

***“All we want is our country back”***

Managing and contesting migration in Nigel Farage’s Open Letter.



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## Introduction

### *Selective Remembering*

Consider these two stories:

With a child's history textbook on early British history in hand, I remember reading that Romans 'came, saw, and conquered' the indigenous peoples of 'Britannia'. I was captured by the brave yet futile attempts of Boudicca and her quant, yet 'simple' Celts to challenge the Roman's right to rule 'Britannia'. A picture of their wood-covered faces contrasted with appreciative depictions of Roman culture on the next page, which included impressive architectural and technological objects like aqueducts, spas, Hadrian's Wall and Castra Deva. I closed the book feeling enlightened with the knowledge that Britain's legacy built on Roman culture and intellect.

Watching the television, I saw the top news item about 'record numbers of migrants' poised to 'swarm' into the UK from Europe to allegedly 'steal' jobs and/or 'claim' benefits. The newsreader outlined two political reactions to the situation, one being a home office spokesperson that emphasised the strength of the government's immigration policy, the other an opposition politician criticising the government's lack of control due to EU rules. I derived a sense of both politician's arguing about the need to protect 'British' people from being taken advantage of, treated as secondary to 'incomers', or being 'ignored' by the EU.

They are memories. The first is from my childhood, the second from a few weeks ago. I have included them to exemplify the argumentative quality of talk about migration. Whilst the first example has a distinctively 'ancient' appeal, we nonetheless witness the colonisation and subjugation of peoples by an apparently superior group that occurred 'for the better'. The latter is as current as they come, strongly conveying a 'home guard' defending the 'indigenous' British culture from the migrant 'Other' (Lynn & Lea, 2003; Barnes, Auburn, & Lea, 2004; Van Dijk, 1992; Charteris-Black, 2006). Thus, in the UK nation's discursive (re)construction, migratory events may be premised differently, as having occurred for the betterment of British culture or as in need of challenge, reduction, or stopping altogether.

The question being explored in this project regards *how* arguments about migration are constructed and subsequently managed. To achieve this, I will be looking at a text that takes active steps to negotiate the contemporary dilemmas inherent to discussing such issues, such as constructing an identity that is authoritative and knowledgeable but also 'ordinary'; conveying persuasiveness whilst also seeming 'reasonable'; negating accusations of 'racism' when talking about potentially discriminatory issues. Before I can analyse how these issues are managed, the cultural context needs to be understood - that is, how migration discourses operate in the United Kingdom (UK) context. A theoretical approach also needs to be outlined. This project seeks to show how - by applying a discursive perspective to contemporary social psychological topics such as group relations, personal identities and categorisations, and prejudice - we can gain a better understanding of the migration discourses that are permeating UK society.

## *Migration: A Discursive Overview*

For around fifteen years, migration to the UK has become increasingly viewed in need of ‘control’ and/or ‘radical change’ (Briant, Philo, & Donald, 2013; Fowler, 1991; Mehan, 1997).<sup>1</sup> This is made particularly evident when metaphors of disaster (‘flood’, ‘invasion’, ‘swarm’) are used (Capdevila & Callaghan, 2007; Charteris-Black, 2006; Polson & Kahle, 2010; Lim & Moufahim, 2011). This shapes the ‘debate’ as being about the need to protect borders, control ‘outsiders’ coming in, and prioritise UK culture (Lyn & Lea, 2003; Augoustinos & Every, 2007). ‘Multiculturalist’ and/or ‘liberal’ discourses advocating ‘diversity and difference’ and ‘community’ are marginalised as a result (see Kilby, Horowitz, & Hylton, 2013; Horowitz & Kilby, 2011).

In the public sphere, political leaders are displaying supposedly ‘distinctive’ views concerning migration<sup>2</sup> and society, despite generally containing features aspiring to the same underlying ‘need’ for revision (Cameron, 2011, 2013; Miliband, 2012; Clegg, 2013). These speeches compare and contrast various examples like ‘good’ and ‘bad’ types of migration, acceptable and unacceptable ‘levels’ of migrants, ‘desirable’ and ‘undesirable’ migrants, and/or ‘intended’ and ‘unintended’ consequences of migration. These displays are argued to convey an ‘understanding’ of how migration is ‘affecting’ society. They also acknowledge discourses forwarded by marginal parties such as the British National Party (BNP), and increasingly the UK Independence Party (UKIP), that argue in favour of UK sovereignty and culture. Contestability (see Gallie, 1956) is also found in debates about legal, psychological and economic aspects of migration (Anderson & Blinder, 2013; Home Office, 2013; Immigration Act, 2014; Berry, 2001; Boski, 2013; Dustmann & Frattini, 2013; Migration Watch, 2014; Vargos-Silva, 2013). Here, competing accounts attempt to ‘inform’ the reader of the ‘reality’ behind migration. We can conclude that the movement of peoples is framed in different ways: and these framings are noteworthy constructions. Moving forward, understanding these discursive phenomena requires an approach that embraces the complex, sometimes contradictory nature of accounts (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, migration has always been contentious in UK history, whether it refers to the Norman Conquest or Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech. The point is that these events are *selectively* constructed and some accounts for specific events become hegemonic and thus ‘factualised’ in history books and the news.

<sup>2</sup> This traditionally referred to commonwealth emigration in the 20<sup>th</sup>C, but more recently discourses also refer to European Union migrants and international refugees seeking asylum (Goodman, 2010).

### *A Discursive Psychological Approach*

Discursive psychology (DP; Edwards, 2005; Potter & Wiggins, 2007; Edwards & Potter, 1992) studies the social, interactive and argumentative qualities of talk and text as central to understanding how psychological topics (e.g. prejudice, categorisation, attitudes) are realised through situated actions and evaluative practices. Take this made-up example:

- 1                    *I'm not against asylum-seekers, but* I just wish the council would not spend  
2                    so much money on translations for how to claim benefits.

Here, 'prejudice' is realised by constructing a selective formulation about "asylum-seekers". It begins with a disclaimer (italicised), showing understanding that the view may be seen as *potentially* controversial. The impact of this complaint is also lessened by softeners ("just", "so much"). The 'speaker' *blames* "the council" for the problem, constructing the receiving society's culture and language as being in need of protection. Such discursive practices may be found in talk about culture and society, where speakers *actively* inoculate against the possibility of being seen as 'racist' (van Dijk, 1992, 2000; Billig, 2001; Fairclough, 2001; Gibaon & Hamilton, 2011; Lopez-Maestre & Lottgen, 2003; Goodman & Burke, 2010, 2011; Barnes et al, 2003). Here, internal 'cognitive processes' (e.g. theoretical models of 'attitudinal structures') are shelved in order to study what is *actually said* and the actions embedded therein. This is DPs anti-cognitivist, action-oriented stance (Edwards, 2005).

Understanding the social realisation of psychological topics also bears important implications for understanding the way that speakers and specific groups are constructed, argued about, and ultimately 'allowed' to be. As Edwards (1991) points out, 'categories are for talking', and enable remarkable ease in their inference-richness in regards to associated activities, characteristics, and knowledge (Sacks, 1995; Housley & Fitzgerald, 2002). Categories are immersed in cultural life, being used as resources to both enable and constrain self-definition (Andreouli & Howarth, 2012; Clare et al, 2014). Antaki and Widdicombe (1998:2) illustrate this socio-cultural argument succinctly:

"Membership of a category is ascribed (and rejected), avowed (and disavowed), displayed (and ignored) in local places and at certain times, and it does these things as part of the interactional work that constitutes people's lives...[I]t [is] not that people passively or latently have this or that identity which then causes feelings and actions, but that they work up and work to this or that identity, for themselves and others, there and then, either as an end in itself or towards some other end."

DP understands how discourse works by using three distinctive theoretical commitments (Edwards, 2005). Firstly, attention is paid to the *formulation* of an utterance. This is particularly pertinent for DP as a social constructionist (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985) position, as different descriptions of the same thing may all seem “reasonable or possible”, and their “rhetorical, argumentative quality” is what encourages *particular* conclusions to be drawn (Edwards, 1997:8). Utterances are seen as constructed using categories, idioms, and metaphors, and constructive insofar that a particular ‘picture’ is assembled from the utterance (Potter & Wiggins, 2007; Potter & Hepburn, 2008). Secondly, an *action-oriented* lens is used to understand the *rhetorical* effects of discourse (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Often, people are performing social actions such as blaming, justifying, complimenting, etc. when talking (Potter & Wiggins, 2007), and DP documents *how* that is occurring. Lastly, DP focuses on contextual production: “identities are always situated and must be interpreted...[where] they are made relevant” (Abell & Stokoe, 2001:433). In sum, these commitments will enable me to study *how* talk about migration discursively operates.

This project aligned to *critical* DP (see Goodman & Speer, 2007; Goodman, 2010; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Critical DP focuses on similar issues to ‘mainstream’ DP, however it pays particular attention to “the social and political consequences of discursive positioning” (Wetherell, 1998:405). This focus enables the study of how the micro-study of text intersects with macro social and political issues. The distinction between ‘critical’ and ‘mainstream’ DP derives from an argument (e.g. Wetherell, 1998, 2007) that asserts that DP has become increasingly focused (or potentially delimited) by the methodological adoption of conversation analysis (CA; Sacks, 1995) (see Edwards, 2005:478). This debate is mostly concerned with how the analyst ‘should’ approach the text. It is constructed as a choice between whether analysis should focus only on the data and the construction of relevant aspects of ‘context’ within it (Schegloff, 1997, 1998, 1999a, 1999b), or whether critical insights beyond the data (the analyst’s context) should also be applicable (Wetherell, 1998, Billig, 1999a, 1999b). In some ways, these divisions can cause more controversy than clarity, as such debates erect discursive barriers that hamper scholarly work due to increasingly restricted and delimited methodologies (Billig, 2012; Kilby, 2011). That said, however, I am aligned with the ‘critical’ camp (e.g. Wetherell, 1998, 2007) as I see the understanding of migration discourses as only possible if inter-textual links can be made from discourse to the socio-cultural context, and if analysis is sensitive to the political realisations of discourse.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The constructionism used here is also less radical than mainstream DP (Potter, 1996; Edwards, Ashmore, & Potter, 1995). Whilst my epistemological position taken is focussed on social action and discursive practices, my ontological position is that it is possible to achieve some knowability towards ‘reality’ through realism. This is

## Methodology

### *The Origin of the Text*

The methodology I used involved the acquisition and analysis of a ‘text’ which bore relation to the research theme (i.e. ‘migration to the UK’). I selected a text exposited by the UKIP Leader Nigel Farage which was published *after* a ‘car crash’ interview he had with radio presenter James O’Brien on the local radio broadcaster LBC (15-06-2014). The original interview occurred during the election campaign for the 2014 Local Council and European Union elections. The letter was published in the *Daily Telegraph* (19-06-2014)<sup>4</sup>. I chose it primarily because it manages an issue that arose during the original interview<sup>5,6</sup>:

#### *Extract 1: The ‘car-crash moment’*

- |   |        |   |
|---|--------|---|
| 1 | James: | and what about the line about not wanting to live next door to <u>Romanians</u> . |
| 2 |        | That it’s perfectly acceptable for people not to-                                 |
| 3 | Nigel: | I didn’t say that (.) I was asked ‘if a group of Romanian men moved in next       |
| 4 |        | door would you be concerned’  |
| 5 | James: | well (.) what if a group of German children did? (0.5) what’s the difference?     |
| 6 | Nigel: | oh come on (.) I know the difference and you know the difference                  |
| 7 | James: | no, I honestly don’t (.) I think this is the disconnect between your position     |
| 8 |        | and mine  |

Clearly there is disagreement between the speakers. After several targeted, highly-charged questions about UKIP members and Nigel’s employment history, language and culture is topicalised. Here, Nigel conveys (arguably) ‘racist’ views about Romanians, which he negotiates on (lines 3-4). James challenges Nigel by asking about “German children” (line 5), and Nigel appeals to ‘commonsense’ by relying on James to ‘know’ the difference between Romanian and German people, which James disputes (lines 6-8). This moment became highly controversial, being reported by different media outlets as Nigel’s ‘car crash’ interview, as he finally ‘let slip’ his ‘racist’ attitudes that he had for previously been ‘hiding.’<sup>7</sup>

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achieved by acknowledging that the social construction of reality as always “partial, limited and necessarily dependent upon empirical and discursive revision” (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002:710). Building on this partiality, discursive research is able to explore possible intersections beyond to the cultural and material.

4 But it was widely advertised. See <https://www.facebook.com/133737666673845/posts/681048245276115> for a digital record.

5 See <http://youtu.be/Z4Rq7avG234> watch between 11:02-16:48 for the topical talk and 14:40 for the ‘moment’.

6 Transcription symbols: (.) marks a minor pause, (0.5) marks a pause in milliseconds, and underline marks speech emphasis. These were selectively drawn from Jefferson (2004).

7 See also: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2631581/What-need-know-Nigel-Farage-vote-Thursday-JAMES-OBRIEN-LBC-radio-presenter-Ukip-aide-tried-silence.html>

### *Text as Case Study*

Jahoda (2012) provides a substantive critique of the contemporary methodological approach adopted in discursive research, that is, of justifying interpretations based on evidence whereby alternative cases are not provided. Similarly, Goodman (2008) discusses the issue of generalisability ('transferability') in discursive research, and its implications for understanding discourse beyond the immediate context. These issues are beyond scope for detailed explication here, but they characterise a central issues this project has managed. The text has been approached analysed in regards to how *specific* devices or practices have helped constitute its being *as a text*. Although their use in other texts is probable, I am not claiming that they will lead to the same discursive effects. Its relation to other political discourses is beyond scope here, although in essence this text bears many similarities to previous work investigating nationalistic political discourses in Europe (Wilson & Hainsworth, 2012).

### *Aim*

McKenzie (2003:462) argues that racism "features as an accountable matter in everyday talk...what-it-is-that-counts-as-racism is *itself* the accomplishment of complex, situated negotiations between speakers in mundane social settings". By analysing of Nigel's letter, I aim to explore how he attends to both the issue of racism and his own identity as a situated response to this original interview. How does Nigel talk about migration? How does he construct his argument, how are people categorised within it? What alternatives are silenced as a result? My analysis will show how he invokes various discursive devices based on psychological and social themes which are used as a means of displaying 'defence' of the UK.



## Analysis

### *Discursive Achievements: An Overview*

The analysis aims to explore three primary discursive achievements embedded within the text. Although they often interrelate (particularly ‘displaying reasonableness’), they are presented separately to convey them as clearly as possible. Firstly, two primary identities are developed in the text: (1) being Nigel who is positioned as an ‘ordinary’/‘elite’ British representative, and (2) being Romanian peoples who are constructed collectively as ‘troublemakers’. Secondly, the (‘car-crash’) ‘racist’ issue is acknowledged, responded to and contested, enabling a space to renegotiate the terms of the accusation. Thirdly, a ‘reasonable’ persona permeates the text, operating to complement the other arguments. Here, opposition is formulated, history is cited, and personal reflections are used, which mitigate the extremities of Nigel’s argument and convey ‘commonsense’. Together, I aim to show how these discursive qualities enable Nigel to renegotiate the original issue from being about ‘racism’ to one being about ‘security’ and ‘defence’ of the UK.

### *Narrating Relevant Identities: exhibiting an ‘ordinary’ British-elite identity, essentialising the ‘Romanian’*

To begin, I will outline how Nigel orients to identities relevant to his position as the text’s author (see Extract 2a). The letter begins (lines 1-2) by situating the genre (“an open letter”) and the writer’s identity (“UKIP Leader Nigel Farage MEP”). Thus, we become aware that Nigel is oriented to political issues informed by four category memberships (“[UK] politician”, “leader”, “UKIP”, and “[EU] politician”). This rhetorically bolsters the argument, as it conveys authority and experience, therefore ‘qualifying’ Nigel to discuss such issues. The letter is addressed to “UK citizen”, thus establishing that its content is directed and/or relevant to readers for whom national citizenship (i.e. having ‘British status’) is applicable. By implication, it is *not* addressed to anyone else, such as ‘tourists’, ‘refugees’ or ‘economic migrants’ from elsewhere in the EU. This latter category is particularly important, as Nigel challenges the legitimacy of Romanian migration to the UK. It appeals to sentiments of traditional ‘British-European’ separateness, of being an ‘island’ (e.g. Abell, Condor, & Stevenson, 2006), and as being ‘British’ over ‘European’. It is therefore addressing the question of UK identity in Europe, and silences the prospect of a ‘European’ voice or identity for ‘UK citizens’. Later, Nigel aligns with ‘UK citizens’ again when discussing the “real

problem” of Romania, a problem that he argues is “unpalatable” to “our political class” who “would rather not discuss” it (lines 8-9). Here, Nigel is flagging his identity as being ‘one of the people’, as someone unafraid to talk about issues ‘as they are’. And so, in this passage Nigel aligns with being both an authoritative ‘elite’ as well as an ‘ordinary’ UK citizen. This multifaceted ‘UK identity’ is also later reused as the letter concludes and his elite political identities are repeated (see Extract 2b). Implicitly, the ‘headline’ (line 34) presents unifying call to ‘UK citizens’ by imploring that ‘all’ UKIP want is to reclaim “our country” back from the EU.



UK identity is markedly contrasted with Romanian identity, who “we” should not be politically involved with. Here, Nigel invokes familiar metaphors of nationhood (Billig, 1995) denoting a need to be ‘protected’ against Romanian people (“open door”, “control of our borders”). This is achieved by sequentially renaming Romanians from “citizens” (line 22) to “criminals” (line 23). Ultimately Romania is portrayed as composed of dangerous, law-breaking people who the UK *cannot* “stop from entering”. Leaving the EU is presented as the “only way” to restore “power” here and prevent this insurgency. Finally, by proposing “work permits” and “necessary checks”, Nigel constructs the need to monitor Romanian people, to ensure they are not a member of an “organised criminal gang” (lines 14-16; 22-27). The criminality displayed here implies a structured, collaborative, and deceptive group intent on ‘damaging’ the UK. Here, Nigel is tapping into familiar nationalistic discourses that premise the need to defend the ‘motherland’ from invasion (Goodman, 2010). This ‘pro-UK’ stance is based on “commonsense” (line 28) by ensuring security and defence from ‘outsiders’. Thus, we see how two ‘sides’, based on categorical identities, are being realised: of Nigel/UKIP versus the EU, of UK versus Romania, of ‘UK citizens’ against Romanian ‘criminals’.

## Extract 2b: Narrating Relevant Identities

22 We should not be in a political corner with Romanians, with an open door to all of their citizens. We should take back the  
 23 power to stop criminals from entering our country by taking back control of our borders. The only way to do that is  
 24 to leave the EU.

25 There are lots of good Romanians who want to come to the UK, work hard and do the necessary checks. When this  
 26 happens my answer to the question, 'Should people be concerned if a group of Romanians start coming to read  
 27 about?' will be 'No'.

28 It is not racist to want to stop organised criminal gangs undermining our way of life – it is common sense.

29 Yours sincerely,

30   
 31 Nigel Farage MEP  
 32 Leader of UKIP

33 ALL WE WANT IS OUR COUNTRY BACK

*Managing Discrimination: contesting racism, conveying inclusivity, and 'considering' evidence*

Having shown how identities are made relevant, now I will show how Nigel manages the 'racist' issue from the original interview and reframes it into beneficial terms. Extract 3a begins with a clarifying statement (line 6) that implies honesty and politeness. Here, the subject position (i.e. Nigel as a 'racist') shifts to instead discuss UKIP and their immigration policy (lines 6-7). Here, Nigel avoids making any personal admissions by instead stating that *UKIP* is not racist. This shift is followed by a stake inoculation (Potter, 1996) portraying Romanians positively (lines 7-8), so as to emphasise pluralism and convey distance from the original 'car-crash moment'. This is also supported by the assertion of an immigration policy that is "far from racist", instead aiming to end discrimination of "non-Europeans". Nigel is invoking his "leader" status to frame his party's policies as aligned with the Commonwealth, thus potentially referring to a vast array of cultures and nationalities. Here, then, we see an explicit claim against racism realised through the evocation of non-UK national groups. The interpretation of racism is thus flipped, with UKIP is portrayed as a champion of opportunity and inclusivity. This gerrymandering construction (Potter, 1996) obscures that *ending* discrimination for 'non-Europeans' would entail *starting* discrimination for 'Europeans'. Here, we observe how a seemingly 'positive' anti-discrimination position is promoted while obscuring its implications, thus avoiding the possibility of conveying 'racism'.

## Extract 3a: Managing Discrimination

6 Let me be clear – UKIP is not a racist party, and our immigration policy, far from being racist, aims to end  
 7 discrimination against non-Europeans. The vast majority of Romanians who have come to the UK wish to  
 8 better their lives and would make good neighbours.

The "Metropolitan Police crime statistics" are used to augment the "huge problems" argument and convey how 'threatening' Romanians are to the UK (see Extract 3b). Nigel argues that they should be "considered". This demonstration of 'reasonableness' *appears* to ask for 'thoughtful' consideration before arriving at a conclusion. However, they afford a very specific, 'face-value' interpretation, which is only conducive to Nigel's argument. For

example, the number of “arrests” (“28,000”) implies that over one-quarter of (“100,000”) Romanian residents in the UK have been arrested “in the last five years”. Here, the statistics included are prompting questions that bear directly upon the sequentially-previous section on ‘crime’ and ‘gangs’. They are noticeably ‘vague’, bearing no explanation as to what/whom they refer to (e.g. are ‘arrests’ people or cases, how many led to charges/convictions, reasons for arrest, etc). This detaches Nigel the evidence he presents, portraying it as ‘self-sufficient’ or ‘obvious’ (Potter, 1996). Regardless of their legitimacy, these statistics rhetorically encourage an interpretation that Romanian people are dangerous, unlawful and should not be able to enter the UK. Clearly, Nigel here is using convergent evidences that contribute ‘reasonably’ and ‘sensibly’ towards his subsequent conclusions, because they are ‘factual’ and ‘statistical’, being derived from a seemingly reputable source (i.e. police). The notion that arrests are human-based interactions involving complex legal, socio-cultural and moral conditions is non-existent, as the evocation of legal categories and processes (“crime”, “arrest”) forces the issue despite a “considered” portrayal.<sup>8</sup>

*Extract 3b: Managing Discrimination*

- 17 With about 100,000 Romanians currently in the UK, consider these Metropolitan Police crime statistics:
- 18 92% of all ATM crime in London is committed by Romanians!
- 19 28,000 Romanians were arrested in the last five years in the Metropolitan Police area alone!
- 20 And across the EU as a whole, Europol figures show:
- 21 7% of all crime across the 28 EU member states was caused by 240 Romanian gangs!

*Displaying Reasonableness: acknowledging opposition, invoking historical knowledge, and expressing experience*

Now, I will show how Nigel bolsters previous discursive actions by portraying a ‘reasonable’ persona that responds to potential challenges to his character (e.g. being ‘nasty’, ‘ill-informed’, or ‘uncaring’). Reasonableness is deployed most obviously at the beginning of Extract 4, where a scene-setting device introduces the ‘racist’ issue. He acknowledges the media reaction (line 4), and also displays understanding for how those original comments have been understood (line 5). Nigel conveys understanding for both ‘sides’ of the argument, conveying a reasonable and open-minded perspective (Billig, 2001). However, despite appearances it actually undermines the reactions that he expresses to “understand”, as he states that people “would” be concerned (lines 4-5), thus removing the perceptual dimension of racism and instead locating “people’s reactions” to a realm of ‘reality’ or ‘actuality’. Thus,

<sup>8</sup> This alignment also enables Nigel to continue his allegiance with ‘UK citizens’ and society’s institutions (e.g. police), thus further bolstering his claims as a concerned, authoritative member of UK society.

this framing appears to celebrate democracy, free speech, and debate (e.g. by acknowledging different reactions, or by not stating that people ‘should’ be concerned which may be linked to a racist position) but simultaneously essentialises particular interpretations (i.e. that people “would” be concerned rather than “could” be). This forced-choice construction thus coercively forwards the appearance of a reasonable, open-minded politician that acknowledges how society ‘has’ changed and is therefore ‘having’ to do something about it.

Further down Extract 4, Nigel invokes a ‘cold war’ narrative, situating his historical allegiance to ‘the west’ and ‘democracy’ (lines 9-10). This is followed by an empathic observation about Romania (lines 10-11). Nigel also incorporates a ‘memory’ device (“when I visited”) that situates ‘profound’ reflections (“truly shocked”). He further develops the memory device by displaying concern about the “living conditions” and “social exclusion” of the “large Roma minority”, and dismay about their “discrimination” (lines 12-13). Here, this moral positioning places Nigel as a caring internationalist, carefully and diplomatically describing Romania’s socio-political conditions with implied consensus and support from fellow continental nations (line 13), inoculating against the charge that Nigel’s views are not considered and/or ‘mainstream’. Finally, further to the reasonableness display, it conveys that Nigel’s decisions are based on ‘feeling’, ‘experience’, etc, conveying deliberation and genuinity. This discursive positioning therefore enables a revised construction of what the ‘car crash’ moment about ‘Romanian men’ really meant. Instead of being based on ‘racist’ views, Nigel constructs it based on ‘concern’ for the material and socio-political circumstances of Romania and its implications for UK ‘security’ and ‘defence’.

#### *Extract 4: Displaying Reasonableness*

- 9 But there is a real problem, an undeniable truth that our political class would rather not discuss. Since the  
10 welcome fall of Communism and the awful dictator Ceausescu, Romania has struggled to complete a full transition  
11 into a western democracy.
- 12 When I visited the country I was truly shocked by the living conditions and social exclusion of a large Roma  
13 minority. It is difficult to believe that such discrimination still exists in Europe today.
- 14 The other huge problem in Romania has been the growth of organised criminal gangs for whom EU membership  
15 has meant greater opportunities. Under free movement rules there is absolutely nothing the UK authorities can do  
16 to stop such people from entering our country.

## Conclusions

### *Taking Stock: Discursive Realisations*

This project has applied a critical DP approach to study the constructive and rhetorical qualities of Nigel Farage's open letter. I have shown how three constituent parts were central to the argument's realisation. Firstly, the identity work performed was constructed based on establishing Nigel's authority as a senior politician, aligning his position with the 'UK citizen' audience, discrediting the UK 'political class', and presenting Romanians as 'criminals'. Secondly, Nigel manages the 'racist' issue by shifting focus onto UKIP. By doing so, he orients to an 'anti-discriminatory' agenda that gerrymanders its implications (i.e. not mentioning the necessary discrimination of 'Europeans'). Nigel also presents 'self-sufficient' evidence that distances him from 'racism'; here, the notion that these statistics are selective, vague and/or stimulated by people is underplayed. Finally, throughout Nigel displays a 'reasonable' persona, conveying that the argument is not extreme, but is instead necessary and 'commonsensical'. For example, he acknowledges reactions to his 'car-crash moment', but invokes a 'reality check' device to downplay racism as a perceptive experience, instead situating it as 'factual'. He similarly introduces historical 'knowledge' and personal 'experience' to further support his conclusions as based on 'empirical facts' and substantiate the essential conclusion that for 'protection', 'UK citizens' must "leave the EU" (line 24).

By conducting a critical discursive analysis on a political text, we can now better understand how macro-political and social issues are managed using psychological themes. Thus, particular attitudes might be downplayed (e.g. racist), nationalities selectively constructed and compared (e.g. UK citizens as in need of 'protection', Romanian 'citizens'/'criminals' in need of surveillance and control), or intra-national classes negotiated (Nigel, as "UKIP leader", attacks "our political class"; lines 2 & 9). These insights were attained through micro-textual analysis. As Zimmerman and Boden (1991:7) argue, "features of social life are recurrently accomplished through...incarnate practices". We see how 'big issues' like migration, society and nationality are negotiated using particular discursive

practices, such as in displays of ‘reasonableness’. ‘Naive empiricist’ approaches like CA (Schegloff, 1997) are unable to convey such devices, as they are delimited by methodological constraints (what is *visibly in the data*). And so, we could not critique, for example, how these arguments are based on maintaining discriminatory policies in society or constructing particular groups as ‘dangerous’ (“Romanians”) or in need of ‘protection’ (“UK citizens”). Billig (1998a) controversially argued that many occasions necessitate critical analysis as otherwise we may assume that ‘participants’ are equal and that all phenomena are collaborative enterprises. I have aimed to show how Nigel’s letter is not only premised on imposing new cultural barriers, undermining ‘multiculturalism’ and/or the ‘European identity’, but also manipulates culturally-available identities (e.g. ‘politician’, ‘citizen’) to stratify and distribute power towards his cause. Here, power is constituted through the evocation of ‘commonsense’ and the need to stop ‘crime’.

#### *Units of Analysis: Restricted Foci, or a Valuable Retread?*

This micro-analysis discovered three distinctive discursive practices that supported Nigel’s argument *against* the EU, Romania, and the British ‘elite’ in the ‘protection’ of ‘our country’. Some may argue that such textual focus is too insular, pedantic, or inconsequential, and is unable to justify the ascription of ‘critical’ analysis; by focusing on the qualitative, meaning-making in language use, other aspects of social action are unexplored. My response would be this: the world is complex, its actors even more so, and language is the primary means by which we make sense of both ourselves and others (Ribes-Iñesta, 2006). A discursive approach is *one* way to document this process in-action, by looking at phenomena that bear consequences for how our psychological identities are realised in cultural context. Its limitations are worthwhile as it enables a *retread*, a reconsideration of the taken-for-granted. It is certainly extremely valuable when studying phenomena like prejudice and identity, which have been traditionally studied by psychologists as ‘cognitive’, ‘individual’ processes and not as and discursively-constituted and socially-realised (Edwards, 1997; Billig, 1995).

George Orwell (2010:11) wrote that “Political language...is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind”. Nigel’s letter was published three days before Election Day, presumably to bolster support from ‘voters’. Nigel described himself and his party favourably. Clearly, my findings are interrelated to cultural processes like running election campaigns and writing open letters. But my findings have documented how this accountability *operated*, how Nigel *negotiated* the

construction and meaning of ‘racism’, and to some extent critique how this *enabled* the avoidance of blame, the promotion of ‘commonsense’, or the branding of Romanians as ‘criminals’. His letter was a significant action embedded within a wider movement across Europe (Wilson & Hainsworth, 2012). This project was a small step towards understanding how this text’s discourse was used to justify efforts that advocate maintaining that rise.

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## Appendix I: Nigel Farage's Open Letter

Line  
Numbers

### 1 An open letter from 2 UKIP Leader Nigel Farage MEP



3 Dear UK Citizen,

4 My recent, widely-reported comment that people would be concerned if a group of Romanian men moved in next  
5 door to their house has caused a predictable storm of protest and accusations of racism.

6 **Let me be clear – UKIP is not a racist party, and our immigration policy, far from being racist, aims to end  
7 discrimination against non-Europeans. The vast majority of Romanians who have come to the UK wish to  
8 better their lives and would make good neighbours.**

9 But there is a real problem, an unpalatable truth that our political class would rather not discuss. Since the  
10 welcome fall of Communism and the awful dictator Ceausescu, Romania has struggled to complete a full transition  
11 into a western democracy.

12 When I visited the country I was truly shocked by the living conditions and social exclusion of a large Roma  
13 minority. It is difficult to believe that such discrimination still exists in Europe today.

14 The other huge problem in Romania has been the growth of organised criminal gangs for whom EU membership  
15 has meant greater opportunities. Under free movement rules there is absolutely nothing the UK authorities can do  
16 to stop such people from entering our country.

17 With about 100,000 Romanians currently in the UK, consider these Metropolitan Police crime statistics:

18 **92% of all ATM crime in London is committed by Romanians<sup>1</sup>**

19 **28,000 Romanians were arrested in the last five years in the Metropolitan Police area alone<sup>2</sup>**

20 And across the EU as a whole, Europol figures show:

21 **7% of all crime across the 28 EU member states was caused by 240 Romanian gangs<sup>3</sup>**

22 We should not be in a political union with Romania, with an open door to all of their citizens. We must take back the  
23 power to stop criminals from entering our country by taking back control of our borders. The only way to do that is  
24 to leave the EU.

25 Then we can give Romanians who want to come to the UK work permits and do the necessary checks. When this  
26 happens my answer to the question, 'Should people be concerned if a group of Romanian men moved in next  
27 door?' will be 'No'.

28 It is not racist to want to stop organised criminal gangs undermining our way of life – it is common sense.

29 Yours sincerely,

30

31 Nigel Farage MEP  
32 Leader of UKIP

33 <sup>1</sup> *UKIP Paul Bennett, Dedicated Citizens and Police Crime Unit interviewed on ITV documentary 'Front Squad', aired April 3, 2012* <sup>2</sup> *Metropolitan Police, Directorate of Information Freedom of Information Request response 00012013* [http://www.met.police.uk/foi/pdfs/disclosure\\_00012013\\_2012201310000140.pdf](http://www.met.police.uk/foi/pdfs/disclosure_00012013_2012201310000140.pdf) <sup>3</sup> *Europol*

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