2018

The use of *zingari/nomadi/rom* in Italian crime discourse

Theresa Catalano

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, tcatalano2@unl.edu

The use of *zingari/nomadi/rom* in Italian crime discourse

Theresa Catalano

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Abstract

This study examines the use of the metonymies *zingari/nomadi/rom* [Gypsies/Nomads/Roma] in Italian media discourse, in order to critically reflect on their relation to the perception of Roma. The author analyses the frequency of these terms in general discourse and crime discourse, as well as the way they are used in context. The findings reveal that *nomadi* and *rom* are used to directly and indirectly index Roma, and have a significant impact on their ethnicization and criminalization. In addition, the episodic framing of crime events, combined with the use of these metonymies, erases the Italian government's responsibility for the conditions of Roma in Italy.

Keywords: Roma, Italian media discourse, crime, metonymy, ideology.

Introduction

Media discourse about the Roma has played a major part in "creating hatred of Roma," and the media has typically had little interest in the positive aspects of "Roma" life (Brearley 2001: 596). The main purpose of this paper is to demonstrate exactly how Italian media discourse both reflects and contributes to anti-Roma sentiment in Italy. Numerous scholars have studied the representation of Roma in the media in Canada (Catalano 2014), Italy (Catalano 2011), the US (Hancock 2010) and the UK (Goodman and Rowe 2014, Richardson 2014), and documented a large gap between the media portrayal and the reality of Romani life. This in turn "feeds fear and paranoia and exacerbates community conflict," which leads to constraints upon

freedom and increased levels of social surveillance and control (Richardson 2014: 52). Studies of online discussion forums have revealed a level of prejudice that would not normally be accepted towards minority groups, and yet is commonplace when discussing Romani people (Goodman and Rowe 2014, Orrù 2014). In addition, Erjavec et al. (2000) found that when Roma are represented in the media they rarely appear as individuals, and instead appear as members of their ethnic group. Moreover, "[t]hey do not speak, they are spoken about. Even when they speak, their talk must be "translated" into the language that is understood by the majority" (ibid.: 38).

Crime discourse in Italy has traditionally been an area where anti-Roma sentiment has been produced, re-produced and fomented (Catalano 2014). Orrù (2014) found that the reporting of crimes tends to be highly ethicized, and often in countries where Roma are present, crime statistics tend to be divided into Roma and non-Roma (Brearley 2001). The present author (2011) found that 42 per cent of news articles about Romani people, from three Italian news sources during 2009, were related to crime. Furthermore, in a comparison of the reporting of three other minority groups in Italian newspapers, the Roma fared the worst, with far more discourse about them categorized as "denaturalization" or "derogation" than any other group.[1]

In Italy, the recent creation or continuation of anti-Roma policies, and worsening human-rights conditions overall, can be traced back to high-profile crimes that have occurred there: for instance, the 2007 killing of an Italian woman and other crimes in 2008 were allegedly committed by Roma suspects, and led to their subsequent criminalization (Armillei 2014, Costi 2010). More recently, in May 2015, when three people of Roma origin were arrested for running over a Filipino woman and injuring nine people (Angeli and Giannoli 2015), a new "moral panic" ensued, using this crime as a justification for renewed anti-Roma discourse. This supports Vitale and Claps" (2010) findings that Italian hostility towards Roma has grown in the last decade, due in part to the way in which crimes are ethnicized, and the way in which Roma are falsely presented as possessing a "cultural trait" or "inclination" toward crime. In addition, Romani crimes are reported episodically, as "specific events or particular cases," as opposed to

1. The other minority groups studied were Moroccan, Albanian and Romanian migrants to Italy.

thematically, where the events are reported in some general context that takes into account the historical and systematic reasons for the committing of the crimes (Iyengar 1991). When crimes allegedly committed by Roma are framed episodically, an occlusion of the history that led to the crimes being committed becomes the norm in Italian media discourse. Hence little mention is made of the fact that "government policy has placed the Roma in a precarious situation where their vital cores – survival, livelihood and dignity – are being threatened … and they are forced into a situation where survival is top of the agenda" (Costi 2010: 130).

Crime discourse is often a place where social conceptions of ethnic groups are built and reinforced, and a place where ideological manipulation is abundant; it therefore provides an ideal space in which to examine how media discourse shapes public opinion of Romani people. Thus, in order to demonstrate how Italian media discourse both reflects and shapes public opinion about the Roma, I examine the use of the labels of *zingari/nomadi/rom* [Gypsies/Nomads/Roma] in Italian media discourse in 2015, taking care to explore exactly how crimes allegedly committed by Roma are ethnicized, and focusing special attention on the use of *nomadi.*

Theoretical perspective

The present paper is informed by a number of overlapping and complementary theoretical perspectives. First, Tajfel and Turner's "Social Identity Theory" (1985) posits that we put ourselves and others into categories, comparing other groups to our groups and developing a favorable bias toward the group to which we belong. This theory explains both the way in which stereotypes provide a means of processing information and giving order to reality by categorizing people (and thus, oversimplifying and generalizing), and also the tendency to apply pejorative stereotypes to outgroups and more positive ones to in-groups (Tajfel 1981).

In addition to Social Identity Theory, this paper incorporates perspectives from critical discourse studies, to reveal how "complex social problems are represented linguistically" with the hope of proposing ways to challenge, deconstruct, understand and possibly overcome them (Angermuller et al. 2014: 361). It also draws on the field of

cognitive linguistics. In particular, framing and the use of metonymy are of interest to this analysis. Frames can be defined as the mental structures that shape our view of the world; they affect our decisions, opinions and actions. Thus, when we hear certain words, their frames are activated in our brain (Lakoff 2004). According to Lakoff, people are more likely to be persuaded of a particular opinion when the moral frames in which they believe have been activated. Framing helps us to understand how certain metonymies (when one thing stands for another to which it is closely related) are used to trigger moral values connected to ideologies and social conceptions that people already have about people, events or actions. For example, when people use the metonymy "illegals" to refer to migrants without proper documents, this nominalization (formed from the adjective "illegal") places migrants in the frame of crime, since illegality is related metonymically to criminality. We also use metonymy in order to "put the large amount of information that is available about the world into a manageable form" (Littlemore 2015: 1), such as when we use acronyms. Furthermore, metonymy in our thinking leaves traces in our language and in other forms of expression, and we are mostly unconscious of its use. In fact, "more often than not, the metonymies we use are so conventional, we may not recognize them as such" (Littlemore 2015: 13).

What is of particular interest, for the purposes of this paper, is the way in which metonymy is used in media discourse when seeking to present (either consciously or unconsciously) one's own perspective, or "to influence the views of others" (Littlemore 2015: 99). Because it is so subtle and hard to notice – and so naturalized in discourse that we often cannot imagine alternative ways of labelling actions, events or people – metonymy has a high potential for manipulation. Thus, in order to understand how *zingari/rom/nomadi* are used for the purposes of influencing the public's opinion of Roma, we will view them in terms of the metonymical processes that readers must undergo in order to negotiate their meaning.

Method

The analysis of the metonymies *zingari/nomadi/rom* occurred in two phases. First, a quantitative analysis was conducted to see which term was used the most in general media discourse, and whether or not

Table 1. Percentage of all *zingaro/nomadi/rom* uses that report crimes allegedly committed by Romanies in 2015.

Search term	La Repubblica	Il Corriere	Liberoquotidiano
zingaro/i/e/a	4%	26%	17%
nomadi/e/a	**31%**	**48%**	**45%**
rom	19%	20%	26%

there have been any changes in the frequency of any of the terms since the author's 2011 study of Italian media discourse. A search via Google (www.google.com) was conducted on three Italian online newspaper sites of varying political tendencies[2] – http://www.repubblica.it (center-left), http://www.corriere.it (center) and http://www.liberoquotidiano.it (right) – using the search terms *zingari/nomadi/rom*. All articles found under each term for each (entire) year from 2011 to 2015 were tabulated, and are discussed briefly in the section "Findings." In addition to this, the percentage of all articles found for each search term (*zingari/nomadi/rom*) which related to crime was calculated; these findings can be found in Table 1. Because *nomadi* was the term used the most in crime-related discourse, a separate topic analysis was also conducted with the terms *nomadi* and *campo nomadi* (see Tables 2 and 3), in order to determine not only the types of topics in which these terms appear and how frequently they appear in comparison with crime, but also how Romani people are represented to the public using this metonymy.

Because quantitative analysis revealed a high number of articles in which the metonymies in question appeared in the context of crime, a qualitative analysis was also conducted upon articles reporting crimes allegedly committed by Roma in Italy in 2015; the intention was to understand exactly how Roma ethnicity is being connected to crime, especially because it is against journalistic ethics codes to do so. Articles from the same news sources as the quantitative analysis were searched with the terms *zingari/nomadi/rom*, and *arrestato* or *accusato* ["arrested" or "accused"]. The selected articles met the criteria of being 150 to 1,000 words, reporting a crime allegedly committed by Roma in Italy, and being published in the online newspapers above

2. These papers were selected based on their wide readership, and in order to show differences or similarities across political lines.

during 2015. A total of thirteen articles were selected. Once the articles were selected, they were uploaded into MAXQDA,[3] and the search terms *zingari/nomadi/rom* were coded and counted, followed by a semiotic analysis conducted in order to understand how the terms were used and to what ends.

Findings

Quantitative Analysis

Findings from the quantitative analysis reveal that the term *rom* is the most frequent of the three metonymies used to index Roma in all types of media discourse, and this has not changed since the author's 2011 analysis. Since 2011, however, the use of *zingaro/i/e/a* has decreased significantly, while the use of *nomadi* has also decreased (except in the case of the *Corriere della Sera*, in which it stayed mostly the same) but to a lesser degree. In contrast, the use of the metonymy *rom* increased dramatically in *La Repubblica* and the *Corriere della Sera*, but decreased, along with the other two terms, in *Libero*. Table 1.1 (below) indicates that crime is still a frequent topic in overall media discourse when any of these terms are used; *nomadi*, however, is used the most of the three terms in crime-related contexts.

There are several interesting things to note from this first phase of quantitative analysis. First, the use of *zingaro/i/a/e* is no longer acceptable across the political spectrum, and is now used less than other terms in the context of crime. The exception is the *Corriere*, in which it is used slightly more in crime contexts than *rom*, but as the qualitative analysis reveals, most of these instances are when "*zingaro*" is a nickname or a surname. Furthermore, the frequency of the use of these terms has not changed significantly in the mainstream Italian media since the author's 2011 analysis, but the term *zingaro/i/e/a* was already in decline at this point, and has since largely disappeared from mainstream newspaper crime-reporting. It is still present, however, although to a much lesser degree, in general media discourse; we discuss this briefly in the section on the qualitative analysis.

3. MAXQDA (http://www.maxqda.com) is a software programme that facilitates qualitative and mixed-methods analysis.

In addition, in crime discourse the terms *nomadi* and *rom* were found in online newspapers across the political spectrum, but *nomadi* was the term used most in these contexts. Because *nomadi* occurred in such high numbers in crime reporting – an average of 41 per cent of all articles with this term referred to crime – an analysis was conducted of the other contexts in which this metonymy was found, and it appears in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Percentage of *nomadi* uses per topic for 2015.

Topic	*La Repubblica*	*Il Corriere*	*Liberoquotidiano*
Human rights/protests/celebrations	7%	9%	5%
Protests against Romanies/camps	2%	1%	0.07%
Entertainment	5%	1%	2%
Crimes allegedly committed by Romanies	**31%**	**48%**	**45%**
Policies/politics related to Romanies	7%	4%	12%
Camps	**32%**	**21%**	**28%**
Crimes against Romanies (mostly Mafia Capitale)	4%	9%	3%
Other	4%	3%	3%
Pope (e.g. visit, call for integration, etc.)	1%	0.04%	0.07%
Nomadic peoples (not Roma) or Animals	6%	2%	0.07%

The analysis demonstrates that by far the most frequent topic in which *nomadi* occurs is "crime," with the topic of "camps" coming in second. In addition, with the exception of *La Repubblica*, in which six per cent of articles referred to non-Roma nomadic peoples, this term was used almost exclusively to discuss Roma. Moreover, while the *Corriere della Sera* had the largest number of articles dealing with crime and indexing *nomadi*, it also had the largest number of articles that reported crimes against Roma, most of which were related to the scandal of "Mafia Capitale."[4] It also had the largest number of articles reporting human-rights abuses or protests on behalf of Roma in Italy. Also interesting is that while the right-leaning newspaper *Libero Quotidiano* had slightly fewer articles dealing with crime than the *Corriere*, it

4. "Mafia Capitale" refers to a particular phenomenon of mafia association developed in Rome (and recently uncovered by judicial investigation), which succeeded in turning the management of nomad camps and immigration in the area of the capital city into a lucrative business (dalla Chiesa 2015: 1).

did feature more articles that discussed policies related to Roma and the camps, most of which discussed their costs and unsafe conditions. *Libero* also reported the least on marches for Roma human rights, as well as crimes against Roma, and less than one per cent of its articles discussed people other than Roma when using the term *nomadi*.

It is also worth noting that of all the articles in 2015 using the term *nomadi*, across all three papers, an average of only seventeen per cent were on positive or neutral topics (human rights, celebrations, culture) while the majority (83 per cent) described negative contexts (crime, camps). In addition, the proportion of articles using these terms and dedicated to crime has changed little since the author's 2011 analysis, in which an average of 42 per cent were related to crime; the average for 2015 was 41 per cent.

Because "*campo nomadi*" [Nomad camp] was the second most frequent topic in the discourse when *nomadi* was used, an analysis of topics related to the camps was also conducted, and can be seen in Table 3:

Table 3. Percentage of articles with search term *campo nomadi* by topic for 2015.

Topic	La Repubblica	Il Corriere	Liberoquotidiano
Evacuations/bulldozing	5%	6%	4%
Crime	**49%**	**45%**	**39%**
Fires	4 %	8%	6%
Child deaths/abuse/bad manners	2%	5%	-----
Tensions/fights	4%	1%	1%
Illegal camps found	1%	1%	2%
Policies/call for destruction/closure	11%	10%	19%
Protests against/for security	1%	----	1%
Crimes/hate crimes against Romanies	4%	9%	6%
Human rights/protests on behalf of Romanies/festivals	4%	4%	2%
Entertainment	2%	----	----
People living in camps/conditions	1%	5%	1%
Cost of camps/government funding for Romanies	----	----	10%

Table 3 demonstrates the strong connection between discourse about Nomad camps and about crime: an average of 44 per cent of articles that discussed the camps also related to crime in some way. In addition, politicians frequently used the camps as part of their political agenda and were frequently featured in articles about conditions

and policies related to camps. For example, the leader of Lega Nord, Matteo Salvini, was almost always shown speaking in reference to "bulldozing" them.[5] Also worth mentioning is that although the *Corriere* contained the most positive reporting on the camps, with twenty-four per cent of articles categorized as positive or neutral, the average across all three papers was again only seventeen per cent positive, with *Libero* (unsurprisingly) containing the most negative coverage on the topic. This is interesting: although *Libero* had fewer instances of crime discourse connected to the term *campo nomadi*, overall its camp-related discourse was more negative. This was largely through over-coverage of political figures, such as Matteo Salvini, discussing them as part of their political agendas.

Qualitative analysis

While a quantitative analysis can inform us about general patterns in topics and the frequency of the use of metonymy, a qualitative analysis is needed to understand exactly how these terms are used and to what ends. *Zingaro/a/e/i* was the metonymy used least in all three Italian news sources, and its use has largely decreased over time since 2011. In fact, the majority of instances of this metonymy were found in relation to someone whose last name was "Zingaro," quoting someone who used the term to refer to themselves (such as the nickname "Lo Zingaro"), places such as "La Riserva dello Zingaro," music referencing the word, or a "lifestyle" such as that of Text 9, in which the speaker refers to himself as a *"zingaro" del volley* when referring to his travel from one place to another:

> **Text 9** (*La Repubblica*)[6]
>
> È *vero, da quando sono diventato* **uno "zingaro"** *del volley forse ho più bisogno di tranquillità...*

---

5. Lega Nord (literally "Northern League") is a regional political party that advocates for greater autonomy among other things. Under the leadership of Matteo Salvini, the party has emphasised Euroscepticism and opposition to immigration, and has aligned itself with right-wing groups in France and elsewhere.

6. See: http://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/10/08/news/mauro_berruto_io_da_parella_a_ct_della_nazionale_-124578688/ Each "Text" is drawn from the author's numbered collection of source-texts.

[It's true, since I became **a "gypsy"** of volleyball maybe I need more tranquility...]

In Text 10 (below), the term *zingaro* is used to refer to a carefree, travelling type of lifestyle, reminiscent of what Hancock (2015) refers to as "popular notions of the Gypsy" which are often romanticized in books or Hollywood movies.

Text 10 (*Corriere della Sera*)[7]

Un amore infinito mi sarebbe salito nell'anima e me ne sarei andato lontano, **come uno zingaro**.

[An infinite love would rise in my soul and I would have gone far, **like a gypsy**.]

Even though the term *zingaro* no longer appears to be acceptable in mainstream media discourse in Italy when discussing Roma and daily life, there were a few examples in which it was used in the context of crime reporting – exceptions rather than the norm – such as the one below:

Text 11: (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno*)[8]

Brutta avventura per un anziano aggredito e scippato, in piazza Giordano a Foggia, da tre **ragazze zingare**, *due minorenni e una maggiorenne.*

[A bad adventure for an elderly man attacked and wounded in Giordano Square in Foggia, by three **gypsy girls**, two minors and one adult.]

The next examples focus on the metonymies more commonly found in crime discourse: *rom* and *nomadi*. Notice that neither *rom* nor *nomadi* are mentioned in the headlines. In fact, none of the articles

---

7. See: http://www.corriere.it/economia/italie-campania2015/notizie/potremmo-ancora-essere-industria-stupore-bellezza-573bc30e-726f-11e5-b015-f1d3b-8f071aa.shtml

8. See: http://corrieredelmezzogiorno.corriere.it/foggia/cronaca/15_settembre_07/scippano-anziano-piazza-giordano-banditi-fuga-l-uomo-ospedale-dd84b720-5548-11e5-9cb9-704b6ebd96ca.shtml

taken from the *Corriere della Sera* use ethnonyms or de-spatializing terms (such as *nomadi*) to refer to Roma in the headlines, in contrast to headlines from *Libero* and *La Repubblica* (as is discussed below). This could point to a higher ethical standard, or at least a recognition of the dangers in the ethnicization of crimes, on the part of the *Corriere*. Unfortunately, the body of the text makes up for this, once again connecting the offender to the "Nomad camp":

> **Text 1** (*Corriere della Sera*)[9]
>
> Headline: *Scippatore si atteggia a boss Mafioso. Tradito dalle foto in posa sulla Rete*
>
> **Il ragazzo rom** *è stato riconosciuto dalla polizia perché indossava su un social network la stessa tuta comparsa nell'aggressione di una pensionata.*
>
> *Sui social era "Totò Riina" … Elementi che hanno consentito alla polizia di rintracciare e identificare* **un rom** *di 20 anni, arrestato per alcune rapine e* **residente in un campo nomadi** *alla periferia di Roma…*
>
> [*Purse snatcher poses as a Mafia boss. Betrayed by the photos he posed for on the internet*
>
> The **Roma boy** was recognized by the police because he was wearing the same outfit he appeared in during the attack on a pensioner on a social network site. His user name was "Totò Riina"[10] … These elements allowed the police to trace and identify a 20-year-old **Roma**, **resident of a Nomad camp** in the suburbs of Rome, who was arrested for some robberies.]

In the use of the term *rom,* it is important to note that this ethnicization and negativity is downgraded by the noun *ragazzo* [boy] – which humanizes the individual, and presents him as less threatening – whereas in the examples from 2008 to 2011 and the rest of the

---

9. See: http://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/15_marzo_27/scippatore-si-atteggia-boss-mafioso-tradito-foto-posa-rete-90d3d780-d4a1-11e4-831f-650093316b0e.shtml

10. Salvatore "Totò" Riina was a Mafia boss in the 1980s and early 1990s. He received multiple life sentences for homicide and mass killings, including the murder of Judge Giovanni Falcone, and he is currently incarcerated in Parma (*Il Post* 2017).

examples from 2015, this does not occur. In addition, the connection of the boy to his residence in a "Nomad camp" is significant. In fact, after finding many examples where the fact that Romani offenders live in a "Nomad camp" was highlighted in the texts, a search was conducted to ensure that the mention of an offender's residence was not a convention in Italian reporting on street crimes such as these. After searching, multiple examples of Italian offenders committing crimes were found, but none of these included the residence of the offenders, although some did identify the area where the crime was reportedly committed (which would constitute relevant information). The inclusion of the offender's residence therefore appears to be limited to Romani crime reports, and serves the purpose of activating the moral value-frames of their readers.

The reference to living in a *campo nomadi* is a good example of what Ochs (1990) refers to as "indirect indexicality." Indirect indexicality is when "a feature of the communicative event is evoked indirectly through the indexing of some other feature of the communicative event" (Ochs 1990: 295). Thus, stating that someone lives in a "Nomad camp" has come to index the Romani ethnicity, despite the fact that many Roma in Italy are not nomadic, and that there are other peoples or ethnicities that could fall under this category. This is an example of *narrowing*, which is a type of semantic change in which "pragmatic implicatures and inferences may become semanticized (coded) over time" (Traugott 2006: 125). In narrowing, a relatively general meaning becomes more specific, as in the case here, where "*nomadi*" in "*campi nomadi*" has come to specify not just any nomads, but Roma. In addition, the term "nomad" has undergone the metonymical process of standing for another word ("*rom*") because they have been used together for so long that their connection is established. If one were to doubt that stating that someone lives in a "Nomad camp" connects the person in question to the Romani ethnicity, a simple translation via Google (www.googletranslate.com) provides evidence which can dispel this notion. Below is a screenshot taken from the "Google Translate" page, where the term *campo nomadi* was searched:

The above is an eloquent example of how the implied meaning has become the main meaning, effectively erasing any reference to a nomadic lifestyle in the translation. The reader no longer has to make the conceptual leap from "Nomad" to "Gypsy," because it is already there.

Figure 1. Google translation, 21 October 2015.

As in Hill's work on Mock Spanish (2005), the indirect indexing here is the (re)production of negative racist stereotypes, and it operates at a covert level; Hill also argues that the frequency on the internet of a particular term can reflect racist attitudes, using this as support for her arguments regarding the use of Mock Spanish.

In our case, the term *nomadi* has been so commonly used to refer to Roma that it has become naturalized, and its original meaning, referring to people who live in different locations and move from one place to another, is not questioned. This is so much the case that we see descriptions like those in the example below appearing in the data:

> **Text 12** (*La Repubblica*)[11]
>
> *I poliziotti, una volta risaliti all'identità del ragazzo, sono andati a casa sua, dalla famiglia. Una famiglia di **nomadi sinti stanziali**, arrivati nella capitale dal Veneto, molti anni fa.*
>
> [The police, once they discovered the boy's identity, went to his family's home. A family of **settled Sinti Nomads** who arrived in the capital from Veneto many years ago.]

This example demonstrates that the metonymy *nomadi* has become part of the ethnicity; it is no longer used to describe the characteristics of a group, since it would be an oxymoron for someone to be nomadic and settled at the same time. The next example illustrates again how the camps are indirectly (but openly) acknowledged as markers of ethnic identity:

11. See: http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2015/11/07/ciclista-ucciso-si-costituisce-pirata-della-strada-e-un-17enneRoma11.html

Text 13 (*La Repubblica*)[12]

*Sulla possibile etnia dei ladri, nessun dubbio: "**Il campo nomadi di via di Salone è vicinissimo…**"*

[On the possible ethnicity of the thieves, there is no doubt: "The **Nomad camp** of Salone Street is very close…"]

Below, Texts 4 and 6 demonstrate further another use of *nomadi* in Italian crime discourse:

Text 4 (*La Repubblica*)[13]

Headline: *Tentata rapina a colpi di mazza, arrestati **3 nomadi***

*Gli agenti, coordinati dal primo dirigente Pasquale Trocino, nel corso dei controlli effettuati **nel campo nomadi**, hanno seques-trato anche **otto vetture di grossa cilindrata**.*

[*Attempted robbery using a bat, three Nomads arrested*

The officers, coordinated by the first director Pasquale Trocino, during routine checks in the **Nomad camp confiscated eight high-powered cars**.]

Text 6 (*Libero*)[14]

Headline: *Folle fuga in auto dopo furto, **arrestati due nomadi** a Torino*

*Hanno tentato di introdursi in un appartamento, ma, scoperti, sono fuggiti in auto per le vie della città inseguiti dalla polizia per poi schiantarsi su un'auto in sosta. … Protagonisti della vicenda un 24enne, un 19enne e un minore**, residenti nel campo nomadi** di Strada dell'Aeroporto. Solo pochi giorni fa la tragedia di Boc-cea a Roma, dove un'auto impazzita con a bordo **tre minori rom**, per seminare la polizia, ha investito nove persone, uccidendo una filippina di 44 anni…*

---

12. See: http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/05/05/news/_nomadi_abban-dono_rifiuti_tossici_cosi_facciamo_noi_gli_sceriffi_di_roma_-113543409/

13. See: http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2015/02/23/tentata-rapina-a-colpi-di-mazza-arrestati-3-nomadiNapoli05.html?ref=search

14. See: http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/cronaca/11795300/folle-fuga-in-auto-dopo-furto-arrestati-due-nomadi-a-torino.html

[*Crazy escape by car after theft, **two Nomads arrested** in Torino*

They tried to get into an apartment, but, discovered, they escaped by car via city streets, pursued by the police, and ended up crashing into a parked car. ... The protagonists of the event were a 24-year-old, a 19-year-old and a minor, **residents of the Nomad camp** of Airport Street. Only a few days ago there was the tragedy of Boccea in Roma, where an out-of-control car with **three Roma minors** inside ran over 9 people while trying to lose the police, killing a 44-year-old Philippine woman. ...

What we notice first about these texts are the headlines, which include the metonym *nomadi* in a clear context of crime. According to van Dijk (1991), headlines have important textual and ideological functions, since they are read first – in fact, sometimes only the headlines are read – and they provide the reader with a strategy for understanding the content that follows. Headlines summarize what, according to the journalist, is the most important aspect of the article. Thus, such a summary necessarily implies an opinion or a specific perspective on the events, and journalists may "upgrade" or "downgrade" a topic by expressing it (or not expressing it) in the headline (van Dijk 1991: 51). In the case of Texts 4 and 6, *rom* and *nomadi* are used with the negative acts of which the offenders are accused in the article. Thus, the ideological information that connects Roma to crime is quickly accessed and activated in the minds of the readers. In addition, "*3 nomadi*" and "*due nomadi*" represent the conceptual metonymy DEFINING ATTRIBUTE FOR PERSON;[15] this foregrounds the suspects" nomadic lifestyle (as well as the number of people accused), and if the reader had any doubts as to the legitimacy of this term, they are put to rest later in the articles, where the suspects are identified as residents in a camp, the iconic representation of the Roma's nomadic life (Sigona 2011).

The episodic framing of the crime events does not include any mention of why the Roma are living in a camp (say, as a result of particular Italian policies towards Roma), nor the systemic social conditions that

15. In cognitive linguistics, when identifying metonymies or metaphors the convention is to use small capitals.

have forced them to ask for handouts. In addition, it does not discuss the ways in which the justice system is biased against Roma (see Decarli in *Nomadic Peoples* 22 [2018]). Instead, ethnicity is highlighted and connected to crime, and there is no accounting for the existence of this unfairness, which might allow for a more thematic framing of the events.

Texts 4 and 6 also illustrate how *nomadi* is used with over-completions that highlight the financial status of the offenders (having high-powered cars implies you have to have money to buy them, or that they were stolen) and that also connect them to other high-profile crimes, such as the Boccea incident where nine people were run over (and one killed) when the offenders attempted to escape the police. Thus, despite the work of many scholars (for example, Piasere 2004, Sigona 2011), the use of *nomadi* and its connection to the *campo nomadi* appears still to be highly prevalent in current Italian crime discourse, and to constitute a covert strategy to "Other" Roma and represent them as different. This pervasive use of *nomadi* is evidence that Roma are often described and perceived as nomadic by the authorities and public alike, and implies that they prefer to live in camps, separated from mainstream society (Costi 2010, Scicluna 2007). Hence they are considered "foreigners" and "outsiders," even if only a part of the Romani population living in the camps is non-Italian.

Furthermore, what is particularly dangerous about this metonymy – where the defining attributes that stand for the Romani people are mobility and the nomadic lifestyle – is the belief that Roma will eventually move on, and are thus not entitled to social assistance because they are not members of society (Clough Marinaro 2003). Hence the terms "Nomad" and "nomadism" in this case do not aim to describe a lifestyle, as they appear to do, "so much as serve to discriminate against the Romani people as an "inferior race," incapable of settling, and thus inherently, genetically vagrant" (Sigona 2011: 591). Moreover, it is important to note that the majority of Regional Laws regarding *campi nomadi* were "discursively constructed around the protection of nomadism, which is presented as the core feature of Romani culture" (Sigona 2011: 591), and, furthermore, that the label "*nomadi*" is considered politically correct in Italy. Evidence to support Sigona's findings can be found in the quantitative analysis for this paper, where *nomadi* was in fact the metonym used most often in crime contexts. Laws regarding Nomad camps (and the use of the terms) respond to a

reality that no longer exists (or never existed); indeed, most Roma in Italy have been living a sedentary lifestyle for decades (Scicluna 2007: 9), while foreign Roma groups migrated to Italy in search of a better life (as opposed to being migratory as a lifestyle), and to ensure their own survival, since war and political turmoil had made their countries of origin unsafe for them (Sigona 2011, Sobotka 2003).

As with the metonym *nomadi*, the ethnonym *rom* was also found in numerous examples that connected to crime. Below, *rom* is used for the purpose of connecting the offender to previous crimes (*con precedenti penali*), his short time in Italy (read: foreigner, immigrant) and his lack of a stable home (*senza fissa dimora*):

> **Text 3** (*Corriere della Sera*)[16]
>
> **Headline**: *Torino, arrestato 18enne. Uccise anziana per rubarle 10 euro*
>
> ***Il giovane rom con precedenti penali…***
>
> *Il ragazzo confessa subito: ammette di aver aiutato l'anziana a portare le buste della spesa, di aver bevuto un bicchiere d'acqua prima di spingere a terra la pensionata per rubarle la borsetta … Mihaita Stanescu**, senza fissa dimora, è in Italia da appena sei mesi**.*
>
> [Torino, 18 year old arrested. He killed an elderly woman to steal 10 Euro from her
>
> **The young Roma with a criminal record…**
>
> The boy confesses immediately: he admits to having helped the elderly woman bring in her grocery bags, and to having drunk a glass of water before pushing the retired woman to the ground in order to steal her purse … Mihaita Stanescu, **homeless, has been in Italy for only six months**.]

These over-completions (*senza fissa dimora, con precedenti penali)* render the factual ideological. That is, the detail about ethnicity does not provide the reader with new information; it therefore has the effect of ethnicizing the crime (Melfi 2014). Moreover, the headline reads that

16. See: http://www.corriere.it/cronache/14_dicembre_27/torino-arrestato-18enne-rom-l-omicidio-un-anziana-b35495be-8dcb-11e4-8076-7a871cc03684.shtml

"he killed" an elderly woman, when at the time of the report he had only been arrested, not convicted. Thus, by using the simple past tense instead of the conditional "avrebbe ucciso" – as seen conventionally in crime reports where offenders have been accused but not yet convicted (Catalano and Waugh 2017) – the journalist has already created the image of a *giovane rom* and connected it to a serious crime and immigration (Italians might recognize the name as Romanian).[17] These factors activate social preconceptions about Roma, and strengthen the neural bindings that create the metaphor ROMA ARE CRIMINALS.

Conclusion

The findings of this paper reveal the significant impact of the current use of *nomadi* and *rom* on the ethnicization and criminalization of Romanies in Italy. Quantitative analyses demonstrated that the metonymy *zingaro/i/a/e* has all but disappeared in mainstream crime discourse as of 2015, and that *rom* was the most used metonym in all types of media discourse to refer to Roma in Italy. Quantitative analysis also showed that crime was still the most frequent topic where *nomadi/rom* appeared, and despite numerous attempts by scholars and activists to critically address the use of the term *nomadi*, this term is still used more than any other metonym examined in crime discourse (although its use has decreased in general news discourse). In addition, crime is the most common topic of discourse related to Nomad camps.

Qualitative analysis revealed that the uses of *rom* and *nomadi* were often interchangeable in the data, and the ethnicization of Roma in crime reports is still very common. It was often the connection of Roma to their residence in a *campo nomadi* that served as code to activate negative social conceptions of these camps in the minds of the readers. Hence, even if there was no explicit mention in the article of the ethnicity of the offender, the connection to their residence in these camps covertly linked them to their ethnicity, and also (falsely) to a nomadic lifestyle that (tautologically) helps to justify the existence of

17. In order to protect the identity of the subject of this article, the name has been deleted. In the original article, however, readers could have easily recognised the person's name as being Romanian, or at least certainly not Italian.

the camps, while at the same time reinforcing public opinion and stereotypes which lead to the metaphor ROMA ARE CRIMINALS. The analysis also found that the episodic framing of the crime events occluded any responsibility on the part of the Italian government for failing to provide proper support for integration.

Analysis of crime discourse (as opposed to other genres) is particularly revealing, because it illustrates how journalists discursively construct Roma for the Italian public, taking every opportunity to highlight and publicize crimes by Roma and then (often covertly) connecting these crimes to the ethnic group, or to their residence in Nomad camps (which indirectly indexes the ethnic group). Despite the fact that numerous scholars point to the dangers of this type of journalism (such as Guadagnucci 2010), and even identify a code of ethics that advises against it (such as Meli 2012), media discourses that make reference to the ethnic background or immigration status of the offenders were still found to be prevalent. Paying close attention to the semiotic processes involved in the use of the examined metonymies illuminates the way in which they "naturalize" (Barthes 1973) the representation of Romanies in the Italian media, and contribute to exclusionary and discriminatory conditions. The ethnicization found in the data also (re)produces in the minds of Italians the false idea that Romanies have a genetic disposition to crime, as opposed to their crimes resulting from inhuman conditions imposed on them by Italian society. Furthermore, the terms *nomadi* and *campi nomadi* have become so naturalized in the discourse that they have become invisible, and hence are unconsciously consumed and reproduced. This underscores the dangerous potential of media discourse to contribute to worsening conditions for Romanies in Italy, through continually connecting crime to residence in a "Nomad camp," and making an entire people responsible for acts committed by single individuals by "pointing out their ethnic origins" (Spinelli 2012: 14–15). In addition, because journalists tend to frame crime events thematically as opposed to episodically, politicians and law enforcement are not held responsible for systemic problems that lead Romanies to live in desperate conditions of marginalization and stigmatization where crime can be the only means of survival. Instead, they blame Romanies for the situation they are in, rather than making "concrete changes in infrastructure in the area of housing, education, employment" (Scicluna 2007: 29), which could lead to improved conditions.

References

Angeli, F. and V. Giannoli. 2015. "Roma, non si fermano al posto di blocco: 9 persone travolte dall'auto in fuga, una è morta." *La Repubblica*, 25 May. Online at: http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/05/27/news/roma_incidente_a_boccea- 115416675/ (12 October 2017).

Angermuller, J., D. Maingueneau and R. Wodak. 2014. "Introduction." In J. Angermuller, D. Maingueneau and R. Wodak (eds), *The Discourse Studies Reader: Main Currents in Theory and Analysis*, pp. 359–364. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Armillei, R. 2014. "The '*Emergenza Nomadi'* in the Italian historical context." Paper presented at the European Union Studies Association Asia Pacific conference, May 2014. Online at: http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Riccardo_Armillei2/publication/270703231_The_Emergenza_nomadi_in_the_Italian_historical_context/links/54b313250cf2318f0f953e86.pdf (12 October 2017).

Barthes, R. 1973. *Mythologies*. Trans. by A. Lavers. St. Albans: Paladin.

Brearley, M. 2001. "The persecution of Gypsies in Europe." *American Behavioral Scientist* **45** (4): 588–599. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027640121957367

Catalano, T. 2011. Xeno-racism and discursive construction of "us" vs. "them": Cosa Nostra, Wall Street, and immigrants. PhD thesis. University of Arizona. Online at: http://arizona.openrepository.com/arizona/bitstream/10150/145423/1/azu_etd_11550_ sip1_m.pdf (19 October 2017).

Catalano, T. 2014. "The Roma and Wall Street/CEOs: linguistic construction of identity in US and Canadian crime reports." *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* **38** (2): 133–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/01924036.2013.803768

Catalano, T. and L. Waugh. 2017. "Representations of power: a critical multimodal analysis of US CEOs, the Italian Mafia and government in the media." *Journal of Language and Politics* **15** (6): 790–817. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.15.6.07cat

dalla Chiesa, N. 2015. "A proposito di 'mafia capitale': alcuni problemi teorica." *Osservatorio sulla criminalità organizzata* **1** (2): 1–15.

Clough Marinaro, I. 2003. "Integration or marginalization? The failures of social policy for the Roma in Rome." *Modern Italy* **8** (2): 203–218. https://doi.org/10.1080/1353294032000131247

Costi, N. 2010. "The spectre that haunts Italy: The systematic criminalization of the Roma and the fears of the Heartland." *Romani Studies* **20** (2): 105–136. https://doi.org/10.3828/rs.2010.5

Erjavec, K., S.B. Hrvatin and B. Kelbl. 2000. *We About the Roma: Discriminatory Discourse in the Media in Slovenia*. Ljubljana: The Open Society Institute. http://mediawatch.mirovni-institut.si/eng/we_about_the_roma.pdf (12 October 2017)

Goodman, S. and L. Rowe. 2014. "A stinking filthy race of people inbred with criminality: A discourse analysis of prejudicial talk about Gypsies in discussion forums." *Romani Studies* **24** (1): 25–42. https://doi.org/10.3828/rs.2014.2

Guadagnucci, L. 2010. *Parole sporche. Clandestini, nomadi, vu cumprà: il razzismo nei media e dentro di noi.* Milan: Altreconomia.

Hancock, I. 2010. "Gypsy Mafia, Romani saints: the racial profiling of Romani Americans." In D. Karanth (ed.), *Danger! Educated Gypsy: Selected Essays by Ian Hancock*, pp. 195–211. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press.

Hancock, I. 2015. "Romance vs. reality: popular notions of the Gypsy." In H. Kyuchukov, M. Kaleja and M. Samko (eds), *Linguistic, Cultural, and Educational Issues of Roma*, pp. 27–55. Munich: Lincom GmbH.

Hill, J. 2005. "Intertextuality as source and evidence for indirect indexical meanings." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* **15** (1): 113–124. https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2005.15.1.113

Il Post [unsigned]. "Dov"è Totò Riina adesso." 7 June. http://www.ilpost.it/2017/06/07/salvatore-toto-riina-carcere-ospedale-parma- 41-bis/ (19 October 2017).

Iyengar, S. 1991. *Is Anyone Responsible?* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226388533.001.0001

Lakoff, G. 2004. *Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate.* Hartford, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Littlemore, J. 2015. *Metonymy: Hidden Shortcuts in Language, Thought and Communication.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107338814

Melfi, F. 2014. "Immigrants, Roma and Sinti unveil the "national" in Italian identity." *Cultural Encounters, Conflicts and Resolutions* **1**(1): 6.

Meli, A. 2012. "Linee-guida per l'applicazione della Carta di Roma: strumenti di lavoro per un'informazione corretta sui temi dell'immigrazione e dell'asilo." Rome: Associazione Carta di Roma. https://www.unhcr.it/sites/53a16111ob80eeaac7000002/assets/53a164ca0b80eeaac70002 59/Linee-Guida_CartaRoma.pdf (12 October 2017).

Ochs, E. 1990. "Indexicality and Socialization." In J.W. Stigler, R.A. Shweder and G. Herdt (eds), *Cultural Psychology*, pp. 287–308. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139173728.009

Orrù, P. 2014. "Racist discourse on social networks: a discourse analysis of Facebook posts in Italy." *Rhesis: International Journal of Linguistics, Philology, and Literature* **5**(1): 113–133.

Piasere, L. 2004. *I rom d"Europa: una storia moderna*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Richardson, J. 2014. "Roma in the news: an examination of media and political discourse and what needs to change." *People, Place and Policy Online* **8** (1): 51–64. https://doi.org/10.3351/ppp.0008.0001.0005

Scicluna, H. 2007. "Anti-Romani speech in Europe's public space – the mechanism of hate speech." *Roma Rights Quarterly* **3**: 47–53.

Sigona, N. 2011. "The governance of Romani people in Italy: discourse, policy and practice." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* **16** (5): 590–606. https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2011.622468

Sobotka, E. 2003. "Romani migrations in the 1990s: perspectives on dynamic interpretation and policy." *Romani Studies* **13** (2): 79–121. https://doi.org/10.3828/rs.2003.4

Spinelli, S. 2012. *Rom, genti libere: storia, arte e cultura di un popolo misconosciuto*. Milano: Dalai.

Tajfel, H. 1981. "Social stereotypes and social groups." In J.C. Turner and H. Giles (eds), *Intergroup Behaviour*, pp. 144–177. Oxford: Blackwell.

Tajfel, H. and J.C. Turner. 1985. "The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour." In S. Worchel and W.G. Austin (eds), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, pp. 7–24. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.

Traugott, E.C. 2006. "Semantic change: bleaching, strengthening, narrowing, extension." In K. Brown (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, vol. 11, pp. 124–31. Second edition. Boston, MA: Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/01105-6

van Dijk, T.A. 1991. *Racism and the Press*. London: Routledge.

Vitale, T. and E. Claps. 2010. "Not always the same old story: spatial segregation and feelings of dislike against Roma and Sinti in large cities and medium-size towns in Italy." In M. Stewart and M. Rovid (eds), *Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Romani Studies*, pp. 228–253. Budapest: CEU Press.

• • • • • •

Theresa Catalano is Associate Professor of Second Language Education/ Applied Linguistics at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. She teaches courses on critical multimodal analysis and language education, and her research focuses on education and migration, critical language studies, and global citizenship. Email: tcatalano2@unl.edu