced by the ideology of the newspaper or newsgroup, depending on the preferred choice of newspaper.

It is very difficult to measure the extent to which the media affects opinion, as many of the effects are often indirect. This author was influenced to carry out this study after having been involved in numerous personal arguments and debates about the immigration of refugees and asylum seekers in which such statements as "you read it in the paper every day" and "I saw it in the paper" were used to legitimate arguments. It is clear that the print media influence opinion and that the media may often be cited in support of particular arguments. People often *do* believe what they read in the newspaper. Cohen and Young (1973) have argued that the print media "relate directly to the present social situation, have wide circulation and enjoy the high credibility that enhances their capacity to influence how people think" (1973:291).

If a newspaper consistently represents refugees and asylum seekers in a negative manner, its influence can be worrying for a society which has only been recently exposed to immigration. Ireland is a society which seeks guidance and advice as to how to react to becoming multicultural. In times of change and uncertainty, it is highly probable that people are more dependent on the media as a source of information and guidance. Denis McQuail argues that "under conditions of tension and uncertainty, elites and interests often try to use the media to influence and control opinion" (1983:137). Certainly, the Irish print media bears a large responsibility for disseminating objective information about immigration. If they fail to do so, (and some Irish newspapers have failed to do

so), they may be largely blamed for creating a prejudiced reaction to refugees and asylum seekers among the Irish population.

The methodologies employed in this research were those of content analysis and discourse analysis. Five newspapers were monitored over four months (January, May, June and October) in two selected years (1997 and 2000). The newspapers examined were The Irish Independent, The Irish Times, The Evening Herald, The Irish Sun and The Irish Mirror. All reports based on issues surrounding immigration were examined. The contents of the headlines were noted, as was the information gleaned from the reports themselves. The reports were analysed for themes using content analysis methods. They were also analysed in terms of language and grammar using discourse analysis methods. These methodologies are complimentary - it is of great importance to examine not only *what* is being said about a particular topic, but also *how* it is said or expressed in language or grammar. As previously mentioned, one important methodological aim throughout this research was to look for what information is missing from a report - the 'unsaids' of discourse to which Foucault (1980) referred. In terms of grammar, agency and transitivity were of interest, as these grammatical devices can have an enormous effect on interpretation.

Expectations of research

The years of 1997 and 2000 were selected as a result of a curiosity of the author about whether or not representations of refugees and asylum seekers would differ between these years. What was initially expected was that reports from 1997 (a point at which

immigrants began to arrive in Ireland in significant and visible numbers) would be somewhat more alarmist and negative than those from 2000. It was expected that by 2000, it would be clear to the Irish readership that the arrival of immigrants does not necessarily lead to social problems of housing, health and population 'flooding'. However, one surprising result of this research was that only one Irish newspaper, The Irish Times, appears to have changed its approach to the issues surrounding immigration - from stereotype-producing reports of May 1997, with such headlines as *Shopkeepers say theft by Romanians is snowballing* (Monday, May 26th 1997) and *Influx of asylum seekers causes concern* (Monday, May 26th 1997), to a much more objective and balanced form of reporting on immigration by 2000.

However, while the remaining four newspapers do show a slightly more objective approach to minority reporting by 2000. there does not seem to be any evidence of a major change in attitude or ideology. The ideology remains that of a dominant white elite group in society which constructs issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers in terms of problems which exist between 'us' and 'them'.

It was also anticipated that the Irish print media would highlight isolated problems 'caused' by asylum seekers and refugees - problems of housing, health and crime. It was expected that such problems and isolated incidents of crime would be emphasised to a greater extent than explanations of the local situations from which asylum seekers arrive and the backgrounds to the conflicts of the societies from which they come. This expectation was met; very little background information is provided when the issues of

immigration are discussed. What is emphasised to the reader are the problems which refugees and asylum seekers bring. There is a definite lack of a corresponding emphasis on providing the reader with information about the reasons why people seek refuge in Ireland, perhaps perpetuating the idea that such people do not actually need refuge at all. As one commentator on the Irish media's reporting of refugees noted:

> The media in general have failed to internalise or properly analyse the issues involved, and the result is a treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers that veers between the bumbling and the vicious (Cullen, 1998:41)

As also anticipated, the Irish print media have allotted as much space to reporting on issues of crime and 'scams' relating to refugees and asylum seekers as they have to reporting on political policy and developments on these issues. The content analysis of this research concluded that 18% of reports on immigration were examples of 'political reporting', while 16.6% of reports had to do with the criminal or deviant activities of asylum seekers and refugees.

Finally, a further hypothesis of this research was that the problems which refugees and asylum seekers present would be highlighted to a greater extent than the problems which they experience. Again, this hypothesis proved to be true. Many would argue that refugees suffer more harm than they cause in the form of Irish racism. However, the Irish media has not emphasised this fact enough. While 11.3% of media coverage was devoted to the emerging racism among the Irish population, some 16.6% of reports had to do with the criminal activities of immigrants. The image invariably presented to the reader's mind is that Irish people are under threat. Even when the phenomenon of racism in

Ireland is discussed, attention is usually drawn to isolated, extreme incidents. Our research substantiates the finding of Van Dijk:

> Racism is systematically underreported, reduced to incidents of individual discrimination, or attributed to small right-wing parties and located in poor city areas. Racism of the elite or the various institutions is seldom discussed (Van Dijk, 1987: 42).

It is at this stage possible to summarise our conclusions about media representations of refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland. Broadly speaking, this study has confirmed the pattern established in previous research elsewhere, particularly in Britain, which suggests that immigration represents a problem or a threat.

Findings of the content analysis

> There *is* something special in the way the press reports race: either particular care is exercised...or there is unusual ignorance and carelessness (Curran et al., 1982:277).

- This research has found that although the Irish print media devote a substantial amount of space to discussing refugees and asylum seekers, immigrants themselves are very rarely consulted as providers of information or insights. In the rare incidences that their views are expressed, the points made are usually expressed through a third party such as lawyers or the gardai. The Irish Times is the only newspaper from the sample which has consistently made an effort to provide its

readership with direct quotations from refugees and asylum seekers who attempt to air important points of view.

- The topic of Irish racism is not covered in an adequate manner in the Irish print media. When Irish racism is discussed it is usually isolated, extreme cases of the manifestations of racism which are highlighted and not the more insidious, subtle and underlying forms.

- The Irish print media holds a responsibility for distorting the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Ireland. Its constant outlining of statistics on a regular basis has a cumulative effect; readers see the numbers growing and a sense of fear and anxiety may result. Furthermore, the newspapers fail to emphasise the numbers of refugees arriving here in comparison to other EU countries, perhaps giving the impression that Ireland is the only country which is 'suffering' from this phenomenon.

- The Irish print media has concentrated on the housing 'crisis' which refugees are seen to have brought about. The problems of local government housing planning are rarely offered as an explanation of this 'crisis', thus perhaps implying to the reader that there would be no shortage of housing in Ireland if there were no refugees or asylum seekers. Similarly, The Irish Independent and The Evening Herald have pointed to the fact that many Irish homeless are unable to find accommodation because asylum seekers have taken up the available places. As already mentioned in Chapter Five, it would be of interest to examine the concern (if any) for the homeless in Ireland in these newspapers in previous years.

- Disease and health issues of refugees and asylum seekers have been highlighted in the Irish print media, not in a sympathetic or understanding manner, but in a manner

which may perpetuate and encourage fear and suspicion - infectious diseases carried by some refugees/asylum seekers and birth rates are the issues emphasised. The reader is perhaps left with an impression that such people pose a threat to our society or that they will be a burden in later years.

- The Irish print media has consistently associated refugees and asylum seekers with crime, petty theft, begging and 'bogus' asylum claims. By doing so, the actions of a minority are interpreted as representative of all immigrants in this society.

- Concerning the issue of dispersal, asylum seekers are represented as ungrateful and fussy, with headlines such as *Shuttle of rage* and *Refugees fury over move back to west*. Little mention is made of the often-unwelcoming local residents. When they are mentioned, the discourse of the article may be found to implicitly support the negative reaction of residents to arriving asylum seekers. The fact that immigrants tend to and often *need* to (for reasons of language difficulties, for example) locate near to people of a similar background (in urban areas, for example) is rarely mentioned.

- The issue of the employment of refugees and asylum seekers is not emphasised in the Irish print media. This was an unexpected finding. What was initially expected was that the newspapers would mention the debates surrounding whether or not asylum seekers should be given the right to work in Ireland. Overall, the Irish print media appears to be in support of the idea of these people being allowed to contribute to our economy.

- Much of the editorial comment in the Irish print media shows a concern for improving race relations. However, The Irish Times is the only newspaper which

consistently discusses immigration in its editorials. Ironically, many of the editorials in the other newspapers which condemn racism often appear alongside articles which may be deemed as inflammatory to refugees and asylum seekers. As an editorial in Focus Magazine pointed out

> With the increase in their numbers, and their increasing visibility...the mainstream media began to cover the refugee issue. The coverage, however, has concentrated on two extremes - superficial and skimpy (not to say occasionally scurrilous) coverage of the general issue, and in-depth searches for isolated scandals (1998:1).

Findings of the discourse analysis

Fairclough summarises the importance of the use of language in ideological discourse:

> When one is writing, there is often a choice between different grammatical process and participant types, and the selection that is made can be ideologically significant...such choices to highlight or background agency may be consistent, automatic and commonsensical, and therefore ideological; or they may be conscious hedging or deception (Fairclough, 1989:121).

This section presents the findings of the discourse analysis of this research.

- The Irish print media have constructed the immigration of refugees and asylum seekers in terms of a 'natural disaster'; terms such as 'floods' and 'waves' are used to describe the arrival of these people. The metaphorical representation of social problems as diseases/ natural disaster is extremely common.

> The ideological significance of disease metaphors is that they tend to take dominant interests to be the interests of society as a whole, and construe expressions of non-dominant interests...as undermining (the health of) society *per se* (Fairclough, 1989:120).

- The use of particular language and grammatical devices contributes to the construction of refugees and asylum seekers as 'bogus'. Even in articles which explicitly support refugees, the discourse may implicitly insinuate that asylum seekers are not to be trusted.

- The Irish print media often employs terms of conflict and violence such as 'rage' and 'hate' when reporting on issues surrounding immigration. The use of such terms perpetuates the image of refugees and asylum seekers as devious, if not violent people.

- The use of 'economic' language such as 'inflow', 'intake' and 'influx' in the Irish print media has the effect of dehumanising its referents in a similar manner to the use of 'natural disaster' language.

- The continuous use of 'homogenising' terms such as 'refugee', 'asylum seeker' and 'immigrant' in Irish newspapers does not give the reader an image of individuals arriving from divergent and differing situations.

On a broader canvass the findings of our research substantiates the observation of Howitt:

> The media, along with many other social institutions, act as agencies of the political control of society. That is, the mass media are so allied to the power structure of society that it is inevitable that they serve to support and maintain power structures and dominant ideologies. The mass media,

in particular, present a world view to members of society which regenerates continually and pervasively the ideological structures that are required for the maintenance of the existing power structure (Howitt, 1982:16)

This research has shown recognition of the existence of ideology behind the discourse of a newspaper. Immigration is so often defined. even by those who are sympathetic to asylum seekers and refugees, as a problem. Good news is hardly news at all, so the 'problem of immigration' is defined by tensions, illegalities and hostilities. If we continue to treat immigration in Ireland as a problem, then we will experience it as a problem. If we become defensive, surly and grudging in our attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers, then we will generate exactly the kind of tensions we purport to fear. A subtle analysis of the ways indirect forms of ethnocentrism and racism still exhibit themselves in our newspapers may lead journalists to at least change their selection of topics, to pay attention to the representation of actors in news events, to have due regard to subtleties of style, and eventually to adopt a more objective code for reporting about ethnic minorities and ethnic relations.

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