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Accounting for extreme prejudice and legitimating blame in talk about the Romanies

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Abstract

This paper examines the particulars of extreme prejudiced discourse about ethnic minorities in a Romanian socio-cultural context. It concentrates on a detailed analysis of a single case taken from a wider project aiming at comparing and contrasting the way Romanians talk about Hungarians with the way they talk about Romanies. The paper examines in detail the discourse of a middle-class Romanian accounting for prejudice and discrimination towards Romanies as part of an interview on a series of controversial issues surrounding ethnic minorities. This paper tries to highlight and interrogate the claims that Romanies are to blame for prejudice against them. The analysis, inspired by a critical discursive approach, has a discursive and conversational analytic focus to examine switches in talk about 'us' to talk that blames 'them'. The analysis suggests that talk about Romanies is more extreme than the anti-alien, anti-immigrant prejudiced talk studied by numerous Western critical researchers. It is more extreme because Romanies are not merely portrayed as being different, but also as being beyond the moral order, beyond nationhood, difference and comparison. Talk about Romanies employs a style which, at the same time, denies, but also protects extreme prejudice. This paper illustrates and discusses some of the discursive, rhetorical and interpretative resources used to talk about and legitimate the blaming of Romanies. In examining the dynamics of extreme prejudice against Romanies, this paper provides a critical investigation of the social and political consequences of extreme discursive patterning. Implications for the study of discursive construction and representation of difference in talk about Romanies are also discussed.

Introduction

The end of communism in Central and Eastern Europe has brought with itself a rise of ethnically based discrimination and exclusion of ethnic minorities. The Romanies deserve a special mention in this context as they were the most affected by the discriminatory and exclusionary repercussions of post-totalitarian freedom (Hockenos, 1993; Hancock, 2002; Petrova, 2003). In several Eastern European countries (but not only there – see MacLaughlin, 1998 and Sibley, 1992, 1995 for examples of the Western world), the Romanies constituted the epitome of foreignness. The Romanies were (and still are) the unmelttable ethnic minorities (MacLaughlin, 1998), the inner enemy (Sigona, 2003), the alien next door (Bauman, 1990), they were a ‘problem’ that needed a ‘solution’.

Romania, the country with the largest Roma population in Eastern Europe, has not constituted an exception from this pattern. The widespread Eastern European anti-Gypsy sentiment has manifested itself in Romania having a very strong discriminatory and exclusionary character and accompanied by outburst of extreme violence against the Romanies (see ERRC, September, 1996 and 2001). As Hockenos argues, Romania’s Roma ‘had to pay for post-totalitarian freedom as no other people in Romania’ (1993, p. 201).

The creation and reproduction of discriminatory and exclusionary social and discursive practices insofar the Romanies are concerned was determined, among other factors, by the increasing political power of the right-wing Romanian nationalist parties and their representatives which promoted an extreme prejudiced discourse based on an ideology of hatred with eliminationist connotations. What is to note though is that ‘although the ultra-right has led the charge against those they deem their genetic inferiors, hatred and wrath against the Roma comes from all segments of society and from across the political spectrum’ (Hockenos, 1993, p. 201).

Internationally, a number of researchers have used a discursive paradigm to examine notions of ethnicity, racism and ideology (cf. Augoustinos and Reynolds, 2001; Augoustinos and Walker, 1998; Billig, 1988; LeCouteur et al., 2001; Rapley, 1998, 2001; Van Dijk, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). The discursive approach was also successfully used in research related to the Romanies and anti-Romany prejudice

(Erjavec, 2001; Leudar and Nekvapil, 2000; Sigona, 2003). Very little research of this nature has been undertaken within the Romanian context. Research of this nature is vital if we are to tackle prejudice since it is through the taken-for-granted forms of explanation, the common-places used by ordinary people, that prejudice and discrimination is sustained and perpetuated. However, common sense does not provide a unitary discourse, for it creates and recreates endless 'ideological dilemmas' (Billig et al., 1988).

By arguing that talk about Romanies is more extreme than the anti-alien, anti-immigrant talk researched in the West, this paper aims to be a short incursion into the intricacies and complexity of a type of discourse employing a style, which, at the same time, denies, but also protects extreme prejudice. Let me note, at this point, that I do not necessarily start from the assumption that participants' talk about the Romanies is intrinsically 'extreme'. 'Extremity' (as 'moderation' or 'ambivalence' for that matter) is something that has to be judged in the interplay of discourses and judged not as something inherent to discourse, but as the *effect* of using specific discursive and rhetorical devices in order to achieve specific purposes, such as assigning blame and positioning the Romanies beyond difference, beyond the moral order.

The contrast between extreme prejudiced discourse against the Romanies as opposed to the well-researched anti-alien, anti-immigrant of the Western world becomes relevant if one is placing and grounds issues such as bigotry, social exclusion and politics of extreme difference within the workings of *discourse* with 'exclusionary' and 'eliminationist' ideological and political effects. The dynamics and intricacies of extreme prejudiced discourse (and its effects) constitute a *localized* process. I am not just referring here to a specific geographical and ideological location (Eastern European post-communist Romania), but to the idea that this extreme prejudiced discourse is enacted in relation to a specific *category of people*, that 'we' (not necessarily Romanians), the settled, the civilized etc. categorize as being matter 'out the place', as abject, try to place beyond the bounds of reasonable behaviour and 'way of being' in the world.

Another dimension that is relevant here is the so often neglected issue of the locatedness and place-boundedness of the 'Othering' process within discursive studies of prejudiced talk. An ideology of 'exclusion' (and bigotry) implies a notion of place, which is the yardstick against which exclusionary, prejudiced discourse is put together. In the case of

Romanies it is rather the absence of a (national) place that shapes the ideological contours of a moral exclusionary, extreme prejudiced discourse (Opotow, 1990), and underpins specific extreme 'essentialist' descriptions of Romanies, which places them beyond difference and beyond the moral order. When faced with prejudice, discrimination and violence nobody can defend them. They have no (national) place, no one wants them and they have no place to go. As the Jews before them (until the nineteenth century at least), the Romanies are the eternal strangers in anybody's land.

Discursive psychology and prejudice

Discursive psychology is a broadly constructionist approach and has its origins in applying ideas from discourse analysis to some of the aspects of social psychology (Antaki et al., 2003; Billig, 1997; Edwards and Potter, in press; Potter, 1998; Potter and Edwards, 2001). Discursive psychology treats talk and texts as social practices and, as Edwards (2003, p. 31) suggests, studies the 'relationships between mind and world, as psychology generally does, but as a discourse topic—as a participant's concern, a matter of talk's business, talk's categories, talk's rhetoric, talk's current interactional concerns'.

Negotiation and identity construction around the topic of prejudice has been documented through many studies (see inter alia, Gill, 1991, 1993; Edwards, 2003; Speer and Potter, 2000; Verkuyten et al., 1994a, b). Research on prejudice has widely documented the discursive processes through which prejudiced talk and difference is constructed in talk about ethnic minorities (e.g. Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998; Van Dijk, 1992, 1993; Verkuyten et al. 1995; Wodak and Reisigl, 1999, 2001; Wodak and Matouschek, 1993). The conclusion that can be drawn from most of the discourse studies is that the definition of difference is a complex accomplishment dependent on a range of constructive processes (see Verkuyten, 2001 for a recent attempt).

The discursive approach can help in mapping the production of 'prejudice' as an everyday phenomenon as it is produced by members in talk-in-interaction (Edwards, 2003; Rapley, 2001). The study of participants' talk also opens the opportunity for the detailed inspection of the 'lived ideology', the local codes of argument, the cultural and ideological resources used to account for controversial issues such as prejudice, discrimination or inequality (Wetherell, 1998, 2003).

Ideology is located in the seemingly factual descriptions about ‘different’ others, in the arguments and intricacies of discourses about social issues (Billig, 2002). But discourse is not inherently ideological, ‘it becomes ideological in argument, debate and application’ (Wetherell and Potter, 1992, p. 139). The ideological content or import of discourse is ‘measured’ by its *effects*. Discourses that categorize the world in ways that legitimate, maintain and perpetuate social inequality patterns and unequal relations of power are said to function ideologically (Thompson, 1987).

Material and analytic procedures

The extracts presented here are taken from a corpus of thirty-eight recorded semi-structured discussion/interviews (collected in the year 2001) with middle-class Romanian professionals, both male and female, selected to cover a variety of social backgrounds in the region of Transylvania (north-western part of Romania). This is part of a wider project aiming at comparing and contrasting the way Romanians talk about the main ethnic minorities, the Hungarians and the Romanies, in Romania

None of interviewees were part of an ethnic minority group, they were all majority group members (ethnically Romanian). Taking part in the interviews was made on a voluntary basis and the recruitment was based on a ‘snowball’ sampling technique. Each individual interview lasted between one hour-one hour and a half. The interviews were introduced as being short discussions about ‘social issues’ and discussed generally ‘controversial’ issues regarding prejudice and prejudice related issues in Romanian society such as the support for the fairness of the policies of the representatives of the Romanian right-wing, the (contested) existence of prejudice and discrimination against the Hungarians, and respectively the Romanies, the issue of interethnic conflict, the issue of minority rights and other general issues related to politics, prejudice and culture.

The excerpts presented were transcribed using a lite version of the Jefferson system and translated from the original Romanian into English by the author of this paper. An attempt was made to keep the translation as accurate as possible in order not to distort meaning. The same transcription notations were used for both the Romanian original and

the English counterpart. The analysis was conducted on the original, but the references in the text are made mainly to the English translation.

A preliminary quantitative analysis has identified three main ideological (subject) positions in relation to the avowed support for the fairness of the policies of the representatives of the Romanian right-wing, Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Gheorghe Funar¹. This was based on the answers to a specific question which sounded like this: ‘Do you think that the nationalist policies of Vadim Tudor towards the Hungarians and other ethnic groups are the fairest ones?’. In some variant of the question the name of Gheorghe Funar was mentioned alongside that of Vadim Tudor. Three categories were identified: the first group being represented by the ‘support Tudor and Funar’ category, the second, by the ‘ambivalent towards Tudor and Funar’ and the final, by the ‘oppose Tudor and Funar’ category.

Analysis

From the corpus of thirty-eight interviews with middle class Romanian professionals extracts from one interview from the ‘ambivalent towards Tudor and Funar’ category were chosen in order to prove the main analytical points. This empirical case looks at the views of a thirty-four year old woman (pseudonym Carla) on prejudice and discrimination against the Romanies. She works as an accountant for a bank and as she suggests at some point in her interview, she does not have a clear political affiliation. The interview took place in her home and lasted for about one hour. It is not the extremity *per se* of Carla’s views that made me choose these particular extracts (it should be noted that she talks in a different way about the Hungarian minority), but because of the ways she accounted, from a position of reasonableness and tolerance, for the positioning of Romanies beyond difference and beyond the moral order as common-sense without requiring elaborate justification.

In the subsequent sections of analysis I follow Carla’s answers to the interviewer’s questions relating to the existence and explanations of prejudice and discrimination against the Romanies. I analyse four extracts representing a marked progression from talking about ‘us’ to talking about (and blaming) ‘them’ and will try to spell out the

ideological implications of such a shift, together with an analysis of the rhetorical and interpretative resources used to accomplish it.

Accounting for prejudice

In extract 1, Carla can be seen answering a question about whether Romanians have prejudices towards Romanies: 'Do you think that Romanians have prejudices against the Romanies or not really'. The question of the interviewer is inviting the addressee to agree or disagree. The alternatives are presented before the completion point of the question (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000).

Extract 1

- 54 Chris Do you think that Romanians have prejudices against (.)
 55 against Romanies or (.) or not really?
 56 Carla There are (.) also those who have (.) mm (.) there are
 57 (.) mm (.)there are (.) it depends on the person (.) so,
 58 >there are those who have, there are those for whom
 59 probably it- it does not matter< (.) so, to be a decent
 60 person (.) it doesn't matter (.) the language one speaks
 61 or one's colour, but there are also those who have (0.2)
 62 °[there are°
 63 Chris [mm (.)
- 54 Chris Considerați că românii au prejudecăți față de (.) față de
 55 romi sau (.) sau nu prea? (0.2)
 56 Carla Sunt (.) care și au (.) mm (.) sunt
 57 (.) mm (.) sunt (.) depinde de om (.) deci,
 58 >sunt care au, sunt care
 59 probabil că nu- nu contează< (.) deci, să fie
 60 om (.) nu contează (.) ce limbă vorbește
 61 sau ce culoare are, dar sunt și care au (0.2)
 62 °[sunt°
 63 Chris [mm (.)

It can be noted that 'not really' does some interesting work here. The interviewer's use of the word 'really' in 'not really' (line 55) could be seen as orienting to a distinction between what is *apparently* the case and what is *really* the case when talking about Romanians being prejudiced against Romanies. It can be said that the interviewer sets the question for a preferred answer (Pomerantz, 1984a), but it does not stop there, because, with 'or not really' it does offer another seemingly equal candidate interpretation. The 'not really' opens up a disagreement slot for the respondent and stops the 'yes' answer being the preferred. There is an implicit preferment with the first part of the question, but 'or not really' seems to invite a justification. The implication is that Romanians might not

be prejudiced and as it will be seen, when answering the question Carla takes for granted the reasonableness of the Romanians.

The interviewer's turn in line 54 is oriented to the prior existence of 'prejudice against Romanies' as something, which one could reasonably be expected to 'think about' (cf. Rapley and Antaki, 1998). The question is asked as if it was irrelevant that Chris and Carla are both Romanians. The context is that of talking about 'them' (Romanians - prejudiced and unprejudiced). As it can be seen, the question is phrased in group terms and implies a stance of 'distance' or 'objectivity'. The interviewer raises the issue of whether the 'Romanians' are prejudiced against the 'Romanies'. Instead of answering in group terms, Carla mobilizes a distinction between different kinds of people (Romanians) – the 'prejudiced' and the 'unprejudiced'.

One feature of Carla's answer suggests that it is being carefully constructed. The beginning of her answer is marked by 'trouble-spots' (Ochs, 1979; Schegloff et al., 1977) indicated by frequent repetition, false starts and pauses: 'There are (.) also those who have (.) mm (.) there are (.) mm (.) there are (.)'. As Ochs (1979, p. 70) notes these repairs reflect the speaker's search for a 'construction that is appropriate to the addressee'. After 'there are (.) also those who have', Carla seems unable to decide how to proceed. There are a series of small pauses, the repetition of 'there are' and a 'mm', then she switches to a clear referent ('it depends on the person'), marks a small pause again and continues using a 'complementary marker of main idea units' (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 191), 'so', to insert a description.

Note in the first lines (56-61), the rhetorical context. As Billig (1985) suggested, talk about social categories tends to be argumentative, not just an expression of views, but a denial of counter views. By the use of 'also' (și) in line 56, Carla sets up a contrast between those considered 'prejudiced' and those 'unprejudiced'. The implied meaning of this is that there are 'some' Romanians who do not have prejudices, for whom 'people are just people', who don't think in 'racial' or 'ethnic' terms, for whom 'it doesn't matter the language one speaks or one's colour' (lines 60-61), but in addition to these there are those who have prejudices. By using 'also' she is reacting to the implication of the question, to the idea that Romanians might not be 'really' prejudiced.

She implicitly splits and uses the category 'Romanians' and talks about individuals who have prejudices and who do not have prejudices. Her answer relies on the 'on one hand, on the other hand' strategy of opinion formulation. An interesting feature of Carla's account is that she talks about prejudice, but doesn't actually use the term 'prejudice' or 'prejudiced'. In fact, none of the key terms presented in the question ('Romanians', 'prejudiced', 'Romanies') do not appear in the answer. As Pomerantz (1984b: 155) pointed out, 'delicate topics sometimes are talked about with terms and glosses that refer to the topic without naming or identifying it'. Note that she doesn't speak in group terms, but she is referring to 'individuals' ('it depends on the person', line 57). What 'it depends on the person' does is to relate to the idea that prejudice is a matter of individual pre-judgment and helps introducing the dichotomy of those who are prejudiced and those who are not. At the same time, Carla's formulation 'it depends on the person' works in not assigning blame to the Romanians as a group, but to 'some' Romanians.

What can be seen in Carla's answer to the interviewer's question is the way she orients to what 'being unprejudiced' means. In lines 57-61 the 'unprejudiced' are presented through various proposed descriptors of this category of people. The 'descriptors' that Carla uses can be seen as 'category-bound activities' which imply membership in the category. This is what unprejudiced people do, this is how unprejudiced people think. In her use of category-implied activities attached to the matter of being unprejudiced that the interviewer has put forward in his question, Carla produces an account which displays her cultural knowledge about the implied meaning of what being unprejudiced means. Invoking the kind of 'activities' that are linked to the unprejudiced, Carla builds an implicit contrast with the prejudiced. There is a moral implication in this contrast. Analyzing how people talk about an issue with others, 'one is directly gaining access to a cultural universe and its content of moral assumptions' (Silverman, 1993, p. 108). The production of the two categories, 'the prejudiced' and 'the unprejudiced' is part of an account, which elaborates what Baker (1997, p. 139) calls 'a local morality'.

Carla talks about 'those for whom probably it- it does not matter (.) so, to be a decent person (.) it doesn't matter (.) the language one speaks or one's colour' in a factually and distanced manner. This seemingly factual statement carries a moral implication. Carla draws upon the common-place theme of the meaning of prejudice to portray the unprejudiced as being reasonable. The ideal identity, which contrasts with prejudice,

comes from the considerate and unbiased treatment. All should be treated without pre-judgement. Far from being merely a 'report' about prejudice, Carla's account displays a version of the 'practical reasoning' that members could use to describe the matter of prejudice. The social phenomenon of prejudice being talked here is assembled as a set of contrasting categories and activities which work to produce a moral order. Working through the activities associated with the 'unprejudiced' we can work out the attributions that are made in relation to the 'prejudiced'. As Baker suggests, 'the attributions that are hinted at are as important as any stated in so many words' (1997, p. 142).

The 'generic vagueness' (Potter, 1996) in answering the question, the delay components (the pauses, the repetitions) signal the upcoming problematic and delicate nature of the topic under discussion. There is a sense of some kind of 'difficulty'² for Carla when accounting for the existence of prejudices against Romanians, which is more revealing in the lines that follow the first question. It might be said or implied that 'talking about prejudice' is quite an extreme example, and that 'of course' people will work to account for such a topic, as it is inherently delicate. But what has to be noted is that topics of talk are never delicate or sensitive *per se* (Baruch, 1981; Silverman, 1997, Rapley, 2001). As it will be shown, the delicacy and the difficulties of approaching the topic are oriented to by Carla.

Accomplishing prejudice without 'being prejudiced'

The next intervention from the interviewer (extract 2, lines 70-72) is an invitation to talk about the existence of discrimination against Romanians. Note the similarity of this question with the first question that the interviewer has asked relating to the idea of Romanians being prejudiced against Romanians. The two questions have almost the same format, with the difference that the first one is phrased in a specific way and explicitly talks about Romanians and Romanies (whether Romanians are prejudiced against Romanies or not really). The second one is phrased in a more general and impersonal way (whether 'there is' discrimination against Romanies or not really) and does not explicitly mention the Romanians, but talks about the Romanies. The question in line 70 marks a shift from talking about the Romanians in the previous question to talking about Romanies.

Extract 2

70 Chris Hm (.) Do you think that there is discrimination against
71 (.) against Romanies or (.) or not really?
72 (1.2)
73 Carla .Hh (.) What can I say (.) so, it depends (.) and (.)
74 °I don't know° (1.2) Maybe there is (.) in a way (.)
75 there is discrimination (.) I mean, against Romanies (.)
76 it (.) could be, but (0.2) as I have said,
77 >it i(h)s o(h)nly b(h)ecause of them<, I th[ink (.)
78 Chris [Mmm
79 (1.4)
80 Carla Yes, there is (.) probably (.) cos' we are not giving
81 them a chance (.) but (.) to integrate into society and
82 (0.4) but I think >that they don't really want< (.)
83 -really want it either (.)

70 Chris Hm (.) Considerați că există discriminare față de
71 (.) față de romi sau (.) sau nu prea?
72 (1.2)
73 Carla .Hh (.) Ce să spun (.) deci, depinde (.) și (.)
74 °nu știu° (1.2) Poate că e (.) pe undeva (.)
75 e și discriminare (.) deci, față de romi (.)
76 ar(.) putea fi, dar (0.2) cum am spus,
77 >d(h)in c(h)auza lor n(h)umai<, mă gînd[esc (.)
78 Chris [Mm:m
79 (1.4)
80 Carla Da, e (.) probabil (.) că nu le dăm
81 nici o șansă (.) dar (.) să se integreze în societate și
82 (0.4) dar cred >că nici ei nu prea vreau< (.)
83 -prea vor (.)

In response to the question whether Romanians are prejudiced against Romanies Carla makes a distinction between those who are and those who are not prejudiced. In answering the question of whether 'there is' discrimination against Romanies, Carla does not try to make a similar distinction and initially, her argument is unclear and marked by both implicit and explicit signs of difficulty': '.Hh (.) What can I say (.) so, it depends (.) and (.) °I don't know° (1.2) Maybe there is (.) in a way (.)'.

In the first lines of the extract, one can see Carla conceding that there is discrimination against the Romanies. There is a shift from a statement that acknowledges the existence of discrimination ('there is discrimination') to a statement that acknowledges the *possible* existence of discrimination ('it (.) could be'). Following van Dijk (1992), the way her concession is rhetorically presented by way of various forms of mitigation and hedging, suggests that the concession is apparent and allows the possibility of blaming.

This is followed, after the ‘but’, by a straightforward statement in line 77 (‘>it i(h)s o(h)nly b(h)ecause of them<’). Carla describes the existence of discrimination by using an extreme-case formulation. With the use of ‘o(h)nly’, it could be said that the concession is explained away and blame is placed entirely on the Romanies. The use of ‘o(h)nly’ rules out any alternative explanation for the existence of discrimination and works as to question the idea that discrimination exists. This use of ‘o(h)nly’ portrays discrimination as the result of the behaviour of Romanies, and if, discrimination ‘really’ exists, then Romanians are not to blame.

The kind of concession can be contrasted with what van Dijk calls ‘apparent concessions’. In Van Dijk’s analyses the ‘concessions’, are not taken back, they are not explained away, they are available in order to prevent negative inferences about the speaker “by accomplishing the semantic act of meaning ‘Even when I say something negative, this does not mean that I am prejudiced’” (1987, p. 94). What Carla’s account does is, to use van Dijk’s words, a ‘redistribution of responsibility’, a denial of blame on the part of Romanians and assigning of total blame on the side of Romanies. This is done through the use of ‘only’ (‘numai’) in favour of other alternative ways of accounting about the same matter. She could have easily said ‘it is mainly because of them’ or ‘it is primarily because of them’, but she did not. Carla has used an extreme case formulation to portray the matter of discrimination as being a Romany problem and at the same time, to question whether discrimination is ‘really’ discrimination.

Carla’s continuation in lines 80-83 is rhetorically interesting. In lines 80-81 she makes an explicit show of conceding that even Romanians could be held accountable for the existence of discrimination, by not giving Romanies a chance to integrate. This kind of statement is used by Carla to head off any imputations that her views are biased or unreasonable by acknowledging the existence of discrimination. It could be said that Carla is attending to the necessity of managing her self-presentation in an interactive context by presenting herself as neutral and balanced. Note the use of ‘we’ in her statement about not offering a chance to Romanies. The ‘we’ appears to include the addressee (the interviewer) and therefore may lend itself to an inclusive interpretation (Ilie, 1998). It can be argued that ‘we’ includes potentially anybody else too.

The implicit ‘problem’ for Carla is to account convincingly for an explanation of discrimination against Romanies. The problem to which Carla has to orient is that of being heard as prejudiced, while still wanting to offer ‘legitimate’ reasons for the existence of discrimination. Saying ‘cos’ we are not giving them a chance’ seems to work as a ‘*bona fide* concession’. As Antaki and Wetherell argue, it could be said that ‘it concedes something which would, at face value, be held to be true and relevant by the opposition’ (1999, p. 23). Carla’s account also has the rhetorical effect of ‘cheapening’ (cf. Antaki and Wetherell, 1999) the opposition’s case. As Antaki and Wetherell suggest, “to ‘genuinely’ concede something is, surely, to allow something which is not already self-evident” (1999, p. 22). Treating the idea that Romanians can also be blamed for not offering chances to Romanies to integrate as a concession, ‘is once again to display that while it might matter to the opposition it is (merely) a concession from the point of view of the speaker’ (ibid., p. 23).

What comes in lines 82-83, after the ‘but’ (‘I think >that they don’t really want< -really want it either (.)’ is the hearable closure of what Antaki and Wetherell (1999, p. 21-22) refer to as a ‘sting in the tail’ concession. By inserting a statement which specifically mentions the Romanies and their unwillingness to integrate, Carla thus amplifies the negativity of her original proposition (‘>It i(h)s o(h)nly be(h)cause of them<, I thi[nk (.)’). It might be thought that Romanies want to integrate in society, but as Carla puts it, this is not the case, they don’t *really* want. With this statement we are back to the idea that it is not Romanians who are to blame, even if they don’t give Romanies a chance to integrate, but it is the Romanies themselves who are to blame for not wanting to integrate. One can see how Carla has ‘squashed’ the objection raised in her concession. By making show of the concessionary gift the speaker, subsequently, corrupts it. This kind of construction works to rationalize and legitimize discrimination against Romanies. As Antaki and Wetherell argue, “there may ... be a lot of usage of this structure in hearably ideological talk, especially talk which comes across as expressing ‘strong views’ in the service of ideology” (1999, p. 25).

Constructing extreme ‘difference’

In the remainder of this paper I will be documenting a shift from blaming the Romanies for the existence of discrimination to the construction of Romanies as beyond difference and beyond the moral order. The next extracts are taken from the same interview with

Carla and come after an intervention relating to the issue of the integration of Romanies in which Carla is of the firm opinion that Romanies would *never* be integrated.

Extract 3

93 (.)
94 Carla There are (.) so, in very small numbers, but still there
95 are (.) but it's >difficult< (.) it's >difficult< (.)
96 because they are (.) I don't know (.) a t(h)otally
97 ap(h)art nation (.) I mean (.) in comparison with (0.8)
98 the rest (0.2) of the nationalities (0.4)

93 (.)
94 Carla Sunt (.) deci, în număr foarte mic, dar mai
95 sunt(.) dar >îi greu< (.) >îi greu< (.)
96 pentru că sunt (.) nu știu (.) o nație cu t(h)otul
97 ap(h)arte (.) deci (.) față (0.8)
98 de restul (0.2) naționalităților (0.4)

This is followed in line 94 by a concession. The kind of statement that Carla has produced in lines 94-95 ('There are (.) so, in very small numbers, but still there are'), indexes her as a reasonable person, taking account of empirical realities, not making excessive claims. Carla's statement says that the idea of Romanies not being integrated into society is *essentially*, if not absolutely, the case (cf. Edwards, 2000, p. 360). This works as to give to the issue of integration the common sense status of the exception that proves the rule: Romanies are not integrated into society. Implying that some Romanies are integrated makes Carla's previous generalization not an all-or-nothing one, but something ostensibly more careful, acknowledging possible exceptions, thereby ensuring that any exceptions remain exceptional.

Carla's remark about 'some', very few Romanies being integrated sounds like an attempt to enhance their status in relation to the issue of integration. However, one can also interpret this remark as basically devaluating the entire out-group. As Graumann (1998) has argued, positive remarks allow for confirmation of dimensions in which out-groups are generally evaluated as worse than in-groups.

In lines 95-97, although displaying tentativeness by the use of 'I don't know' (Edwards, 2000) about offering a concrete judgement, Carla manages to introduce the matter of integration in a very straightforward way, by using an extreme case formulation: 'a

t(h)otally ap(h)art nation'. Carla's claim is reinforced by the use of an extreme case formulation: 'totally'³. Being a 'totally apart nation' gives a sense of Romanies being a nation not only socially, but also physically separate from 'us' and from the other nationalities, not wanting to 'adapt' and as having characteristics not shared by the others. This is presented as common sense without an elaborate justification.

In order to understand the full implications of this kind of account, one ought to look at the ideological position from which Carla's account is spoken, the position from which the presence and evaluation of Romanies is considered (cf. Dixon and Durrheim, 2000). One would notice that the voice is that of an 'insider', someone who speaks from within the (Romanian) community. In this particular extract, this is done through the use of a comparison with the other ethnic 'nationalities' in order to make a point regarding to what Romanies *are*. The implied message that can be drawn from here is rather clear: it is not only that Romanies are unlike 'us', but they are also unlike any other 'nationalities'. The extreme 'differentiation'⁴ which is achieved by the use of 'totally apart' works to prescribing an ideological position for Romanies, one which places them beyond the 'reasonable' bounds of society. The *modus existendi* of Romanies is the antithesis of a possible *modus coexistendi*.

Beyond difference and beyond the moral order

In the next extract which is a continuation of the previous, one can see the interviewer pressing on the issue of the causes of discrimination against Romanies. There is a lot going on here, but for the purposes of this paper I will focus specifically on lines 104-105 (where blame is again placed entirely on Romanies) and then go to look at lines 113-117 (a transgression story which does 'moral work' in positioning Romanies as out-of-the-normal way, to account for their abnormality of their behaviour)

Extract 4

99	Chris	What do you think the causes of such discrimination that
100		you talked about are? (.) I don't know, for example, a
101		Romany can be easily refused a job
102		(1.2)
103	Carla	°Because to me°- (.) >what can I say< (.) >what are the
104		causes<? (0.2) right? (.) I think that everything
105		happens because of <u>them</u> (.) because <u>even they don't want</u>
106		(.) they <u>don't</u> have the desire (0.4) I <u>don't think</u> that
107		they are accepting (.) so, they would like to (0.4) to
108		(.) so, > <u>they</u> don't really like to work< (.) so,
109		as far as I know, >they don't own land <u>to</u> cultivate, <u>to</u>

110 farm< and >when they were offered a place to stay or
 111 something like that< (.) I saw it on televi[sion (.)
 112 Chris [uh huh
 113 Carla They've put their horses in (.) so (.) >even if there
 114 were flats< (.) where they managed to or (0.4) so
 115 (0.4) even them, what they receive, they ruin (.)
 116 so, they don't (0.8) °they don't respect, that's the
 117 thing° (.)
 118 Chris Hmm
 119 (1.2)

99 Chris Care credeți că sunt cauzele acestei discriminări de, de
 100 care aminteți? (.) Știu eu, de exemplu unui rom i se
 101 poate refuza foarte ușor un loc de muncă
 102 (1.2)
 103 Carla °Pentru că mi°-(.) >ce să zic< (.) >care sunt
 104 cauzele<? (0.2) Nu? (.) Eu zic că totul
 105 pornesc de la ei (.) deci pentru că nici ei nu vor
 106 (.) deci nu își doresc (0.4) nu cred
 107 că acceptă (.) deci ar vrea să (0.4) să
 108 (.) deci, >lor nu prea le place să muncească< (.) deci,
 109 din câte știu eu, >n-au nici pământuri să cultive, să
 110 lucreze<, și >cînd li s-au oferit locuințe sau
 111 ceva< (.) am văzut la tele[vizor (.)
 112 Chris [uh huh
 113 Carla Că și-au băgat caii (.) deci (.) >chiar dacă au
 114 fost apartamente< (.) unde au reușit sau (0.4) deci
 115 (0.4) și ei ce primesc, distrug (.)
 116 deci nu (0.8) °că nu respectă,
 117 asta e° (.)
 118 Chris Hmm
 119 (1.2)

In line 99, the interviewer takes the matter further and asks about the causes of discrimination. He even gives an example of what could count as an instance of discrimination, a Romany being refused a job. When answering the question there are signs of implicit and explicit difficulty. Her answer is slightly delayed (note the 1.2 seconds pause), just at the beginning there is a mis-start ('°because to me°-') followed by a small pause, then a mark of explicit difficulty ('>what can I say<') and after another small pause there is a contracted reformulation of the question ('>what are the causes<?') followed by a 0.2 pause.

In lines 104-105 Carla offers an answer that is *marked as* tentative, 'I think that everything happens because of them'. Note how Carla's explanation of the causes of discrimination is built around an extreme case formulation and makes a direct reference to 'them' (Romanies). Romanians are not present in her explanation and by the use of 'everything' Carla accomplishes a clear blaming of the Romanies and again, implicitly, suggests the idea that discrimination is not 'really' discrimination if caused by the

Romanies. This kind of explanation is very similar with the one used by Carla when accounting for the existence of discrimination. Previously in her interview, the explanation was ‘it is only because of them’. Now, the explanation is ‘everything happens because of them’. As Pomerantz (1986) suggested, the use of this kind of extreme case formulation works to propose that “a phenomenon is ‘in the object’ or objective rather than a product of the interaction or the circumstances” (p. 220). As Edwards (2000) has pointed out, extreme case formulations can be used for justifying factual claims and can be linked to ‘various ways of normalizing and pathologizing people’s actions and character’ (p. 348).

In lines 110-111, Carla initiates an account about transgression and misconduct through a story introduction, ‘>when they were offered a place to stay or something like that< (.) I saw it on television’ which then leads into a story about the behaviour of Romanies. The description that Carla gives in lines 113-117 is a very interesting one: ‘They’ve put their horses in (.) so (.) >even if there were flats< (.) where they managed to or (0.4) so (0.4) even them, what they receive, they ruin (.) so, they don’t (0.8) °they don’t respect, that’s the thing° (.)’. As Paul Drew (1998) suggests, our descriptions have to be understood as doing moral work – as providing a basis for evaluating the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of whatever is being reported. Carla’s description can be seen as doing similar things.

The first line of Carla’s story is an explicit formulation of transgression: ‘They’ve put their horses in (.)’ and the character of the impropriety is quite overtly formulated: ‘so (.) >even if there were flats< (.) where they managed to or (0.4)’. It can be seen that by attracting attention to the idea that there were flats involved, and not any kind of residence (and definitely not a place to put your horses in), a normative standard of behaviour is invoked as the basis for complaining about the behaviour of Romanies.

I would argue that issues of intention, chance or deliberation are of ‘programmatic relevance’ in the organization of our accounting practices, for this is one of the ways in which actions, outcomes and their agents get morally constituted (Jayyusi, 1993). By saying ‘so (.) >even if there were flats< (.) where they managed to or (0.4)’ Carla can be seen as orienting to the issue of intentional and deliberate conduct in order to make manifest the transgression by the Romanies of normative standards of conduct and hence to warrant her final sense of moral indignation. The behaviour of Romanies is described

in such a way that ‘the fault is not to be regarded as accidental, inadvertent, or otherwise innocent’ (Drew, 1998, p. 316). Even the reference to ‘them’ makes this as not something accidental or innocent (something that could possibly could have happened to some of them) but as something premeditated and presented by making reference to *all* of them.

Carla’s description does not stop here, the ‘offence’ is upgraded in line 115, ‘even them, what they receive, they ruin’. Note the formulation ‘what they receive’ (from ‘us’) which implicitly points to ‘our’ magnanimity. It is through a contrast between ‘best intentions’ of ‘offering’ Romanies a place to stay and their resulting behaviour that the latter is portrayed as being offensive and reprehensible.

Sometimes, the ‘moral work’ that speakers may manage through describing other’s conduct is deeply implicit or embedded in their descriptions and the moral evaluative ‘point’ of an account may not come to be explicitly addressed by the participants (Drew, 1998). In Carla’s case, quite the contrary seems to be happening. Look at the way she concludes her account ‘so, they don’t (0.8) °they don’t respect, that’s the thing° (.)’ . Carla’s moral evaluative position is quite explicit : they don’t respect (they don’t have respect). Carla reports not only the transgression, but also a sense of indignation. Carla does not report her emotional response, her sense of grievance, by using a first person assessment, but rather uses a generalized assessment ‘°they don’t respect, that’s the thing°’. One could argue that this is just one example of the ways in which Romanies are *apart* from ‘us’. It is presented as common-sense, as factual and I would argue that it has wider implications that do not necessarily relate to the particular Romanian moral order, but to a more general contemporary society moral order. A more general point is made about the Romanies, which stresses their incongruity within the contemporary moral order.

Conclusions

This article has tried to make a contribution to the study of the discursive construction and representation of difference in talk about ethnic minorities, by focusing on the discursive manoeuvres through which Romanies are represented and made real in actual talk in a Romanian socio-cultural context. At the same time, it has also provided a critical investigation of the dialectic of extreme prejudice achieved from a position of tolerance and reasonableness, looking at one instance of ‘ambivalence’ when it comes to supporting

the representatives of the right-wing ideology. The views in this paper are not those of a 'political' extremist or member of a fringe group, but the speaker nevertheless takes on board and makes use of the 'power' of the common-sense, common-place extreme ideology of 'difference'. It is worth saying that this kind of talk is very similar to the talk of the supporters of right-wing ideology which include implicit, but also explicit eliminationist connotations when it comes to discussing the Romanies (for examples see Tileagă, 2003, 2004) .

The case of Romanies in Romania is a very interesting one because it raises serious implications for the construction and representation of (extreme) difference. It was argued that talk about Romanies is more extreme than the anti-alien, anti-immigrant prejudiced talk studied by numerous Western critical researchers. It is more extreme because Romanies are not merely portrayed as being different from 'us' and other minority groups, but also as being beyond difference and comparison, beyond the moral order, constituting an 'outside' which does include the possibility of an 'inside', which does not include the possibility of a shared physical and moral space. This was done through the use of a rhetoric of comparison and differentiation, the use of extreme case and disposition formulations in order to justify factual claims linked to various ways of pathologizing the actions and character of the Romanies.

The judgments of comparison and difference, the factual accounts and disposition formulations insofar the Romanies were concerned that Carla has offered are not accidental, they are not made based on fortuitous criteria, but they are made on *moral* grounds. The comparison/differentiation moves of which Romanies are part, are moral evaluations, moral judgements (Bar-Tal, 1989, 1990; see also Graumann, 1998, 1995). By means of differentiation and extreme negative depiction, delegitimization (and sometimes dehumanisation) is achieved as Romanies are placed 'outside the boundaries of the commonly accepted groups' (Bar-Tal, 1989, p. 171).

The analysis has identified a shift from talking about 'us' (extracts 1 and 2) to talking about 'them' (extracts 3 and 4). Carla was seen (extract 3) contesting the idea that one can talk about discrimination against the Romanies. This is not done directly, but it is done cautiously through conceding that discrimination might exist, which is then taken back by pointing to the Romanies as being the source of discrimination. This way of accounting

portrays discrimination as being a Romany problem and at the same time, questions whether discrimination is 'really' discrimination. Using several discursive devices, Carla constructs her discourse as being based on a rhetoric of fact rather than of prejudice, but nevertheless incorporates prejudices uncritically (Billig et al., 1988). Blaming the victim is one of the powerful justification strategy used by her in order to rationalize and justify discrimination. Carla's arguments have transformed discrimination from an accountable moral practice into something inevitable due to the intrinsic features of the Romany character and behaviour. The idea that Romanies are a 'totally apart nation' is complemented by the introduction of a story about transgression and misconduct to further account for the behaviour of Romanies. These two discursive constructions have extremely important ideological implications that bear an important relation to the construction of a 'beyond difference' representation of Romanies.

Examining the functions of ideological and rhetorical available resources has theoretical and analytical consequences. It is argued that while an analysis of the details of interaction and taking account of participants' orientations is essential, it is equally important to consider talk as a culturally (cf. Abell and Stokoe, 1999, 2001) and ideologically (cf. Billig, 1991; 2002; Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; Wodak and Reisigl, 1999) situated practice. To understand the rhetorical and ideological thrust of Carla's argument and the positioning of herself (and Romanians) and others (the Romanies), the analyst (as well as the reader) must engage in a wider understanding of the cultural and ideological interpretative framework within which all this becomes relevant. As Verkuyten (2001, p. 275) cogently put it, '[the] wider ideological context is both inside and outside the talk'.

One can see how talk about the Romanies is inextricably linked with issues of a contemporary (society) moral order, (ab)normality and discursive practices of exclusion. This kind of accounting has also an important relation to a broader theme, the social exclusion of Romanies. At the same time, one also has to draw attention to the ideological implications of Romanies being represented as a 'nation apart', coming into being inside an ideological representation, which places them beyond nationhood, beyond difference and comparison. As the analysis of these extracts has shown, the 'banal' language evocative of fear, disgust and withdrawal from contact engenders fixed, stereotypical, immutable ideological representations of Romanies with extreme political and social

consequences. The implication of the difficulty that the participants have with designating a place for the Romanies together with the reference to an unchangeable stereotypical essence is that they are not just in the ‘wrong place’, but actually that there is no place for them! Concerns with the symbolic place assigned to Romanies and concerns with being ‘in’/‘out of place’ underpin an ideological representation of Romanies which places them beyond the moral order and opens the ways for expressing views with eliminationist connotations. This kind of discourse of ‘difference’ is marked by an absence: Romanies have no homeland like other nations – this is where the extremism is implicit and potentially dangerous. Extreme discourses of difference contain or imply the ‘differentiating power’ - to use Bauman’s apt term - of the absence of a national space.

Notes

¹ Corneliu Vadim Tudor is the president of the ultra-nationalist ‘Greater Romania Party’ [Partidul România Mare] and is one of the most important representatives of the extreme right-wing ideology in Romania. Together with Gheorghe Funar (former leader of its own nationalistic party ‘The Romanian Cradle’ [Vatra Românească]) they form an extreme, ultra-nationalist tandem whose extreme prejudiced discourse touches invariably on issues related to the three traditional ‘scapegoats’ of the Romanian psyche: the Romanies, the Hungarians and the Jews. They are the fiercest advocates of a ‘politics of intolerance’ (Gallagher, 1995) through the intermediary of a nationalistic, racist and xenophobic discourse. Their discourse on the Romanies has clear fascist underpinnings (with clear eliminationist connotations).

² A distinction can be made between, on one hand implicit demonstrations of difficulty, by the use of implicit ‘trouble-spots’ and, on the other hand, explicit, outward claims of difficulty. The difference between the implicit and explicit signs of difficulty lies in the observation that in the case of the former, the implicit signs of difficulty, no actual difficulty claim is made by the speaker, but the analyst and the other speaker(s) can infer the difficulty, whilst in the case of the latter, difficulty is stressed by the use of explicit claims from the speaker that they experience difficulty.

³ Note the laughter that punctuates a specific part of the claim itself ‘I don’t know (.) a t(h)otally ap(h)art nation’ but it is not present in the segment that qualifies the view: ‘I mean (.) in comparison (.) with (0.8) the rest (0.2) of the nationalities (0.4)’. By punctuating her explanation with laughter, it could be said that Carla treats the nature of the view as being potentially problematic for the other party. It is a way of recognizing that the interviewer might have difficulties with the content of the view. It could also be noted that by using laughter, Carla attends to the extremity of her claim, but she does not mitigate her statement. It is not the view who is softened, but the presentation of it.

⁴ This differentiation process is similar to the ‘social differentiation’ that Henri Tajfel (1981) was talking about. ‘Differentiation’ is not to be seen as a cognitive process, but as a discursive process. As discursive psychologists have shown, social categorization is something that it is achieved discursively and has different ideological effects. Nevertheless, there is an important difference from the socio-cognitive studies (including Tajfel’s) insofar this rhetoric of ‘differentiation’ is concerned. The pattern here is not one of ‘shifting the onus’, of defamation of other groups in order to put one’s own social status in a better light, but rather a pattern that goes beyond ‘differentiation’ itself.

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