

**FROM MILITANCY TO NEW
MEDIA: THE DISCURSIVE
CONSTRUCTION OF IRISH
REPUBLICANISM**

by

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ABSTRACT

In spite of past marginalisation (Hayes 2012), in the twenty first century, Irish republicanism—predominantly through the vehicle of Sinn Féin—has undergone a process of mainstreaming and a modernisation of its image (Hoey 2018, Maillot 2004, Reilly 2013): resulting in a seismic shift in the Irish political landscape and a rise in support. Nowhere is this discursive shift more evident than republicanism’s online spaces where it enjoys a loyal and vocal support base from a cohort known colloquially as ‘Shinnerbots.’ Yet despite this mainstreaming, republican discourse remains radical and relies on a nuanced interpretation of the past to legitimate its peripheral critique of existing centres of political power. (Filardo-Llamas 2013, Alonso 2016 and Goulding 2022 forthcoming) This points toward a disparity between surface representation and socio-political strategy: on one level republicanism remains radical and critical of power, yet simultaneously it is integrating into political structures it continues to delegitimize.

This thesis capitalises on the ability for social media to provide ‘large data sets that can be aptly used for social-science research.’ (KhosraviNik and Unger 2016: 211) Taking nationalism to be a discursive formation (Calhoun 1997), this thesis adopts an approach to Irish republicanism from the field of critical discourse analysis (Wodak 2001, de Cillia et al. 1999). Drawing data from several virtual sites of republican discourse, it aims to critique problematic aspects of contemporary Irish republicanism and its reproduction. Over three analytical chapters, the reconstruction of Irish republican identity and ideology, the negotiation of its mainstreaming into popular cultural forms, and its reproduction in response to day-to-day political events are examined from the perspective of grassroots ideologues. As such, this thesis’ main contribution will be to provide an up-to-date account of discourses of republicanism (and the power dynamics which underpin these) and their strategic reproduction in virtually mediated spaces that are peripheral to elite republican centres of power.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables/Figures	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Chapter I: Introduction	1
Chapter II: Irish Republicanism as a Discourse	15
Chapter III: (New) Media and Republicanism	78
Chapter IV: Analytical Framework	126
Chapter V: Methodology	165
Chapter VI Republican.ie Analysis	172
Chapter VII Facebook Meme Analysis	296
Chapter VIII Twitter Hashtag Analysis	339
Chapter IX Conclusion and Critique	381
Bibliography	396
Appendix A: Republican.ie Frequency Lists	
Appendix B: Enlarged Functional Communication Model Diagram	

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Number</i>	<i>Page(s)</i>
1. List of Republican Internet Sites.....	106
2. Field of Action/ Genre/ Discourse in the DHA.....	146
3. Discourse/ Text/ Topic Structure in the DHA.....	147
4. Levels of Context in the DHA.....	151
5. DHA Strategies.....	154
6. Vertical and Horizontal Context in SM-CDS.....	160
7. Operationalisation of Research Foci as Central Research Questions.....	167
8. Republican.ie Homepage.....	177
9. Republican.ie Discussion Threads.....	177
10. Republican.ie Corpus Composition Statistics.....	184
11. Operationalisation of RQs 1-4.....	188
12. WordSketch of Lemma 'To Be'.....	193
13. Collocates of 'Part of'.....	194
14. N-Grams of 'Thing'.....	196
15. Collocates of 'Don't Think'.....	198
16. Visualisation of 'To Believe'.....	199
17. Selected Concordance Lines of 'Firmly Believe'.....	199
18. Selected Concordance lines of 'Don't Believe'.....	200
19. R-Collocates of 'To Believe'.....	200
20. Visualisation of 'To Know'.....	201
21. Selected Concordance Lines of 'Free State Media'.....	202
22. Visualisation of 'To Want'.....	204
23. Further Visualisation of 'To Want'.....	205
24. Problematising Terminology 'R- To Be'.....	207
25. Visualisation of 'Thing Is'.....	208

26. Visualisation of Pre-Lexical Modifiers/ ‘Issue’	209
27. Visualisation of ‘Situation’ and its Lexical Environment	210
28. Visualisation of ‘People’ and its Lexical Patterning.....	211
29. In-Group Applications of People.....	214
30. Government as a Modifier.....	215
31. Pre-Lexical Modifiers of ‘Power’	216
32. Pre-Lexical Modification of ‘Rights’.....	217
33. Sample Uses of Home around ‘Our’.....	218
34. WordSketch of Medium	219
35. Pre-Lexical Modifiers of Media.....	220
36. Collocates of Media	221
37. Visualisation of Visionary Model / Hegemonic Status	222
38. Sample Concordance Lines of ‘It Will’	224
39. Sample Concordance Lines of ‘Hope_ Gets’	225
40. Collocates of United Ireland.....	227
41. Sample of Conceptual Metaphors	227
42. Sample of Conceptual Metaphors	228
43. WordSketch of Unity	229
44. WordSketch of ‘Of Unity’	230
45. Sample Concordance Lines.....	231
46. Sample of Argumentation Strategies.....	232
47. Visualisation of Lexical Environment.....	233
48. Visualisation of ‘We have to’	234
49. Visualisation of ‘Change	238
50. WordSketches of ‘Border’	239
51. Sample Concordance Lines of Shot/ Killed/ Attack	243
52. Collocates of ‘To Remember’	244
53. Visualisation of Lexical Modifiers of ‘To Remember’	246

54. Sample Concordance Lines of Key Text Signifiers	248
55. Sample Topoi and Argumentation Schema	250
56. Heteronymic Frame and Construction	251
57. Provocation Narrative and Victimhood Frames.....	252
58. Pre-Lexical Modification of History	253
59. Functional Model of Irish Republican Ideology.....	257
60. Operationalisation of Research Questions	259
61. Personal Pronouns (taken from de Cillia et al. 1999).....	262
62. Sample Concordance Lines of We	263
63. Sample Concordance Lines of We All.....	264
64. Sample Concordance Lines of Our.....	267
65. Collocates of Our.....	267
66. Collocates of Republican	270
67. Lateral Collocates of Republican	271
68. Collocates of Comrade	273
69. Sample Concordance Lines of A Chara	274
70. Sample Concordance Lines of IRA Organisational Actors.....	277
71. Visualisation of Sinn Féin.....	277
72. Sample Concordance Lines of Sinn Féin	279
73. Visualisation of Republican Diminutives	280
74. Visualisation of Republican Pre-Lexical Modification.....	280
75. Sample Concordance Lines of Viceroy.....	282
76. Sample Concordance Lines of Ar Dheis Go Anam Dé.....	285
77. Collocates of Language.....	286
78. Out-Group Signifiers	289
79. Sample Concordance Lines of West Brit	290
80. Collocates of Brit	291
81. Visualisation of State	292

82. Ireland Simpsons Fans Topical Analysis	320
83. ISF1	321
84. ISF2	323
85. ISF3	325
86. ISF4	326
87. ISF16	329
88. IrishUnity Hashtag Social Network Analysis.....	352
89. Irish Unity Frequency List.....	357
90. Irish Unity L-Collocates.....	357
91. Irish Unity R-Collocates	358
92. Ireland Collocates	359
93. Sample Concordance Lines of Brexit.....	360
94. Collocates of Brexit	360
95. Sample Concordance Lines of 'Time For	361
96. Sample Concordance Lines of 'Time To.....	362
97. 2-Ngrams of British.....	363
98. Sample Concordance Lines of Vote For.....	364
99. UI11.....	357
100. UI2	357
101. UI3	357
102. UI4	370
103. UI5	372
104. Functional Communication Model of Republican Ideology	383
105. Functional Communication Model of Republican Counter-Public.....	357

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INTRODUCTION

WATCHING DJANGO UNCHAINED—A BALLY MURPHY N****R!

-Tweet from Gerry Adams' Twitter account (@GerryAdamsSF)
01/05/16 23:27

When the above tweet from the then-president of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams, emerged in the mid-night hours of May the 1st 2016, Adams ensured that he and his party, (and, in turn, republicanism) became the focus of public debate the following day—albeit for reasons none would have desired. Republicanism would surge into public deliberations not for its engagement with the preceding day's Mayday festivities, nor for their commemorative efforts relating to the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising, but for what was largely a cultural issue. Adams' tweet expectedly garnered a negative backlash from political actors of all shades: as was the norm in instances where politicians employed such abhorrent language.¹ He was condemned for using the term by opposition politicians, social commentators and media professionals alike. Adams responded and elaborated via a follow-up statement and further tweet, where he alleged that those who were critical of his usage of the term misunderstood the context in which he intended it to be interpreted. He suggested the tweet meant to draw parallels between the plight of African American slaves and the oppression of Irish

¹ For instance, see Eamon Ryan's 2020 usage in the socially-distanced Dail: (<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/green-party-leader-eamon-ryan-sorry-for-n-word-in-dail-racism-debate-lq9rxxskj>)

nationalists in the north of Ireland— more specifically the residents of the Ballymurphy area of west Belfast who he insisted: ‘were treated in much the same way as African Americans’ until they ‘stood up for [them]selves.’ This clarification, too, was summarily condemned—but not by all.

Adams’ justification seemed to resonate in online spheres dominated by republican activists: where some saw fit to defend his usage of the term as ironic or intellectual. Such an argument, however, was not continued by Adams who the next day, appearing outside of Connolly house in Belfast, made a public apology for using the term and assured the viewing public of his anti-racist credentials and the republican movement’s long history of solidarity with anti-racist movements across the globe. Calls were made for Adams to step down, but he did not. The media furore dissipated and the news cycle eventually moved on. Adams had survived yet another political scandal and, significantly, in the ensuing years the republican movement continued to make electoral gains through Sinn Féin both north and south of the border.

*

My point of opening with the above vignette is not to provide mere shock value or to wax philosophical about the ethics of racist language use. Rather, my reason for doing so is that it offers a succinct snapshot of many of the subtleties, nuances and changes which have beset Irish republicanism in its most recent phase, transformations which this dissertation strives to critically interrogate. Embedded within the above incident are themes and traces of problematic aspects of republicanism which serve as critical research foci for the ensuing chapters. For instance, Adams’ personal transition in terms of public opinion from a militaristic bogeyman to a humorous, eccentric social media personality and the (now former) leader of the opposition in the southern parliament is

reminiscent of the transformation of the wider republican movement in this phase, too (Maillot 2004). In the last century, republicanism's elite organisations have undergone a stark change in their ideological and programmatic outlook: whereas previously they espoused physical force nationalism, since moving toward the cessation of the Troubles, republicans have broadly committed themselves solely to leftist political agitation in systems of governance it (previously) sought to dismantle (Tonge 2005, Frampton 2009). As such, this dissertation aims to shed light on some of the ideological and discursive aspects of republicanism which have facilitated this shift in outlook and adaptation to mainstream politics. In this light, the above tweet captures republicanism's adaption and success in virtual domains of political activity, its move toward centres of political power and the changes in power, identification and discourse which have emerged as a result. Relatedly, its expansion into domains of (popular) cultural discourse that were hereto prohibited to republicanism and its ability to produce a discursively coherent base of grassroots activists and ideologues, contingent to the realisation of the republican project's ideals and aspirations, are also captured in the vignette. Below, each aspect inasmuch as they are embedded in the tweet are unpacked and problematised in more detail.

In one way, the incident evoked much of the same media backlash that has been historically targeted at republicanism (Gillan and Cox 2014, Hayes 2012)—but for different reasons. For Adams, it was unusual to draw flak for things other than his questionable past. Now he was being held to the same sociocultural standards as other politicians in an age of celebrity-esque political culture (Street 2012). He was enjoying (or perhaps, in this instance, disdaining) the ability to amass a following and celebrity like status, aided through new participatory platforms like Twitter (Loader et al. 2016, Marwick and Boyd 2011b). However, the outrage caused by his tweet was triggered by his usage of one word, not by his choice to comment on a movie or what was ostensibly a matter of (popular) culture.

Indeed, tweeting about things outside of politics had very much become the norm for Adams who, by 2016, had amassed a cult-like status and following in the Irish virtual sphere². The capacity for new media to allow Adams to mould a new public identity is also mirrored by the movement's ability to mould a new public perception of itself in the face of media excoriation (Hayes 2012). The advent of new media and participatory platforms enabled new modes of political (inter)action for republican discourse, which moved into virtual spheres with the same vigour it had embraced access to new, alternative and, episodically, mainstream media in the preceding centuries (Kee 2000). The same communicative success republicans enjoyed with newsletters in the era of the United Irishmen or murals and Gestetner machines in the time of the provisionals was mirrored in the initial virtual efforts of republicanism (see Hoey (2018) for comprehensive overview). The fervency and virtual-vociferousness of republican's online representatives—or Shinnerbots— illustrates a problematic charge that is frequently levelled against republicanism: it produces fervent ideologues, loyal beyond the point of reason, cultish in their commitment to the 'struggle.' A corollary of this criticism is that the movement is overly top heavy in its power dynamics: it adheres to a rigid top-down flow of information where communicative power resides with political elites who determine messages reproduced by the grassroots (Whiting 2016, Maillot 2004). Indeed, Wilson and Stapleton (2007) in their study of focus groups on community policing noted that nationalist participants largely reproduced a cohesive resistance discourse. Moreover, in their 2017 study (see Wilson and Stapleton 2017), grassroots republican participants were shown to favourably interpret the actions of elite republicans, mirroring their sentiments and frames of interpretation. This suggests that the rigid, internal communicative structure of republicanism can be

² For instance, in 2016 he self-published a book of his tweets for sale to a popular audience, (see Adams (2016))

discursively examined and interrogated. Accordingly, it will be important to assess how (if at all) this communicative rigidity and ideological control has expanded into online communicative domains, in particular those on the periphery of republicanism's elite contexts.

In another sense, the above tweet could also have represented a chink in the armour of the republican stalwart. For decades Adams had endured (and navigated with some success) a largely hostile media environment and was no stranger to controversy or criticism (Spencer 2006). However, this tweet pointed toward a new potential avenue of criticism. Was Adams losing his ability to operate at the highest echelons of the republican power structure? Was he losing his touch with the public (if he ever had one)? Did this incident serve as evidence that the party leader was out of touch with the social terrain of modern Ireland? To argue that this was the first (public) act of senility for the political leader does not seem to be borne out by history³. But perhaps it did point toward the necessity for political actors to maintain a constant sense of public-awareness in a highly mediated world: something that is, perhaps, better exemplified by the likes of O'Neill and McDonald as opposed to the republican old-guard⁴. Relatedly, when commenting in his address to the 2018 Sinn Féin *Ard Fheis* in Belfast, the Palestinian ambassador saw fit to compliment those in attendance for their embracement of the 'feminisation' of republicanism (*Ard Fheis* 2018), as a progressive and welcomed change. Was it the case that the republican movement now needed new, fresher torchbearers, with new demographics, skills and

³ Eventually Adams was to step down of his own accord and be replaced by Mary Lou McDonald as party leader, with Michelle O'Neill taking up the northern leadership post.

⁴ See, for instance, Mary Lou MacDonal's interview with the *New Statesman* (2020), where she is quoted as saying 'I would hope that our image has changed.'
<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2020/11/sinn-f-leader-mary-lou-mcdonald-i-would-hope-our-image-has-changed>
<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2020/11/sinn-f-leader-mary-lou-mcdonald-i-would-hope-our-image-has-changed>

leadership attributes, which reflected the demands of a modern society? Was it the case that the republican old-guard had lost their tact and a re-shuffle of leadership was a methodological necessity? A more significant question, from the perspective of this research, is what ramifications does this have for republican identity and ideology? When set in the wider frame of the movement's modernisation, it is hard not to read the tweet as a mere hiccup on the road to wider social acceptance and efficacy in the political mainstream.

While republicanism's leader had changed from a militaristic outlier to an online folk-status figure at the centre of a social media scandal, its grassroots had undergone a similar process of modernisation. Whereas once republicans constituted a predominantly northern-based, working class public with strong territorial associations, endorsing varying degrees of abstentionism and paramilitarism (Gill and Horgan 2014, White 1989), nowadays the movement and ideology attract a base of supporters from a variety of locales (analogue and virtual). Moreover, activists tend to be younger, from a broader range of demographical backgrounds and are often educated to tertiary level (Lynch 2012, Reinisch 2020). Additionally, they possess a new repertoire of skills and the capacity to engage with politics on social media. More broadly for the republican movement, power has become less centralised and more diffuse in the post-conflict era. Republican actors and actions—now fully committed to political means—are reliant on mass support and are wholly integrated into hegemonic systems of governance. Likewise, the ideals and aspirations of the republican project, within the context of democratic systems and consociational peace arrangements, require mass support to be enacted into law. As such, whilst we can note the emergence of a new, younger type of activist, we must also appreciate that these activists are operating in very disparate contexts to their predecessors.

The backlash surrounding the tweet is also illustrative of the obstacles faced by elite republican actors in forging a new political identity in the public sphere. The identity of Irish republicans in terms of broader social cognition had largely been moulded by non-republicans, who varyingly sought to marginalise or criminalise republican actors (Miller 1994). In a very broad sense, then, social media presented a means of circumventing gatekeepers which had historically marginalised republicans. Yet this novelty does not paint a full picture of elite republican identification efforts in the post conflict era. For instance, around the time of the tweet, republican organisations were actively engaged in commemorating the centenary of the 1916 Rising. Sinn Féin saw fit—as did other republican organisations—to hold a separate commemoration⁵, on the basis of perceived illegitimacy of the official state events. As such, while we can appreciate that much has been done to forge a new identity of the movement at the level of elite political representation, these efforts ought not be characterised unvaryingly as moving away from the past. Rather, republicanism holds a strategic relationship to the past and its militant history, relying on it to legitimate in-group cohesion and identity, to the extent that commemoration is a routine, ritualised feature of republican discourse and action (Alonso 2016, Whiting 2016, Hoey 2013). Yet simultaneously, it tries to mitigate against the negative effects that the militaristic imageries have on contemporary political success and standing in public opinion (Somerville and Purcell 2011). Even outside of its violent past, republican social identity does not sit well with those of the hegemonic order it seeks to depower (albeit whilst maintaining a putative desire to deconstruct these ‘unjust’ structures). Indeed, Adams’ tweet can be seen to embody this sentiment (albeit in a way that was couched in abhorrent terminology): republicanism self-positions as marginalised and expresses solidarity with other marginalised groups

⁵ See <https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/39145>

(Filardo-Llamas 2013).

Beyond this complex and dynamic social identity, republicanism enjoys a newfound cultural acceptance within what Habermas termed the public sphere (1962): the spaces where public opinion formation takes place. Republican politicians now feature on informal chat-shows⁶, a resurgence in republican music, largely driven by viral trends on social media, has also abounded in recent memory, and similarly, republicanism became a popular topic of online humour through internet Simpsons memes to name but a few of its notable proliferations. Channel 4's hit sitcom *Derry Girls*, offers a good encapsulation of this novel cultural acceptance. The sitcom details the lives of ordinary teenagers in Derry's bog-side during the Troubles who, among many other things, encounter characters of various republican shadings: from the arm-chair republicanism of Granda Joe, to the Provisional IRA volunteer hidden in the boot of the family car, republicanism is represented as an inherent part of the social milieu of mid-nineties Derry, and, is in turn, transmitted into contemporary homesteads through a humorous lens. I need to be clear: I am not arguing that republicanism has shed the chains of its violent past. We can, however, observe a proliferation of republicanism into public domains and media spheres in which it was previously unfound or, less objectively, unwelcome (Hayes 2012, Gillan and Cox 2014). In this sense, perhaps it is possible to see the above tweet as symptomatic of a more positive shift for republicanism: one that positions them as a more salient, oppositional voice in mediated public spheres. By being subjected to the same levels of decorum as other politicians, their ideology was afforded increased (albeit negative) attention in the public sphere wherein republicanism's status and central position have been increasing steadily in the last number of decades.

⁶ See former MMA fighter turned former Sinn Féin councillor Paddy Holohan's appearance on *The Tommy Tiernan Show* (2020).

Further to the enhanced conveyance of political information, however, republicanism's propagation into popular cultural forms can be theorised to exert conditioning effects on its discursive practices of identification. Tallying these points, we can discern how the identity of republicanism remains nebulous and shady from the outside, if not rigid and militaristic; yet, internally, it is regarded as a given, a cogent structure that is uniform and righteous. The discursive processes which construct and legitimate these identity and discourse features will form the focus of the research hereafter.

Critically, then, this dissertation asks a number of questions of contemporary Irish republicanism, in a time when the movement is undergoing a process of what can broadly be construed as political mainstreaming (Frampton 2009, Maillot 2004, Whiting 2016). This shift, as will be demonstrated subsequently, ought not be seen as a new development, but rather as the latest phase in what has been a continuous move away from traditional modalities violence and abstentionism, to newer constitutional means of struggle. In its latest phase, republicanism has found its political 'valence' (cf. Budge 2015), so to speak, in policy areas relating to social justice, economic reform and anti-austerity measures: maintaining a broadly leftist commitment since the early twentieth century (although the roots of this association go back much further to the eighteenth century (O'Broin (2009))). Its commitment to interventionist leftist policies and classical republicanism, which strives to reform the state free from arbitrary power, means that in its current form, republicanism as an ideology poses a threat to established political structures—particularly, with Sinn Féin potentially poised to attain political power in coming years in the south, having won the largest share of electoral support in the 2020 election. This political *savoir-faire*, however, is not fully reflected in historical accounts of republicanism which paint it as being ideologically reductionist and lacking a clear political program beyond the removal of British forces from Ireland (Frampton 2009).

While the literature on contemporary republicanism pays attention to the movement's socio-political transition and progression, works which have done so have varyingly fallen into a number of pitfalls, viewing republicanism solely through a northern (Spencer 2015) or provisional (Bean 2007) lens. Similarly, works which have focussed on the latest phase of republican activity have taken a narrow focusing relying on elite actors as sources (Maillot 2004), forgoing a consideration of the segment of the republican movement from which confers it with authority and legitimacy: grassroots republicans. As such there remain novel and hereto neglected aspects of republicanism which the present dissertation seeks to illuminate through its critical analysis. Further questions abound as to what exactly makes the republican movement effective, from the grassroots level to the elite? Why is it that academics paint the movement as lacking a strong programmatic alternative (beyond a vision of unity), whereas republicans themselves view republicanism as the over-arching solution to socio-political grievances, reproducing cohesive narratives and messages at all levels? To broach these questions, a constructionist approach to identification is utilised to assess how grassroots republicans make and construct meaning together through interaction. More specifically, republicanism is positioned within a wider framework of nationalism which understands it as a socially constituted and constitutive ideological discourse.

Relatedly, asking such questions of Irish republicanism at the present juncture can calibrate republican research with regard to the global literature on nationalism. Significantly, this literature has documented a novel wave of net-driven nationalist politics in the West, which Fuchs (2019) has termed Nationalism 2.0. This was in no small part aided by the emergence of online spaces which acted as sites of resistance and populist consolidation for dispersed nationalist ideologues. The capacity for online platforms to facilitate new, less demanding/ disparately

influential modes of political actions have rendered these spaces as domains of opinion formation and virtual political action for (globally dispersed) nationalist movements. Indeed, closer to the context of Irish republicanism, Hoey's (2018) recent contribution to the literature on republican media activism has begun to flesh out the history of the republican movement's usage of (alternative) media forms and online media toward strategic ends. As such, the present dissertation's focus on the virtual manifestations of Irish republicanism makes a timely contribution to the debate, but from a previously unexplored angle.

Below, all of the above-listed points have been translated into addressable research foci. Although listed here in the introduction, the reality is that this list was devised after extensive literature reviews which are presented in the dissertation's theoretical chapters. As such, this thesis aims to critique these problematic foci of republicanism, which correspond to its identity, ideology and power dynamics both internally and externally:

RF1 -republicanism's identity and ideology—which remains nebulous and shady, connotative and charged from the outside, and potentially undergoing discursive shifts internally

RF2 -republicanism's proliferation into / reproduction in popular culture and public or non-political discourse

RF3 -how republicanism's ideological principles inform the day-to-day (re)actions of its grassroots

RF4 -a critique of its communication and self-construction in new media ecologies (text/discourse) and an elucidation of its critique of the hegemonic

order as produced by grassroots participants, as well as a practical application of research findings

Applied from a broadly grassroots level, these foci broadly correspond to republicanism's sense of self, its enactment and reproduction of its identity in social domains beyond its usual remit, and its application in daily practice, as well as a critical reflection on all of these aspects. These will be fleshed out through considerations of literature and formulated into research questions over the course of ensuing chapters, an indicative overview of which follows below:

Chapter 2 is given over to a consideration of Irish republicanism as a form of nationalist ideological discourse. The field of nationalism studies is surveyed inasmuch as it relates to the present study's approach, before key typological distinctions in the field are introduced. Thereafter the history of Irish republicanism is summarised as an ideological discourse, paying attention to the academic literature of contemporary republicanism

Chapter 3 provides a complementary framework of understanding to account for dispersed social media users as members of a counter-public (Fraser 1992). After summarising the history of Irish republicanism and the media from the Troubles onward, paying specific attention to communication and media strategies which facilitated republicanism's mainstreaming, more general theoretical concerns relating to the study of political engagement online are also provided here.

Chapter 4 introduces an approach to Irish republicanism (and nationalism more generally) from the field of Critical Discourse Analysis, which is presented and summarised in terms of its core foci. Thereafter the analytical framework of the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) is introduced and overviewed. Furthermore, its adoption and integration to the present dissertation is

rationalised and, where possible, defended against potential limitations. Having outlined the core analytical categories of the research, the chapter finishes by situating the devised analytical instrument in the broader theoretical paradigm of Social Media – Critical Discourse Studies to account for the nuances of discourse analysis of computer-mediated communication.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of how the Discourse Historical Approach has been methodologically operationalised for analytical purposes, paying attention to the specific phases of the present research's design. Research foci are translated into central research questions before two broad trajectories of analysis are presented in lieu of a discussion of the potential bias-mitigating properties of corpus linguistics. The chapter finishes with some final notes on the presentation of material.

Chapter 6 marks the first analytical chapter, which aims to address RF1: the discursive construction of the movement's ideology and identity. Having devised operational research questions, a corpus of data drawn from a long-running republican internet forum (www.republican.ie) is analysed via corpus linguistic methods. Analysis is divided in terms of its focus on firstly, ideology and then identity.

Chapter 7, in striving to address RF2, analyses the proliferation of republicanism into para-political domains of socially mediated communication. More broadly, the chapter seeks to illuminate the ways in which republicanism has integrated into a loosely defined conception of mainstream, popular culture. Drawing data from republican internet memes circulated on a popular Facebook page, the chapter utilises DHA tools, multi-modal analysis and humour theories to critically assess the socio-political functions of these memes, tying them to various levels of context and significance.

Chapter 8 aims to account for the day-to-day reproductions of republicanism, which centre around the concerns of RF3: the reproduction of the ideology in day-to-day, process level contexts. Drawing data from a republican Twitter hashtag, the chapter analyses how republican social media users aggregate their voice around topics of concern in an *ad hoc* yet communicatively strategic way. Corpus tools, as well as social media analytic tools, serve to provide a methodological basis for rendering such ephemeral data insightful.

Finally, chapter 9 serves as the site of critical reflection for the dissertation (RF4). Whereas central research questions will be addressed over the course of the analytical chapters, insights drawn from these chapters' analyses will inform the critiques formulated here. Three types of critical reflection habituate the structure of this chapter. Namely, a text-immanent critique— which provides a critical (re)visitation of text-internal structures which reproduce implicit counter-hegemonic critique, a socio-diagnostic critique—which isolates key points of critical relevance in lieu of specific research foci, and, finally, a prognostic critique —which strives to enhance the communicative clarity of the problem or topic under consideration.

IRISH REPUBLICANISM AS A DISCOURSE

In what follows, the historic context and framework for the present study's approach to Irish republicanism are laid out. Toward this end, the chapter serves three purposes:

i) outline and rationalise the research's theorisation of nationalism in regard to the dominant paradigms of nationalism studies

ii) situate Irish republicanism in regard to nationalism's core theoretical categories and typologies

and

iii) provide a historical context for the present study, whilst situating the research in regard to contemporary literature on Irish republicanism.

Before moving to address these concerns, however, working understandings of two key foci, nationalism and national identity, are offered. For the present point of departure, when we speak of nationalism, we do not speak of a tangible entity which can be perceived in itself. Rather, we speak of an immaterial, abstract system of beliefs about how 'we', a given nation or national community, should collectively organise, how we ought to (be) govern(ed), how we should create boundaries between 'us' and 'other' people, and about what our culture and social enterprises ought to work toward and look like. It is tempting, then, to conceive of nationalism

as something which ‘exists’, so to speak, exclusively in our imaginations or cognitions. Yet, ‘evidence’ of nationalism can be noted across all domains of social life: from our day-to-day (inter)actions, through to our language use and media content, all of which are conditioned, structured and informed by nationalism (Özirimli 2017). The nation—or rather, the belief that the nation is a normal and logical category of association—underpins contemporary social reality for most human beings (de Cillia et al. 1999). Similarly, our national identity does not exist *a priori* of human experience, yet, since modernity, it has acted as a central component of (social) identification, both collectively and individually: often being perceived as the most fundamental category of affiliation (Calhoun 1997). However, in spite of being regarded with such importance nowadays, the nation and the national—and the beliefs and actions which sustain them—were not always commonplace features of human life. As will be explicated below, nations are the products of modernity (Gellner 1983) and are relatively novel categories of association that undergo continuous processes of negotiation and change in response to various social factors. How nationalist beliefs are realised and reproduced, then, relies on their dissemination and negotiation between co-nationals and their proximate actors. Put simply, for nationalism and national identities to be exacted, they have to be realised through communication—predominantly, through language-use which further functions to bind a national community together and normalise its structure. In this sense, we can understand nationalisms as what Calhoun (1997), relying on Foucault, has termed a ‘discourse formation’. De Cillia et al. (1999) have since simplified this understanding to conceiving of nationalism simply as a ‘discourse’ or a form of social action that shapes (and is shaped by) its socio-political context. The performative produce of this collective action is national(ist) identity.

Yet, conceiving of nationalism and national identities as transient constructs ought not to downplay their socio-political significance. As noted by Anderson (1983), since the dawn of modernity, no belief (save, potentially, religion) has sent more people to their premature graves than nationalism. Moreover, nationalism acts as a central justification for the exertion and distribution of power in contemporary societies (Brass 1991). More pressingly, a recent surge of nationalism has spread into new domains of interaction: for example, nationalism on social media has proven to be divisive in amplifying social cleavages and preserving systems of governance which facilitate domination and alienation – a phenomenon termed Nationalism 2.0 (Fuchs 2019). Put simply, no ideology in recent times has exerted a more unifying yet simultaneously divisive force over society than nationalism. Expectedly, nationalism has garnered (and, in fact, continues to garner) a significant amount of academic attention in the late twentieth century. Indeed, the resurgence of nationalism as a driving social force on the stage of global politics has ensured that it remains a hotly debated topic and a locus of diverging opinions and theories (Özkirimli 2017). This point has led many prominent scholars in the field (Breuilly 2013 for example) to conclude that no one true nationalism exists, rather, there exists a generous array of nationalisms: some of which share various commonalities, but each distinct and nuanced in its own right. Accordingly, any theoretically based account of a given nationalism must pay specific attention to the nuances which render it distinct and significant as realised in its discursive construction. Moreover, to appreciate its significance in the twenty-first century, any account of a given nationalism must consider its broader positioning within mediated domains of interaction and communication.

Consequently, the theorisation presented hereafter offers an account of nationalism as a discourse (de Cillia et al. 1999, Calhoun 1997). Relatedly, it theorises national identity as a discursive construct. Such a conceptualisation can largely be approximated within the postmodernist paradigm of nationalism studies

and the discursive conceptualisations of national identity construction which accompany these epistemological perspectives (Özkirimli 2017). However, I also rely on insights drawn from divergent theoretical approaches within the broader field of nationalism studies to strengthen the theoretical rigour of the subsequent analysis. Therefore, in what follows, the core theoretical paradigms of nationalism studies are overviewed as they related to the present research in a broadly chronological order. The dominant theoretical paradigm which serves as the basis for the present study, the post-modernist paradigm, is then presented and rationalised as the most valid and methodologically operationalizable theoretical basis. The section reiterates the limitations and benefits associated with the adopted theoretical framework for nationalism before introducing core typological distinctions in the study and analysis of nationalism which will help situate and categorise Irish republicanism in regard to the wider field of research and other nationalisms. Subsequently, the chapter turns its attention to republicanism specifically by providing a historical contextualisation of republicanism as an ideological discourse, paying attention to key evolutions in the genealogy of republican discourse through a synoptic consideration of republicanism's history and its interventions. This, in part, documents the key chronological evolution of the ideology's core, peripheral and adjacent concepts (as used by Maruo 2009) and positions Irish republicanism as undergoing a trajectory toward hegemonic power through different modalities of action (militancy/ constitutionality) or what is termed hereafter the 'mainstreaming' of the republican movement and its discourse.

Theoretical Contextualisation of Nationalism:

Scholars continuously bemoan the magnitude of nationalism as a subject and many have cited the importance of setting parameters and demarcations for their studies (Smith 2010, 2013, Özkirimli 2017). In what follow, dominant paradigms within

the field of nationalism studies are considered inasmuch as they relate to the present study, namely: primordialism, modernism and ethnosymbolism⁷. Insights from these paradigms will be integrated into the present study's conceptualisation of nationalism as a discourse, which itself can be positioned within the post-modernist school of thought in nationalism studies and which is discussed afterwards.

Primordialism:

Primordialism denotes a broad number of theories which share a common commitment to the belief that nations are natural or, more accurately, that nationhood is an inevitable mode of social organisation for humanity. This belief centres around two claims, which proponents of primordialism endorse to varying degrees: 1) nationality is (perceived as) the natural result of cultural, ethnic or biological factors, and 2), nations are the products of antiquity and can be traced back to time immemorial.

The first of these bears some consideration from the perspective of the present thesis. As suggested by the name, primordialists position nationalism and national identity on the same affective plane as kinship and blood-relations. The cohesion resulting from this emotive experiencing of nationality is varyingly theorised as being exacted through biological (van den Berghe 1995, 2001, 2002) or cultural affinity (Geertz 1973, 1993). This, in turn, accounts for the ineffable character of the nation as it is perceived by its nationals (Özirimli 2017) and the ability for nationalist sentiment to evoke such a fervent, emotive response. While the

⁷ It should be noted that the below schools of thought did not necessarily self-identify as distinct paradigms, rather, these titles have been ascribed retrospectively and represent the dominant demarcations used to delineate and discuss scholars in key reviews of the literature relating to nationalism (see Özirimli 2000)

presupposition of the existence of such ties has been widely criticised (Eller and Coughlan 1993), the primordialists' framing of nationalism as an emotively experienced political grouping best accounts for nationalists' experience of nationalism (Özkirimli 2017). This is captured by Özkirimli (2017) who noted that primordialism is tantamount to the nationalism of nationalists: that the perceptive awe with which primordialists allege the nation is perceived, is reproduced in the language of nationalists, who invoke a common frame of expression in nationalist discourse. Such an emotive and affective self-consciousness must be seen to influence group identity formation processes: a key focus of the present research. The work of Shils (1957, 1995) and Geertz (1973, 1993) can prove insightful in elucidating the common frame of expression which holds the nation to be 'a mystical, a-temporal, even transcendental entity whose survival is more important than the survival of its individual members at any given time.' (Özkirimli 2017: 83) In this sense, the emotive and affective ties cited by Shils and Geertz manifest in formulaic narrative forms, discursive features and frames which reproduce this sense of ineffability, sacredness.

Modernism:

The modernist paradigm, contra primordialism, posits that nations are the products of modernist (Gellner 1983). For modernists, nations share an inherent, purposive relationship with the processes associated with modernity: the rise of capitalism, industrialisation, urbanisation, secularisation etc. (Anderson 1983). As a research paradigm, the modernist school of nationalism studies is the largest and most influential (Özkirimli 2017) and is loosely discernible by its commitment to the belief that nations are no more than 250 years old. Rather than being conceived of as antiquated, modernists argue that nations emerged as a necessary mode of social organisation in a dynamizing global social terrain beset by the throes of modernisation (Nairn 1990, 1997, 1993).

Early contributions to the modernist school of thought tended to foreground issues of economic concern and—often from a Marxist perspective—posited that capitalism ultimately compelled the nation to proliferate as a mode of social organisation (Nairn 1997) on the basis that it met the systemic needs of capitalism: mobile workers with a relatively common culture. Capitalism necessitated and facilitated the spread of super-structural affinity amidst a population that was geographically dispersed (Hechter 1995, 2000). Yet others in the modernist paradigm are quick to point out that such cultural and social enterprises—like notions of tradition, for example—ought not to be regarded as natural or organic cultivations, but rather as constructs utilised to legitimate the new social structure of the nation—a shift driven by the primacy of the market (Hobsbawm 1990, Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012). Importantly, others in the modernist paradigm cite political changes as the key drivers of nationalism and the emergence of nations. Breuilly (1982), for example, notes that the key function of nations as social formations was to attain power for its people, as such the primary goal of nationalist movements is the attainment of political power—in the form of independent state governance. Secondary to this pursuit, Breuilly (1993, 1994, 2013) cites group interactions with modernising processes as shaping the emergence of a national consciousness. This tallies with the insights of Hobsbawm and Nairn who foreground the modernity of nations and position their immaterial systems of representation and cognition as being socially purposed within a wider ideological shift toward the consecration of western capitalism.

A focus on nationalist movements' utilisation of power in society also formed the focus of Paul Brass' instrumentalist theorisation within the paradigm (see Brass 1991, 1994)—mentioned here for its pertinence to the present study's focus on Irish republicanism and its collective reproduction as a structured entity. For Brass, nationalism was not a natural fact of existence, it was the product of design: a socio-political construct of political elites, devised to instrumentally ramp up affective

sentiment among a population they wish to represent (Özkirimli 2017, Brass 1991). In open polemic with primordialism, Brass contended that nationalist discourses were shaped and disseminated by elites whose aim was to inculcate the masses with a national consciousness and, in turn, confer themselves with the mass support necessary to preserve their privileged positions. Like primordialists, Brass recognises the same affective and cultural salience of group relational dynamics in nationalist contexts, yet he strips it of the organic, affective cloths it had been donned by primordialism. The instrumentalist critique forwarded by Brass bears some similar sentiment to a criticism of republicanism outlined in the introduction of the dissertation: that communicative power resides predominantly in the upper echelons of the movement and accordingly, will be invoked when considering republican discourse sources' influence in (virtual) republican spaces of interaction.

The work of Ernest Gellner (see 1983 for instance) has been cited by some scholars as the most significant contribution to the canon from the paradigm and is, perhaps, the most representative of the general modernist thesis. His work is overviewed here for its pertinence to the present study's understanding of nationalism as a modernist construction, but also for his insights related to in-group cognition. Like those previously surveyed, Gellner (1983, 1994) argues that nationalism became a necessary mode of social organisation in modernity and resulted in the wake of the sociocultural changes which beset society in that time. The move from agrarian, ruralised social structures—where functions and status were largely pre-determined and ascribed—to an atomised, urbanised and industrialised society which was more meritocratic and competitively linked with a more mobile and adaptable workforce necessitated what Gellner (1983) termed a 'high culture.' This was a unifying social apparatus—conventions, language, rituals etc.—with which a geographically dispersed populace could negotiate the demands of modern capitalist society. For workers to be able to travel freely and effectively within the boundaries of a nation, something approaching a national character or

culture had to be inculcated. The proliferation of this high-culture resulted, for Gellner, in political demands for nationhood and the incarnation of a national consciousness. The identification of such an abstract form of identification and collective consciousness is, interestingly, one of the first to emerge within the canon. This emergence of a sense of shared experience and collective consciousness within more massive modes of organisation which grew in response to modernity also factors heavily into the final—and most influential in terms of the present study's understanding of nationalism—modernist theorist considered here: Benedict Anderson's conceptualisation of the nation (and national identity) as an imagined community.

Anderson's techno-social account of the rise of nations and nationalism—first presented in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983)—mirrors many contentions of Gellner, albeit in a less teleological way, and—as the privilege of hindsight tells us—in a way that remains more represented in contemporary academic discourse on nationalism (Conversi 2007, Breuilly 2016). Anderson posits that nationalism was the result of congruence of a number of historically conditioned, distinct processes at play in society during the late eighteenth century. Once emerged, nationhood proved to be easily reproducible in other social terrains and proliferated as a mode of social organisation. For Anderson, any theoretical account of a given nationalism would need to consider such processes in its course: the discrete historical developments which mould and influence a given national community into a national conscious. Moreover, the nation proved to be adaptable in this regard, that is to say, nationalities and nation state forms proved compatible across social contexts with the pre-existing cultures and ideologies of their new subjects. A theorisation of nationalism, thus, would need to account for this modularity and adaptableness to new socio-political environs (Anderson 1983). Lastly, in a similar vein to the primordialist paradigm (but from disparate theoretical starting points) Anderson argues that a theorisation

of nationalism would necessarily account for how and why it rouses such strong emotive responses from its subjects: a claim historically substantiated by the millions of individuals who have died for national causes since the dawn of modernity.

Anderson (1983) sees nationalism (or more accurately its study and theorisation) as being plagued by three paradoxes, between:

-the academic consensus on the modernity of nations and the nationalist thesis, which positions the nation as a-temporal, antiquated and immemorial

-the proliferation of nationality as a mode of social identification in the modern world, and the 'irremediable' nature of its specific manifestations (for instance, Irish nationalism is a type of nationalism like its global counterparts, but has characteristics and attributes which render it unique and, from the nationalist's perspective, sanctified)

-the capacity for nationalism to act as a primary driving force for political power and the alleged dearth of popular philosophical frameworks to justify such a centrality

To theorise nations and nationalism in a way which accounts for all of these, Anderson proffers the concept of the nation as an imagined community, that is, a collective, mental construct that is embedded and reproduced in the mind of its subjects. For Anderson nations are 'imagined' as members of 'even the smallest nation will never know their fellow-members' (6), this is true of all communities that are beyond face-to-face space/time distanciation. A corollary of this claim, for Anderson, is that national(ist) communities ought not be distinguished on the basis of 'their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.' (6) As such, the defining, irremediable characteristics of specific nationalisms emanate

from their style of conception and mental reproduction. Anderson further adds that nations are ‘inherently limited and sovereign’ (7) (or, in the case of nationalism, strive for sovereignty). Nations are ‘limited’ in the sense that they have an upper (often ethnically or geographically determined) boundary of demarcation: no nation strives to encompass the entirety of humanity of the globe, for instance. In this sense, Anderson is arguing that, embedded within the mental schemata of a given nationalism is a collectively understood, vaguely defined homeland: a conceptual, spatial construct which holds emotive value for the subjects, as a result of being ‘theirs’. Accordingly, the reproduction of such a construct (or more specifically how it is reproduced) must be accounted for to identify the nuanced characteristics of a given nationalism, something which will be operationalised for analytical purposes later.

Anderson’s foregrounding of ‘sovereignty’ as a criterion for nationalism mirrors the contentions of other modernists who see a primary function of nationalism as the attainment of political power. For Anderson, this value results from nations’ historical roots in the age of modernity: in a reactionary critique of European autocratic society and divinely ordained, arbitrary power. The choice of the term community connotes a ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ (6) among fellow nationals which does not reflect the vast inequity and exploitation that is evident in most modern-day nations. As such, Anderson’s two-word conceptualisation of nations and nationalism provides a succinct encapsulation of his theorisation: that nationalism is, in essence, an emotively charged perceptive schema adopted by its subjects in disparate ways across socio-political contexts and allows them to position themselves within a wider national community, affording their position and role in the nation a sense of legitimacy and meaning. Such an understanding of nationalism, as a collectively adopted mental framework, as some (including Anderson himself) have noted (Breuille 2016), differentiates Anderson from other modernist contemporaries—and perhaps positions him at the interface of

modernism and postmodernism (see below). What some contend positions Anderson in the modernist paradigm is his contention that nationalism is a modern phenomenon: as the result of social changes brought about by the modernisation of society (Özkirimli 2000). For him, nations emerged in the wake of the decline of cultural and societal institutions like religion and the monarchy. In particular, an understanding of the emotive power of nationalism can be gained through Anderson's interpretation of the decline of religion. The religious masses of the late eighteenth century stood out as the proto-types of mass, imagined communities. Such religions met underlying, individual emotional needs which, writ large became societal needs: religions provided a justificatory basis for perceived grievances through divine abstraction or imbued the finality of death with a more appealing sense of continuity (in the afterlife) and connectedness to previous generations. Nations, for Anderson, emerged as a means of imbuing collective existence with meaning and contingency: all sacrifices, from the mundane to the most supreme, can be justified by a belief in the supremacy of the nation. In this sense, nationalism usurped religion's position as a primary social force. However, key to this centralisation was the development of what Anderson termed 'print capitalism'.

Crucial to his thesis was the idea that national(ist) structures required the inculcation of national consciousness and the sustenance of a national imagined community to prevail over time. Such a shared experience (or rather, the perception of one) was key to mass organisation. The development of the printing press was cited by Anderson as integral to refashioning the public's perception of time and collective enterprises. A rise in literacy rates in the wake of the invention of the printing press provided a basis for Anderson's technologically deterministic account of social change. Mirroring the work of McLuhan (1966, 1967), which was to greatly shape the academic understanding of media's relation to social change, he argued that the mass consumption of printed material furnished the masses with

new collective perceptions and understandings of time and simultaneity. Similar contentions are made in the influential work of Habermas (1989 for example), who posits that novel media forms such as the pamphlet and novel permitted the emergence of collective processes of opinion formation, crystalizing as epistemic publics which fed off these mediated forms. For Anderson, it was newspapers, in particular, that provided the masses with these novel experiential frames, due to the habituality of their consumption. Every morning (or evening) readers could expect to consume their news and information in the privacy of their own homes, this ritual, however, was knowingly repeated by hundreds of thousands of people at more or less the same time. The result was an unprecedented, mass sense of connectedness: audiences were furnished with all the necessary information for the illusion of inclusivity and comradeship to take hold. Anderson provides a further nuance to his argument—beyond a mere technologically driven account of social progression—by adding that it was the capitalist systematisation of print media which made the media form ‘mass’. Whereas literacy and print materials were previously the preserve of the elite and educated of society, print capitalism saw a broadening of material into the vernaculars of regions (as opposed to Latin).

The expansion of target audiences to include lay people, whilst driven by the profit orientation of capitalist productive relations, provided a historical basis for the fruition of national consciousness insofar as it furnished national subjects with a new, collective field of exchange, or what Özkirimli (2017) has termed a frame-of-expression, but also new ways of linguistically moulding beliefs and opinions, and by extension, power relations in society. Whilst Anderson (and indeed, McLuhan 1967) was primarily concerned with the process of nation building, his postulations also apply to imagined, national communities who have yet to realise their visionary model of a national homeland—such as Irish republicanism. Moreover, Anderson’s theorisation of nationalism is of pertinence to the present research owing to his foregrounding of the role of communication (and mediated flows of

information) in the imagining of a national(ist) community. His account shows that profit-oriented media can still act as information sources of grassroots nationalists, whose project was altogether concerned with motivations other than profit. Importantly, Anderson's work provides one of the earliest and most influential theories of nationalism that accounts for the discursive, mediated flows of information which sustain a sense of group identity.

The modernist paradigm, overall, is characterised by its teleological theorisation of the move to modernity and the emergence of nations and nationalist ideology. Theorists in the paradigm tend to isolate and operationalise discrete factors in their (largely narrative and causal) accounts of nationalism. However, these tendencies can be seen as the sources of its two most pervasive pitfalls. For instance, the paradigm has been criticised for its overly narrativized accounts of the fruition of nations, which paint them the by-products of the explosive transition to modernity. Hutchinson (1987, 2012) notes that such accounts gloss over the more tidal evolutionary trajectory of most western European nations. Moreover, the tendency for accounts to isolate a specific sub-set of factors to account for the fruition of nation and nationalism has resulted in criticisms of reductionism being levelled against the modernist paradigm. Such critics (see Özkirimli (2017) for example) note that nationalism is too complex a social entity to be accounted for by a univariate analysis. In spite of these criticisms, the modernist paradigm offers a lot in the way of theoretical insights. Moreover, the theories of Anderson, Gellner and Brass, among others, will influence the present research's take on nationalism as inherently communicative in nature and political in its remit and as being produced through deliberative flows on information which reproduce a hierarchical group structure across space.

In spite of its centrality to the canon, however, the paradigm has lost its authority in the context of a wider philosophical shift in social research. The twilight of what

some have termed high modernity (Conversi 2007)—characterised by its commitment to enlightenment and rational thinking, and technological development— broadly coincided with the development of nationalism studies and a renewal of interest in the study of nationalism. As such, the proclivity for modernist theorists to narrativize accounts of social change (or, more ideologically, ‘progression’) to mirror the ideologies of philosophical thought at that time is evident in nationalism. Works in the paradigm are characterised by a conceptualisation of the nation (and its related ideology) as being teleologically and causally embedded in technological and social developments related to the economy, education, religion, literacy and the perception of civic society. The emergence of post-modernity—which espoused an end to the grand-narratives of modernity— proved influential in challenging this conception of nationalism. Yet the application of a post-modernist approach as applied here includes the selective incorporation of certain aspects of the modernist paradigm summarised above. Before outlining how post modernism builds on these postulates, however, attention must first be diverted to the final remaining paradigm of nationalism studies that influences the present thesis’ theorisation of nationalism: the ethno-symbolist paradigm.

Ethnosymbolism:

The ethnosymbolist paradigm emerged in response to a perceived flaw in the arguments of modernist nationalism scholars who saw nations as modern constructions. For proponents of ethnosymbolism the roots of nations stretch back further in history than modernity, alternatively positing that nations can trace their origins through *la longue dureé* of history. However, as it relates to the present research, this contention is somewhat moot. Rather, the paradigm is invoked here for its foregrounding of the role of myths, memories and symbols – and how these

are passed from generation to generation—in the realisation of nationalism as a discourse.

Toward this end, the work of both Anthony Smith (2010, 2013) and John Hutchinson (1987, 2012) stand out as apposite to the foci of this dissertation. Smith's pertinence is due to the discursive slant of his myth-symbol complex theorisation of nationalist discourse and rhetoric (Smith 2010). Whereas for Hutchinson, his relevance to the present research stems partly from his adherence to a similar focus on recurrent myths and symbols, but also from his explicit focus on Irish nationalism/republicanism. Smith (1986) cites the work of Berger and Luckman (1966)—specifically, their theses pertaining to the social construction of reality—as having a formative influence on his theorisation of nationalism and the psycho-social functions it plays in a secularised world. For Smith, nationalism permits its ideologues a communicative and emotional refuge, as an identity which distracts from the ultimate terror: the inevitable cessation of identity, death. In this sense, his work mirrors the theories of modernists (like Anderson and Gellner) who both argued that nationalism met deeply entrenched emotional needs of a society who—having undergone modernisation and secularisation—had lost a satisfactory justificatory framework for the impenetrable, indiscriminate absurdity of existence. Nationalism's proliferations can, in part, be attributed to its religious traits and character. This, in turn, explicates the prevalence of quasi-religious motifs and modalities of iconography and idolatry, which are rife in nationalist discourse and rhetoric (Smith 2010). Thus, focus here is on the role of myths, symbols and communication in regard to the psychological boundary mechanisms of the human mind: the inclination for humans to draw conceptual borders between 'us' and 'them', which manifests in discourse as in-groups and out-groups (van Dijk 1998).

This focus on collective memories and their transmission throughout history is also found in the work of John Hutchinson, whose cultural nationalist thesis was

developed in a case study of Irish nationalism from the mid-eighteenth century to the foundation of the Irish Saor Stát. Hutchinson's (1987) focus was on the instrumentalist cultural nationalism that was propagated by elites in the run up to the foundation of the Irish state. Hutchinson's focus here is not on Irish republicanism—this would constitute what he would class as a state-seeking, political nationalism—rather, it is on the cultural discourses that were propagated by elite nationalist figures—like folklorist turned president, Douglas Hyde—who, as part of a wider Gaelic Revival, turned to past culture, myth and folklore to (re)produce a distinct Irish national identity. What is of pertinence here is how Hutchinson, and by extension ethno-symbolism, argues that this was (and is) achieved: the flow of information and power follows a downward trajectory from an elite nationalist intelligentsia to an agog national audience. Thus, the imagined community, from this perspective, is one characterised by a hierarchical power dynamic. Furthermore, Hutchinson notes that nationalism has both cultural and political dimensions to it (1994, 2012). And, in spite of insisting both be treated and analysed as separate objects of analysis, he claims an intrinsic political potential resides in the cultural workings of nationalism and its discourses:

These movements have formed recurrently in post-eighteenth-century societies as historico-cultural revivals, in order to propound the idea of the nation as a moral community, and have inspired rising social groups to collective political action.... cultural nationalism [is] a distinctive form of nationalism, which, articulated by secular intellectuals, has shaped the modern political community (Hutchinson 2012: 12).

It must be noted that, as operationalised here, the contentions of both Hutchinson and Armstrong do not reflect the wider theoretical tenets of ethnosymbolism (see Smith (2009) for comprehensive overview) beyond a mere methodological and analytical commitment to the function of myths, memories and traditions in

shaping national identity. A final point of note here that will factor into the subsequent analysis relates to the episodic nature of nationalist discourses. Whilst not ruled out by other paradigms, ethnosymbolism stands out as the most adept in its accountancy for the recursive capacity of communicative manifestations of nationalism to episodically filtrate into broader public discourse. That is to say, memories, motifs and discourse features are deemed by ethno-symbolists to be instrumentally utilised toward political purposes or goals.

Postmodernism:

The previous sections relayed the core aspects of dominant paradigms within nationalism studies as they relate to the present project. However, over the course of these sections, a number of pitfalls and shortcomings were noted in each. Moreover, as outlined, the information included above was selected on the basis of its pertinence to the present study's conceptualisation of nationalism and ought not be regarded as comprehensive overviews of their respective paradigms. That said, what was presented provided a sufficient basis to critique these paradigms on the basis of their inability to produce an acceptable catch-all theoretical account of nationalism. In what follows, the present study is situated in regard to much broader shifts within academia and epistemology so as to arrive at a sufficiently adaptable and viable theoretical basis for the present thesis. In doing so, broader shifts in epistemology and cultural thought are charted so as to paint a critical distance between classic works of nationalism studies and the present study's theorisation of nationalism. After this, a focus on the habitual, daily reproductions of nationalism is justified through a consideration of the banal reproductions of the nation. The section then introduces an analytically viable theorisation of nationalism as a discursive formation. In lieu of this, national identity and its discursive construction are also theoretically overviewed here (how both are broached methodologically and analytically will be dealt with in subsequent

chapters). The paradigm being considered presently is aptly labelled ‘post’-modernist inasmuch as it can be positioned both temporally and conceptually *after* modernity and modernism. Relatedly, post-modernist approaches to nationalism are primarily discernible through their shared criticality of the classic canon of literature (Özkirimli 2017). This perspective stems in part from broader shifts in epistemology and criticality at play in the late twentieth century, but also from perceived methodological limitations posed by classic paradigms, too. As both of these points pertain to the concerns of this research, they are unpacked presently in turn.

The late twentieth century saw modernism’s core contentions come under scrutiny from a number of angles (Özkirimli 2000). Such critical perspectives gave rise to broader shifts in cognition, two of which are cited here for purposes of contextualisation. Modernism’s portrayal of nation states as homogenous entities which were culturally cohesive did not corroborate with the complex ethno-cultural dynamics of most nation states. Relatedly, the latter half of the twentieth century saw many social movements abound, citing cultural grievances as reasons for activism (Özkirimli 2000). The result was that the primacy of nationalism became challenged by other socio-cultural variables or categories that proved socially or morally contentious (Calhoun 1997). More broadly, this ‘cultural turn’ had ramifications for research in the social sciences which resulted in increasingly ‘fluid and dynamic interpretations’ emerging ‘which treat culture as a deeply contested concept whose meaning is continually negotiated, revised and reinterpreted by successive generations...’ (Özkirimli 2017: 169) Such contested, negotiable and impermanent understandings of categories of social research proliferated into other domains, too. As such, we can also note a ‘linguistic turn’ in late twentieth century thought which was characterised by an increased focus on the centrality of language to human experience and a methodological emphasis on language use and users (Rorty 1967). The resulting methodological changes these

shifts yielded in social sciences and nationalism studies are overviewed below. The salient point here is that nationalism studies, like many other academic disciplines, underwent a process of epistemological and philosophical change which espoused novel critical angles of research. Importantly, modernism's proclivity for over-arching, aggrandised meta-narratives and teleological accounts of social change came under widespread scrutiny for their inability to produce a viable catch-all theory for nationalism (Conversi 2007). New approaches to social scientific research sought to maintain a critical distance between themselves and classic accounts, this resulted in an epistemological recalibration occurring in western academic thought, part of which entailed the fruition of post-structuralism and post-modernism as paradigms of thought. Both are characterised by their antipathy to / criticality of their predecessors: structuralism (the main framework in which meaning-making and identity research was situated) and modernism (the main framework of classical nationalism studies and through which non-academic nation building enterprises were reified). As applied to nationalism, the influence of post-modernist research saw a marked change in focus away from striving toward a catch-all theoretical account of nationalism, toward more contextually appreciative and intersectional accounts of social reality, where nationalism was one of many potential social identity components that could be categorised and contested in terms of its social power (Özirimli 2017).

The increasing currency and popularity of linguistic data being utilised for social research purposes, as impelled by the linguistic turn, proved to be fruitful in terms of its proliferation in the study and analysis of nationalism. This can ostensibly be seen to result from the inherent communicative nature of nationalism that was identified previously in this chapter. More specifically, however, nationalism studies underwent a process of critical assessment which resulted in a re-calibration of methodological terrains from which the subject was traditionally broached. This was partly indebted to the methodological narrowness and limitations of classic

literature: where historic and institutional accounts were favoured over more empirical, non-elite angles of investigation. As such, in addition to seeing a notable increase in analyses of nationalism from empirical-analytical angles, there has been more focus on the reproduction of the nation in various mediated domains of interaction, too (Özkirimli 2017, Conversi 2007).

Relatedly, many critics of the classic canon bemoaned its preoccupation with moot concerns of the origins of nations and endorsed a shift away from elite level theorisations toward investigations of the nation's reproduction and instantiation in various domains of social life: its construction in popular culture, its representation in political, legal and media texts, etc. (Breuilly 2016, Özkirimli 2000). Finally, criticisms of the classic canon of literature identified a habitual adoption of methodological nationalism or the reification of the nation, where pre-ordained categories (cultural ties or specific exalted variables) and typologies (concepts like ethnies, for instance) were latched onto specific case studies. The approach adopted and presented hereafter takes these same criticisms as its point of departure. In saying the present dissertation adopts a post-modernist approach to theorising nationalism, then, the chapter is overtly i) situating the research in the same critical relation against the grandiose claims of classical literature (rather, insights yielded from considerations of this literature can be utilised in more empirical or analytical approaches to specific nationalisms) and ii) espousing a shift in methodological and analytical reasoning. A theoretical basis for such a methodological position is provided here, firstly, through a consideration of the reproductions of nations and nationalism in the day-to-day actions of nationals. And secondly, through a broader theoretical account of nationalism as a discursive formation (Calhoun 1997, de Cillia et al. 1999).

In postmodernity, theorists looked toward non-elite, non-narrativised accounts of national identity formation and, accordingly, tackled perceived flaws in the

modernist paradigm's account of nationalism, mainly its inability to account for the impermanency and contextual variability of national identity. As noted, this entailed a shift away from elite sources and historic causal linkages, toward analyses of how the nation is realised in a specific context, time or from less elite perspectives (Özkirimli 2000). The research of Nira Yuval-Davis (1997), for instance, has done much to elucidate the gendered and feminist dimensions of nationalism as a discourse. Similarly, the work of Michael Billig (1995) in regard to nationalism provides the first attempt at theorising the reproduction of the nation in the daily (inter)actions of co-nationals. In his view, nationalism as a concept had been conflated (both by the academy, social institutions and the broader public) with movements and ideologies which sought to establish a nation state (like Irish republicanism) (Billig 1995). Nationalism, in this view, is something which 'other' people use to challenge existing nation-state arrangements or the belief system of external groups. Such a habitual delineation of nationalism isolates only one of its modalities (vying for a nation state) and overlooks the more commonplace function that nationalism fulfils: normalising 'the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced' (Billig 1995: 6) on a daily basis.

In spite of studying a non-established variation of nationalism here in Irish republicanism, this shift in analytical gaze is of key significance to the concerns of the present research. That is to say, we can extrapolate Billig's theses to analyse the reproduction of non-established forms of nationalism among nationalists striving toward the establishment of a nation-state/ attainment of political power. In removing nationalism from the extra-ordinary characteristics it had been imbued with in wider thought, Billig renders nationalism as an ideology more analytically perceptible. Rather than solely providing justifications for acts of political violence of pre-state social movements, nationalism can further be seen to underpin (often in quiescent or latent ways) the machinations of both modern

nation-states. Indeed, Billig argues that actions (both humdrum and extraordinary) effectively constitute nationalism by reproducing it. Moreover, his work foregrounds the primacy of symbols and signs (and other forms of semiosis) which 'flag' the nation to nationals: effectively interpellating them within the imagined national community. As Billig's focus remains primarily on the established, banal variations of nationalism which perpetuate existing, western nation states, he cites symbols such as national currencies, stamps, street signs etc. as painting the background space of contemporary citizens as a national space. More specifically, they play to underlying psychological boundary mechanisms of individual cognition, positioning 'us' within a national community and differentiating this group from all other national groups. Accordingly, Billig positions national media systems as centrifugal powers in this process: fostering a sense of national consciousness and a broader sense of the global stage being contested for by competing nation-states.

The accumulative effect of these banal reproductions of the nation is that citizens ultimately internalise the nation and reproduce it in their own, habitual social action, primarily in their language-use. This may, in the case of non-established nationalisms take the form of grandiose assertions, ritualised or cultural ways of inculcating resistance, but from the perspective of all nationalisms this is mostly realised in non-explicit, routine ways. For Billig, it is the 'small words, rather than the grand memorable phrases' (93) which are the most commonplace means of reproducing the nation in language. Simplistic pronouns—'us', 'we', 'they' etc.—which presuppose group membership, indicate a perspective and/or preordain sameness, affinity, difference etc. are key in this regard and can be noted across elite and non-elite contexts. In this sense, nationalism is something which is sustained over time and reproduced in the minds of nationals through their (inter)action(s). Individual nationalists reproduce socio-political contexts which normalise or legitimate the nation either below the threshold of perception – as is

the case with established nation-states—or in more overt, radicalised frames of interpretation. The language features, symbols or ideological habits utilised in the realisation of nation are often devised by elites and enshrined in history and culture. These serve to condition the ideological evaluations and dispositions of those who adopt them and incorporate them in normalised ways into their daily activities. Applying this shift in focus to the perspective of this research, then, any consideration of Irish republicanism ought to account for the habits of language, ideological actions and patterns of interaction which reproduce the republican social identity. In spite of its banal slant, Billig's work is of pertinence here as it provides a suitable theoretical basis to assess individual reproductions of the nation by establishing an inherent link between language-use and nationalist ideation.

This constitutive connexion between cognition and language also forms the point of departure for the theory of nationalism forwarded by Craig Calhoun (1997), who views nationalism as a 'discursive formation'. Mirroring Foucault's (1969, 1972) use of the term, this positions nationalism as a way of thinking, speaking and understanding that conditions and legitimates modes of organisation and the actions which sustain them. For Calhoun, merely identifying when a nation is reproduced forms only part of the task of analysing a given nationalism. It is also necessary to identify the commonalities that lay within these individual reproductions to elucidate the underlying functions of nationalist discourse and the specific discourse features which serve these purposes. Illuminating these patterns of language use is significant as they play a key role in the formation and sustenance of an imagined community whilst also legitimising the nation to other groups. Moreover, this enables a consideration of specific nationalisms within a common framework of interpretation that is adaptable enough to be (re)applied across national contexts and avoids reifying the nation. Citing Wittgenstein's notion of a conceptual pattern of 'family resemblance', Özkirimli (2017: 88) posits that regarding nations as discursive formations, as Calhoun does, circumvents the

perceived need to identify the objective 'essence' or nationhood, instead recognising the analytical merit of identifying and collating the imperfect, subjective patterns which constitute a specific nationalist discourse. In this regard, Calhoun (1997) provides the following list of discourse features, which he contends provides an indicative, but not exhaustive overview of the discourse of most nationalisms:

1. boundaries, of territory and population, or both
2. indivisibility
3. sovereignty, or the aspiration to sovereignty, usually through an autonomous and putatively self-sufficient state
4. an 'ascending' notion of legitimacy, or the idea that government is just only when supported by popular will
5. popular participation in collective affairs
6. direct membership, where each individual is a part of the nation and categorically equivalent to other members
7. culture which involves some combination of language, shared beliefs and values
8. temporal depth, the idea of a nation extending from the past to the future
9. common descent or racial characteristics
10. special historical, sometimes sacred, relations to a particular territory

(Calhoun 1997: 4–5)

For Calhoun nationalisms do not lose their purpose or significance through deconstruction by the academy or through failure to attain political goals. Rather

the durability of nationalist discourses lies in their ability to promulgate and legitimate modes of social organisation through easily reproducible modes of cognition and action. Whilst also serving to legitimate these, nationalist discourses serve as the site of construction of the nation, too. This mirrors the contentions of other scholars from within the post-modernist paradigm who also foreground the discursive nature of nationhood and its reproduction by nationalists. For example, Özkirimli (2017: 52) argues that ‘nationalists share a common language, a common frame of reference to express their claims.’ In this view, as Calhoun himself contends, ‘nations are constituted largely by the claims themselves, by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilize people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices.’(Calhoun 1997: 6) The imagined community for Calhoun can be abstracted from its nationalist context and tallied with the concept of a community of discourse participants, actively engaged in the reproduction of specific, nuanced and historically conditioned discourse features. Analyses of nationalisms must, from this perspective, describe and identify the recurring discourse features (or as Billig might term them, ‘ideological habits’) which serve to sustain the national community’s discourse. Importantly, Calhoun notes that this process is neither objective or conducive to verifying causal accounts of the fruition of nationhood (Calhoun 1997). Rather, in rendering the construction of nations perceptible, the ‘discursive form that shapes all of them, [that which] is common...is general is the discourse of nationalism, which may not completely explain any particular event or activity, but helps to constitute each through cultural framing’ is elucidated (Calhoun 1997: 21-22). As such, in adhering to a conception of republicanism as a discourse, the goal is to analyse the specific frames, topics and language patterns which sustain the ideology. The corollary of this is that such ideological, discursive acts also act as the site for nationalist identity construction, too. In this regard, and as a final theoretical consideration pertinent to the present research’s theorisation of nationalism, this section returns to Anderson’s (1983)

concept of the nation(alism) as an imagined community and national identity as membership within this community.

Whilst this provides a good starting point for theorising the process of national social identification within discourses of nationalism, some critical points must be noted as it relates to the discursive construction of national identity. For example, Busch and Krzyżanowski (2007) and Wodak (2007), drawing influential research on social/ national identity (Triandafyllidou (1998, 2001), note that Anderson's concept is underpinned by the putative existence of a homogenous national community, something which does not corroborate with the complex ethnic makeup of many modern-day nationalisms and nation-states. Rather, individual and collective identities 'are dynamic, fluid and fragmented. They can always be renegotiated, according to socio-political and situative contexts as well as to more global and social change and ideologically informed categories.' (Wodak 2017: 3) In subscribing to these critical points the present thesis positions the analysis of collective identities within the broader post-modernist conceptualisation of identities as non-static entities, undergoing a constant process of construction, affirmation and change (Wodak and Triandafyllidou 2003: 210).

The above sections have outlined the theoretical basis for the analysis of Irish republicanism's discourse presented hereafter. As a form of nationalist discourse (Calhoun 1997, Wodak 2017), Irish republicanism is conceived of as comprising historically conditioned discourse features (varyingly ascribed by theorists from across paradigms as myths, symbols, language patterns, ideological habits etc.). These discourses are disseminated via mediated networks of interaction which foster a sense of national consciousness (Billig 1993, Anderson 1983) and inclusion in a national in-group. Importantly, these discourses (and their realisation in media and language) varies from context-to-context (Özirimli 2017), and can be episodic in their recurrence throughout history (Smith 2010, Hutchinson 1984). Nationalist

discourses were theorised as being instrumentally deployed by elites within specific contexts toward various goals (Brass 1991) and as being conditioned by elite-level strategies or enterprises (Hutchison 2004) and texts/ frames/ discourse features (Özkirimli 2017, Billig 1993). Whilst nationalisms can trace their historic roots to the dawn of modernity, national identities are fluid and dynamic discursive constructs that are (re)negotiated and constructed over time. The benefits of adopting such a theoretical approach will be demonstrated in the empirical and analytical operationalisation presented in chapter four. Certain limitations, however, must be noted in terms of the generalisability of claims which emerge from such analyses or claims of subjectivity in interpretations of data. Accordingly, migratory measures designed to address these issues will also be presented in chapters four and five.

Typological Context

Civic vs Ethnic (and other frames of nationalist discourse):

The philosophical and theoretical origins of nationalism can be traced back to the Enlightenment, specifically to Rousseau and Kant. The former's doctrine of self-determination would greatly influence subsequent Romantic, German intellectuals. Johann Gottfried Herder, for instance, utilised the doctrine in his early theorisation of nations, not as arbitrary modalities of social order, but rather, the products of shared cultural and ethnic bonds, most typically, a language (van Benthem van den Bergh 1993). For Herder (1784), a language was inherent to its national character and the product of innate natural living energies (*Kräfte*) which, when externalised, create a sense of unity and community amongst a people (*Volke*) (Breuilly 2013). The natural national boundaries which emerged from the reach of these bonds, when writ large to the global scale, would form a 'natural' world order of co-existing, ethnically homogenous nations. The conceptual shift away from the rationalism of the Enlightenment that took place within romanticism, provided the

context in which Herder's teachings would gain currency among subsequent thinkers, such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Fichte, expanding on the Hederian concept of nationhood, posited that Germany was an exalted nation, with a superior ethnicity and culture. This particular early school of thought pertaining to nationalism, thus, categorised it in ethnic and cultural terms, striving toward congruence between the national territory and ethnicity. Nationalisms which correlate to these criteria are classified as ethnic nationalisms (Özkirimli 2000).

Whilst this German strand of ethnic nationalist thought was being used to produce and ratify a new mode of social organisation –an ethnically homogenous and exalted nation— somewhat simultaneously, the work of enlightenment thinkers like Rousseau was being used to critique existing systems of social order. Rousseau (1762), in line with Hobbes (1651), argued that humanity was best served by sacrificing certain liberties in exchange for the collective safety and stability of civilisation, and regard actions relating to the collective with '*l'esprit de corp*' or a sense of patriotism. This position provided the initial premise for the conceptual paradigm of Social Contract Theory⁸. Traces of this development in thought are discernible in the political nationalism and radical republicanism of the various social movements that emerged in the growing critical impetus against autocratic power in early-modern Europe (Herb and Kaplan 2008), crystallising in the

⁸ It is important to note that this label has been re-appropriated in contemporary academia to denote the idea of individuals leaving the 'state of nature' and organising into a democratically governed collective. As presented in *The Social Contract* (1762), the concept was more complex: positing that the notion of the 'general will' –which broadly represents the interests of the whole collective – ought to take precedence over the interests of the individual. Rousseau argued that people should vote in line with the general will (i.e. the best interests of the 'nation') in their minds as opposed to their own individual desires and goals. In essence, his argument that the interests of the individual are best served by furthering the interests of their collectives. Rousseau elaborates that in order for the submission to the general will to be effective, it is necessary that individuals embrace it with a certain '*esprit de corp*' or a sense of patriotism, which he saw as a requisite to ensure a citizenry's viability. (Rousseau 1762)

ideologies of the French and American revolutions, (1789, 1775) as well the United Irish Rebellion of 1798 (see below). These interventions legitimated the devolution of power to a nation's people, a vision succinctly encapsulated by the triadic motto of the French revolution: '*liberte, egalite, fraternite*'. Similarly, such civically oriented nationalism is elaborately enshrined in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* (Paine 1789). This disparate, non-ethnically rooted strand of nationalist projects envisaged that devolving power to the people would achieve political and civic unity amongst the regions and classes of a given nation, to create: '*la république, une et indivisible*.' Whilst republics were not new concepts, envisaging the nation state as a republic, governed by a representative body was very much a novel idea that emerged within the post-autocratic epoch of early modernism (Wiesner-Hanks 2006). This second category of nationalist projects are typically denoted as civic or political nationalisms.

In the historiography of nationalism, the classifications of ethnic and civic nationalisms would structure nationalist inquiry for the majority of the twentieth century, being positioned as antipodes on a wider spectrum of nationalist typologies. Such a dichotomous treatment of the two strands of nationalism is best captured in the work of Hans Kohn (1955, 1962, 1994, and more recently 2017). Kohn equated civic nationalisms—which were primarily voluntarist and political in character—with the established nations of the West and ethnic nationalisms—which were organic and based on a belief of common ancestry or heritage – with the more militant, state-seeking or separatist movements primarily found east of the Rhine. In doing so, he provided the study of nationalism with 'the longest-living, and probably the most influential, typology in the field' (Özirimli 2017: 37). Yet, we have already established that aiming to apply such catch-all categories (as was the aim of many modernist nationalist scholars) is theoretically unviable and not suited to specific analyses of a given nationalism's reproductions. This presents

a point of consideration for the present thesis: how do we theoretically account for these disparate modes of nationalist discourse in categorising Irish republicanism?

To address this, we can return to insights established in the previous section relating to the present thesis' theorisation of Irish republicanism as a type of nationalist discourse. Irish republicanism is primarily conceived of here as a *nationalist* discourse as it seeks to establish and ratify a national homeland and its self-consciousness takes the form of a national imagined community. Within this understanding, though, we can further categorise it within the civic and political strands of nationalism, owing to its historical and conceptual lineage. The national character of such nations and nationalist movements, is civically qualified (as opposed to ethnically) or, more appropriately, given the nature of the discursive approach of this thesis, their discourses utilise political frames of reference, topics, myths and symbols (Smith 2010) to construct their nationalist identities. The Irish republican discursive formation, however, is further shaped by its lineage to the ideology of republicanism, which itself constitutes a discursive formation, or way of thinking, perceiving and understanding which informs group action. In categorising Irish republicanism primarily as a form of nationalist discourse, we must also bear in mind its civic republican roots (Honohan 2008), which hold their provenance in the evolutions of nationalist discourse and thought that underpinned the foundation of contemporary global powers like the U.S.A and France (and, indeed, can be chronologically linked to the established nationalism of the Republic of Ireland, too). Following Lovett (2006), we can view political liberty or 'non-domination or independence from arbitrary power' as the utmost republican value. Republican ideology filtrates into the central claims of nationalist discourses by informing or being used to legitimate their central claims and tenets and to shape their visions (Calhoun 1997). Such an understanding positions nationalism as the central, categorical node of republican discourse, whilst accounting for the multiplicity of frames of expression within which it can be

realised. As such, we can view civic republicanism and political nationalism as constituting some (of many) frame(s) of expression in which Irish republican discourse tends to be enacted (relatedly, ethnically characterised frames of expression will be less salient).

The reality is, however, that politics and ethnicity are but two of many areas of social life where the nation is reproduced in nuanced ways. Nationalism – and the accepted fundamentality of the nation—permeates many, if not all, aspects of contemporary society, even the academy (Billig 1993, Özkirimli 2017). Relatedly, it proves to be a formative force in aspects of modern societal superstructures like the economy and culture (Fuchs 2019). Beyond normalising and reproducing ethnic and political dimensions of a nation, then, nationalist discourses filtrate into others aspects of social reality, too. One way of interpreting this, is to conceive of nationalism as an ideology sustained by self-serving communicative strategies. Such an approach (which integrates well with a discursive understanding of nationalism) is espoused by Christian Fuchs (2019), who notes that nationalism is communicated in four prevalent ways which facilitate the inculcation (or as he terms it submission) of its subjects: these are, biological-, economic-, political- and cultural- nationalisms. For Fuchs, these communicative frames of nationalism are conducive to producing a sense of in-group superiority (and its corollary of out-group inferiority) among nationalist subjects, thus, strengthening in-group cohesion. Biological nationalisms make claims of superiority based on (the supposed) biological components of its own nation's denizens. Economic nationalisms assert superiority of a given nation's economic system and resources. Political nationalisms concern themselves with the political systems and power structures of nations. Finally, cultural nationalisms relate to a nation's cultural enterprises: asserting pride and superiority in a nation's symbols, rituals and heritage, for example. Taken in their simplest form, these modes of nationalist discourse are shown to be communicative apparatuses used to juxtapose a nation

(its supposed values, actions and attributes) against negatively evaluated *Others*. As such, in spite of being reproduced across contexts and domains of social life, we can note that the practice of nationalist identification is inherent in all.

Whilst the above is not an exhaustive list, it does provide a good encapsulation of the main themes of global nationalism. The conclusion from this discussion must be that, the framework for analysis adopted hereafter needs to account for the variety of strategic frames and contexts in which nationalist discourses are reproduced. The internal discourse structures and topics of Irish republicanism – from biology through to politics—must be rendered empirically analysable (see chapter 4). Moreover, a historical contextualisation for the genealogy of this discourse must further be proffered to account for the variety of historically conditioned and legitimated claims that underlie the reproduction of its discourse contemporarily. Finally, given the breadth of potential frames in which nationalist discourse could be couched, we can infer that the textual contexts of a given nationalist discourse—that is, where it is being reproduced—can vary greatly, too. This is especially the case given Irish republicanism, as a social movement, does not enjoy the status of state-hood and the elite communication contexts this entails. As such, further to accounting for the constitutive topics and salient frames of expression of Irish republican discourse to gain a better sense of its ideological communication strategies (Fuchs 2019), we must also account for the disparate (if not peripheral) position of Irish republicanism to the broader public sphere where established nation-states are constructed (see chapter 3).

‘Hot’ and ‘Banal’ Nationalisms—a discursive interpretation:

This last point brings us to a final typological distinction that will be of relevance for situating Irish republicanism in regard to the wider typologies of nationalism: that between hot and banal nationalism. This distinction was addressed previously in the discussion of daily ideological habits of founded nation states whose

discourses seek to ratify and perpetuate existing nation-state structures, primarily in banal ways. Such established nations can be seen to exert a form of hegemony over their citizens, whereby the ideologies promulgated in their media systems are internalised by the masses as being beneficial to the collective (Gramsci 1973). In terms of nationalism, hegemony is achieved when nationalists within a state accept its structures and authority as legitimate. Whilst this can be achieved through coercion, (Weber 1946) (cultural) hegemony denotes the co-optive inculcation of this submission to group ideology, or the reproduction of group identity through ritualised ideological actions or habits. Loosely, then, we can regard the discourse of established nation states as ‘banal’ inasmuch as it seeks to legitimate and maintain the national *status quo*. Similarly, they are hegemonic as they seek to ratify an existing social order.

Such banality, however, does not account for the disparate – or more visible (Billig 1993)—nationalist movements which have yet to achieve statehood. Such movements seek to change (in a variety of ways) existing hegemonic orders of nation states. A wide array of typologies have been proffered by scholars who seek to categorise this broad array of movements, united by their affinitive lack of statehood but differentiated by their modalities of agitation or national visions. To categorise this broad church of nationalist movements, Breuilly (1994) offers a tripartite typology of nationalist projects as: separatist, reformist and unification movements. Separatist movements claim the legitimacy of a nation (and corresponding national territory) outside of existing, hegemonic nation-state arrangements (for instance, the nationalist movements of the Basque country, Catalonia and South Ossetia). Reform nationalisms, which seek to transform (from within) a given nation’s state structure and social machinations, in spite of existing within the hegemonic order, these movements actively seek to destruct an existing national identity and replace it with a novel one (Turkish Kemalism, for instance, or Irish cultural nationalism of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century). Finally,

unification movements seek to unite a national grouping which is perceived to be divided by existing nation-state borders (the historic nationalism of Italy's Risorgimento, or the multiple variations of German nationalism which underpinned its historic unifications in 1871 or 1989). Trying to situate Irish republicanism neatly into such a classification is a difficult task, owing to the nuanced historical context of republicanism's fruition and its positioning in regard to existing hegemonic nation states (R.O.I and U.K). The envisaged annexation of the northern six counties of Ireland can be conceptualised and categorised as unification (from the perspective of republicans, separatist (from the perspective of the UK), and, arguably, reformist (from the perspective of the Republic of Ireland, the system which republicanism seeks to change). Thus, what unites Irish republicanism in this regard is its position against the hegemonic orders - as a counter-hegemonic form of nationalism. In place of banality, we can ascribe Irish republicanism as a 'hot' variation of nationalism, a catch-all term that encompasses the counter-hegemonic position of the movement and the alternative nation-state framework it strives to establish.

In integrating this typological distinction into our discursive understanding of Irish republicanism, we can essentially regard 'hot' nationalisms as being in the incipient, embryonic discursive formulations of banal nationalist discourses. That is, hot nationalisms precede banal nationalisms on a broad discursive evolutionary trajectory toward statehood and hegemonic power. In place of banality, hot nationalist discourses make as of yet unsubstantiated claims and adopt more fervent frames of expression. Therefore, in empirically operationalising an understanding of Irish republicanism as a discourse, the present thesis has to account for the disparities (in both form and function) of its discourse features that result from its 'hot' or counter hegemonic position. Efforts toward this end are presented in the following chapter. More generally, it was established earlier in this section that nationalism tends to be communicated through prototypical frames of

expression (cultural, political, biological, economic etc.), and an identification of the constituent topics, frames, myths and symbols of republicanism was shown to be a necessary step to its analysis. How these features of republicanism's discourse are rendered analytically considerable is presented in chapters four and five. Both of these chapters will further draw on insights uncovered in the review of literature from the field of nationalism studies to analyse Irish republicanism's virtual discourse spaces as sites of nationalist political activity.

Irish Republicanism as a discourse:

Having sufficiently categorised Irish republicanism in regard to the core distinctions of nationalism, the remainder of this chapter tends to an application of the previously established theorisation account of nationalism as a discourse to Irish republicanism. Part of this entails examining the historical genealogy of republican discourse. Prior to this, however, a consideration of the historical and scholarly literature related to contemporary republicanism (and its move toward political power) can provide insights into aspects and dimensions of republicanism (and its history) that are of relevance to the present thesis, or gaps in the body of literature that are addressable by the present research's discursive approach. Toward this end, a brief survey of this literature is presented here. Owing to limitations of space, this is necessarily selective and discusses key works which typify specific concerns this project seeks to address.

Rather than being regarded as a historically conditioned way of speaking, acting and knowing, academic attention on contemporary Irish republicanism has focussed on it from a number of habitual perspectives and paradigms. The main detraction from this limitation is that Irish republicanism has been underappreciated as an ideology (reproduced in discourse by ideologues). Broadly, these works produce a collective image of republicanism as a movement that has moved from a violent, political outlier to centralised political force – a process

denoted here as the ‘mainstreaming’ of republicanism. Temporally, such research adopts a predominantly historical lens, more specifically, it is, for a variety of reasons, routinely limited to specific time-frames and is demarcated around specific key moments or organisations. For instance, Feeney’s (2002) historical account of Sinn Féin in the preceding century provides a useful summation of key policy developments of republicanism within this time-frame and is indicative of similar contributions to the canon. Rafter (2005) similarly offers an appraisal of republican activity in this era, outlining the elite-level pragmatism which ushered the movement toward constitutional politics. Taking such an approach can provide chronological referent points for the development of policy, which, in turn, can indicate ideological progression.

However, like other works in the canon, chiefly O’Doherty (1998), Feeney reifies republicanism as the product of the Peace Process and the immediate material opportunities/goals which this presented. At a less-elite level, Alonso’s (2001) contribution provides an assessment of the demilitarisation of republicanism, relying on interview data taken from republican prisoners. Rather than analysing this data for insights related to ideological progression, Alonso uses it to provide a critique of republican political violence – which he normatively labels ‘terrorism’. In limiting their consideration to its relationship with violence in the Troubles, all of these authors negate a consideration of the underlying ideological dimensions of the movement which begot such violence as well as the abandonment of this modality. In spite of posing limitations, then, the tendency for the academy to isolate specific timespans also provides useful insights relating to the development of key strategies by actors engaged in the production of a discourse. Despite offering much in the way of historical insight, such reductionist lenses of interpretation inevitably rely on (their interpretation of) elite sources and furnish insights related to specific time-spans within republicanism. The result is that the

commonalities and genealogical progression of republicanism's central claims (and their reproduction) are obfuscated in the literature.

Similarly, scholars of republicanism have typically relied on accounts 'from the top' in examining republicanism's collective, contemporary forms. Moreover, such work similarly neglects a substantive consideration of the reproduction of republicanism as a discourse, instead providing historical, narrativized accounts of its emergence through organisations. Moloney's (2007) contribution is one such example, offering extensive discussion on the internal machinations of the republican movement in this time-frame but solely from the perspective of elite members of the provisional movement, whose actions are teleologically linked to the peace process and mainstreaming. In a related vein, Maillot (2004) has considered the development of 'new' Sinn Féin, a term coined to denote the party in its post-conflict form. Relying on interviews with spokespeople from the party, Maillot's book documents key policy changes (as they are conceived of) within the party. Yet, like many other publications in this trend, republicanism's ideological reproduction is treated as a secondary or peripheral concern. Moreover, in narrowing their focus to specific time-spans within one organisation (Sinn Féin), these works negate a sufficient consideration of the historically conditioned discourses and strategies which condition its reproduction and which underpinned such policy developments. That said, some works in this trend have recognised or tried to address this gap.

Frampton (2009) for example, in spite of limiting his consideration to Sinn Féin in the period of 1981 to 2007, argues that the transformation of Sinn Féin can only be interpreted in the context of the underlying ideological objective of republicanism which still inform the movement. Patterson (1989), noting an antagonism between leftist politics and physical force nationalism, contended that elite-level republicans developed the ideology through (re)interpretations of the big

ideas of Irish republicanism as an ideology (or what can be regarded from our perspective here as a discourse), suggesting historical re-interventions rely on the same lineage of thought. For Patterson, republicans, irrespective of organisational or factional loyalties, must be seen as rational political actors, motivated by an ideological goal (Patterson 1989, Frampton 2009). Relatedly, Bourke (2004) insists that republicanism is best regarded on the political-ideological plane, striving toward the collective aim of self-determination. Whiting (2013, 2018) compares all of republicanism's instantiations, regardless of historical nuances, regarding them as united by an affinitive aim. The cessation of armed resistance, from this perspective, is best interpreted in the context of a broader ideological goal it moves toward. Related to this, Whiting (2018) offers a consideration of the modernisation of republicanism (drawing a parallel between the early twentieth century) to show how its policy and actions changed. This is of note as such a consideration would have been better appreciated from a discourse perspective - analysing how republicanism was reproduced in 1920s compared to early 2000s to see how ideology had, if at all, changed. McGovern's (2000) article also provides an indication of a growing academic consensus around the notion of ideological transformation within republicanism. Therefore, the above offers a small snapshot of a growing number of works concerned with the modernisation of Irish republicanism and the ideological framework in which it is best appreciated. As it stands, however, the identified pitfalls of this body of research have prevented a thorough appreciation of these aspects from the bottom or from a discursive perspective.

In spite of the criticism emanating from the canon largely being ideological, comparatively few sources directly deal with republicanism as an ideology, in particular, in its contemporary forms. Mauro's (2009) thesis has proven useful from the perspective of the present thesis in providing an apparatus to measure the development of Irish republicanism over time through its 'conceptual

morphology' of central, peripheral and adjacent concepts—something which will be integrated subsequently. His research demonstrates that Irish republican ideology is characterised by centrally nationalist ideological features, with its less-central concepts being undeveloped owing to its political nascency. Finally, the collection of contributions edited by Honohan (2008) provides an indicative account of research that strives to conceptually tie Irish republicanism with the wider paradigm of civic and political republicanism. A notable absence from these works is a thorough consideration of the ideological habits and actions which reproduce these ideologies on a daily basis, indeed, both Mauro and authors in Honohan's collection tend to assess ideology as an ontological entity, as opposed to examining its manifestation in practice.

Criticisms of republicanism emerging from all of the above publications largely centre around its ideological dimensions in spite of the myriad methodological limitations noted previously. Typically, scholars of republicanism note a lightness in the ideology, arguing that regardless of policy developments, republicanism remains somewhat underdeveloped as a fully-fledged political ideology, being predominantly reactionary or critical (Frampton 2009). Moreover, they identify a clear shift away from an ideological commitment to physical force nationalism (Alonso 2001) and toward a discourse of peace and political agitation resulting in revolutionary radicalism becoming fused with mainstream political discourse features (Honohan 2008, McGovern 2000). As such, we can identify an untapped aspect of republicanism that has been neglected by works thus far. In spite of partly identifying the centrality of ideology to informing and explaining the mainstreaming of contemporary Irish republicanism, the academy has arguably neglected the core site where this transition was enacted and negotiated: the grassroots discourse of ideologues. The discourse structures and features which legitimated these progressions have, to an extent, been neglected by research. Some notable exceptions to this—and works which will inform the subsequent analysis

of republican discourse –can be found in the works of Wilson and Stapleton (2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2017), which have identified the reproduction of key discourse shifts in post-conflict republican communities, as well as the work of Filardo-Llamas (2012, 2013, 2015) who has analysed aspects of elite-level provisional discourse in a Northern Irish context. Similarly, the researcher’s own publications have addressed some marginal concerns in this regard, too, identifying the discursive legitimization of republican press statements (Goulding 2022 forthcoming) and the post-conflict identification functions of muralism (Goulding and McCroy 2020).

Thus, we can identify aspects of republicanism that are addressable from the perspective of the current thesis. Currently, no substantive discursive research has been undertaken in relation to contemporary Irish republicanism. In undertaking a historically informed analysis of its discursive construction, then, the present thesis can begin to illuminate the common discourse features and claims that constitute (Irish) republican as an ideological discourse and (Irish) republican social identification, thus, addressing a gap in existing literature. In spite of beginning to identify an ideological basis for the movement’s mainstreaming, no contemporary discursive interrogation of how (if at all) such policy and ideology shifts that have conditioned republicanism’s identification exists. The focus on elite or institutional sources being used to produce narrativized histories, has circumvented a consideration of the site where the imagined community of republicanism is constructed: the grassroots ideological actions of republican ideologues. Relatedly, the putative ideological lightness of republicanism, a criticism that is frequently levelled by the academy, can be corroborated or mitigated against from a discursive approach, by identifying the salient and recurring discourse features evident in grassroots, day-to-day reproductions.

Historical genealogy of Irish republicanism as discourse:

The remainder of this chapter is given over to a consideration of the historic context of Irish republicanism as a discourse, charting the evolution of Irish republican discourse's central claims. In considering how to broach such a historic consideration, it is prudent to return to insights that were previously drawn from the classical literature of nationalism studies, which, in spite of not sufficiently theoretically accounting for nationalism, can still shed some light on the nature and dynamic of nationalist movements and discourse. In this regard, the contentions of ethno-symbolists (particularly, Hutchinson (1994) and Smith (2010), as well as the instrumental critique of Brass (1991, 1994) are of note. The former accentuates the historically conditioned nature of nationalist discourses and national identities. More specifically, these ethnosymbolists theorise nationalist discourses as being episodic in their manifestation, unfolding over time, fluctuating between idle periods of dormancy and sporadic, radical interventions or upsurges. Similarly, Hutchinson and Brass identify the definitive and formative role played by elite actors in shaping nationalist discourses of myth-symbol complexes. Thus, the key shapers of contemporary nationalist discourses are its historical forbearers, whose discourses typically crystallise in notable interventions or revolutions. Applying this to the present focus, a reading of Irish republicanism as a discourse is presented which narrows its focus to republican interventions and actions of republican elites. Additionally, it was noted that historically revered texts constituted salient artefacts of specific civic forms of nationalism. As such, it can be hypothesised that key texts from the history of Irish republicanism served as the sites of its discursive construction and progression. Accordingly, the parameters of the historical consideration presented here can be narrowed to focus primarily on elite level actions: central texts and key events within republicanism's history. Owing to its narrowed focus, this account can be relatively synoptic, mirroring others historic considerations of ideological discourses (see Richardson 2017 for example). To gauge and chart the centrality of specific republican discourse features over time, the thesis invokes Mauro's (2009) conceptual morphological gradation of

republican ideology as being comprised of: central (core visions), adjacent (modalities/ meso visions) and peripheral (immediate goals, steps and aims) concepts. Finally, in what follows the genealogy of Irish republican discourse is presented in reference to the wider genealogy of Irish nationalism as a discourse, while the roots of the two are intertwined, republicanism must be considered as one of many variations of Irish nationalism which have abounded over the previous centuries. As such, where pertinent, differentiations between competing variations and factions of republicanism are discussed.

The United Irishmen:

Corroborating, to an extent, the view of modernist nationalism scholars, Irish nationalism began to emerge in an incoherent shape toward the end of the eighteenth century, more as an alternative ideal held by elites and gentry as opposed to a fully-fledge nationalist position (Kee 2000). Indeed, early evidence of nationalism's filtration into broader public discourse in Ireland largely takes the form of elite political actors disseminating critiques aimed at instrumentally materialising in the practice of nationalist politics (O'Broin 2009). Yet, beyond identifying Ireland and England as disparate nations, such a discourse proved ineffectual in amounting to a political force. Indeed, the republican tendency to construct republicanism as the organic product of resistance to English oppression does not seemingly hold up to historic scrutiny, in particular from a discourse perspective. Whilst some reformist political efforts designed to unify the Irish national community abounded from below, it was the global stage of politics that would ultimately provide the impetus for Irish republicanism to emerge as a discourse (Kee 2000, English 2008).

The political thought and associated literature of the American and French revolutions provided the central ideological sources for newly emerging Irish nationalists, who could typically be demarcated into two groupings: north eastern,

middle-class/gentry (predominantly Protestant) and the southern Irish peasantry (Kee 2000). Whilst the grievances of both sides were disparate (indeed often treating each other as enemies), the French revolution provided sufficient evidence for more radical members of both camps to begin to identify the pragmatism of secularism and the commonalities they held (FitzGerald 2008). Whereas the Irish peasantry endured physical hardships and suffering, the protestant middle-classes were spurred by a perceived deprivation under colonialism. Both factions began to recognise the potential of a united political effort for sovereign government, yet the unequivocal secularism of the French proved to be problematic at first (Kee 2000, English 2008). As such, the integration of civic republican ideals into the Irish public sphere is best interpreted as a dialogic process between elite discourse shapers and socio-political context. The former consisted of influential activists and scholars of the time who began to publicly (often through secret monikers) espouse the potential beneficence of Irish sovereignty. Yet, the context in which these early nationalist elites began to formulate their critiques, however, proves important, too, for without broader throes of nationalist and civic republican thought emerging in Europe, coupled with a broader move away from autocracy, the radicalism of republicanism might not have united these disparate factions (O'Broin 2009, Kee 2000).

Whilst the northern protestants would form the Society of the United Irishmen (the society most-associated with the inception of republicanism and the integration of civic republican ideals into a coherent political ideology), the southern peasantry would contribute greatly in conditioning a dimension of republicanism that would characterise it for two centuries: its commitment to physical force nationalism (Kee 2000, English 2008, Honohan 2008). Increasing raids by secret organisations (united by their anti-English sentiment) such as the Defenders, gained notoriety in this era, often for the harsh punishments doled out to their commanders. The need for military intervention to realise sovereignty was

also identified earlier on by the United Irishmen who founded an alternative, albeit less intimidating, militia (Kee 2000, Madden 1846). Some form of ideological reckoning took place between these previously divided sections of Irish society, or more accurately, their organisational fronts, providing the groundwork for republicanism as a discourse to proliferate into Irish society. An examination of the discursive features of these organisations can provide an indication of both the nature of early Irish republicanism in terms of its discourse features, but also the extent to which global discourses conditioned its form and content. For instance, a 1791 list of central claims of the fledging organisation produced by Wolfe Tone provides a good indication of republicanism's early demands:

i) English removal from Britain

ii) reform of the parliament

iii) such reform could only take place with the Irish Catholics

(documented in Madden 1846, Kee 2000)

Similarly, a 1791 pamphlet titled *An Argument on Behalf of Catholics in Ireland*, presents an early visionary representation of an independent Irish nation, united by their commitments to 'brotherhood of affection, identity of interests, communion of rights.' (cited in Madden 1846) French-derived republican discourse features, like the identifier 'Citizen' being utilised by certain members of the newly formed republican community, are indicative of a shift in political loyalties defined not by 'sect but society.' (Kee 2000) From its earliest incarnations, then, republican discourse reproduced an active critique of aristocratic or colonial power which promoted the beneficence of secularism in bringing about political reform.

In spite of envisaging the establishment of a new Irish nation, the influence of French and American republicanisms is evident. Against the backdrop of worsening relations between England and France, Irish republicanism would crystallize in active form in a litany of poorly planned and executed rebellions from 1797, 1798 and 1803 (O'Broin 2009). All would fail to realise their aim of sovereignty, but ignite a flame of resistance that would be claimed by subsequent interventions and, importantly, they engendered a criticality of power and an alternative national framework free of external rule. As such, we can discern some central ideological concepts which still structure republican discourse to date, namely, antipathy to arbitrary or oppressive power and commitment to a national community that is politically defined, and not by religion or ethnicity. Similarly, we can also identify (perhaps as a peripheral concept) a commitment to physical force nationalism as a modality. In terms of myths and symbols which emerged in this era, the colour green (and the motto *Erin go Bragh*) became associated with the movement, as did the mythology that Ireland was 'held' by England unjustly (Kee 2000). Whilst both ostensibly connote with Irishness, it is important to recognise their early secular usages. Beyond these additions, the final great contribution of these early republicans to the wider discourse is their inception of a tradition of martyrdom which would paint the discourse of republican interventions for the following centuries (Hopkins 2018). In what was to become somewhat of a recurring motif, the early republican blood-sacrifices would prove to be the first in a historic array of military sacrifices that would be hastily punished by the opposing forces, often to much public outcry. From the outset, then, we can identify the centrality of elite republicans in shaping and unifying the Irish variation a global critique of autocracy and the forging of a new national consciousness defined by political rights. Moreover, we can note a cognizance on their behalf of the spectre of interventions and rebellions in inculcating future resistance. Thus, a discursive reading of the fruition of Irish republicanism

provides a suitable framework in which we can chart the development of an alternative framework of political thought in Ireland.

Act of Union to Fenianism:

The Act of Union solidified the apparatus of political control over the island for the foreseeable future. Yet the capacity for the Irish populace to engender a form of national self-consciousness was demonstrated recursively over the course of the eighteenth century (Geoghegan 2001). Indeed, the early half of the century was marked by further republican-inspired political organisations emerging, none of which would bring about any tangible change. The subjugation of the Irish peasantry would persist in this time, leading to ideals of Catholic relief as opposed to national self-determination, characterising political discourse of this era. Yet a novel sense of unity had, nonetheless, been established in the wake of the early republican rebellions (Madden 1846). This crystallised in a distinct nationalist identity emerging, albeit with a less secular, more Catholic slant (Kee 2000). Thus, much of the early discourse of elite nationalism in this time was devoted to the discursive construction and legitimation of this group in the broader socio-political context of the Union. The political dimension of the discourse and ideology were further appropriated. In particular, political rights for Catholics began to centralise around the concept of land-ownership which had, given Ireland's status as a colony, typically resided in the hands of the wealthy, predominantly Protestant gentry. Prolific actors in this era forged an Irish identity based on its Celtic, Catholic heritage. The influence of more explicitly political nationalism then began to reside as political efforts congregated around this Catholic, Irish identity—typified by the almost romantic concept of national identity espoused by Daniel O'Connell, the prolific reformist (Keogh and Whelan 2000). In particular, the concept of land-ownership was to form the basis of materialistic political struggles for this community's rights, providing an ideological basis for later ideological evolutions

toward leftist adjacent concepts (O'Broin 2009). The early part of the century, then, saw a qualitative relegation of purely civic republican/ political nationalist discourse features and in their place emerged more ethnically defined features that were latent in the Irish peasantry's subaltern culture and heritage. Such a shift in discourse can further be mapped out through the previously outlined frames of political (republican) nationalist discourse frames to cultural or ethnic frames.

The Old Ireland of O'Connell conditioned the subsequent generations in two ways. Firstly, the stagnation of political amelioration caused some ire among younger more zealous Irish nationalists, who soon became open to violence: something O'Connell decried. The Young Irelanders⁹ emerged as the next republican militant intervention. In typical fashion for Irish nationalist interventions, however, this re-integration of militancy as a modality of struggle amounted to nothing. That is to say, the Young Irelanders' Rebellion of 1848 is regarded as an unmitigated military disaster (Fenton 2010). Secondly, however, and more significantly, they continued to flesh out the cultural aspects of Irish national culture. Their reasons for doing so (and indeed for mounting an insurrection in the first place) are, again, best interpreted within the broader historical context. Locally, ameliorated material conditions for Catholics had failed to materialise, culminating in the Great Famine/ *An Gorta Mór* of 1847 (Kee 2000, Fenton 2010). Globally, 1848 was a year of fervent anti-monarchic nationalist struggles with countries such as Italy, Austria, Germany, France, Hungary, Denmark and Poland (Sperber 2005).

These newly emerging discourses featured ethnically rooted claims and rights coinciding with a broader rise in romantic ideals of nationhood and nationalist expression. Thus, the main lasting influence of this particular recursion of

⁹ The name purposively differentiates against the Old Ireland of precedent nationalist actors. (Kee 2000)

nationalist discourse is the introduction and proliferation of key cultural codes, symbols and cultural constructs which have further influenced the myriad expressions of Irish identity that followed (Kee 2000). For instance, the Irish Tri-Colour was to emerge in this period as the semiotic encapsulation of a republican political ideal. Indeed, the flag and colour-scheme are re-appropriated by dissident and provisional republicans to date. Yet this also laid the seeds for an antagonism within Irish nationalism between republicanism and its exclusively political discourse set against Irish cultural nationalism and its instrumental affect. The subsequent incarnations of Irish republicans can be located on a spectrum between these two antipodes, the latter gaining more currency again toward the end of the century, forging the new Saor Stát (Hutchinson 1994). Beyond providing the temporal span for the inception of cultural frames of nationalism within which republicanism constructs its own identity, we can also identify the key role of elite nationalists in shaping the contours of public deliberation thereafter. Like the elites of the United Irishmen, literacy in media and journalistic activism were aspects of nationalist struggle that the Young Irelanders proved adept (O'Broin 2009).

One of the Young Irelanders, James Stephens, was to flee to France in the wake of the of the 1848 rebellion. Once there he would become embedded in revolutionary circles. His radicalisation in this context of republicanism would prove to be an influential development for Irish nationalism which had, under O'Connell and latterly the Young Irelanders, adopted a more ethnic, conservative discourse and cultural identity, veering away from the political nationalism of republicanism. Stephens' emersion in radical republicanism led him to return to such political and civic nationalist thought. His republicanism can be seen to have heavily influenced the re-radicalisation of Irish nationalism, a shift that would give rise to yet a further, explicitly republican intervention. Yet where previous republican organisations adopted inherently French and American aspects to their discourses, the utilitarian value of cultural nationalism and romanticism that had been

established in the previous half-century was also seen as a pre-requisite to political success (Fenton 2010). As such, this new republican intervention adopted an explicitly Irish/Gaelic identity that re-contextualised republican ideals into the Irish context. It relied on much of the same cultural codes and myths of the Young Irelanders but used these to frame republican political aims.

This duality in discourse can be identified in this strand of republicanism's organisational titles. Stephens and his counterparts would establish two key organisational fronts for their movement, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Fenians. The former, the historical precursor to the Irish Republican Army, adopted an explicitly fraternal and republican name, espousing a primarily militant modality. The latter's name is an homage to the mythological military unit *Na Fianna* which mirrors the anglicised title of the cycle from Irish mythology in which they feature: the Fenian cycle. Its function was primarily to gain funds and support from the diaspora in the U.S.A (Comerford 1998, Kee 2000). The ostensible disparity between cultural and political nationalisms in the title can be seen to correlate to the types of support both sought from their respective national publics: the Fenians (founded 1859) strove to harness romantic notions of the homeland in successful Irish emigrants (Comerford 1998), whereas the I.R.B (founded 1858) sought to gain the support of volunteers for military activities (Kee 2000). After much forecast, rebellion arrived in 1867, in what was to be yet another unmitigated military failure with only a minor fraction of available volunteers actually engaging in the fighting (Kee 2000). Yet the re-emergence of republicanism as the primary form of Irish nationalist discourse is significant for having radicalised ensuing generations. For instance, the same year as the failed rebellion, a number Fenian/IRB members would go on trial for the killing of a police officer in Manchester (O'Neill 2012). Their declarations from the dock captures the distinct Gaelic ethno-religious national identity of the Fenians, whilst also demonstrating the explicit republican character of their discourse features and ideology. Most notably,

their defiant cry of ‘God Save Ireland!’ would become enshrined in republican lore, (O’Neill 2012) however, their characterisation of Ireland as a ‘land of saints’ somewhat deviates from the secular character of idealist republican discourse. This aspect is most noted in explicit declarations of their justifications and aims: take for instance, the words of the Fenian volunteer William Phillip Allen in accepting his death stated: ‘I will die proudly and triumphantly in defence of republican principles; and liberty of an oppressed and enslaved people.’ (sourced via O’Neill 2012)

Fenianism can also be seen to have conditioned discourses of republicanism and militarism as well as the imagery of Irish republican volunteers, having established the primacy of such garb within the ranks of the I.R.B. (Kee 2000). The primacy of militaristic and violent agitation, coupled with the mythology of martyrdom would provide an established collective memory that future republican interventions would paligenetically draw from. Yet the failure of the 1867 rebellion was met with an antecedent wave of re-radicalisation of Irish nationalism, partly brought about by the harsh coercive suppression of Fenianism, but also due to a broader rise of liberal democratic ideologies in the politics of the U.K. (Steward and McGovern 2013). For instance, the following year, 1868, marked the first prime ministerial term for William Gladstone, someone who would look favourably on the concept of Irish independence over the latter half of the century (St. John 2016). As such, the I.R.B and republicanism became subaltern and, in their place, more constitutionally oriented forms of nationalism abounded. Less far-reaching in their demands, and more constitutional and reformist in their discourse, this wave of late-nineteenth century Irish nationalist organisations can be typified through the efforts of C.S Parnell’s Irish Parliamentary Party and their demands for Home Rule (essentially a devolved parliament for Ireland, varyingly seen as an end-goal in itself/ or as a stepping stone to full independence) (Jackson 2003). As such, Fenianism, as a republican discourse, is notable for its re-ignition

of physical force republicanism and its political aims. Its central concepts can be seen to correlate to previous incarnations with more peripheral concerns relating to Irish identity and religious freedom. It was, however, its failure as a discourse to proffer a suitable political critique (when faced with the limitations of solely military tactics) which provided a vacuum for constitutional nationalism. This is not to say that Fenianism lacked peripheral or adjacent political concepts, however. Some (O'Broin (2009) and Hobsbawm (2002), for example) have argued that, whilst not explicitly leftist or socialist, Fenianism provided the first formulation of republican discourse that was resonant among the masses. Whereas the United Irishmen relied on the intellectual critiques of the landed gentry, Fenianism targeted the deprived masses of Irish workers, marginalised at the edge of the Union. As such their contribution is best captured by Hobsbawm, noting that 'they were entirely independent of the middle-class moderates, that their support came entirely from among the popular masses ... and that they were the first to put forward a programme of total independence from England, to be achieved by armed insurrection' (Hobsbawm 2001: 114, cited in O'Broin 2009)

The incorporation of socialism into republican discourse must, again, be considered in terms of broader conceptual shifts in political thought at play in the latter half of the century. The anti-monarchic revolutions of the 1840s inculcated a sense of national consciousness and unity that would result in the emergence of a powerful political force driven by the working-class who sought new forms of political representation in this era (Lane 1997). It was in this broader global context that socialism emerged, from below, as a crystallisation of critical evaluations of capitalist and bourgeois society. In the context of Ireland, both socialism and republicanism remained peripheral in terms of popular support at the end of the nineteenth century (O'Broin 2009). It was in this context that the ideological commitments of both would integrate at an organisational and discourse level. For example, the emergence of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) in 1896 is

indicative of both political positions unifying into a cohesive discourse and ideology, as is the emergence of James Connolly as the public face of Socialist Republicanism. The IRSP manifesto declares its aims as the:

Establishment of An Irish Socialist Republic based on the public ownership by the Irish people of the land, and instruments of production, distribution and exchange. Agriculture to be administered as a public function, under boards of management elected by the agricultural population and responsible to them and to the nation at large. All other forms of labour necessary to the wellbeing of the community to be conducted on the same principles (see Éirigi 2019).¹⁰

This offers a brief outline of the perceived affinity and relativity of republicanism and socialism from their group-internal perspective. Claims to national sovereignty, rather than being couched exclusively in terms of political citizenry and civic republicanism, were now justified through leftist claims of the right to public ownership. The old grievance of land ownership was now altered to a form of collective ownership, justified through socialist principles and the well-being of the community. The ostensible similarities at the surface level are undeniable, indeed, it is fair to say that the central claims of their discourse have largely remained the same. However, the characterisation of these claims and their legitimation increasingly began to be communicated in more socialist, less cultural or ethnic, discourse frames as the century progressed—albeit from a continuously marginalised or subaltern position. Civic republicanism’s antipathy to arbitrary power proved, in the context of Irish republicanism, to be incorporative of socialism’s critique of capitalist, bourgeois power. As Lane (1997: 223), argues, ‘the ISRP introduced a new vocabulary into the Irish left. Socialist republicanism was Marxian, revolutionist, strongly anti-imperialist and rooted in a sense of historical

¹⁰ <https://eirigi.org/latestnews/2019/11/8/on-the-shoulders1896-irish-socialist-republican-party-manifesto>

place.’ Discursively, then, socialism provided republican discourse participants with the established (internationalist) framework of political ideation that their movement required in the face of the limitations of exclusively militaristic struggle and the growing success of Home Rule’s constitutional nationalism (Lane 1997). This influence, though marginal at first, was to prove incredibly influential in shaping republican discourse in the coming, twentieth century.

Early Twentieth century republicanism:

The diachronic survey of republican discourse in the nineteenth century produced an over-arching outline of republican discourse undergoing periods of salience and dormancy typically corresponding to a rise in cultural or reformist nationalist discourses. At the turn of the twentieth century, republican organisations paled in terms of support (both membership and electoral) when compared to their constitutional counter-parts. Yet, the stagnation of the Home Rule movement posed serious questions about the viability of constitutional reform (Kee 2000). Similarly, the outbreak of WWI posed problems of identity to Irish nationalists who were now being urged to fight for Britain to secure a devolved parliament, in spite of espousing an avowedly Irish national identity for decades previously. It was in this changed political landscape that republicanism re-emerged as an influential political discourse, not as a result of a mass republicanisation of society, but, rather through chance. This is not to suggest that Irish cultural nationalism was to recede in this era— on the contrary, this time-frame marked the establishment of the G.A.A (O’Flynn 2008) as well as the Irish literary revival— but rather that republican discourse would prove to be the most formative and tumultuous in the ensuing century. Nevertheless, the fervour of Irish republican discourse that had been so pronounced was, at best, a peripheral discourse at the turn of the twentieth century (Kee 2000).

At an organisational level the I.R.B's influence had waned as newer parliamentary and cultural forms of activity gained popularity over the latter half of the century. Socialist republican organisations in this era, too, remained marginalised (O'Broin 2009). The expediency of violence was, at this stage, seen as antiquated by those outside of republican circles. However, the ability for media to foster a shared sense of national consciousness had been recognised by republicans such as Arthur Griffith and William Rooney who, in March of 1899 founded the *United Irishman* newspaper, the name being indicative of its purported ideological lineage to previous physical force republican interventions (O'Broin 2009). Often in open polemic with constitutional or cultural nationalism, the paper endorsed traditional republican values and ideals, envisaging the establishment of 'An Irish Republic, One and Indivisible' (a direct homage to the French radical roots of this commitment) (quoted in Kee 2000). Whilst support for Sinn Féin as political movement grew initially, by 1910 it had begun to decline. Indeed, by 1916 only one branch of the organisation remained active (in comparison to approximately 1,200 in 1910). Thus, Griffith and Sinn Féin's early contribution to republican discourse in this era remained an ideational one, providing a newly emerging generation of republicans, weary of the war and Home Rule, with propaganda and maintaining the flame of republican discourse.

In spite of losing support, the I.R.B sought to capitalise on the war by staging a rebellion before its end (Kelly 2007). A strategy devised by members of the I.R.B's army council planned to collectively mobilise the Irish Volunteers¹¹, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Citizen Army in a coordinated military rebellion. This would ultimately come to fruition in the Easter Rising of 1916, which would, like its predecessors, result in a military failure (McGarry 2016). The nuances of the Rising itself are not of concern to the present research, rather, the

¹¹ Militant nationalist organization founded in 1913 by Eoin MacNeill to uphold the commitment to Home Rule

features which became enshrined in republican discourse in the run up to the Rising are, as were the discursive shifts which ensued in its wake. Regarding the former, Griffith's propaganda activity was to prove influential in conditioning a republican national consciousness and republican discourse, which through circumstance would prove to be easily adaptable and scalable to Irish society, in spite of remaining marginal until after the Rising (McGarry 2016). Similarly, the efforts of elite republicans in this era can be seen to embody a reverence for martyrdom and blood-sacrifice and the instrumental power of drawing lineages to previous republican interventions. The oration of Padraig Pearse, a leading republican thinker, at the graveside of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, an exiled Fenian who was repatriated only for burial, captures this dynamic of republican discourse at play (Kenna 2015). Pearse explicitly drew a lineage to Fenianism, urging a new generation of republicans to be 'rebaptised in the Fenian faith... complete the Fenian program' (Pearse 1915).¹² The affective resonance of martyrdom as a mode of instrumentally eliciting support for republican causes is further captured by his assertion that 'as long as Ireland holds these graves, it will never be at peace.' (Pearse 1915) Although there were initial hopes for militaristic success, the Rising was eventually conceded to be a blood-sacrifice, aimed at spurring on future generations of republicans. This, however, would not be caused by the self-described heroism of Pearse's republicanism, but rather by the institutional response to the Rising. In deciding to execute the leaders of the 1916 Rising, the state forces ignited a wave of public outcry which drew attention to republican ideals (O'Donnell 2008). The ensuing rise in popularity for republicanism can be captured through the upsurge in support for Sinn Féin the following year, rising from one active branch in 1916 to over a thousand the following year. Thus, the rise in salience of republican discourse in this time-frame

¹² See <http://www.easter1916.net/oration.htm> for full script of speech

can best be seen as the product of persistence by a marginalised community of republicans and the serendipity of historic circumstance. Enraged by the harshness displayed in executing the leaders, Irish society now took up republican discourse with an unprecedented fervour.

As such, the central concepts of Irish republicanism - Irish independence and freedom from British rule - remained the same in the early decades of the twentieth century. Adjacent to republicanism from the late nineteenth century onward was a commitment to socialist ideals which politicised the discourse's features. Peripheral to these concerns were the cultural expressions of nationalism, the G.A.A and the literary revival, which were viewed as secondary to the establishment of an active, republican citizenry. The manifestation of these claims is best laid out in the *Proclamation of the Irish Republic* where various republican ('religious and civil liberty, equal rights... to its citizens'), socialist ('equal opportunities') and internationalist ('exaltation among the nations') aspirations can be noted. The Easter Rising, as a discursive event, thus, is canonical within republican discourse, its mythology and commemoration constitute a large part of republican ritualism, commemoration and funerary practices (Hoey 2013, Brown 2016). Yet as an historic event, it paved the way for republicanism to filtrate into Irish political structures in an unprecedented way. The rise of support in the wake of the Rising for republicanism resulted in Sinn Féin becoming the main political vehicle striving toward the recognition of Ireland as an independent Irish republic (McGarry 2016). This new wave of support yielded the party a vast majority of Irish seats in the 1918 election. Rather than taking their seats in Westminster, these representatives formed the first Dáil, thus marking the first example of a long-standing commitment to abstentionism in republicanism (Kee 2000). Other political commitments of republican discourse in this era are further identifiable in the Democratic

Programme for the First Dáil (1919)¹³, where ‘Citizens of a Free and Gaelic Ireland’ are also denoted as ‘the nation’s labour’/ ‘working classes’: demonstrating the visionary imagined community of republicans in this era.

The ensuing War of Independence (or Tan War) resulted in the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which provisioned for the establishment of an Irish Free State (*Saor Stát*), comprising the southern 26 counties of Ireland, and the foundation of Northern Ireland, 6 counties of Ulster that would remain in the Union (Shannon 1986). This would ultimately cause a schism within republicanism which has been documented extensively through political histories and histories of what has since been termed the Irish Civil War (Hopkinson 2004). From the perspective of republican discourse, two influential strands can be identified as emanating from this particular time. The first was a form of republicanism that (gradually) accepted the Irish Free State (later, in 1937, to be refashioned as a Republic) and committed itself to the maintenance of this state. Such a discourse of republicanism would lead to the state-establishment republicanism of *Fianna Fáil*, for example, in the ensuing decades of the twentieth century. The second strand, with which the present research concerns itself with, refused to accept the partition of Ireland into two separate states. Although less central at this particular point, this strand of republican discourse maintained its commitment to the ideals of republicanism through what it would term as the ‘reunification’ of Ireland. Thus, republicanism evolved into both banal and hot nationalist discourses in lieu of the civil war. Whilst the bulk of republican activities in the first half of the twentieth century centred around its banal variations, ‘hot’ republican discourse would undergo another period of relative dormancy or marginalisation. Yet the seeds sown by the treaty ensured a protestant majority in the newly devolved northern parliament, something that would result in the maintenance of an ethno-cratic state

¹³ See <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/politics/docs/pir24416.htm> for full text

(cf. Yiftachel 2006). It was in this newly agonised socio-political context that republican discourse would re-proliferate in its most fervent intervention in recent history, but not before another organisational split would further condition its discourse features.

Contemporary Irish Republicanism

Whilst mid-century hot republican discourse can be seen as a temporal extension of republican discourse of the old I.R.A, some notable ideological evolutions came in the wake of new leaders adopting Marxist analyses of the Irish question. This politicisation of republicanism was not unprecedented (James Connolly had achieved something similar at the turn of the previous century) (O'Broin 2009). Yet in the face of continued oppression and excoriation, northern based republicans grew weary of the southern command's Marxian idealism, seeking more active, militant defenders. This ideological schism would divide republican organisations between their Official and Provisional factions (Bean 2007). The former maintained its socialist interpretation of the Troubles and played a lesser role in the ensuing conflict. The latter would form the Provisional I.R.A. (PIRA) This would, from the perspective of the present research, provide the necessary historical conditions that would ultimately facilitate the mainstreaming of Irish republicanism. Communication strategies devised by Provisionals in this time are analysed in detail in the subsequent chapter. For now, the remainder of this synopsis charts the genealogy of the discourse of provisional republicanism – or simply, republicanism hereafter. As this time-frame is further discussed later in regard to media and communication strategies, its consideration is limited here to the key historic and ideological developments.

The republican self-consciousness which begot the fracturing of the movement, from the provisional perspective, is conceived of as a re-iteration of the republican tradition of 1798 and 1916 (McKearney 2011). The symbolism of a rising phoenix

(which the PIRA adopted as its logo) captured this re-incarnated, palingenetic spirit. Similarly, the title of ‘provisional’ was chosen as a direct linkage to the Provisional government declared in the wake of the 1918 general election by Sinn Fein (Dingley 2012). Implicit in provisional discourse, then, was a historical narrative which tried to memorialise the republican community’s ‘struggle’ throughout history, and to legitimise provisional violence as the continuation of Ireland’s quest for liberation. This cavalier militancy characterised the early discourse of the movement, as captured by its central ideological concept of Eire Nua, which envisaged the establishment of a federalist republic in Ireland with devolved parliaments in all four provinces (Tonge 2006). This would, it was theorised, manifest after the withdrawal of British troops and the dissolution of the existing Republic of Ireland. Thus, the early phases of the Troubles and the Provisionals were marred by militarism and violence, with ideological goals being expressed in quasi-republican terms. More adjacent peripheral concepts in this era mirrored the demands of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, calling for equal voting and housing rights from a broadly leftist perspective.

The process of mainstreaming with which this project concerns itself can trace its strategic roots back to the efforts of Provisionals in the 1980s. The limitations of militancy in forwarding a political cause became apparent to republican strategists, (Somerville and Purcell 2011) which resulted in a shift toward republican constitutional politics unfolding in the 1980s. This resulted in the production of more politically attuned republican discourse features. The decade began with the Hunger Strikes of 1981, which saw the (re)proliferation of the republican concept of self-sacrifice and martyrdom (Doyle 2015). Whilst republicanism remained marginalised, such non-violence attracted a lot of attention to the cause (see next chapter for a consideration of underlying communication strategies). Importantly, though, another organisational split in the late eighties—this time based around the practice of abstentionism in devolved parliaments—would pave the way for

republicanism to begin tiptoeing toward mainstream political power, through the political efforts of Sinn Féin (Frampton 2009). Thus, this phase of the republican discourse was characterizable through ‘the Armalite and the Ballot Box’, a term coined by leading republican strategist Danny Morrison to capture a dual commitment to guerrilla tactics and political agitation. This would remain the epitome of republican discourse until circumstances began to change in the early nineties. Both sides, weary of the ongoing war, began to accept the possibility of a peaceful resolution (Tonge 2005). For republicanism, this entailed the relegation of an ideological concept that had remained central to adjacent since the rebellion of 1798. In accepting the limitations of the long war, republican discourse would slowly morph from that of a militant revolutionary movement to a cooperative, mainstreaming political party – the following chapter will address strategies which facilitated this shift. Ultimately, the political efforts toward this end culminated in the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

Discursively, then, republican discourse can be seen to shift toward a ‘new mode’¹⁴ from the peace process onward. Republicans who did not subscribe to the peace agreement, varyingly denoted dissident or dissenting republicans depending on their particular stance, maintained a discourse akin to that of the Provisionals in the 1980s. This shift toward centralised political power, as it did in the 1920s, caused republican discourse features to adapt to more peripheral concerns (McGovern 2000, McGovern 2004, McGovern and Shirlow 1998, McGovern et al. 2010). Republicanism’s historic connections with socialist politics were to shape its early political efforts, which produced leftist policies which represented the wishes of the nationalist community in the north. Indeed, the realities of consociationalism entailed republican political representatives making major

¹⁴ A term taken from the IRA’s New Year Statement in (2005)
<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/othelem/organ/ira/ira060105.htm>

concessions in terms of policing and national identity.¹⁵ (Maillot 2004) Yet, its internal discourse structures elide such stark transitions in modality and gloss over any internal contradictions which underpin the contemporary political efforts of Sinn Féin. For instance, in spite of constructing itself as the party of peace (Alonso 2016), Sinn Fein also maintains an active commitment to republican ritualism, funerary practices and commemoration (Hoey 2013, Whiting 2016). Similarly, it maintains a revolutionary rhetoric in spite of propagating a central-leftist ideology akin to Syriza in Greece or Podemos in Spain (Hoey 2018). As such, its adjacent concepts can be seen to have expanded greatly in this era owing to the necessity of political progress. Yet the sole uniting aspect of republicanism as a discourse which ties this latest incarnation with its antecedents is its pervasive, central concept of Irish liberty and independence, which contemporary republicans would signify as re-unification.

Summary:

The above historical contextualisation produces an over-arching account of Irish republicanism as a discourse that has been re-appropriated over the course of history. Against the historic backdrop of a growing national self-consciousness, and broader global evolutions in political thought, republicanism presented itself at specific junctures to nationalist ideologues seeking an alternative framework. More importantly, republicanism was shown to be predominantly peripheral to society, emerging as a hot form of nationalism through specific interventions. The corollary of this is that it underwent long periods of dormancy. In spite of this we can, over its course, note a perennially present dimension in its discourse features: the inherent antipathy to arbitrary power which expresses itself as a right to national

¹⁵ The intervention which ordained the peace process endorsed a consociationalist framework of government, which sought to empower competing elites from opposing ethnic blocs with a view to stabilising the conflict (Lijphart 1969). Importantly, this required elite actors to act in the 'spirit of accommodation' and engage in concession, reflection and dialogue (Steiner 2009).

self-determination for Ireland. Political realities have seen this concept be framed as liberty, independence or (re)unification depending on specific historic context, but the underlying aim remains ostensibly the same. Its predominantly marginalised position throughout history, however, has prevented republicanism as a discourse from expanding its adjacent and peripheral concepts beyond a loose (and varying) commitment to socialist principles and sporadic constitutionality. Where republican actors did move toward centralised political power (namely, 1918 and 1986 onward), there is evidence of increased politicisation of discourse features. Relatedly, its commitment to violence was shown to also vary in terms of centrality throughout history.

Thus, claims of ideological lightness that are typically levelled at republicanism can begin to be accounted for through such a discursive reading, which, further, foregrounds the episodic nature of Irish republican discourse (something which contravenes the claims of republicans themselves). But more importantly, it provides a clear indication of the macro-level move toward centralised political power that republican discourse has undergone for the last two centuries. Contemporarily, linking political efforts to previous incarnations of republicanism was theorised to produce a potential disparity between surface level rhetoric and real-world political actions of elite republicans. Thus, as a discourse, Irish republicanism can be seen to be quite formulaic and light as a result of its placement on the hot pole of the hot-cold dyad (as an unrealised narrative). Moreover, from a discursive perspective, Irish republicanism can be considered cohesively or genealogically, overcoming the pitfalls of epoch-specific research, honing in on the commonalities and aspirations which unite republicans across history and continue to manifest in their discourse. This builds on the insights of research which notes a need to interpret republican actions from the perspective of republicans or as ideological actors. By examining republicanism as a way of speaking and knowing, we can identify the commonplace features of Irish republicanism which historically

unite these interventions and continue to guide its contemporary manifestations to this day. Furthermore, a gradual move toward centralised political power can be theorised to change the domains of interaction wherein republicanism is negotiated internally and in the broader public sphere. As such, the strategies which underpin the reproduction of republican discourse and the mediated flows of information and spaces of interaction where these discourses are reproduced at the grassroots level are overviewed in the next chapter.

(NEW) MEDIA AND REPUBLICANISM

The previous chapter presented this thesis' theorisation of nationalism as a discourse, reproduced by (non) elite participants through habitual, ideological forms of (inter)action. Yet, this broad theoretical point of departure — and the resulting analytical framework adopted in the ensuing chapter— can benefit from further elaboration on the qualitative aspects of participants in (and their interactions with) virtual media spheres and new information communication technologies. Accordingly, republicanism's media relations and communication strategies (and the historic circumstances in which they emerged), its embracement of new information communication technologies and social media, and the communication strategies which underpin its discursive mainstreaming are overviewed hereafter. This historical contextualisation and review of the canon will serve as a basis in presenting an account of republicanism's utilisation of (new) media affordances as a (virtual) counter public (Fraser 1990), comprised of internal sphericules (Todd 1998) of opinion formation. This offers a structural and theoretical framework in which to interpret the discursive action of republican social media users in both individual and collective forms, as well as accounting for (counter) hegemonic discourses flows (and their instrumental, strategic deployment by elite sources) in a virtually mediated grouping that is subject to space/time distancing (Giddens 1985). After this, the focus of the chapter turns to more general theoretical concerns related to the study of virtual socio-political action and identification practices. Toward this end, a critical account of the internet as a space for discursive action— which accounts for the underlying profit-orientation as well as socio-political functions of certain Social Networking Sites

(SNSs)— is offered. Specific attention is paid here to the generic categories of data sources relied on hereafter, specifically internet discussion forums, Facebook and Twitter.

Irish Republicanism and (New) Media:

In providing a basis for understanding the republican movement's relationship with (virtual) media spheres, two core points are addressed here. First, a historic contextualisation for the republican movement's interactions with mainstream and social media is presented, which relies on a critical review of the canon of relevant literature. Secondly, the section proffers a theoretical conceptualisation of republicanism's virtual manifestations as a counter-hegemonic public sphere (cf. Fraser 1990), internally comprised of a variety of (overlapping) sphericules (Todd 1998) or less-centralised, microcosmic publics. This rests upon a broader understanding of Irish republicanism as a counter-public (cf. Fraser 1990) (alternatively termed counter-hegemonic public, sub-altern public, radical public spheres etc.) These are discursive spheres that develop within or outside the official public sphere, 'where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.' (Fraser, cited in Calhoun (1992: 123)) Importantly, this understanding allows us to appreciate how spaces that are peripheral to the societal public sphere are autotelic, in that they 'may only become visible thanks to the production of texts and their circulation.' (Warner 2002, cited in Hoey 2018: 11)

Historical Context:

In his overview of Irish republican activism since the Good Friday Agreement, Hoey (2018) identifies three distinct periods in scholarly activity relating to Irish republicanism and mass-mediated communication. Namely, i) the Troubles to the GFA, where research elucidated the media's anti-republican bias and the

movement's subversive, reactionary media activism, ii) the Peace Process, where scholarly focus tended to the legitimation and selling of a new mode of republicanism to the in-group as well as the legitimation and acceptance of Sinn Féin in the broader public sphere and popular culture, and iii) the post-conflict era where literature has focused on the movement's utilisation of new media affordances toward both dissident and establishment aims. Assessed in turn below, these phases correspond to the proliferation of the contemporary phase of republican discourse in its 'new mode'/ post-conflict modality. More broadly, then, what follows strives to account for how republicanism has been integrated into the societal public sphere and spaces of political opinion formation. The negotiation of this assimilation can be seen to have historically conditioned both internal and external perceptions of republican social identity (and its representations in (mass/cultural) media forms) in the contemporary period. Furthermore, this process was formative in the development of (elite-led) communication strategies which persist in novel, diffusively reproduced forms to the present day. As such, beyond providing a historical discussion of communication strategies, this section explores (social) media as spaces of ideological contestation wherein historically conditioned ulterior republican strategies have shaped discourse and identification processes and group structure.

The Troubles to the Good Friday Agreement:

The resulting socio-political tensions which grew in the wake of the civil rights movement laid the foundations for the provisional faction to emerge as the leading representative within the broader republican movement (Bean 2007, Maillot 2004). As it relates to the present dissertation's focus, a consideration of the media (and its role in the conflict) can contextualise the broader perceptions of republicanism in the public sphere that were inculcated in this period and which arguably continue to inhibit the movement to the present day. The Troubles also saw the republican

movement adopt key communicative transformations which relate to (and influence) the movement's contemporary utilisation of new media affordances. To account for these disparate concerns, the hegemonic media's institutional responses to the conflict is firstly discussed, before the responsive efforts of the marginalised republican movement are presented.

i) Institutional Response to Conflict:

In the wake of the civil rights movement, and the outbreak of civil unrest in the late 1960s, the domestic media agendas of the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland frequently centred around events in Northern Ireland. As Taylor (1996) notes, this new phase of political and civil unrest made Northern Ireland more 'newsworthy'. Republicanism's integration into broader public spheres in this time, then, emanated from its proximity to the conflict. As the key shapers of public deliberation (van Dijk 1998), media systems are the centrifugal points of communication which furnish individual citizens with information necessary to make informed, rationalised political choices (McNair 2017). This has led to an idealised account of the media as a 'fourth estate' proliferating into western academic discourse (McNair 1998) and becoming enshrined in normative theories of the press (Habermas 1962). Key to this perspective is the idea that the media ought to act as an impartial relater of information and a watch-dog on democratically elected power, necessitating a firm boundary between state political actors and the media system (Schultz 1998). Theoretically, this neutrality facilitates a process of public opinion formation which affords impartial access to competing social groupings and perspectives in an open and accessible public sphere. Yet, such impartiality on behalf of the media (in particular in times of conflict) is broadly regarded as an unrealised ideal and is notably absent from critical accounts of the early responses of media institutions to the onset of the Troubles in the late sixties. Rather, both institutional media systems endorsed the hegemonic order and an

ethno-centric interpretation of the conflict by working in unison to limit or censor information. This strategic marginalisation of republicanism from the public sphere relied on Conservative governments (and media elites) *de facto* regarding republicans as Other and as terrorist to their respective public networks, (Lago 1998) through an 'orthodox' interpretation of the media-terror nexus (see Wilkinson (1997) for an indicative overview of paradigm). In this view, terrorist acts rely on mass media coverage to succeed in getting their message across—what has elsewhere been termed a propaganda of the deed (Laqueur 1998). State intervention, in this view, aims to deprive terrorists of the mass media coverage necessary to promulgating support for their cause.

Considered from this perspective, both the British and Irish governments' actions exhibit a cognisance of the need to control media output pertaining to the conflict so as to condition public opinion to remain in their favour and to mitigate against the potentially negative ramifications which candid reportage of domestic violence could have on political stability. Accordingly, initial institutional efforts sought to minimise the positive reportage of republicanism and promote the positive representation of state-sanctioned efforts (Cottle and Condit 1997). At first, such measures were somewhat indirectly imposed in the context of the UK through a series of legislative barriers and obstacles which impeded the scope of journalistic work and imposed novel legal obligations on the praxis of their reportage. For instance, it became illegal for journalists to withhold the names of their sources if it was deemed to be in breach of national security (Miller 1994). Similarly, *the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974* was edited in 1976 to make it illegal to withhold information that could lead to the capture of a 'terrorist' (Curtis 1984). The restrictiveness of these requirements stymied the reporter's freedom and indirectly limited the tone and register of reportage on the IRA that could be disseminated. Yet such criticisms presuppose an active commitment to impartial reportage by media professionals, something which was not always realised in the context of the

Troubles. Many scholars of this era (see Miller 1994), Hayes (2012), and Curtis (1984) for examples) document a litany of examples of acquiescence on behalf of the British press toward the wishes of the government and elite political actors. Carruthers (2011), for instance, notes that the British government communicated to the BBC that, regardless of its commitment to impartiality (as laid out in its charter), the BBC were not expected to remain neutral between the British government/Army and the IRA. The habitual nature of government intervention in this era effectively inculcated a style of self-censorship, whereby journalists were encouraged to anticipate and, ultimately, avoid government flak (Curtis 1984, Lago 1998). In another sense, state media outlets naturally oriented toward such an ethnocentric interpretation of the conflict (Curtis 1984, Bennett 1998). Hayes (2012) further this point by arguing that many editors and senior journalists simply detested the IRA, Gerry Adams and the republican movement, and were themselves more comfortable dealing with oversimplified, stereotypical images of masked men, violence and militarism, reporting their activities with an implicit revulsion (Carruthers 2011). Thus, we can appreciate the degree to which media professionals and gate-keepers of mass media were constituted by the hegemonic discourses they were complicit in promulgating.

British anti-republican efforts escalated from legal hampering to direct censorship in 1988 (Lago 1998) when a new law outlawed the transmission of voices of representatives of various (paramilitary) organisations on the airwaves. This was, as noted by Miller (1994) and Lago (1998), the most marked and direct example of governmental interference in broadcasting up to that point. Although not solely targeted at republicans, the broadcasting ban served to further marginalise the movement in a period when, internally, it was morphing toward a modality of political agitation (epitomised by the symbol of the 'Ballot Box'). A pre-requisite to attaining electoral support in democratic systems, however, was access to/

favourable presence in the public sphere, something which the stringent censorship measures circumvented.

As strict as they were, British efforts paled in comparison in terms of severity to those imposed by the Irish media. Despite its anti-IRA sentiment, the UK's media system had far more liberties in terms of coverage than its Irish counterparts (Horgan 2001). Whereas broadcasters in Britain were permitted to dub or subtitle the words of representatives of banned organisations in a creative by-passing of material (Hoey 2018, Lago 1998, Hayes 2012)—often resulting in comical reproductions of interviews—Irish broadcasters had no such option. Similarly, toward the end of the conflict British journalists could expect to interview elected members of Sinn Féin regarding constituency issues or in the run-up to elections they were contesting, (Lago 1998, Somerville and Purcell 2011) RTÉ, conversely, made no such allowances (Horgan 2001). The severity of this disparity held its roots in a long-standing tradition of a catholic and conservative cultural identity that was institutionalised in the context of Ireland's national superstructure (Brennan 2019). Censorship of print media was commonplace in Ireland, having been enshrined into the newfound state's legal structure in 1929 following recommendations made by the Dail's *Committee on Evil Literature* (held in 1926). From the establishment of its national broadcaster, Radió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ), the Irish government were cognizant of the potential influence that media could have on the social cognitions of the newly connected national audience (Brennan 2019). Yet, in the beginning, the government afforded RTÉ relative autonomy in terms of operational matters (Horgan 2001). That said, RTÉ and other national media outlets broadly shared in the government's ideals of constructing a new, distinct Irish national identity through the paternalistic interpellation of conservative, Catholic values¹⁶. However, woven into the fabric of Section 31 of

¹⁶ Similar to the early mission of the Reithian BBC, yet operating within a different socio-religious value framework.

The Broadcasting Authority Act of 1960—the bill which instituted RTÉ in its capacity as national broadcaster—was a caveat that enabled the Minister for Post and Telegraphs to prevent RTÉ from broadcasting any material by way of a ministerial order (Horgan 2001).

From the perspective of Ireland's fledging national, hegemonic institutions—chiefly, the state, church and their complicit media system—the outbreak of conflict posed a serious threat to the order and identity they desired. The potential for republican ideals filtrating into spheres of national opinion formation rendered the possibility of a shift in electoral support all too real. It was in this context that the first invocation of ministerial censorship was made in 1971, where it was ordered that RTÉ:

...refrain from broadcasting any matter that could be calculated to promote the aims or activities of any organisation which engages in, promotes, encourages or advocates the attaining of any political objective by violent means. (MacDermott 1995: 31)

When pressured for clarification by the RTÉ Authority, the (Fianna Fáil) Minister for Post and Telegraphs, Gerry Collins refused (Maillot 2004). The result was a vague, prohibitive law which was left open to interpretation by broadcasters—much to their dismay. In spite of being vague, however, the effects of the bill were to be long-lasting and effective in minimising the reportage of republican activities. While there were notable contestations of this ruling¹⁷, the directive was re-issued

¹⁷ See Horgan (2001) for discussions of these contestations, most notably RTÉ's interview with Séan MacStíofán in 1972 and its subsequent institutional fallout.

by a minister every year (with a few minor edits) between 1970 and 1994, without contestation by any member of the Dáil (Horgan 2001).

The above historical synopses reveal the media's centrality to the conflict and the ramifications this had for Irish republican social identification. Moreover, the ulterior motives of the media systems in Ireland and Britain (and significantly, how these deviated from ideals) become clear upon consideration. The Irish institutional response sought to preserve its newfound hegemonic stability and distinct Irish identity though limiting the reportage of a movement which legitimated an alternative national framework, whereas British institutional actors tried to present themselves to its internal audience as benign, neutral arbitrators (Hayes 2012), intervening in violence that was the direct cause of conflicting political identities and irreconcilable grievances between two communities (Miller 1994). In forgoing their democratic obligations, commentators such as Lago (1994) and Schlesinger (1991) argue that media systems involved in reporting the conflict were complicit in presenting a one-dimensional, one-sided account of the Troubles. Rather than seeking to facilitate deliberative public engagement that could ease socio-political cleavages, both media systems largely omitted the republican perspective and limited information to that which helped to perpetuate their privileged, hegemonic positions. This point is developed by Miller (1994), who posits that through the introduction of censorship, both governments were responsible for ruling out 'a whole class of viewpoints from the popular debate surrounding the conflict' (48) and limiting the range of conclusions that the public could draw from the debate. Other scholars have documented a strategy of depowering republicanism through criminalisation. For instance, Taylor (1996) gives the example of Roy Mason, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, putting pressure on the BBC to subject the IRA to a process of 'criminalisation' through their reportage. Spencer (2000) similarly notes that rather than politicising the conflict, the media strove to construct those who they perceived to be

responsible for it in the most inhumane and criminal of terms. This criminalisation divorced republicanism's justificatory frameworks for political violence from the acts themselves, presenting such acts as decontextualised violence.

An over-riding goal of these concerted media efforts was to delegitimise and marginalise the IRA and Sinn Féin (Hayes 2012, Miller 1993, 1994, Rolston and Miller 1996). This was often achieved by conflating the two and failing to make the distinction between the political and militant commitments of each organisation (Miller 1994). Furthermore, they sought to dehumanise prominent republicans, (Somerville and Purcell 2011, Savage 2015, Curtis 1984) As Cohen (2000: 38) notes, 'Gerry Adams was kept off British television not because of the unlikely prospect that he would convert anyone to the IRA's cause, but because there was a possibility that he would seem more human.' Dehumanising the actions and words of so-called 'terrorists' has the effect of 'othering' the problematic force/individual and elides a consideration of contextual factors which conditioned and underpinned their radicalisation.

The effects of more macro-level changes in political communication and media at the time, too, must be seen to have exerted an effect on conditioning public perceptions of republicanism. The 'Troubles' broadly coincided with increasing tabloidization¹⁸ and the rise of the British tabloid press' political power. This resulted in republicanism routinely being represented in reductionist, sensationalised frames which played to affect and in-group political sentiment. The tabloid press—with their propensity for 'lurid sensationalism' and violence (Cottle and Condit 1997)—were not interested in dissecting the republican viewpoint or promoting a better understanding of their ideology and perspective. The result of this preoccupation with terror was that instances of political violence appeared in

¹⁸ Denoting the rising influence of the tabloid form in the public sphere, as well as the proliferation of its associated news values – lurid sensationalism, gaudy tone, humour etc.— into other media forms. See Rowe (2011) for a more comprehensive overview

the news-agenda void of context, essentially corralling audiences into blaming the conflict on the mindless violence of republicans. Beyond delegitimising the political dimension of republicanism, these institutional efforts also sought to strengthen in-group cohesion by propagating a narrative of wartime, and the expected the civic support that usually entails (Bennett 2002, Curtis 1984). This point is supported by Rolston and Miller (1996) and Miller (1994) who also note that early media efforts (i.e pre-peace process) were staunchly anti-republican, anti-terrorist and provided no context. Responsibility for the outbreak of violence was laid firmly at the feet of the IRA in some instances, or, as Miller (1994) notes, often instances of political violence were blamed on an abstract concept of ‘terrorism’, that was accepted axiomatically by the institutional order. Hayes (2012) goes so far as to suggest that the British government had the ulterior motive of invoking a common public enemy to distract the masses from the domestic shortcomings of British conservatism.

The above points demonstrate the critical efficacy of state intervention in mediation of the conflict in preserving elite power. Moreover, the symbiotic connexion shared between the elite political and media actors, who largely belonged to the same social class and adopted the same ethno-centric interpretations of the conflict in an era beset by an increased tabloidisation of the press, becomes clear from such a critical reading. In essence, those with power sought to preserve it through strategically salacious or violent reportage which constructed a war-time, us vs them frame of mass interpretation, structurally impelling submission to the perspective that the IRA were the central reason for the conflict. This is relevant to the present thesis insofar as it elucidates the self-preservation measures of elite, institutional power which republicanism self-identifies as challenging. Significantly, the above also outlines the historic conditions in which republicanism’s reactionary communication strategies (surveyed hereafter) were devised. From the perspective of the academy, a growing

body of research has demonstrated the lasting effects of systemic media bias on social cognition (see Eveland and Shah 2003 for instance). Importantly, then, the realities of censorship – and the effect censorial measures had on public opinion formation and perceptions of republicanism – can be regarded as historically conditioning many of the stereotypes and reductionist frames of interpretation that would inhibit the movement’s later political efforts and its subsequent social identification.

ii) The marginalised republican response to conflict (and censorship):

At the outbreak of the Northern Irish conflict, the republican movement lacked any effective public relations capability. As a result, egregious acts of military misconduct—such as the Bloody Sunday— were not properly exploited by the republican leadership. As the conflict progressed, communication strategists gradually recognised the need to develop different ‘frames’ for the conflict (cf. Entman 1993); indeed, ‘[t]he battle over what frame to use to explain the conflict would be played out over the subsequent decades.’ (Somerville and Purcell 2011) We can discern from this that republican communication strategies sought to disseminate a republican account of conflict-related events and to garner attention to the republican perspective. The initial stage of the conflict, however, was characterised by instability and the escalation of violence on all sides (Lee 1989, Somerville and Purcell 2011). It was in this violence-laden context that the provisional movement’s command arrived at the choice to communicate primarily through the propaganda of the deed¹⁹ (Laqueur 1998)—which strove to attract attention through large-scale acts of political violence, which, in the case of the PIRA, typically constituted bombs. These ‘spectaculars’ were designed to have a dualistic political effect and a propaganda effect. Conducting a bombing campaign

¹⁹ For general account see: Laqueur (1998), for republican-specific accounts see: Alonso (2001), and Somerville and Purcell (2011)

on the UK mainland, it was theorised, would garner much more international media attention. Accordingly, press-releases and statements which followed the PIRA's attacks and bombings were intentionally written as sound-bites for the global media and were designed to have a lasting effect on listeners (Somerville and Purcell 2011). It appears also that the movement became adept at producing apologies in the wake of attacks and bombings which resulted in civilian casualties or fatalities (Hayes 2012, Miller 1994). Interestingly, both of these discourse features, code-worded bombing warnings and post-fact apologies, have become somewhat synonymous with republicanism since. The internal strategies of the provisional movement in this era strove to promulgate and disseminate justificatory frameworks for acts of political violence designed to broadcast republicanism. The realities of censorship, however, ensured that such efforts rarely received positive coverage.

The 1980s saw Sinn Féin refine their political public relations and incorporate a more complex approach than the propaganda of the deed phase. This, in part, resulted from a growing political dimension within the movement: the decade began with the-republican hunger strikes, the second of which, in 1981, gained international notoriety. Somerville and Purcell (2011) note that by this time the organisation was able to draw upon the wealth of knowledge it had accumulated in the previous decade in order to maximise exposure and influence coverage in the media. The movement, however, was still very much affected by the constraints of broadcast censorship. Pitted against state suppression of their efforts, Sinn Féin and other republican actors developed effective political-public relations capabilities (Spencer 2000). Particularly, they exploited the distinct commitments of Sinn Féin and the PIRA by using elected Sinn Féin representatives (who were subject to less strict censorship) as spokespersons for the movements as a whole. This was part of a conscious move to counteract the media's traditional militaristic constructions of the movement that had, by then, dominated social cognitions and

perceptions of republicanism. Republican strategist Danny Morrison, cognizant of the need for republican analysis to feature as part of the mainstream media, recruited and trained appropriate spokespeople to communicate their points effectively and in way that would resonate with mainstream audiences. In doing so, the aim was to remove the mask from the republican movement and re-humanise it and its aspirations in the face of active suppression and criminalisation (Somerville and Purcell 2011, Maillot 2004).

The rise of republican political muralism in this era is of further pertinence to the concerns of the present thesis. Murals had a long tradition in Northern Ireland²⁰, but were utilised by the republican movement from the eighties onward for a range of political functions (Goulding and McCroy 2020). In one sense, murals were territorial and were effective in marking in-group territory in contested spaces like inner-city enclaves in Belfast (Rolston 2018). Yet, strategically, murals embodied a (Saatchi and Saatchi inspired) commitment to ease of message consumption (Somerville and Purcell 2011). Republican activist and muralist Danny Devenney²¹, among others, has made similar observations, noting that the primary functions of muralism in this era was to unambiguously get the republican message across (Goulding and McCroy 2020). We see, then, that republican communication in this era was inherently reactionary, utilising alternative media forms to combat the realities of censorship. Beyond this, however, republicanism's uptake of muralism, and the proliferation of a codified genre of muralism within the republican movement in this era, further offers historical insight relating to the utilisation of

²⁰ 'According to Rolston, 'Northern Ireland has the longest continuous mural painting tradition in the world' (Rolston, 2018, p. 370). Locals have been painting slogans and murals on the walls of Belfast's working-class communities since 1908 (Lisle, 2006) –nearly thirteen years before the partition of Ireland. During that time, Protestant unionists began to paint murals on the 12th of July in conjunction with the annual Orangemen's celebration as an expression of their British identity' (Goulding and McCroy 2020: 3)

²¹ A distinction he himself does not make, preferring to see his muralism as a modality of activism and as part of the broader republican struggle.

new and alternative media forms. Whilst the messages propagated were often elite-determined, the production of murals was more diffuse, being conducted by volunteer-activists, some of whom learned as they went (Bukaty 2016). Such innovative utilisation of media can also be identified within other forms in this era, too, particularly republican-produced newspapers.

For example, Hoey (2018) documents a rise in the use of Gestetner machines during the Troubles to produce local community news sheets in west Belfast. Such endeavours furnished members of the republican community with the partisan information and perspectives that were omitted from mainstream reportage, and proved effective in fostering a tentative form of shared republican experience of the conflict. The split between the Official and the Provisional IRA instigated the advent of a new revitalised incarnation of Sinn Féin's internal party paper, *An Phoblacht*, that was initially based in Dublin with an initial circulation of 20-30,000 (Hoey 2018). Maillot (2004) argues that the paper's external influence peaked at the time of the hunger-strike, where, from the perspective of the international media it acted as a source for the republican movement. Thereafter its role and functionality became more characterised by internal commitments. In an effort to ensure that their messages began to gain traction in international media and to improve internal organisational efficacy the paper's production was moved to Belfast. In addition, the Sinn Féin press centre was opened in west Belfast (Curtis 1984). Both of these actions centralised the movement's communicative control in the northern part of the island and, more pressingly, in the hands of the provisional elite.

The Troubles then, marks the historic span in which republicanism engendered communication strategies that strove to legitimate its own image and political efforts to internal and external publics. Implicit in these efforts was the utilisation of (alternative) media at all levels of the movement. At an ulterior level, these developments sought to exert some control over cognition and perception of the

movement and its role in the conflict. The communication and media strategies adopted exhibit a gradual acknowledgement of the limitations of propaganda of the deed and a cognisance of the potential of the media as a resource to social movements and the beneficence of activist literacy in communication techniques. This shift in strategy, from our discursive perspective, sought to construct and legitimise republican social identity (and its core political actors) and the ideology of republicanism, which was tainted by state narratives in the public sphere. Broadly then, beyond moving toward systemic political power, these strategies aimed to regain communicative control and power for the movement in the broader political sphere, and instil a centralised form of communicative power through shaping the republican movement's internal cognition.

The Peace Process:

In the late eighties and early nineties, the communication strategies and media activities of elite actors on both sides of the ethno-religious conflict reflect a growing acknowledgement of the limitations of armed conflict. For republicans, this crystallised in a fluctuating commitment to propaganda of the deed (or 'the Armalite') and constitutional political efforts ('the Ballot Box'). However, faced with increasing public condemnation deriving from a marked increase in bombing campaigns during the early nineties, some senior republicans began to sense that the political sphere was the most viable arena in which to agitate for their goals (Tonge 2005). For the state actors, this shift entailed a recognition of the necessity to engage republicanism in the political arena. It was in this context of shifting perception that the strict censorship measures imposed by both governments began to lapse.

After an emphatic beginning, the Irish government's ability to censor what RTÉ broadcast came to a sudden end in January 1994. Despite the Conservative party, under the leadership of John Major, maintaining its power in Britain in the early

nineties, pressure began to be applied to emulate the actions of their Irish counterparts. This pressure amounted to a legal challenge from the National Union of Journalists in 1994, something which itself was symptomatic of an amelioration in attitude and dispositions of the press toward republicanism, perhaps brought about by the growing recognition of the viability of a peaceful resolution to the conflict (Miller and McLaughlin 1996). It was against this backdrop that the ban was ultimately lifted in 1994, albeit only after the PIRA had declared a ceasefire (Miller and McLaughlin 1996).

Republicans were now uninhibited in having their voices broadcast and sought to capitalise on their newfound relationship with the news media by combatting the criminalised, militarised connotations they had accrued in the mediated realities of broader society by foregrounding the political dimensions of the movement in media exposures. As both Spencer (2006) and Sparre (2000) note, their engagement in this regard ultimately enabled them to move from political pariahs to central figures in the political landscape of Northern Ireland. The possibility of a political resolution to the conflict, reinforced by the commitments put forward in the *Downing Street Declaration* of late 1993, provided the necessary framework for actors from all stakeholder groups to enter into dialogue. Yet, at this time, Sinn Féin were politically marginalised and had no direct link to the British government²². Their commitment to dialogue, then, presented government actors with a challenge: how to bring representatives of the republican movement to the negotiating table without losing the support of those who were already engaged in peace talks. Factions that had been warring with each other for years were now, somewhat unexpectedly, in need of a mode of communication. In efforts to try and ‘save face’ concerned parties turned toward the newly-censorship-free mass media and

²² The communicative back-channel that had operated for years between the IRA and the British government ceased in 1993 when the British government ended communications. (Mallie and McKittrick 1996)

engaged in what has been since ascribed as ‘megaphone diplomacy’²³.’ (Spencer (2006), Miller and Mclaughlin (1996), Sparre (2000))

This indirect communication in the public sphere—beyond progressing both sides of the divide toward peace talks—formed part of a larger scale, orchestrated integration of republicanism into the consociational civic and political framework of a shared Northern Ireland. With the cessation of censorship republicans now had novel media resources at their disposal (Dixon 2006). The corollary effect of this however, was that the media were provided with more avenues through which they could enact their anti-republican sentiments. Importantly, this negotiation seemed to predominantly take place in mass mediated flows of information and popular culture. A snapshot of this can be captured in Gerry Adams’ tumultuous first interview on *The Late Late Show*, where he was introduced as ‘The most controversial man in Ireland.’ (RTÉ 1994) The politicisation of the movement was, in this phase, continually hampered by the negative connotations it had been imbued with in the early conflict and the resumption of bombing campaigns by the PIRA as the decade progressed. Accordingly, the road to peace was, ultimately, a long and protracted one. The election of the New Labour government under the leadership of Tony Blair in 1997 provided the necessary impetus for a broader shift in public deliberations which again saw elite political actors and the media strive for peace. Actors on all sides, took it upon themselves to promote the attainability and necessity of lasting peace. Communication strategies adopted in this era aimed to achieve this end, and broadly sought to dismantle the affective resonance of the masked face of republicanism that had been instilled through decades of state propaganda and anti-state propaganda of the deed.

²³ The practices of engaging in dialogue and sending messages via the media to other parties in a conflict, in a situation where it is not possible or desirable to conduct formal negotiations for whatever reason...[it entails] passing information to journalists...hoping it will be picked up and reach the other side’ (Sparre 2000: 89-90)

McLaughlin and Baker (2010) note that, at a local level, the media were keen to impress upon its audiences the need for peace. This is captured by the fact that the three dominant newspapers in Belfast at the time—*The Newsletter* (a staunchly unionist paper), *The Belfast Telegraph* (which had readerships on both sides of the community), and *The Irish News* (a paper that was broadly supportive of nationalist ideals)—all recommended a Yes vote in the Good Friday Agreement. Similarly, the authors identify a softening of governmental tone in the run up to key milestones of the peace process, specifically, in official Northern Ireland Office adverts which saw a shift from ominous representations toward a more sanguine and optimistic tone. The critical point here lies in the malleability of government propaganda, which can be correlated to their ulterior political motives, whilst strategically (dis)empowering republicanism. More broadly, the state's communicative resources were fuelled toward fostering the political arrangements contingent to peace, having:

...distributed to every home a copy of the Agreement document, its cover showing the archetypal nuclear family silhouetted against a rising sun, symbolising the Agreement as a new dawn for the people of Northern Ireland.... these idealised, post-ceasefire images marked a radical departure from the violent imagery ... because they dispensed with the anti-terrorist message altogether and held out the prospect of real peace and a final settlement to the conflict (55).

Such measures demonstrate the centrality of culturally codified communication to legitimisation of republicanism as political actors in the public sphere. Indeed, there is a (perhaps misguided) perception that representations of republican paramilitaries in Hollywood blockbuster films were generally sympathetic to the republican cause owing to diasporic connections between Ireland and the U.S.A. More critical research (Connelly 2014, McLoone 2011, Hill 1987, Ivory 2007) has questioned the true beneficence of these representations, noting their proclivity to

rely on reductionist overly romanticised depictions (in a time when republicanism was trying to mitigate against its violent past.) (Alonso 2016) Nevertheless, the above examples demonstrate an acute awareness on behalf of the academy and elite political actors of potential of cultural legitimation. Furthermore, regarding the above together, one can begin to discern to extent to which the media were central in this (particularly important) evolutionary phase of republican discourse. Significantly, the move of republicanism from marginalised political outlier to centralised political actors in a newly established political framework can be seen as the dividends of conflictive communication strategies devised by the movement in the Troubles.

Yet, key to understanding this evolutionary period in republican discourse and communication is understanding that the idealised, post-conflict identities being carved out in this era formed part of a larger, choreographed process of selling peace to broader society (Dixon 2006). From the nuanced perspective of this chapter then, it is important to note that communicative control largely lay outside of the republican movement, with mainstream media reportage reflecting pre-orchestrated conceptions of republicanism more attuned to a British audience—what Butler (1995) denoted as a form of ‘balanced sectarianism’. Importantly, the above-listed examples foreground the viability of popular culture and mass media as sites of political legitimation. Finally, internally, the peace process proved significant insofar as it cemented Sinn Féin as the primary definers of republicanism thereafter. The centralised position the party had accrued—sustained internally through its devoted activist network and inculcatory internal communication – had now come to fruition in the form of a significant mandate for peaceful political representation. As will be noted in the next section, and as is frequently foregrounded by critics of republicanism in this period, this move necessitated a doubling-down on communication strategies which strove toward internal cohesion and unity of message. Alonso (2016) notes that the new identity

of this ‘party of peace’ republicanism relied on the elision and manipulation of its militant history. Similarly, Anthony McIntyre, a dissenting republican and academic, notes that provisional discourse in this era, beyond striving to legitimate republicanism’s political credentials, aimed to internally sell a ‘new mode’ of republicanism in a triumphalist light, in spite of this ‘progression’ ostensibly appearing as a failure to attain the core demands of republicanism (See McIntyre 1995, 2008 for example). From the perspective of this thesis, how this communicative control was sustained into the 21st century is key to understanding the power dynamics which underlie republican interaction online.

New Media and Post Conflict Era:

The final broad temporal phase demarcated for consideration here is the timespan which follows the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. Hoey (2018) characterises this period by an increase in scholarly attention directed toward the ‘the influence of online and social media ... in the maintenance of the Peace Process...[and] the organisation and interaction of political organisations in Northern Ireland.’ (2018: 6) Yet, beyond the parameters of activist media, the elite dimensions of republicanism’s communication in this era also bare some pertinence to the present thesis’ concerns. Accordingly, focus in the section hereafter is divided between, firstly, the communicative mainstreaming of elite republicanism and, secondly, its non-elite embracement of new media affordances.

i) Elite-Level (New) Media Utilisation in the Post-Conflict Era:

The first of these concerns—the elite mainstreaming of the movement— is significant as, in their newfound role as mandated representatives of the republican movement, Sinn Féin would ultimately go on to define the ‘new mode’ of republicanism instantiated after the peace process. In a previous chapter, it was noted that critics of republicanism identify an ideological lightness in republicanism

(Kee 2000). As such some consideration of the elite-level communicative efforts to expatiate and forge a new political ideology and identity capable of progressing the republican movement through solely political means are overviewed. Particular attention is paid throughout to the nuanced and strategically important way the movement achieved this, and the discourse features devised toward this end, which can be seen to have conditioned republican identification thereafter, and which still frequently draw criticisms of republicanism's political efforts (Gillan and Cox 2014, 2016).

The forging of a new (discursive) mode of republicanism, channelled through the morphing of Sinn Féin into an ostensibly mainstream political party has been examined, among others, by Whiting (2016). She identifies several key developments in republican communication in this time-frame which elucidate how this shift in modality was legitimated (internally and externally). Key to the transition toward centralised political power is a strategic manipulation or justification of past militancy. Alonso (2016), too, has noted the fundamentality of a nuanced interpretation of the past actions of republicanism as necessary evil(s) in legitimating the contemporary political efforts of republicanism. Communicatively, this growth in group narrative identity was easily diffused to (and adopted by) grassroots members through an enhanced party structure (Whiting 2016). The movement, with the same organisational fervour inherited from its para-militant days, capitalised on its hierarchical internal structure by frequently legitimating the new direction from the top down (McIntyre 2008). Importantly, there is empirical evidence of such elite level discourse frames being reproduced by grassroots members of the republican community in response to key political developments of this time frame. Most notably, Wilson and Stapleton (2007, 2009) identified the reproduction of elite-sourced discourse frames in regard to policy developments on policing and consociational arrangements in Northern Ireland. In spite of drawing flak for its past actions, Whiting (2016) further identifies the rigid

inculcation of, and adherence to, a ‘catch-all’ strategy whereby the movement inches and agitates toward centralised, systemic political power, whilst maintaining surface level radicalism in its rhetoric and discourse. This has the effect of satiating in-group affinity with the movement’s radical roots and critique, with the pragmatic realities of consociational / democratic politics north and south of the border. In regard to the latter, the researcher has previously undertaken a quantitative analysis of a variety of Sinn Féin’s election manifestoes from this time-frame (mixing lexicography with discourse analysis). Beyond elucidating a disparity in tone, register and topicality from mainstream (ROI) parties, the results (presented and published in Goulding 2016a and 2016b) indicate that the party aimed to claim ‘valence’ (cf. Budge 1983) over certain political issues in the public sphere: featuring higher frequencies of discussions of leftist, internationalist, feminist and socialist issues.

In reviewing the media literacy evidenced by elite-level republicanism in the post-conflict era, Spencer (2006) posits that the seeds planted by provisional strategists in the early conflict began to pay dividends. This is important, as political economies of the media landscape in post-Celtic tiger Ireland and 20th century British institutions (see Gillan and Cox 2014, Doherty 2004) suggest the perseverance of forms of anti-republican bias and the perpetuation of violent sensationalist frames of interpretation conditioned by the media in the Troubles. In spite of this both Spencer (2006) and Bean (2007) contend that post-conflict, Sinn Féin held a certain appeal or allure to nationalist voters who were tired of the *status quo*. Yet key to maintaining this appeal was an image of republicanism as not only willing, but capable of dealing with ‘pot-hole’ politics. This, Spencer (2006) argues, was achieved through the maintenance of a rigid internal communication structure which outwardly gave the impression of a cohesive, unified movement. Significantly, interviewees responding to Spencer self-represented the development of communication strategies toward this end as organic, self-taught or the product

of innovative thinking, something which mirrors insights uncovered related to dispositions and attitudes in the republican movement toward (alternative) media. A similar mitigating self-description of communicative prowess is also evident in Richard McCauley's downplaying of Sinn Féin's alleged PR capacity: 'Do you know the sum total of the famous republican propaganda machine everyone talks about... I'm it.' (taken from Hoey (2018), originally cited in Curtis (1984)).

The use of party-internal newspapers was sustained in this era, too, in spite of *An Phoblacht* undergoing formal changes and moving online (alleging to be the first Irish newspaper to do so) (Hoey 2018). Indeed, the party has sporadically commissioned a rekindled version of *Iris* magazine²⁴, too, throughout the 2000s. Although the readership of the republican printed press has, in recent years, begun to wane, this decline must be considered against the rise of new media. Relatedly, the communicative discipline, innovation and strategy evident in analogue provisional political communication seems to have successfully translated into virtual domains. Reilly (2013) contends that Sinn Féin displays an unorthodox approach to social media activity for a political party. Whereas established political parties typically tend to mitigate against the multitude of two-way communication avenues permitted by online communication, Sinn Féin seem to have adopted a more nuanced approach, seeking to establish connections online. Significantly, the development of elite devised communication strategies was also self-described by Reilly's interviewees as in-house activism and experimentation (Reilly 2013). Importantly, from the perspective of this thesis, interviewees also were cognisant of the growing literacy on behalf of the younger members of the republican movement, a demographic segment that republicanism in general is believed to be

²⁴ The magazine's early versions, like *An Phoblacht*, sought to furnish the movement with information related to the conflict and republican politics, *Iris* is the Irish language word for journal, whilst also forming an acronym for Irish Republican Information Service.

appealing to and structurally oriented toward (Reilly 2013, Lynch 2012, Reinisch 2020).

From the above discussion we can note a strategic awareness of elite strategists of the novel forms of activism and political engagement permitted by new information communication technologies and the potential instrumental expediency of these to the movement in pursuance of its goal. Reilly's research further identifies an absence of usage policies for elected representatives, and a lack of centralised policy on utilisation of new media in the first place (although representatives' content is monitored by party staff, in particular around election time). This relaxed approach to elite level usage, however, ought not be interpreted as a lack of awareness of the utility of social media platforms in promoting political causes or specific individuals associated with that cause. Indeed, within a local context, leading republican politicians like Gerry Adams can be seen to have amassed a celebrity-like following on social media. Within an even narrower local context, former West Tyrone MP Barry McElduff's use of social media, can also be seen to deviate from orthodox uses of elite politicians. Significantly, both of these figures have drawn flak for mishaps which unfolded virtually²⁵. As such, while social media has allowed the party to begin to sever connotative links with its past and individuals like Adams to gain notable positions of status in online spheres that are governed by memetic and viral logic as opposed to rationalised political deliberations, there is further evidence of these same, greying politicians being subjected to similar (if not heightened) levels of scrutiny directed toward elite politicians in virtually mediated spaces of interaction (Times 2016). Yet, beyond

²⁵ Adams' social media antics have often been criticised by public commentators, the most notable incident being the focus of the opening vignette of this thesis. Similarly, in spite of a successful re-election, McElduff was forced to resign his abstentionist Westminster seat following widespread public condemnation after he shared a video of himself with a Kingsmill loaf of bread on his head around the time of the anniversary of the Kingsmill Massacre.

promoting individuals, Reilly further notes that Sinn Féin's social media usage can be seen to legitimate its own internal status and centrality within the republican movement (2013). Similar to the uses of newsheets and newspapers during the conflict, Sinn Féin's utilisation of new media platforms and social networking sites predominantly targets its internal membership and ideological supporters by displaying externally directed messages, too.

Hoey (2016, 2018), mirroring research that has focussed on a broader rise of web-driven nationalism, argues that Irish nationalism is experiencing a bounce back due to the political context of Brexit and stagnated power-sharing arrangements. With Sinn Féin donning the garments of a central-leftist, mainstream political party (akin to Syriza in Greece or Podemos in Spain), and utilising new media in a way that is bringing republicanism into previously inaccessible domains of interaction and consumption, it stands poised to gain much in the way of electoral support (Hoey 2018, Whiting 2016, Bowman-Grieve and Herron 2020). Hoey (2018) further argues that the post conflict media activities in this time allowed Sinn Féin to gain a certain amount of appeal as a counter-cultural alternative. Critically then, the post-conflict era is insightful from the perspective of this thesis as it provides evidence of a continuation of strategic communicative innovation and utilisation of (new) media. The utilisation of new and social media by Sinn Féin was further theorised to mirror its uses of movement-internal newspapers and communicative discipline and strive toward the same goal of making the republican message more coherent and solidifying the central, authoritative position of Sinn Féin. Similarly, we can draw a lineage to the efforts of elite strategists like Danny Morrison inasmuch as the new socially mediated efforts of republicanism strive toward conveying the same professionalised image of the movement that the development of public relations literacy did in the eighties and nineties. The dualistic dynamic of party support, from within the republican movement, and, electorally, from the broader public, which, from the perspective of the current movement, is contingent to the

realisation of its goals, has led to the party adopting notable mainstream properties whilst simultaneously adhering to an ostensibly revolutionary rhetoric. Therefore, assessing how this complex topicality and disparity between surface level discourse and elite level political action is discursively constructed and legitimated is of key importance.

ii) Non-elite embracement of New Media:

The second and final focus of this historic overview of media activity and communication strategy focuses on an aspect of republicanism's mediatisation which is, temporally speaking, the most current and topically most pertinent to the foci of the present research. As Hoey (2018) notes, the rise of new Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) broadly corresponds with the republican movement's integration into mainstream politics. Yet, the early scholarly literature on republicanism and its embracement of new media affordances was very much indebted to the broader paradigms of thought that were emerging at that time around the internet, politics and power, as well as broader shifts in response to increasing technologization in the social sciences and humanities. In particular, republicanism's early virtual manifestations were typically broached from the perspective of Terrorism Studies or couched in broader discussions of the benefits of Web 2.0 to social movements. Warren and Leitch's (2012) examination of how the dissident factions of republicanism utilise new media toward their political ends is one such example of early scholarly literature on republicanism coloured by the post 9/11 fascination with internet mediated terrorist activity. Dartnell's (2001) case study of Irish Republican Socialist Movement's e-nationalism provides a snapshot of two key insights relating to social media and republicanism which position his account more broadly in the literature around Web 2.0. Firstly, it provides an early documentation of the ability for the internet to consolidate nationalist groupings and negotiate aspects of '[collective] memory and future

projection of a place as the home for a given group' (Dartnell 2001) and the internet's adjunct capacity for activism. Secondly, his case study documents the ability for alternative media to act as sites of consolidation for dissident or dissenting republican factions, namely those that were peripheral to the central provisional node and Sinn Féin in this era.

In spite of emanating from the paradigm of terrorism and security studies, a significant body of work documenting dissident utilisation of the internet and social networking sites exists. Key inputs in this body of research includes Nalton et al. (2011), Reinisch (2020), Bowman-Grieve and Conway (2012), Bowman Grieve (2010) and Bowman-Grieve and Herron (2020). Taken together, these works provide a largely uncritical, narrative account of internet based republican activity in the considered time-frame. In spite of targeting insights related to the Violent Dissident Republican (VDR) phenomenon, the above researchers also discuss online spaces populated by the wider republican community in their infancy. Importantly, this research documents the emergence and fluctuated development of a virtual community of geographically dispersed republican social media users. The earliest documented interactions of republicanism and the internet stretch back to the late nineties. For example, Bowman-Grieve and Herron (2020) provide an example of a website— Fieldcraft for the Freedom Fighter—using a broadcast type communication model to disseminate information on republican guerrilla tactics. Yet this one-to-many model was to give way to more interactive and discursive modes of interaction as the internet changed from a place of passive consumption (Web 1.0) to a space of fluid, crowdsourced production (Web 2.0). This change in communicative dynamics ushered in new modes of interaction which saw the internet change from a place where republicans merely consumed information to a space where users could 'communicate with a wider audience, exchange information... spread propaganda...[and] also... monitor other Republicans.' (Bowman-Grieve and

Herron 2020: 112) A notable number of sites related to republicanism emerged in this time-frame, seeking to build on the newly enabled communication dynamics. Naturally, the rise of popular SNSs formats, like internet discussion forums or internet bulletin board (Androutsopoulos 2007). In this regard, Nalton et al. (2011) provide an overview of the range of republican-oriented forums which had emerged by 2010. One of the forerunners of this list, the Irish Republican Bulletin Board²⁶, provided republican internet users with one of the first virtual spaces of online consolidation and discussion (Nalton et al. 2011, Bowman-Grieve and Herron 2020).

Web forum	Members in April 2010	Members in August 2011	Growth (%)	Most users ever online
Irish Republican http://www.irishrepublican.net	11,754	15,336	30.5	745
Irish Freedom News http://www.irishfreedomnews.com	513	–	–	34
Irish Republican Socialist Forum http://rsmforum.proboards.com/index.cgi	1,667	1,953	17.2	169
Up the RA! http://upthera.free-forums.org/	336	1,117	332	88
Irish Republican Bulletin Board http://admin2.7.forumer.com/	1,209	1,408	16.5	133
Irish-Nationalism http://www.irish-nationalism.net	1,364	–	–	339
Ireland's Future http://irelandfuture.free-forums.org	1,107	–	–	67

Figure 1 – List of Republican Internet Sites circa 2011 (taken from Nalton et al. 2011)

Yet by the early 2000s, some scholars argue that Irish republicanism was experiencing a decline in activity both online and offline (Bowman-Grieve 2010).

²⁶ Which as Bowman-Grieve and Herron (2020) note was more recently, previously located at <http://www.irbb.r.r.nu>

The realities of post-conflict, consociational politics led to a quietened political climate, ‘however, despite this relative calm on the ground, there was a continuation of activity online at this time.’ (Bowman-Grieve and Herron 2020: 113) Importantly, researchers note a discussion and negotiation of several key ideological and policy developments related to republicanism in this era: more specifically, the elite-level developments surveyed earlier (such as the legitimisation of policing arrangements) were shown to be negotiated, appraised and evaluated by members of these peripheral but consolidated communities of online interaction. This indicates that such spaces are not necessarily subjected to the same centralised power dynamics of provisional-specific communication contexts (Bowman-Grieve 2010, Bowman-Grieve and Herron 2020, Nalton et al. 2011). Indeed, commenting on the factionalised terrain of the ‘republican online milieu’ (to borrow a phrase from Bowman-Grieve and Herron (2020), researchers typically identify a lessening of numbers of supportive users as one moves from provisionals (viz. those who support Sinn Féin), to dissenters (those critical of Sinn Féin and the Peace Process) through to dissident factions (here used to signify the VDR organisations which espouse a continuation of the armed campaign). This seems to point toward a reproduction of analogue levels of virtual support for republicanism which in general, as Bowman-Grieve and Conway (2012: 74) note, ‘is plentiful online’, adding the caveat that ‘it can be more difficult to get a real sense for distinct groups.’ The early activities then of these grassroots republican internet users are characterised by the formation and maintenance of lateral social networks and the internal negotiation of contemporary republican ideology and identity (and the legitimacy or value of its elite actors).

Although less focussed on grassroots, crowd-sourced, participatory platforms, Hoey (2018) and Carson and Hoey (2012) have offered extensive documentation of the emergence of virtual sites of republican activist journalism. Similar to the way in which the actions of elite actors were commented on, negotiated and

(de)legitimated by the users of republican internet forums, these internet-based forms of activist journalism provided an emerging segment of republicanism to find a platform in a time when the provisional hegemony was being cemented through the legitimisation of power-sharing arrangements and peace. Dissenting republicans such as Anthony McIntyre utilised the internet to promulgate critiques of the provisional legitimisation narrative that had been instilled since the adaptation of republicanism's 'new mode' in the Peace Process. Influential online journals such as *the Blanket*—co-founded and edited by McIntyre—fostered a newly emerging group of dissenting voices within the republican movement, which remained connected through largely virtual means. Similarly, dissenting republican publications that had roots in the pre-Internet age also recognised its expediency as a communicative resource and a means of by-passing the gate-keepers of traditional media. Of note in this regard is *Fourthwrite*, the magazine of the Irish Republican Writers Group, which openly posited that Sinn Féin's peace strategy was misguided and espoused a radical, alternative framework in which to bring about republican ideals. At both the level of the activist and the slactivist²⁷, then, we can identify early tactical uses of the internet to strengthen in-group cohesion or peripherally question and negotiate the legitimacy of elite republican actors and organisations.

The early 2000s marked the halcyon days of many of the republican crowdsourced sites formed in the wake of the advent of Web 2.0. This seems to mirror the (admittedly unquantified) assertion of Bowman-Grieve and Herron (2020) who argue that between 2010 and 2016 the virtual activity of Irish republicanism undergone a downturn. Indeed, over the last 20 years, the number of republican internet discussion forums has notably lessened. Yet many of these sites remain accessible (in varying degrees) as documented textual archives, and some still

²⁷ See Morozov's (2011) definition below

remain active to this day. In regard to the latter of these, the internet discussion forum that is currently located as *www.republican.ie*²⁸ is perhaps the most prolific example of such a site. Documented research related to the site (Bowman Grieve 2006, 2010, Bowman-Grieve and Conway 2012) has suggested that the site largely functioned as a space where the evolving face of republicanism (or what has been termed here, the modernisation or mainstreaming of the movement) has been documented, commented on and interpreted by users of the site, leading to the site's community adopting internal categorisations of republicans as: 'die-hards', 'true republicans', 'dissidents' and even 'sell-outs' and 'traitors.' (Bowman-Grieve and Herron 2020: 116) As such, we can note that the rise of new ICTs and digital participatory platforms provided the republican movement with novel spaces of interaction, debate and consolidation. The close-level exposure of the researchers, too, proves insightful in accounting for the developments of codified habits of interaction and online culture. Importantly, this body of work documents the emergence of a distinct republican online micro-culture that was successfully sustained over space and time.

In terms of activism and political activity, Bowman-Grieve and Herron (2020) document instances of *republican.ie* users providing a running commentary of unfolding political riots in Belfast, with a view to organising on-the-ground activities. Indeed, the body of pertinent research more generally provides evidence of republican political activism and engagement being organised on and facilitated through social media, as well as being commented on by republican users (Nalton et al. 2011, Hoey 2018, Bowman-Grieve 2010). How such modalities of activism can be measured for our purposes here is addressed in the subsequent section. Relatedly, running as an undercurrent to this body of research is a notion of these users being geographically dispersed but ideologically united, as individual users

²⁸ Having previously being located at *irishrepublican.net* among other UseNet and internet locations.

producing a coherent virtual presence that was representative of analogue power dynamics and factionalism. Bowman-Grieve and Herron (2020) employ the concepts of ‘community of practice’²⁹ and ‘voluntary associations’³⁰ to account for the dynamic and dispersed structure of this group, whilst also allowing for its ideological commonalities that are reproduced through group interaction. Similar applications of this concept (to analogue republicanism) can also be noted in the work of Wilson and Stapleton (2005, 2009, 2012) who use it to conceptualise the internal discourse practices and information of a dynamic social movement. The conclusion as it relates to the present thesis is that some conceptual and structural provisions for disparities in centrality, power and (intra) group structure is warranted when analysing the virtual manifestations of republicanism. Finally, and critically for the present research, while recognising the utility of new media to republicanism more generally, the above body of internet focused research has not provided an in-depth consideration of non-violent-oriented dimensions of Irish republicanism, specifically the more powerful, centralised provisional faction and its grassroots’ embracement of new media.

Outside of republicanism specifically, Ó Dochartaigh (2007) Reilly (2013, 2021) note that, in the broader socio-political terrain of Northern Ireland, new information and communication technologies are often used purely for inward facing communication. This use of new media seemingly mirrors a functionality of republican political murals discussed earlier: their function of maintaining in-group cohesion and territoriality. (Goulding and McCroy 2020) Such an understanding positions republicanism’s virtual grassroots as constituting a much smaller

²⁹ “Communities of practice can be defined as social spaces which allow people to come together to share common ideas and/or shared interested in pursuit of a common goal.” (Bowman-Grieve and Heron 2019: 110) The concept originates from the work of Etienne Wenger (see Wenger 2011 for example).

³⁰ “Voluntary associations can be defined as voluntarily organised private groups where members join to pursue a shared interest.”(Bowman-Grieve and Herron 2020: 110)

microcosm of a larger reproduction of its proximate public spheres. Indeed, internally, such sites have also been demonstrated to facilitate intra republican negotiation and debate and, more hostilely, blatant in-fighting (Bowman Grieve 2012). As such the internal structure of republicanism's online manifestations must also be regarded as dynamic in terms of its power, status and centrality, whilst also being facilitative of sub-group formation and consolidation, too.

Hoey's (2018) study of republican media activism since the Good Friday Agreement provides the most holistic account of post-conflict republicanism's utilisation of (new) media to date. Importantly, his work addresses the mediated negotiation of provisional ('Shinners'), dissident (dissos) and outlier (dissenter) republican actors' utilisation of emerging forms of media activism. In rooting his consideration in the tradition of media activism and the study of culture as resistance, Hoey provides case studies of republican internal media production in the early stages of the internet. Importantly, Hoey (2018: 4) argues such media activism and innovative, strategic usage of novel information communication technologies was precedential in the republican tradition: from the United Irishmen using clandestine, radical pamphlets to provisional members utilising Gestetner machines to produce news-sheets, or even the more marginalised republican prisoner community cultivating its own media artefacts of resistance, such as *An Glór Gafa* (The Captive's Voice). Noting the capacity for participatory platforms to foster forms of political engagement which entail a lessened transactional cost for participants, Hoey discusses the proliferation of a stereotype of a republican social media user emerging in popular discourse (*Newsletter* 2018, *Times* 2018). The archetypal 'Shinnerbot' – a portmanteau of 'Shinner', a colloquial term for a member of Sinn Féin, and a technologically automated 'bot', which connotes blithe obedience and subservience – has emerged as a derogatory label for the collective of vociferous, republican social media users which reproduce the party line in virtual sites of political discussion. Returning this to the previously mentioned

communicative discipline within the republican movement, and the internally centralised position of Sinn Féin (and their peripheral societal position), we can begin to account for the proliferation of such a form of activism and the largely pejorative connotations it has accrued. Overlooking the negativity with which the term has become imbued, we can interpret the emergence of the signifier of 'Shinnerbot' as being indicative of an ideologically cohesive patterning of media activism which produces the (perception of) a unified voice in online spaces of interaction. Indeed, from the perspective of this thesis, the Shinnerbot phenomenon provides a critical locus, as a potential site of discourse production among republican social media users.

In spite of being broad-reaching, the above-surveyed literature fails to cohesivise its findings in a way that can be harnessed toward a communicative critique or discourse analysis of contemporary republicanism. The proliferation of Shinnerbots ostensibly provides evidence of reactionary communication strategies devised in the Troubles yielding results, or at least conditioning the unrelentingly conflicting relationship between the media and the movement. It can be hypothesised that elite-determined discourse features and strategic frames will be diffusely reproduced in the discourse of the myriad of Shinnerbots populating online spaces of and for republicanism. Indeed, the previously cited transition of Sinn Féin figures like Adams to quasi-internet celebrities cannot be divorced from provisional republicanism's broader proliferation at the grassroots level into virtual media ecologies. Moreover, the topical diversity of online spaces can be seen to have abstracted republicanism from its solely political/violent contexts found in its elite media representations. In non-gatekept spaces of media, republicanism is continually being renegotiated and re-contextualised in new, often cultural or

memetic ways³¹. As such, in spite of the canon of literature providing ample historical studies of republicanism's strategic utilisation of communication and media, we can begin to identify a gap that is addressable by the present thesis. Whilst Hoey's research has focussed on forms of cultural activism and activist journalism that sustained the movement in the post-conflict era, his focus does not tend to an account of participatory, virtual spaces of consolidation, like internet forums or more popular social networking sites. Whilst the work of Bowman Grieve and others does offer some insight into this, its focus has sustained a militant perception of republicanism as an ideology, in a time when (as the previous historical synopsis has evidenced) the movement's discourse, modality and trajectory have been morphing gradually in the direction of constitutional political power (whilst maintaining a surface level radicalism). Moreover, in habitually framing the internet as a space for 'terrorist' activity and organisation (a questionable premise in and of itself), this work fails to account for their ideational significance among the larger, non-radical segments of republicanism.

As such, the political power of these sites as spaces which facilitate the identification, consolidation and negotiation of a peripheral, but mainstreaming, social identity has not yet been fully addressed by the literature. Whilst the research foci listed in the introduction of this thesis chiefly pertain to republican ideology and identity, the commitment of this thesis to assessing their reproduction in virtual, non-gatekept and participatory spaces of interaction is significant, especially within the context of the evidence given for republicanism's diffusive reproduction of elite determined discourse features and enactment of elite devised communication strategies through new or emerging media forms. This leads us to

³¹ Take for instance, the virally driven surge of popularity in republican music that was noted in 2020 in response to a viral video of comedian Steve Coogan singing *Come out ye Black and Tans* by The Wolf Tones.

the final concern pertaining to the republican movement and its utilisation of new media, which has been mentioned throughout the previous discussion: how to account for the hierarchical structure and power dynamics of the geographically dispersed users which beget its virtual manifestations, whilst also accounting for the ideological affinity and shared commitments that unites them and renders them (historically) identifiable as co-ideologues. Importantly, such an account must also entail the centrality and ideology-defining capacity of centralised, elite actors like Sinn Féin and the ability for such actors to instrumentally elicit (novel and emerging) forms of virtual activism from grassroots users. Accordingly, the final section presented hereafter draws from Hoey's (2018) conceptualisation of Irish republicanism as a counter-hegemonic public to provide as a structural instrument that can be applied at varying levels in the analysis of virtual republican discourse hereafter.

Irish Republicanism as counter-hegemonic networked-public:

The historic survey of media activism and communication strategies above—as well as the variety of empirical and theoretical analysis of republicanism and its communication that were considered in its course— provides an overview of the core aspects of republican discourse and communication which the present chapter seeks to accentuate: its power-bearing capacities (both internally constituting group power dynamics, while challenging centralised political power) and its unity of message or ideological perspective that it produces through its mediated activity. Relatedly, the historical synopses positioned republicanism as critical of the existing social and political order and the social institutions which strive to perpetuate the *status quo* and its power dynamics. In this sense, we can regard republicanism as being an active participant in the historic struggle for hegemony (Gramsci 1973), the idea that dominant groupings instil control by eliciting consent via coercion or co-option. A society's mass media, then, becomes a key site for the establishment

and perpetuation of such exploitative power dynamics (Calhoun 1992). Hegemony is achieved when the majority accept the legitimacy of the specifics of this rule and internalise them as being beneficial or common sense. Republicanism, as a social movement and an ideology, stands in open polemic with both British and Irish centres of hegemonic nation-state power. As a grouping, it has been marginalised from the public sphere and been subjected to strategic depowering by elite actors, devising reactionary strategies to strive toward hegemonic status.

In this light, we can regard republicanism as counter-hegemonic (which, when couched in the discourse of nationalism, can be loosely translated to a 'hot' form of nationalism). Indeed, the above survey of communication strategies implied that elite republicans strategically negotiate between revolutionary hegemonic frames of rhetoric and more hegemonically inclined political activities as needed (Whiting 2016). Yet the above survey also foregrounded the extent to which mass and social media (and communication strategies enacted through these) have enabled elite, provisional republicans to attain a form of internal hegemony: wherein republicanism forms a sphere of opinion formation in and of itself, and its elite actors condition and determine its self-perpetuating discourses (Whiting 2016, Spencer 2006, Hoey 2018). Whilst internally, power is asymmetrically vested in the provisional factions of the movement, externally, this republican sphere constitutes a lesser force, where it is one of many (admittedly centralising) political identities vying for power in the societal public sphere. As noted by Hoey (2018: 9), in this light, the media and communication of republicanism 'comes to represent ...[the] idea of contesting hegemony or the battle for control or dominance... politically and culturally.' Such an understanding further permits a consideration of republicanism's interactions with popular culture and social media activity as perpetuating resistance discourses in the broader public sphere (Hoey 2018, Bruns and Highfield 2016). As such, we can regard republicanism as constituting a counter-public (cf. Fraser 1990). These are discursive spheres that develop within

or outside the official public sphere, 'where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.' (Fraser, cited in Calhoun 1992: 123)

Significantly, the dynamism and breadth of republicanism's mediated structures were shown to reflect the analogue centrality of the provisional movement and form part of a wider nexus of diffusive communicative reproduction within republicanism. Indeed, the previously surveyed communication strategies and media activities of elite-level republicanism could be correlated to a broader effort on behalf of Sinn Féin to perpetuate its own privileged, centralised status as the definers of contemporary republicanism and its political struggle. Internal to republicanism, then, (and the broader counter-hegemonic segment of the public sphere) we can discern a reduced formulation of a sphere of opinion formation. Indeed, this microcosmic de-structuring can be reapplied *ad hoc* to assess the various sub-groupings which vie for republican-internal power and status, or what can be seen to constitute an internal hegemony within the republican sphere. Both Bowman Grieve and Herron (2019) and Hoey (2018) stress the dynamism of virtual and mediated republicanism in this regard. The former, for instance, notes that dissidents constituted a lesser community in the general online milieu of republicanism than their dissenting or provisional counterparts. Hoey (2018), too, notes that within republicanism one can discern specific sub-publics which were more marginalised from the provisional centre, resulting from a disparate ideological evaluation (dissidents, dissenters) or a depowered or external position in terms of text production/ dissemination capacities (prisoners, diaspora). To account for this, Hoey (2018) utilises Gitlin's (1998) concept of public sphericules, something which the present study seeks to emulate. Gitlin's initial usage of the term seems to mirror the perceived fracturing of the Habermasian public sphere (similar to Fraser's usage of counter-public), into smaller, constituent spheres of

opinion formation. Commenting on Gitlin's concept, Bruns and Highfield (2015) note that:

Such public sphericules no longer claim to reflect public discourse within entire domains back to society at large. Rather, they address particular thematic debates within and across the broader domains, and in doing so draw on a smaller subset of participants with a specific interest in these themes. This reduction in size and reach may indeed improve the quality of the deliberation which takes place in such public sphericules, as a certain level of shared interest and knowledge amongst participants may be assumed. (107)

A point of clarification needs to be drawn between Gitlin's original use of the term—which was somewhat pessimistic, denoting the gradual dissipation of 'the' idealised public sphere—and the operational usage of the term as it is employed here, simply to denote a less grand sphere of opinion formation. Importantly, scholars such as Benkler (2006) have noted the primacy of media in determining the nature and scope of deliberations within lesser spheres of opinion formation, coining the term 'networked public sphere' to account for the deliberative discourse flows which constitute virtual opinion formation. Similarly, Bruns and Burgess (2011) and Bruns and Highfield (2015) note that popular social media present a variety of different levels at which a concept of the public can be applied: with sites like Facebook forming individually networked public spheres and micro-blogging sites like Twitter allowing the expedient formation of issue publics or *ad hoc*, hashtag publics. As such, the concepts of the public sphere, sphericules and counter-publics will be utilised in a variety of ways in the subsequent analysis to grade and describe the structure of republicanism's virtual manifestations, in a way that accounts for the sources and underlying power dynamics of a given site's discursive production. Beyond providing a structural basis to interpret republicanism online these also encapsulates the deliberative character of group

perspective and opinion formation. Moreover, they offer an appropriate theoretical basis in which to situate an analysis of nationalism as a discourse. As a final measure here, some further general elaboration related to the internet as a space for political activity is offered.

The Internet, Web 2.0 and Political Movements:

From the perspective of politics, the advents of the internet and SNSs, brought with them notable airs of optimism. The internet was predicted by many of its early researchers to have a positive effect on citizen engagement (Barber 2003) and deliberative democracy (Norris 2002). The construction and maintenance of virtual social networks, it was hypothesised, would allow ‘users to participate in collaborative platforms that facilitate increased information flow and diversity of opinion’ (Halpern and Gibbs 2013: 1159), thus crafting more informed and engaged citizens. In this view, the internet formed a communicative nexus through which users could overcome the physical impediments of space/time distancing (cf. Giddens 1985) and keep abreast of/ engaged with political processes. Similarly, many welcomed a potential levelling of the playing field and capacity for plurality in dialogue brought about by SNSs (van Dijck 2012), with some suggesting that the rising popularity of the sites could see the fruition of a ‘networked public sphere.’ (Benkler 2006) This optimism was brought about by a change in the dynamics of communication in lieu of the emergence of what scholars termed Web 2.0 (Seargant and Tagg 2014, O’Reilly 2012). A key, unifying theme of early research on Web 2.0 was a focus on communicative interaction (Vesnic-Alujevic 2011). The participatory nature of web 2.0 not only facilitated grassroots user engagement, but relied on it to produce active and popular websites. As such, for the political, the internet was lauded as a mode of engaging an otherwise passive citizenry (Gane and Beer 2008). and as being the latest in a series of technological revolutions which drive social transformation and ultimately empower users

(Castells 1997, 2015). Early research into SNSs, then, positioned them as discursive spaces with the capacity for broadening inclusivity in political processes, facilitating new avenues of power contestation and embedding politics amidst other domains of interest.

However, soon after abounding, critics began to question the capacity of internet-based political engagement to amount to any form of meaningful political change. For instance, Maricahl (2012: 11) referring to Morozov (2011) notes that the ‘ease of membership and identification detracts from more serious and coordinated efforts to effect social change.’ This has resulted in what has been variously termed slacktivism (Morozov 2011) or clicktivism (White 2010), both denoting a weak form of political engagement, often spurred by factors other than a desire to bring about change, such as kinship. Other early empirical studies seem to corroborate this contention. For instance, Feezell et al. (2009) noted that interactions in online political group discussions were marred by incivility and falsity, as such they were not conducive to increasing policy related knowledge or information exchange that is central to a Habermasian rational citizenry discourse (Habermas 1962). Similarly, Kushin and Kitchener (2009) noted that while their case study of a political discussion group was predominantly civil (75%), there was still a sizeable minority of users that engaged in flaming or trolling.³² This reveals an important component of virtual political engagement, the capacity for SNSs to ‘allow users to engage in social activism without resulting in a corresponding change in their political identities.’ (Marichal 2012: 11) While a correlation can arguably be identified between online and offline political engagement (see Conroy et al. (2012) for an overview of what is an ongoing debate), engagement online does not always entail substantive action, and may often be passive or inconducive to mobilisation owing to the fragmentation of a given social movement (Theocharis and Lowe 2015,

³² Communicative practices that seek to irritate other users or detract from meaningful information exchange.

Coretti and Pica 2015). This, however, does not mean that digital participatory platforms have *not* provided political actors with new affordances or resources.

Some scholars (see Salter 2007, 2020, for example) have argued that the political functionality of the internet to politics ought only to be appraised for its ability to provide marginalised groups spaces of consolidation and resistance, or ‘radical public spheres’ (2007, 2020)³³. Others contend that the communicative dynamics of these sites are less hierarchical, more informal and accessible, and tend to be more horizontal or lateral in their communication (Dahlberg 2007). As such they can acts breeding grounds for resistive publics engaged in the production of counter-hegemonic struggles. Similarly, Marichal (2012) contends that while some social networks are predicated on society’s proclivity to accentuate voice over listening, they can, nevertheless assist in cultivating and maintaining a public voice for marginalised actors in democratic societies. Echoing this sentiment, but from a critical discursive perspective, KhosraviNik and Unger (2016) note that, on social networking sites and other crowdsourced platforms the ‘traditional dichotomy of powerful and powerless is eroding’ (211) due to the ability for users to actively engage in textual production as a social process. Whilst this does not completely negate analogue power and hegemonic macrostructures (which the authors contend are ‘colonizing’ these new virtual spaces though the power of discourse), they also note that these sites have helped to ‘decentralise... some kind of participatory role to the individual communicator.’ (211) As such, top-down power is not exclusive on these sites insofar as resistive discourses can emerge somewhat unfettered and uncensored among participants (KhosraviNik and Unger 2016, Kelsey and Bennett 2014). Moreover, emerging crowdsourced media platforms facilitate the maintenance of non-mainstream activist subcultures which bring with them (albeit limited) forms of political possibility (Kahn and Kellner 2005, 2007).

³³ Akin to the previously discussed concepts of networked public spheres (cf. Benkler 2006)

In assessing the centrality of (social) media in relation to contemporary political uprisings, KhosraviNik and Unger (2016) provide a more critical (less utopian) account for the role of social media in political change and citizenry. They note that labelling such upheavals as ‘Facebook Revolutions’ or ‘Twitter Revolutions’ erroneously positions the medium as the driving force behind the collective action and elides any mention of the socio-political contexts from which the revolutions emerged. As such, it is more appropriate to think of these revolutions as utilising social media as one of many resources. Moreover, the early, technologically-deterministic predictions that the internet would re-connect individuals to politics largely emerged from the context of Westernised affluent democracies and overlooked more global uses of alternative and social media for activism. This seemingly corroborates with research into Irish republican media activism. Hoey (2018), for example, argues that Irish republicanism’s uptake of social media was a logical evolution and expansion of the activist’s repertoire of resources. Social media, then, ought not to be thought of as the driving forces behind social change, rather, they are spaces in which users can engage in a variety of social activities. Although overly utopian in his outlook, Castells’ work (1996, 1997, 2015) hones in on an important aspect of political resistance in a mediated age: the fact that new modes of dispersed resistance and consolidation are now freely available to the masses (KhosraviNik and Unger 2016, Shirky2011). Whilst this last point ought to be taken with the caveats that access to social media and communicative technology is still inherently unequal and these sites are predominantly hegemonic, this point begins to foreground the notion that these virtual media ecologies can (and do) act as sites for bottom-up political resistance to the hegemonic order. While the above-cited literature accounts for the capacity for such participatory fora to engender resistance discourses, they often elide any consideration of a key facet of large-scale, influential platforms like Twitter and Facebook: the fact that they operate on a for-profit basis (Weller et al. 2014). The adaption of such capitalistic power and dominant ideologies to these new, commercialised spaces

has formed the focus of much of the work of Christian Fuchs (2007, 2010, 2011, 2014). In his view, the aforementioned participatory nature of web 2.0 is inherent in the exploitation of its users. From his Marxist perspective, prosumption (a portmanteau of consumption and production) is central to the financial viability of these sites and forms an ideology which coerces users to participate through the fear of social exclusion (Fuchs and Sevignani 2013, Bruns 2009). Relatedly, scholars (Fuchs and Sevignani 2013, Fuchs 2014, and Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010, Kücklich 2005) have coined various terms—playbour, digital labour—to signify the hegemonic submission of users to the overarching will of capitalism and the willing uptake of latent ideologies. Politically, this does not mean that such critical scholars view SNSs are lacking expediency to social movements, rather they contend that the bulk of social action on major sites is geared toward reproducing the existing social order, as opposed to challenging it. Another pertinent contention of Fuchs' is that power and visibility in analogue domains translate to social media (2010). That is to say, individuals, institutions and organisations which hold analogue status, power or resources tend to have higher virtual capital (in terms of following, status etc.) than those with little to no material/symbolic capital at their disposal. Elsewhere (Fuchs 2011) he notes that, while it is inarguable that users now possess the ability to produce their own content, they cannot be thought of as having an entirely equal footing in virtual spheres. Rather, any holistic critiques of power exertion on these sites must necessarily take into account their over-arching, profit-orientation and their primary function as loci of hegemonic interpellation and the disparate power dynamics this instantiates. Importantly in this regard, the political on social media is increasingly becoming enmeshed with non-political information, rendering it experience-able in new, collapsed ways. For instance, social media has largely expedited the trend of celebrity politics (Street 2012) in allowing political figures to accrue celebrity-like social media followings (Loader et al. 2016).

The above discussion has broached two key points of congruence which inform the present research's take on SNSs like Facebook and Twitter, as well as topic-related spaces like internet discussion fora. In one respect, they are undoubtedly textually produced social spaces, sustained by users' interactions, codes and engagement with discursive social practice (and, by extension, analysable via semiotic/ discursive/linguistic approaches). Yet, simultaneously, on another level, they are spaces in which the hegemonic order is reproduced (and to a lesser extent challenged) and in which dominant ideologies are circulated, inculcated, culturally negotiated and/or resisted. As such, they are conceived of here as being analysable along the lines proposed by KhosraviNik and Unger:

... researchers can critique digitally mediated language and social actions that make use of social media as a mode of dissemination. But, on the other hand, we argue that it is also vital to consider and discuss the potential of newly created spaces for citizenry practices, while engaging in an overarching critique of media corporatization (2016: 208).

Such collective engagement must further be considered against the backdrop of individual and group identity construction. Users of SNSs simultaneously engage in both individual and social identity formation of the networked self (Papacharissi 2010). The result is a blurring of the lines between the public and private or the individual and the collective, where multiple audiences subside into one single context, a phenomenon known as context collapse (Marwick and Boyd 2011a). Building on this premise, Papacharissi (2015) argues that online political activism cannot be entirely divorced from either context insofar as such tweets contain highly affective content— of personal significance to the individual—whilst also gravitating toward established conventions and co-operative actions of a collective. As such, political engagement online provides (textual) data for researchers interested in analysing the discursive means through which users identify with

social movements or political ideologies, and construct affective lateral bonds between participants (Papacharissi 2015). The above provides a general outline of how data sites are conceived of as spaces for socio-political action hereafter. As a final concern, a method of grading and categorising forms of action on these sites is proffered.

To properly analyse such collective, political activities on social media, engagements can be gradated in terms of their levels of pre-orchestration and planning. Toward this end, Bennett and Segerberg (2012) propose the concept of ‘collective action’ to denote collectively performed social media efforts which result after a process of centralised consultation, for example, individual users promoting a party-related message after being urged to do so. This stands in contrast to movements which rely on the logic of personalised or ‘connective action’, whereby users respond of their own volition to unfolding political events or prominent topics, producing a general perspective or public voice. Finally, of pertinence in this regard is Kelsey and Bennett’s (2014) concept of ‘synoptic resistance’, which signifies the contention that social media ought to be considered for their ability to allow ‘the many’ to watch ‘the many’, and the ability for civically engaged media users to publicly hold actors and institutions to account by aggregating their voices online. These concepts will be utilised as scalar points to gauge the types of political engagement evidence within specific data sources. On one pole of this scale lies collective action: orchestrated, derived from a centralised consultation process and choreographed on a top-down basis. At its antipode lies connective action: highly affective, unchoreographed, bottom up and (can be) derived from synoptic observation of socio-political context. In the interim lies the lurking capacity of users to synoptically monitor public political actors. It must be conceded that individual instances of social media activity often do not need to fit neatly into one category or the other, and frequently constitute a hybrid category. As such, further elaboration on the application of these categories—as well as site-specific

concerns— is provided at the start of each chapter. Given the focus of this thesis on the grassroots reproduction of republicanism, coupled with the above-evidenced diffusive communication strategies at play within republicanism, this research aims to identify data sources which rely on less-orchestrated, more connective logics. This is to facilitate an analysis of the non-elite discursive habits which republicans who are communicatively marginalised within the republican counter public employ in the construction of their identity. Moreover, spaces where republican discourse is reproduced, in spite of republicanism not being the central topic of said space, will also be identified.

Summarising these general concerns, the internet is approached from a perspective of critical dualism—noting the socio-political reality of offline and online action – whilst also aligning itself with critical accounts of internet based political engagement which foreground the adjunct capacity for activism that the internet holds in regard to analogue activity. Popular sites of interaction are not ideologically neutral, providing spaces where the hegemonic order (and its perpetuative discourses) are disseminated and reproduced in novel, constantly evolving modalities. To a lesser extent, these sites also act as sites of counter-hegemonic resistance and consolidatory platforms for peripheral or dispersed political groupings. Importantly, then, the internet is primarily seen as mirroring or reproducing the *status quo* and existing power dynamics, whilst also being capable of facilitating critiques of hegemonic power among counter hegemonic sphericules. From the perspective of social movements, such platforms were shown to be effective in fostering the affective bonds necessary for political efficacy, but also, in linking key representatives or elites to their supporting publics. This provides the basis through which data sources—or specific sites of republican virtual discourse— will be conceptualised hereafter. Finally, key insights regarding specific chapters and data sources are addressed at the beginning of the respective analytical chapter.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical account of nationalism as a discursive construct that was presented in chapter two is predicated on a social constructionist account of (social) identification (Berger and Luckmann 1966). This posits that our knowledge and modalities of understanding the world (and our place within it) are socially negotiated. Moreover, such a discursive account was embedded in wider epistemological shifts related to postmodernity, as well as the cultural and linguistic turns in the social sciences and humanities (Rorty 1967). Less generally, this approach mirrors a broader commitment in nationalism studies to non-elite perspectives which, analytically, seeks to link given nationalisms' reproductions in group representations to their ideology and identity construction (Özkirimli 2017, Billig 1993) Yet this broad theoretical constellation enables a multitude of different, less elite, methodological and analytical approaches (Feminist/ post structuralist/post-colonial/ Freudian/ psychoanalytic approaches, etc.) Accordingly, some (re)consideration must be given to what is required of the analytical framework for the purpose of the present study, prior to outlining it. Methodologically and analytically, the chosen framework must be able to link the surface representations of republicans –at the linguistic or discursive level of semiosis— to the negotiation and reproduction of their social reality and group identity. Critically—given the nature of the research questions posed previously – the analytical framework ought to also account for the power resisting/ conveying capacities of republicanism's 'hot' nationalist discourse. Further to identity

construction, this dissertation also seeks to ask key questions of republicanism and its position in regard to the hegemonic order, as well as its potential proliferation to mainstream culture and political structures. As such, the analytical framework embraced hereafter should also be facilitative of critical appraisals of republican communication and illuminating of the implicit critiques of hegemonic power entrenched in republican discourse.

Toward this end an approach to nationalism from the field of Critical Discourse Analysis is outlined below. As it is not feasible to review the myriad discursive approaches that could potentially be adopted here, focus is limited to considerations of pertinence to the analytical framework adopted in this dissertation. After providing an outline of CDA and its core foci of discourse, ideology, power and critique, The Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) (cf. Reisigl and Wodak 2016) is presented as suitable to the present research's foci and analytical aims. Finally, the broader theoretical framework Social Media-Critical Discourse Studies (cf. KhosranviNik 2017a) is integrated into the devised analytical framework to account for nuances of power and context associated with virtual media ecologies.

Irish Republicanism – an Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis:

Whereas previously the concept of discourse was discussed from the theoretical perspective of nationalism studies, henceforth it will be operationalised as an analytical object. In this regard, (a) discourse can be defined as:

-A cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action.

-Socially constituted and constitutive.

-Related to a macro-topic.

-Linked to argumentation about validity claims, such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors with different points of view.

(cf. Reisigl and Wodak 2016)

The above definition foregrounds the realisation of discourses in language (and wider semiosis) whilst tying this to social action and cognition (and the power dynamics these legitimise). This relation between discourse and society is viewed here as mutually constitutive: that is, discourses both shape social reality and are, in turn, shaped by social action. Importantly, this conceptual base renders the normative, power-legitimising effects of language use that centres around a specific topic (in this instance republicanism) assessable through surface form analysis. This understanding is unpacked in more specific detail below after some more general concerns related to CDA are addressed.

Critical Discourse Analysis (alternatively, Critical Discourse Studies, used hereafter interchangeably) signifies a constellation of analytical frameworks and related theoretical viewpoints that are discernible by their affinitive epistemic tenets, criticality toward elite/oppressive power, and commitments to intervention/emancipation of the oppressed through their research (Fairclough 2007). How these principles are characterised and employed analytically varies greatly, however, across the field's many constituent approaches (Wodak and Meyer 2001). However, all CDA approaches are united by their commitment to addressing and deconstructing (broadly construable) social problems from a range of critical angles. Their affinitive aim is to account for the role of discourse(s) in the production/perpetuation/challenging of such social problems (Fairclough 2007). The field also asks further questions of discourses in terms of the ideologies which beget them and inform their material realisations: the underlying beliefs, dispositions and perspectives which invariably serve purposes of power resistance/conveyance. As such, CDA strives to illuminate how these discourses

(and the individual choices in language which constitute them) reproduce or resist (at times undetectable) (in)equitable power relations in society. As noted earlier, the social commitment of CDA positions the critical discourse analyst's role as intervening on the side of the oppressed (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). Polemically then:

[CDA] starts from prevailing social problems, and thereby chooses the perspective of those who suffer most, and critically analyses those in power, those who are responsible, and those who have the means and the opportunity to solve such problems (Fairclough 1989: 4).

Such an intervention is premised on the aforementioned conceptualisation of discourse as being imbricated and imbued with (in this instance, nationalist) power serving ideologies. As such, discourse is the site where: 'power is legitimized or delegitimized.... [and are] sites of social struggle in that they manifest traces of differing ideological fights for dominance and hegemony'. As such, CDA must also consider the broader contextual framework of specific texts, the status and resources of discourse participants within this socio-political context, their gate-keeping/ dissemination/ and agenda-setting abilities, and their overall status within the public sphere (Habermas 1962), all of which affect the power generativity of given discourse.

CDA, then, is not concerned with analysis of linguistic units solely in terms of their grammaticality or syntactical structure, but more in terms of how these systematised linguistic (or multimodal) aspects reproduce/ resist the reproduction of the *status quo* and its power asymmetries. In this sense, 'CDA is not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se, but in studying social phenomena.' (Wodak and Meyer 2001: 2) It follows from this that CDA analysts are typically drawn to 'powerful' discourses, viz. those with the ability to shape worldviews, public opinion—e.g., media discourse – or alternatively use language to oppress, excoriate

and exert power at a societal level—e.g., legal or political discourse. Key to linking the socially enacted negotiation of power to formal linguistic choices is a dynamic notion of context, which is foregrounded in CDA.

In addition to formal and structural concerns in the linguistic context, the analyst should, account for the means and context of production of a discourse in the broader socio-political context. As such CDA does not limit context to mere interpersonal, or situational context, but broadens its consideration to the socio-political, historical or institutional context in which a discourse arises. These aforementioned nuances will be unpacked below, in line with Wodak and Meyer's (2001) contention that the common ground of CDA can be demarcated into the following inter-related conceptual foci: discourse, power, ideology and critique.

Discourse:

As outlined in the working definition of discourse, a critical approach to semiotic and discursive research necessarily sees discourse as being 'socially constitutive and socially constituted' (Reisigl and Wodak 2016) and as a form of social practice. This paints language-use as a ritual form of behaviour that both constitutes, and is conditioned by, the content of our/a group's/a culture's belief systems, social reality and (perception of the) *status quo*. Social practices reproduce the *status quo*, and normalise and inculcate certain modes of thinking, beliefs or practices through rituality and reiteration. This view of discourse, as Wodak and Meyer (2001, 2016) point out, implies that a symbiotic dialectic exists between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and structure(s) which influence or frame it. That is, the event shapes institutions, yet it is concomitantly shaped by them (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). Discourse then, in CDA's view, is 'constitutive' or generative as it is the main vehicle through which the *status quo* (or a challenge to it) is (re)produced. Importantly, in this understanding, discourses both inform and serve as the site of construction for interpersonal and intergroup relations,

collective and/or individual identities, too (de Cillia et al. 1999). That is to say, discourses both inform and legitimate the boundaries of societal groupings (and the power dynamics of these) and how specific social movements construct, negotiate and reproduce their frameworks of interpretation.

It follows naturally from this (and in part due to its postmodernist roots) that CDA views discourse as being inherently linked with two concepts which will be considered shortly: power, or rather how discourse is used to uphold (or overthrow unequal) power relations in society, and ideology, or how discourse is employed toward ideological ends. A generalised, catch-all definition for discourse in all of CDA, then, which encapsulates the above-charted inter-relatedness (and one that is used widely by scholars in the field) is: ‘a relatively stable use of [multi-modal] language serving the organisation and structuring of social life.’ (Wodak and Meyer 2001: 12)

Critique:

CDA is ‘critical’ in many ways. Partly, it derives criticality from its view of language as a social conduit that obfuscates, frames or mystifies social events to elicit and inculcate a certain viewpoint in society. CDA is committed to demystification of such language through a systematic analysis of grammatical and lexical aspects of text, to lay bare the ideological, ulterior motives which underpinned them. In this sense, CDA is critical in terms of its commitment to what Sayer (2009) terms the reduction of illusion. More theoretically, the critical impetus can, in turn, be traced back to the notion of critique developed by members of the Frankfurt School, in particular the work of Horkheimer and Adorno and their critiques of Enlightenment thinking (Horkheimer 1941, Horkheimer and Adorno 1947). Such a view was critical of social theory which antedated it on the basis that it was too descriptive in its remit. They argued for the idea that social research should strive toward the amelioration of society along egalitarian lines. In this view, theorists

should take an explicit normative position, rather than merely striving to understand how a phenomenon abounded or machinates through description. In line with this, CDA approaches claim, as far back as the field's inception (see Fairclough's *Language and Power* (1989)), to strive for emancipation through analysis by systematically deconstructing the oppressive workings of discourses—framed as a critical intervention.

Core to this understanding, however, is an inherently coercive structuring principle that is active in all group identity practices, including discourse. Recently, the concept of critique has been adopted by the various approaches to CDA in multifarious ways. Whereas traditionally, it had been applied to critiques of top-down domination and ideology (Wodak and Meyer 2001, Fairclough and Wodak 1999, van Dijk 1986), recent developments (see KhosraviNik 2017a) have seen CDA addressing immanently defined (viz. from the perspective of the oppressed) critical problems, too. Yet, some (see Fairclough and Fairclough 2018) within the field have seen the need to call for a more procedural, transparent and empirically grounded means of operationalising critique in CDA. Accordingly, how it is operationalised here will be addressed at length shortly.

Ideology:

Being 'critical' in the sense outlined above, entails a commitment to deconstructing the (often invisible) (a)symmetrical structures of power (see below) in society and exposing the ideologies which these structures serve. CDA positions itself as a discursive approach toward this end by striving to deconstruct the ideological workings of discourse through an analysis of the trace ideologies embedded in discursive strategies of texts and utterances. Across the constituent approaches of CDA, ideology is seen and treated in a number of comparable ways: some (most significantly the dialectical-relations approach developed by Fairclough (see below or Fairclough 2016) take an essentially Marxian approach to the nexus of language,

power and ideology. Marx's contention in this regard was that ideology's main function was to serve the superstructure of society—viz. its cultures, politics, law and societal institutions— which dialectically exist with its substructure or base, i.e. the forces and relations of productions (Marx 1932). For Marx, language—in terms of ideology— acted as the main 'product, producer, and reproducer of social consciousness.' (Fairclough and Graham 2002: 201) In this sense, ideology is seen as being embedded in and constituted by social processes. Ideologies, then, can be seen as representations of aspects of the world which invariably are geared toward establishing and maintaining/ challenging the oppressive and exploitative power relations in society or at a group level.

Given the political focus of this dissertation, it is perhaps tempting to take ideology to signify a cohesive set of ideas or as a 'coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs or values', as it is often taken to mean in the political sciences (Knight 2006: 623), indeed, it must be noted that this definition is used elsewhere in this dissertation, mostly in regards to the core conceptual tenets of republicanism as a political ideology. However, this explicit conception of ideology is difficult to capture as a belief system and has, through increased salience in public discourse, become derogated by negative connotations (Reisigl and Wodak 2016). Rather than taking interest in the explicit political mapping or description of ideologies, CDA is geared toward the unravelling of everyday ideologies which shape and mould the power dynamics of our society, which govern and are produced/reproduced in our day-to-day interactions, and which form our belief systems. These ideologies, as noted by Lakoff and Johnson (1971) and Reisigl and Wodak (2016), are typically reproduced in linguistic form, social cognitions, conceptual metaphors, etc. Moreover, these ideologies are normalised through social practice and taken up, legitimated and reproduced by society in discourse. In this sense, CDA's understanding of ideology has drawn heavily from Gramsci's notion of hegemony (1973), in the sense that it sees control as being instilled and exerted through the

persuasive potential of discourse and is not routinely exacted through coercive force. In this light, an ideology can be perceived by the majority of society as being normal (or indeed beneficial) when in reality its reproduction constitutes the stratified hegemonic order and perpetuates the majority's position at the bottom of power structures. A more apt conception of ideology, which accounts for the social actions which they give rise to, comes from Mullins (1972), who argues that ideologies have power over people's cognitions (and by extension, the collective perceptive schema of certain groups), suggesting that ideologies influence people's/groups' evaluations and value judgements. Fully developed ideologies will provide some guidance or normative judgement on group action. Finally, as will be unpacked further below in regard to this dissertation's operationalisation of the term, the cognitive and narrative configuration of ideologies follow a logically coherent (or narrativised) structure which is easily consumed and simple to process and reproduce in group representations.

Power:

As previously established, one of the most salient commonalities within CDA is its commitment to deobfuscating the ways in which discourses structure society: that is, how discourses legitimate the asymmetrical distribution of social power between social groupings, which leads to domination (and, in response, resistance). Discourse is seen as a conduit or nexus through which power is (typically hegemonically) exerted, but also as a product of power: that is to say, discourse is conditioned or actioned by power. It must also be noted (as KhosraviNik and Unger (2016) do) that discourse can be used to resist power by social minority groupings. As such the nexus of power should be conceived as a continuum which is continuously in flux. Within this, individual texts act as sites of struggle for power in the public sphere and group social cognition. Below the struggle for power and social control, at the textual level, a struggle between competing discourses and

ideologies embedded the text plays out. Power, then, in terms of CDA, is typically conceived of in a Foucauldian sense inasmuch as it is the product of social actions which are determined by social structures, but also reproduces or erodes these structures (Wodak and Meyer 2001). CDA's conception of power is also indebted to the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1993) whose conception of social fields as systematised struggles for power amidst members lends itself a Foucauldian perspective on power (Foucault 1971). Bourdieu's notion of habitus (1977)—the system of dispositions that govern the way an individual thinks and perceives the world—also is influential in various approaches to CDA and their notions of power, and will be incorporated hereafter subsequently.

Within CDA, power can be theorised to take different forms, relying on theories furnished by Weber (1958), Foucault (1972), Lukes (2004) and Arednt (1970). For instance, power can be explicit, visible and exerted through an accumulation of resources or coercive force. This type of overt power is traditionally seen in the capital forms of wealth or military might and is concerned with enacting the will of elite actors successfully (even in the face of resistance from others (Weber 1958). However, power can also operate more quiescently, its exertion going unnoticed by many in society: for example, holding power in the form of political or corporate office and decision-making processes, or exerting communicative control over the content of mass media—i.e. agenda setting, gate keeping, etc. all can be seen to condition a given public's opinion, thus engendering a form of ideational power. Finally, power can also be invisible (Foucault 1972), and imperceptible to the uncritical eye, operating below the threshold of perception for most in society. This mode of power exertion (which directly relates to ideology and the Gramscian (1971, 1973) concept of hegemony) can shape belief and value systems and influence individual cognition. Perhaps the most associated realisations of this modality of power (at least in terms of western (neo)liberal democracies) can be found in advertising discourse or political discourse (van Dijk 1998). Whilst CDA

is interested in explicit/visible and opaque discursive manifestations of power, it takes particular interest in the invisible forms of power, traces of which can be found and systematically analysed in discourses which condition an individual/group's worldview and ideology. The nuances of the specific approach within CDA that is adopted hereafter are overviewed next.

The Discourse-Historical Approach:

The Discourse Historical Approach (hereafter DHA) was forwarded by (and most associated with) Ruth Wodak (and her former colleagues at the University of Vienna, most notably Martin Reisigl). The approach's provenance in Vienna has led to scholars which have become associated with its development and use as the 'Vienna School' (of Critical Discourse Analysis). The approach was first presented in a tentative formulation in the 1980s. Yet, in the intervening years, it has been added to and expanded to in various publications (Wodak and Weiss 2004, Krzyżanowski 2010, Wodak 1999, Richardson 2013, Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2008, 2011, Krzyżanowski 2015, and Reisigl and Wodak 2016, to name but a few). Significantly, too, the approach has been adapted by various other CDA scholars (some of whom were PhD students of Wodak): see Richardson (2017), Krzyżanowski (2010), KhosraviNik (2010a, 2010b) all of whom have expanded its applicability or analytical categories varyingly. Significantly, from the perspective of this research, it has also been utilised in prominent analyses of nationalism, national identity and social media data, too (de Cillia et al. 1999, KhosraviNik and Zia 2014, KhosraviNik 2017b, and KhosraviNik and Sarkoh 2017). As employed here, the 2016 version (presented in Reisigl and Wodak 2016) of the framework will serve as the spine of this thesis' application and provides the basis for following discussion.

The DHA adopts a problem-oriented perspective which views discourse as a form of social practice. To do so, it takes a necessarily inter-disciplinary approach which

integrates theoretical contextualisation, empirical methods and application. While grand theories often serve as the critical point of departure in DHA analyses, the framework itself is, importantly, incorporative of other meso/ 'middle range' theories from a variety of academic disciplines 'wherever integration leads to an adequate understanding and explanation of the research object.' (Reisigl and Wodak 2016) Similar adaptability is notable in terms of its methodological versatility, being applicable to a multitude of different genres and textual formats (including social media texts) and— where expedient— incorporating insights from fieldwork or ethnography to yield an 'insider's' perspective. As such the DHA is abductive: recursively moving between theory and methods to produce its analysis. Crucially, its proponents note that its core analytical instruments must be elaborated and nuanced for each considered context, and its categories can be invoked *ad hoc* on the basis of specific research goals. Finally, in terms of its constituent characteristics, the approach – emanating from its theoretical roots in the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory—embodies an understanding of criticality which posits that research findings ought to be applied, and, more generally, research should hold a social commitment (Horkheimer 1941).

How the abovementioned adaptability is harnessed and operationalised for the present dissertation will be broached later on in the discussion. For now, the above points position the DHA as being congruent with the underlying principles of CDA. As such, some more consideration ought to be given to how the paradigm distinguishes itself and differentiates in regard to the core foci of ideology, identity power and discourse. These are addressed in turn below as analytical foci for the present research, before the approach's analytical triangulation and categories are presented.

Ideology:

This thesis' understanding of ideology, is heavily indebted to that of the DHA, where it is seen as:

a perspective (often one-sided), i.e a worldview and a system composed of related mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes, values and evaluations, which is shared by members of a specific social group (Reisigl and Wodak 2016).

We see, then, that in this definition, value judgments and group identity/membership are foregrounded. Ideologies are inherently related to power and serve to legitimise and normalise its exertion. This legitimation can strive toward establishing and perpetuating a hegemonic order, or alternatively—and importantly from the perspective of this dissertation—ideologies can also aim to transform 'power relations more or less radically.' That is to say, ideologies can delegitimise existing power relations (and legitimate alternative modalities of power distribution). As such, the DHA takes explicit concern with the discursive manifestations of ideologies, focusing on the ways 'in which linguistic and other semiotic practices mediate and reproduce ideology in a variety of social institutions' (2016: 637). Through an analysis of surface language forms (considered against broader levels of context) the aim of the DHA is to "demystify" the hegemony of specific discourses by deciphering the ideologies that establish, perpetuate or fight dominance.'

Importantly, the DHA conceives of ideologies as operating at different levels and scales. In one sense, ideologies can denote the grand, over-arching normative accounts of how society ought to look—such as the fully fledged grand narratives of society: communism, capitalism, etc. Yet at the same time, it can be taken to signify the beliefs, view and evaluations which inform less grandiose constellations of belief, too. This interpretation broadly sees ideology signify the ways in which 'meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination' (Thompson 1990: 56) at a sub-societal level (i.e. intergroup or interpersonal political contestations).

As such, ideologies, beyond providing ideologues with collectively held lenses through which to interpret society, also serve as a means of legitimating and negotiating power distribution at the (inter)group level—i.e. within and by a hot nationalist movement. As such ideologies are viewed as forming the basis of (in)group identification processes (see ‘identity’ below).

Yet beyond this level of ideological influence at the group identification level, we can also view Irish republicanism as a ‘fully-fledged’ ideology. Accordingly, its analytical operationalisation hereafter will target three inter-related foci which Reisigl and Wodak (2016) pose as the core imageries of all ideologies. These imageries serve to constitute the over-arching narrative structure of a given ideology and broadly map on to the temporalities of the present/ *status quo*, the future (in terms of ideological realisation), and the interim between these two points. They are listed below and operationalised subsequently as analytical foci. For Reisigl and Wodak (2016), ideologies comprise of:

1) a representational model: which constructs what society looks like from the perspective of the in-group. More often than not this model of the status quo hones in on the group’s grievances and provides legitimacy for the *raison d’etre*.

2) a visionary model: which is predicated on an evaluative (series of) normative judgement(s) on what a society should look from the perspective of the in-group and the discursive construction of this outcome

and

3) a programmatic model: which outlines the path(s) of action that could see the group arrive at the visionary model in the future (i.e through revolution, electoral success etc.)

These models will form the basis for analytical considerations of ideology later on in the dissertation. Yet within this dissertation, ideological temporal models are not delimited from the present onward. Rather, here it is contended that groups equally rely on their interpretations of the past to inform their perspectives and proposed programs of action. As such, it is proposed that the ‘collective memory’ of Irish republicans be incorporated into the theorisation of republicanism’s ideological narrative hereafter, too (see chapter 5 for further discussion of this). The term is used here as Wodak and Krzyżanowski (2009), citing Ricoeur (1997) define it:

collective memory may be ‘characterized as a collection of traces of the events that were important for the historical sequence of a particular group’, equipped with the capability of ‘bringing these common recollections back to life on the occasion of rites, festivals and public ceremonies (Ricoeur, 1997: 439).

As such, ideologies are treated and analysed hereafter as dynamic in their discursive manifestation: constructing temporally bound imageries which serve to narrativize and cohesivise the overall group in terms of its ideological reproduction. The concrete analytical categories used in the construction of these models will be presented subsequently. Beyond assessing the discursive construction of the above-listed foci in the consideration of republican ideology, however, further foci must be delineated for the analysis of republican social identification—a processes heavily imbricated with ideology.

Identity:

In contrast to an essentialist approach to identity (which contends that a person/group’s identity is innate within them) the DHA views identity as from a constructionist perspective: that is, it views both personal and social identities as being the products of interaction and as not being rooted in any innate capacity. In this view, an act of identity construction (or performance) is highly dependent on

the social context in which it presents itself. Similar to Baudrillard's (1983) notion of a simulacra, the constructionist approach to identity views it not as being fixed, but as malleable, developing and layered. Whilst personal identities are enacted by the actions (discursive or otherwise) of the individual, social or group identities are ratified by categorisation: that is, individuals being identified as belonging to the same social grouping. This process of identification occurs (as Tajfel et al. 1979 note) chiefly from drawing distinctions (linguistic or cognitive) between one's in-group and out-group. In terms of the DHA, this distinction is realised through the discursive construction of social actors and the linguistic means that are used to draw boundaries/ express sameness etc. As such, the detection and analysis of identity markers which label and construct these in/out groups form the core analytical focus in terms of (social) identification. As noted above, the DHA views ideologies as legitimising group power dynamics and providing the unitive and affinitive basis for in-group boundary construction. Accordingly, these group identification practices, tend to divide along two poles: foregrounding the positive attributes of the in-group, whilst simultaneously derogating those of opposite, out-groups (van Dijk 1998). A DHA analysis of national(ist) identity, then, concerns itself with analysis of language units and 'syntactic devices which serve to construct unification, unity, sameness, difference, uniqueness', (de Cillia et al 1999: 35) whilst analytically tying these concrete realisations to their socio-structural products (this is discussed below in regard to 'discourse strategies.')

As established in a previous chapter, nationalism(s) and national identities are social constructs, embedded in shared perceptive schema and (re)constructed in discourse. Indeed, Anderson's (1983) conception of nations as being 'imagined communities' provides a good basis, from the perspective of the DHA for understanding how nationalist self-consciousness is conceptualised by fellow nationals. Yet, it has come under criticism from DHA analysts. Despite being constructionist in its approach, Busch and Krzyzanowski (2007) and Wodak (2007)

argue that Anderson's contention is premised upon the pre-existence of homogenous political communities: a concept that does not, in their opinion, account for the heterogeneous and ethnically diverse national identities found in the contemporary global political landscape. Whilst Anderson's approach is credited by the DHA for its foregrounding of language and conception of the national identity as being a collective perceptive schema, it is criticised for lacking the capacity to account for the dynamic transient nature of (national) identities. As Wodak notes:

identity, in the complex struggle over belonging to a nation state, is never static and defined once and for all; all (national, collective and individual) identities are dynamic, fluid and fragmented; they can always be renegotiated, according to socio-political and situative contexts as well as to more global social change and ideologically informed categories. This is why the German sociologist Theodor W. Adorno famously claimed, '[i]dentity is the prototype of ideology (1966: 151).' (Wodak 2017: 141)

Similarly, Anderson's conceptualisation does little to provide insight into why nationalists reproduce their group identity discursively.³⁴ Importantly, the DHA illuminates its conception of national identity by relying on Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1993) which denotes a 'durable but also evolving system of dispositions and internalised behaviours' which can be activated by members of a group within a specific field of social action.' Applying this concept to national identity, we can arrive at an understanding of it as: 'a complex of common or similar beliefs or opinions internalised in the course of socialisation... and of

³⁴ This does not mean they criticise Anderson's account lacks sufficient exploration of why nationalism emerged or why nationalists are nationalist (Anderson makes several defensible claims in this regard and generally this aspect of *Imagined Communities* is quite effective) rather it means that it provides little in the way of explaining why they emerge *discursively* in the minds and language use of participants.

common or similar emotional attitudes ...as well as common or similar behavioural dispositions, including ... linguistic dispositions' related to a given nationalist group. These are internalised and reproduced discursively by group members. As such, they are objectively enshrined in group practice and language-use. These dispositions ultimately serve to elicit the reproduction strategies (see below) which serve in-group ideology and construct in-group identity. As such, group membership exerts a 'soft, relative deterministic' (de Cillia et al. 1999) influence on its members, coaxing them (to varying degrees) to act in accordance with group goals which they may not subjectively (want to) pursue or know they are pursuing (de Cillia et al. 1999). Such an understanding encapsulates the power relation which underpins group identity structures and cause individual nationalists to (unknowingly) reproduce complex national structures. Importantly, the above also acknowledges the two dominant research foci for national identity processes in terms of the discursive construction in in-groups and out-groups. How the discursive construction of national identities is rendered analysable in this regard is detailed below in regard to discourse strategies.

As noted above, the product of negotiating inter-group relational dynamics—viz. the power structures which abound form the process – can be seen to either constitute or challenge the status quo. Accordingly, the DHA's understanding of power is dynamic: accounting for its hegemonic formulations and top-down machinations which perpetuate it—viz., power as the ability to exert one's own will—or 'vertical power', whilst also accounting for power's ability to signify both lateral and vertical social relations and networks of power (Emerson 1962). Various gradations of power from critical, social and cultural theorist can be used to signify the various modalities of power. Hereafter, the gradations adopted by Popitz (1992) (which have been employed in regard to the DHA) are utilised. In this view, power can take actional/ coercive forms (physical force or violence), ideational/ cooptive forms (through persuasion or inculcation) or technical/

systematised forms to (i.e. through controlling means of dissemination, mass media, gate-keeping etc.) Importantly, beyond conveying and reproducing power relations, texts and discourses – in particular in communicative contexts marked by high levels of grassroots interaction and text production— are generative of power: variously perpetuating elite, hegemonic ideologies (with power behind their discourse) and consolidating or disseminating novel, non-elite ideologies (with power in their discourse, as quantified by the number of participants) (KhosraviNik 2010a, 2017a).

Categories of analysis (in terms of realisation in data) are presented below for both national identity construction and, more generally, for purposes of undertaking a DHA analysis. These will be returned to subsequently.

Discourse:

Within the DHA, discourse is treated in a typically critical sense and viewed as a form of social practice (Reisigl 2018). Indeed, the working definition outlined in a previous section originates largely from one of the most contemporary treatises on the DHA (Reisigl and Wodak 2016). Discourses, in line with this definition, are taken to be situated in a particular social field, related to some macro topic and comprised of texts. As Krzyżanowski (2010: 76) notes, whilst patterns, commonalities and themes are embedded in discourses, ‘texts comprise a representation of discourse in a particular context and situation’. As such, texts can be seen as the concrete realisations of discourses which will form the objects of analysis hereafter. In addition to possessing a relatedness to a macro-topic, discourses are also, in the view of the DHA, pluri-perspective and argumentative in nature: meaning that they can be sites of contention. In this view, discourses are not impenetrable or unmalleable. Rather, they are ‘open and hybrid’ (Wodak and Meyer 2001: 66) and, as units of analysis, are dynamic semiotic entities that are open to reinterpretation and continuation through textual realisations.

In this sense texts ‘are parts of discourses’ (Reisigl and Wodak 2016), effectively rendered as their material constituent units and acting as the sites of power struggles. In this definition, everything from a speech to a tweet can be regarded as a text, so the defining feature of the term here should be its relatedness to a discourse (as a concrete realisation of it), and the term shouldn’t be regarded as signifying a quantified unit of language or size of communicative act. Within the DHA’s understanding of discourse, texts are positioned as operating on four distinct levels of context:

- 1) the immediate, language or text-internal co-text and co-discourse;
- 2) the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between...texts, genres and discourses;
- 3) the social variables and institutional frames of a specific context, and
- 4) the broader socio-political and historical context, which discursive practices are embedded in and related to (Reisigl and Wodak 2016).

These levels of context will be revisited recursively (as per Reisigl and Wodak 2016, Reisigl 2017, etc.) to ensure a holistic appreciation of the socio-political relativity to language choices. Finally, to better understand how the DHA conceives of the structure of discourse (in terms of origins and flow of information) it is necessary to introduce the three further concepts: ‘field of action’, and ‘intertextuality’ ‘interdiscursivity.’

A field of action denotes a section or aspect of social reality that frames or dictates a discourse and these fields play host to different discursive practices and genres (and necessitate different habitus). For example, in the below diagram (taken from Wodak 2001) the field of political actions is outlined, and the respective genres associated with each field is included below in the diagram.

Intertextuality in terms of the DHA is not taken in a solely Bakhtinian fashion in the sense that texts are linked to other past texts by being framed by them. Rather, it denotes the idea that texts are linked (in both the present and the past) by being conditioned but also by way of explicit reference to a (macro)topic, by mimicking argumentativity or by referencing the same social actors or events, etc. Reisigl and Wodak (2016) further elaborate that this process of transferring elements intertextually is known as recontextualization and the considering or situating of an element out of its original (or indeed out of any) context is known as de-contextualisation. Interdiscursivity is conceived of in its usual manner, denoting the potentiality of discourses to be imbricated, overlapping and often hybrid in nature: that is to say, discourses can draw from one another, or indeed merge to form new sub-topical discourses.

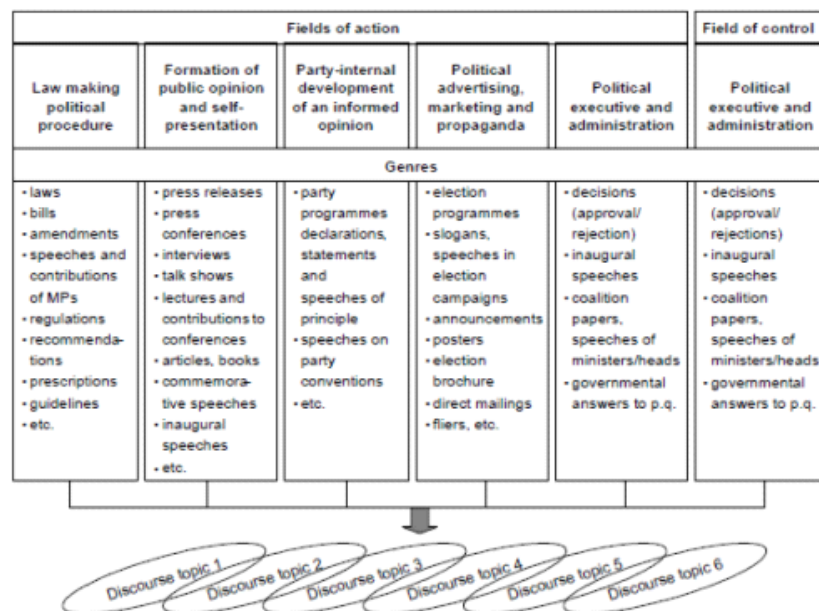


Figure 2 – Illustration of Field of Action/ Genre/Discourse in the DHA (taken from Wodak 2001)

Below this level of categorisation, the following illustrates DHA's conception of discourse/ genre/ text/ intertextual and interdiscursive relations as well as the relatedness of topics which can be recontextualised within these formations.

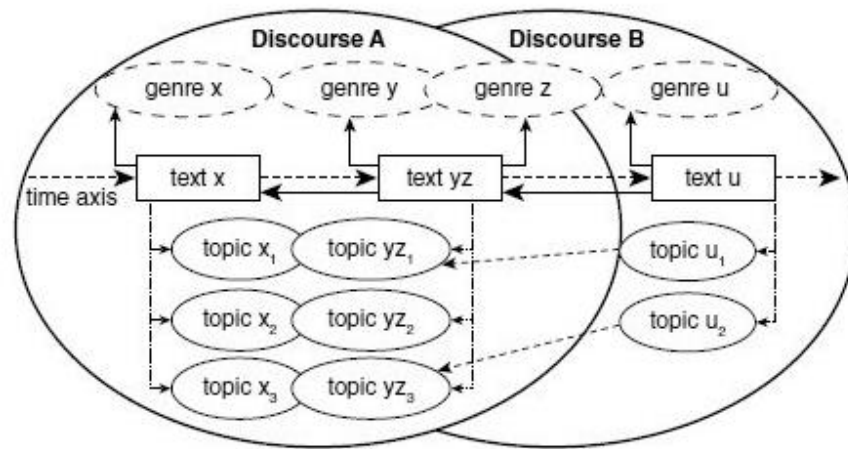


Figure 3 – Discourse/ Text/ Topic Structure in the DHA (taken from Wodak 2001)

How these varying levels of consideration are operationalised is addressed after some final considerations relating to the notion of critique are offered below.

Critique:

Like other approaches, the DHA draws from Critical Theory (most prominently the Frankfurt School, see above) and posits that a holistic, thorough and truly critical analysis should focus on three inter-related aspects, each of which are surveyed below.

The first, a text or discourse-immanent critique, follows the tradition of Hegel, Marx, Adorno and Bakshar who used immanent critique to identify and demystify internal contradictions in societal systematised norms. As applied at the text-internal/discourse level in the DHA, however, it aims to unveil ‘inconsistencies, (self-) contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas in the text-internal or discourse-internal structures.’ (Reisigl and Wodak 2016) Whereas critical theorists sought to identify these contradictions in societal structures, the DHA aims to critique them in terms of how they are reproduced or constructed in texts. As such, text-immanent critique is operationalised here through an application of DHA categories during the analytical chapters and a critical re-visitation of the concept in the concluding chapter, where republicanism’s discourse-immanent critique³⁵ (as revealed through analysis) will be recapitulated. Attention in this light will be afforded to the discursive negotiation of the agonisms between the perpetuation of a historically conditioned, revolutionary rhetoric and the construction of centre-left political socio-political identity in the contemporary period.

The second level of critique is concerned with reducing illusion and unmasking the (latent) ‘persuasive or ‘manipulative’ character of discursive practices.’ (Wodak 2001) This socio-diagnostic critique does so by drawing from other disciplines and social theories to interpret discursive events. It also goes beyond the textual boundaries of a discourse to situate a discursive event in the socio-political or historical context in which it manifested. This mode of critique enables a consideration of republican discourse practices in relation to key contemporary contextual factors identified over the previous theoretical chapters – such as republicanism’s position in regard to established power and its alleged mainstreaming or proliferation into popular cultural forms, for example. Beyond

³⁵My distinction here is important: text-immanent refers to the unravelling of internal inconsistencies through language/ surface form analysis, whereas discourse-immanent is used here to signify the critique that is produced in republican discourse, as revealed through analysis.

critiquing republicanism in terms of its power bearing discourse and identification practices, broader insights can be gained from this level of critical reflection. As applied here, this socio-diagnostic critique will be devoted to a consideration of republicanism's putative communicative control and structure, its alleged ideological lightness and the alleged mainstreaming of the movement: claims which can be empirically interrogated in lieu of analysis.

The final level of critique is a prospective or prognostic critique (the terminology has changed across formulations between 2001 and 2016). This criticality follows from analysis and involves making suggestions to overcome/mitigate against the problem under consideration. These suggestions are in line with the critical impetus of the Frankfurt School who contended that social/critical theory should strive to change (or at the very least challenge) the *status quo*. In terms of the DHA, this involves the sharing and dissemination of findings and production of a means of addressing the problem. More significantly, however, there has been a notable commitment to enhancing the communicative clarity of insights so as to ameliorate social issues. As such, beyond identifying specific gaps in the literature which the present research can address, an effort to cohesive knowledge around republicanism's discursive construction and communicative structure in a communicatively accessible way is undertaken.

Analytical Categories:

The main discourse analysis in the DHA is systematised to an extent (i.e. there are a broad range of potential analytical categories and theories which can be drawn from, and should be chosen on the basis of each study) and three-dimensional:

- 1) contents or topics of a specific discourse are identified (by way of historical reading and/or content analysis)

2) discursive strategies are investigated

and

3) the linguistic realisations of discourses are examined

(Reisigl and Wodak 2016)

We see, then, that the initial analytical consideration starts out relatively broad – looking at the topical level of the discourse, before moving to narrower, more linguistic concerns. Having identified the constituent topics within a given discourse, it is the role of the discourse historical analyst to identify macro/micro discourse strategies. Strategies are ‘more or less accurate plan(s) adopted to achieve a certain political, psychological or other kind of objective.’ (Reisigl and Wodak 2016:)

In this light, we can view strategies as mediating

between communicative functions and objectives deduced from the interaction and the social conditions of interacting partners and, on the other hand, the realisation of linguistic (or extralinguistic) means and their structuration (Heinemann and Viehweger 1991: 215).

Such a view is, indebted to Bourdieu’s use of the term (and his related concept of habitus), and views such strategies as being ‘oriented towards a goal but not necessarily planned to the last detail or strictly instrumentalist; strategies can also be applied automatically’ (de Cillia et al. 1999: 32), resulting from interpellation within the habitus of a given field of social action. Participants need not (indeed, they are unlikely to) explicitly identify them as strategic, but nevertheless are conditioned into reproducing and employing them (chiefly, in their own language use). In light of this, all discursive acts can be regarded as the ‘realisations of

strategies...‘within’ [these] acts we can discern specific, more or less conscious or automatised, strategies which serve certain purposes or help to achieve a particular objective. Only by looking at these – for example, discursive – acts may we draw conclusions about potential underlying strategies.’ (de Cillia et al. 1999: 32) Importantly, strategies can be realised (and in turn analysed) at both the macro level of context (what strategy the discursive act is trying to generally do) and micro discourse/linguistic level (what discursive and linguistic resources does it invoke at the co-textual level). These distinctions are illustrated below in regard to the levels of context considered within the discursive construction of national identity (de Cillia et al. 1999).

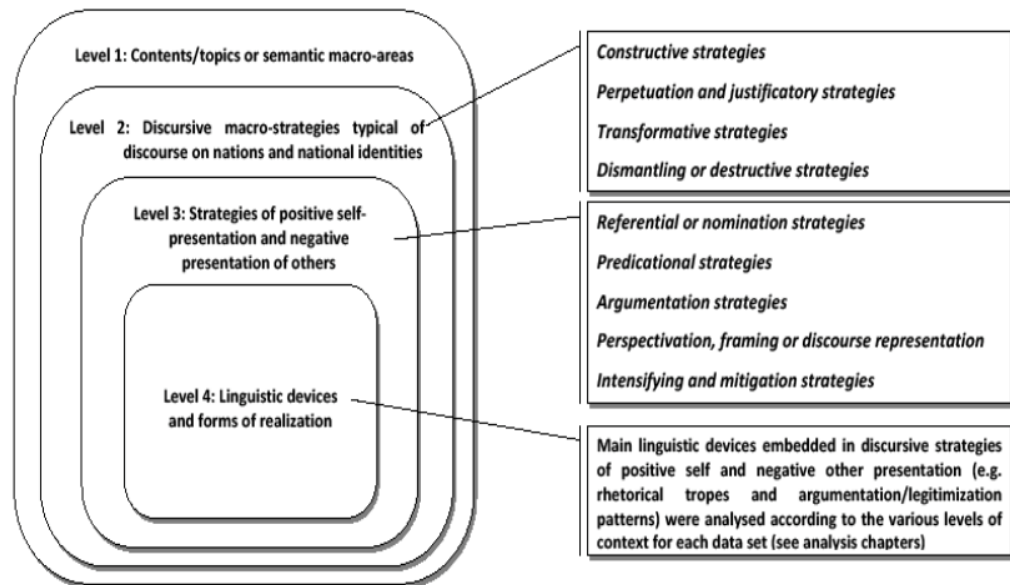


Figure 4 – Levels of Context in the DHA (taken from Ribeiro 2010)

Subsequent to identifying key themes and topics in the data (level 1), the next level of consideration entails a focus on the discursive macro-level strategies (level 2), which denotes the more or less strategic macro social actions undertaken and realised in discursive acts. In terms of national identity construction, these macro strategies relate to four generalised identity functions that are routinely achieved in such discursive acts. These are (cf. de Cillia et al. 1999) strategies of construction (which seek to construct and establish a nationalist identity), strategies of justification (which seek to defend, rationalise and legitimise it), strategies of transformation (which try to change how said identity is perceived) or strategies of destruction (which strive to deconstruct and derogate an established identity). After identifying the social functions evident within a text, the micro-level discourse strategies which serve these must be subjected to closer analysis.

Regarding analysis the micro levels (levels 3 and 4), the aim is to identify the linguistic and discursive means through which macro strategies are realised. This entails both a categorisation of the discourse strategy under consideration and also a description of the linguistic means invoked in its realisation. For our purposes here, two specific sets of strategies which have been proposed by DHA scholars in the past are proposed. The first of these comes from de Cillia et al. (1999), who propose a list of core constituent discourse strategies involved in the construction of national(ist) identity. Whilst not an exhaustive list, the following provides an overview of the main strategies that are afforded attention in certain analytical chapters hereafter relating to identity: these are, strategies of assimilation (or the discursive presupposition of sameness) and its corresponding strategy of dissimilation (the discursive emphasis of difference). Additionally, strategies of (pro)autonomisation (discursive foregrounding of (need for) national independence), strategies of unification / cohesivation (which foreground the affinitive characteristics of co-nationals and their objects), and strategies of

heteronomisation (the discursive positioning of an entity as being subjected to external constraints).

The second, and more central framework of discourse strategies is the most associated with the DHA (Wodak 2001, Reisigl and Wodak 2016) and constitutes its core analytical considerations at the data level. For analytical purposes, these strategies have been articulated as five key questions which, when answered, serve to illuminate realisations of given strategies within a text.

These questions are:

- 1) How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically?
- 2) What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects phenomena/events and processes?
- 3) What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?
- 4) From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?
- 5) Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, intensified or mitigated?

(Reisigl and Wodak 2016)

These, in turn, reveal occurrences of strategies of 1) nomination, 2) predication, 3) argumentation, 4) perspectivisation and 5) intensification /mitigation. These are presented in diagram form below (with accompanying list of indicative macro-objectives and linguistic devices used in their realisation), before being elaborated briefly.

Strategies	Objectives	Devices
Referential/ Nomination	Construction of in groups and out-groups	- Membership categorization - Biological, naturalizing and depersonalizing metaphors, metonymies - Synecdoche (pars pro toto, tatum pro pars) - Verbs and nouns to denote processes and actions
Predication	Labelling social actors more or less positively or negatively, deprecatorily or appreciatively	-Stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits - Implicit and explicit predicate
Argumentation	Justification of positive or negative attributions	Topoi refers to arguments used to justify political inclusion or exclusion, discrimination or preferential treatment.
Perspectivation, framing	Expressing involvement, positioning speakers' point of view	Reporting, description, narration or quotation of (discriminatory) events and utterances
Intensification, mitigation	Modifying the epistemic status of proposition	Intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of (discriminatory) utterances

Figure 5- DHA Strategies (adapted from Reisigl and Wodak 2016)

Nomination strategies are the primary discursive means of constructing social actors in the view of the DHA. Underlying the lexical choices used in this realisation, it is theorised, are traces of ideology and social purposes which invariably inform its formal realisation (Halliday 1973) and these can, more broadly, be seen to foreground positive attributes and negative attributes along identity boundaries (van Dijk 1998). Accordingly, then, referential strategies are the main discursive vehicles through which groups/individuals construct their identity boundaries through the construction of discursive in-groups and antipodal out-groups or Others. A myriad of linguistic forms can potentially be used in describing the material realisations of nomination strategies—indeed, this is true of all strategies listed here—as such, their linguistic formulations will be described during analysis only. However, for illustrative purposes, nomination strategies may take a

metonymic form (which substitutes a part for the whole)—such as White House denoting the USA’s executive branch—, a functionalised form (where an actors functions or social purposes are foregrounded)—for example, labelling someone a ‘retired politician’ constructs them solely in political terms, and as being past their social function—, or, alternatively, a pronoun may be used—for instance, the pronoun ‘us’ denotes a vaguely defined, yet encompassing group that conflates the audience—all of which elicit different psycho-emotive and discursive responses toward different socio-political functions.

Strategies of predication refer to the manner in which actions/actors are discursively qualified. As noted above this can take the form of negative or positive qualification (again this is key in constructing the in-group/out-group dyad (van Dijk 1998). Qualities can also be attributed less directly through the use of metaphors, pragmatic presupposition, etc. (Reisigl and Wodak 2016). and tend to manifest more or less stereotypically. Argumentation strategies refer to the schemes of rationalisation and causal structures which underpin a given ideology, as they are realised in the data. Analysis of argumentation schemes typically involves an identification of the schemas (if A then B or because A then B), which can be, further, be fallacious. In keeping with the conventions of the discipline, such underlying discourse structures are denoted in Latin (*argumentum ad hominem* for instance) or through more generalised, accepted terms ascribed to logical fallacies (slippery slope fallacy, for example). Importantly, the DHA also identifies argumentation topoi as a key analytical concern. How topoi/ topoi have been defined has been subjected to much debate but broadly speaking, topoi can be regarded as denoting the base arguments to which a text can be reduced. Identifying topoi within a text allows the analyst to get a sense of the ideological appraisals, truth value judgements and normative qualities embedded within a discourse and their habitual topical and formal realisations. Importantly, these topoi can be either formal (deriving from traditional categories of argumentation

associated with debate and rhetoric) or informal (denoting the subjective reservoirs of knowledge and logic that are accumulated and curated by groups to inform their ideologies).

Perspectivisation refers to the manner in which a discursive event is framed in regards to the author/ speaker—i.e. narrated, quoted, newspaper reportage, etc., as well as the discursive means which position the speaker in regard to another, external entity. Finally, strategies of mitigation or intensification modify the proposition of an utterance: they are explicitly ideological in this sense and most typically rendered linguistically via the use of modals, adjectives and adverbs (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999, Wodak 2001).

While the DHA does actually explicitly account for strategies of discursive legitimation, it is proposed here to incorporate van Leeuwen's matrix of legitimation (2008) on the basis that it is more expansive in its descriptive capacity and has been successfully be fused with the DHA in the past (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999). Analyses of political discourses from this perspective aim to elucidate 'how some forms of knowledge are privileged over others', how power is 'legitimized' and how certain political practices are 'normalised' (Jackson 2005: 148). Resulting from this, they necessarily focus on 'the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in society.' (van Dijk 2015: 353) If, then, we take legitimation to signify the 'the act of justifying and sanctioning a certain action or power, on the basis of normative or other reasons' (Hazea et al. 2014: 172), we can understand it as discourse that justifies social actions and provides 'good reasons, grounds, or acceptable motivations for past or present action.' (van Dijk 1998: 255) As such, when we analyse legitimation strategies, we are seeking to answer to two pervading 'Why' questions: 'Why should we do this?' and 'Why should we do this in this way?'

Three strategies from van Leeuwen's (2008) framework are predominantly considered hereafter. These are:

1. Authorization, or, legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom, law, and/or persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested.
2. Moral evaluation, which entails legitimation by (often very oblique) reference to value systems.

and

3. Rationalization, that is, legitimation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalized social action and to the knowledges that society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity.

The linguistic realisations of these will be noted and explicated in the text so as to reveal the prevailing legitimation patterns within the data. Yet, given the focus of this dissertation on social media and social networking sites as data sources, some further consideration has to be given to the heterogenous array of semiotic resources available to discourse participants. While the DHA has been applied to multi-modal analyses successfully before (KhosraviNik and Unger 2016, Wodak and Krzyżanowski 2009, and Wodak and Forchtner 2014) (and indeed, its provenance in Systemic Functional Linguistics shares the same genealogical roots as social semiotics and other visual analysis approaches, see O'Halloran (2006) for overview of affinity), it is proposed here that Machin and Mayr's (2012) framework of visual critical discourse analysis be invoked to expand the categorising capacity and terminology of the present framework in this regard. As such, where visual materials will be analysed, they will strive to identify the visual realisations of the above strategies but also consider visual codes, potent cultural symbols, languages, setting and various other semiotic resources, as well as strategies of foregrounding

(bringing something to attention) and suppressing/ backgrounding (striving to elide information).

The above provides a comprehensive overview of the core strategies that will, at various levels and stages, be utilised in the analyses presented in the subsequent chapters. As per Reisigl and Wodak (2016) and the underlying tenets of the DHA, each site of analysis merits its own consideration of how best to use the above array of strategic resources. Importantly, the above can be used on an 'as needed basis', and efforts will be made to explicate how exactly they are used on a chapter-by-chapter basis. Crucially, this process must also relate to the specific research focus (and corresponding research questions) which the chapter sets out to address. Providing this explication at the start of each chapter will also serve as the site of introduction for any other meso-theory related concerns that will be operationalised thereafter.

Two final points must be noted here in regard to their significance to methodological concerns addressed in the subsequent chapter. Firstly, the DHA typically interprets criticality to include a sense of reflexive criticality, that is, a criticality directed at the researcher's own relationship to the research (object, subject, topic). As such, my own position and motivations for undertaking the research will be clarified in the methodology chapter which follows. Crucially, this chapter will also provide an overview of the dissertation's research design, which will be presented through an extrapolation of proposed research steps proffered by Reisigl and Wodak (2016). Combining all of the above strategic insights with contextual layers of criticality comprehensive discourse-historical analyses have traditionally followed these eight steps (as outlined in Reisigl 2018, Wodak 2001, Reisigl and Wodak 2016).

1. Activation and consultation of preceding theoretical knowledge (i.e. recollection, reading and discussion of previous research).

2. Systematic collection of data and context information (depending on the research question, various discourses and discursive events, social fields as well as actors, semiotic media, genres and texts are focused on).
3. Selection and preparation of data for specific analyses (selection and downsizing of data according to relevant criteria, transcription of tape recordings, etc.).
4. Specification of the research question and formulation of assumptions (on the basis of a literature review and a first skimming of the data).
5. Qualitative pilot analysis (allows testing categories and first assumptions as well as the further specification of assumptions).
6. Detailed case studies (of a whole range of data, primarily qualitative, but in part also quantitative).
7. Formulation of critique (interpretation of results, taking into account the relevant context knowledge and referring to the three dimensions of critique).
8. Application of the detailed analytical results (if possible, the results might be applied or proposed for application).

In the ensuing methodology, these steps will be linked to chapters within the dissertation to give a sense of how the present research's design corresponds to this research trajectory. Presently, the discussion now moves to situate the above developed analytical framework within the broader theoretical framework of Social Media – Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) proffered by KhosraviNik (2017a). Whilst not an analytical framework in itself (with specified categories etc.) the integration of SM-CDS is rationalised here due to its ability to account for the nuances of power and context on digital participatory platforms which will necessarily factor into any critical consideration of such sites as discourse spaces. Subsequent to this, limitations with the developed framework (informed by key criticisms of the canon) are overviewed before this chapter (and its insights) are summarised.

Social Media – Critical Discourse Studies

The nexus between media and society (and the power relations which underlie it) have long been an area of interest for CDA and has traditionally been underpinned by a conception of what Gee (2004) refers to as big ‘D’ discourse. That is, the elite dominated media are seen as shapers of discourse which are constructed with power ‘behind’ them’ or, termed in a more Foucauldian way, the notion of power of discourse. Yet, such an interpretation does not seemingly account for the ability of social media, crowdsourced sites and other digital participatory platforms where the power arguably derives from the magnitude of its producers (as opposed to the mass-ness of its reach) and their bottom up flows of information.

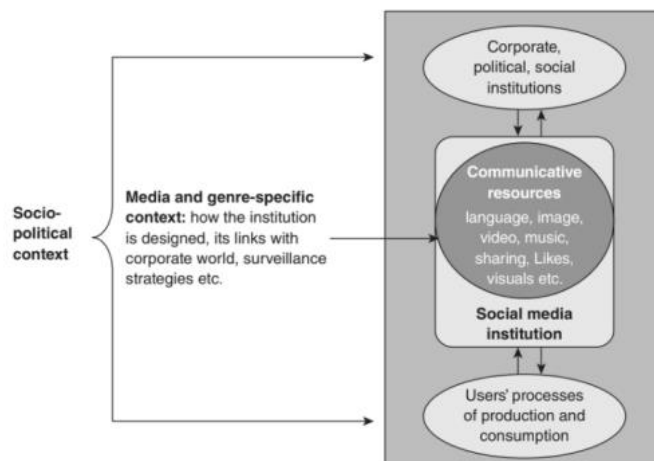


Figure 6- Vertical and Horizontal Context in SM-CDS (KhosraviNik 2017a)

This forms the point of departure for KhosraviNik (2017a), who – in introducing the framework of SM-CDS—identifies some core assumptions which ought to underpin any critical evaluation of participatorily produced data. In line with the DHA and its tenets, he argues that the analyst ought to consider the communicative context in which the data was produced so as to get a sense of the participants’ discourse practices. Analysis should also aim to move beyond the

description of surface linguistic realisation, and some contextualisation to the broader socio-political concerns they construct is needed. Importantly, from his perspective, the business model of sites and their commercial interests must also be exposed for critical purposes. Accordingly, the analyst ought to reject the notion of a binary between virtual and analogue domains in favour of a collapsed understanding of discourses and the spaces they operate in (whilst not neglecting the effects that social media affordances have on text productive activities).

As such, context for KhosraviNik, in terms of critical discourse studies in new media ecologies, ought not delimit context to its typical elite-determined formulations (institutional, social, historical etc.) in CDA, —which he terms ‘vertical context’. Rather, he argues that the more laterally oriented communication contexts which are permitted simultaneously on such sites should also be accounted for in any truly critical analysis of data. This permits a consideration of how power manifests both vertically (i.e. through top-down oppression), in a Foucauldian sense, and horizontally (i.e. through bottom up consolidation or resistance), in a Habermasian sense. The former denotes the structures and forces which deploy discourses that work to inculcate belief, reproduce the hegemonic order, etc. Whereas the latter signifies the group-political interactions of non-elite participants, who, in communicating, may reproduce elite discourses (or challenge them).

As such, the integration of SM-CDS is employed here to denote a commitment to the broad research tenets proposed by KhosraviNik (2017a). A digital/analogue binary divide is not subscribed to hereafter and sites of analysis are treated as fluid, dynamic and non-static spaces where discourses are reproduced in both elite/vertical and non-elite/horizontal formulations. In terms of informing the critique of this dissertation, power, necessarily, must be seen to be dynamic and simultaneously coursing in both oppressive and resistive ways in such sites. The

final point offered in this chapter relates to perceived criticisms of the field of CDA as they potentially apply to this project.

Potential Limitations:

Since emerging as a fully orbed area of study less than twenty years ago, CDA has undergone exponential growth. However, its rise has also meant that it has been on the receiving end of much criticism in this time span, too. These criticisms are levelled from different perspectives: from methodological criticisms to charges of theoretical inconsistency. The most prominent of these (as they are perceived to apply to the present project) are considered in the below section.³⁶

Widdowson (1995, 1998) and Blommaert (2001) criticise CDA along somewhat similar lines. Both contend that CDA is overly subject to the researcher's bias. Widdowson argues that CDA lacks objectivity and that analysts actively seek out problems (which are problematized as a result of their own interpretations and ideological perspectives) and frame them in ways which suit their own research agendas. In Widdowson's view, CDA's commitment to changing social inequalities is overly normative and detracts from its analytical rigour. In a similar vein, Blommaert argues that CDA tends to take as its point of departure a series of a priori assumptions about key actors within society such as the media and politicians who are habitually treated as reproducers of ideology or evil manipulators respectively (Blommaert 2001). A defence to these claims comes from Billig (2003) who notes that all critical approaches to social sciences (not just CDA) are 'biased', or more appropriately, unabashedly normative. He further notes that non-critical approaches are in themselves ideologically charged, or, rather, that the choice of the researcher to adhere to a non-critical approach to analysis is an ideological one. DeBeaugrande (1997) (in line with Foucault 1972) makes a similar—admittedly

³⁶ Methods to address these in the research's design will be presented in the next chapter.

broader—point by arguing that all academia is ideological in spite of claims of objectivity and axiomatic truths.

A knock-on accusation of Widdowson's aforementioned claim that analysts within CDA are overly subjective is that they actively take an interest in the down-sampling and text selection process. Indeed, one of the main charges levelled against CDA is that researchers select (an unrepresentative sample) of texts which bolster and endorse their own initial conceptions and arguments. The typical criterion for including a text in analysis is that it is representative or typical of the discourse under analysis. As a standard, however, this remains vague and lofty and exposes CDA to legitimate criticism. As such, in the following chapter, efforts to mitigate against these potential pitfalls—namely, through the incorporation of corpus linguistic tools to enhance representativity—will be overviewed.

Summary:

The above has provided an illustrative overview of field of Critical Discourse Analysis. From this broad point of departure, a framework based around the Discourse Historical Approach was developed. This was presented in terms of the core foci of ideology, identity, power and critique—all of which were explicated as they are applied hereafter, and methodological or analytical concerns outlined where pertinent. Significantly, the analytical categories which will be applied on a chapter-by-chapter basis were overviewed as strategies, before the DHA was positioned in the theoretical framework of Social Media –Critical Discourse Studies to account for nuances posed by participatory, crowd sourced platforms. Limitations in regard to researcher bias were deemed addressable through integration of corpus linguistic techniques. And finally, the DHA was further shown to be operationalizable in a program of eight research steps. How the above-presented framework has been methodologically operationalised in regard to these steps, in addition to the noted points of concern, are overviewed below.

METHODOLOGY

The following chapter provides an overview of how the Discourse Historical Approach has been applied hereafter to address the research foci outlined in the opening chapters of this dissertation. After a quick re-visitation of these, a discussion of their operationalisation into central research questions (and the concept of operational research questions) are presented. The chapters of this dissertation are then correlated to the eight-step research program outlined in the previous chapter to provide a more holistic understanding of the research's design. Methodological concerns relating to the researcher's position and motivations for the present research are then clarified before their mitigation through integration of corpus linguistic techniques is discussed. Owing to the specific elaborations within each chapter, the methodology of this dissertation is discussed here through broad analytical and methodological research trajectories that will be followed hereafter.

In the introductory chapter, the following broad research foci were presented (having been identified in lieu of literature reviews undertaken for the project). These were as follows:

RF1 -the movement's identity and ideology—which remains nebulous and shady, connotative and charged from the outside, and potentially undergoing discursive shifts internally

RF2 -the movement's proliferation into / reproduction in popular culture and public or non-political discourse, and alleged mainstreaming

RF3 -how the movement's ideological principles inform the day to day (re)actions of its grassroots, and the alleged ideological lightness of republicanism

RF4 -A critique of its communication and self-construction in new media ecologies, and an elucidation of its critique of the hegemonic order as produced by grassroots participants, providing a critical demystification of complex republican communication processes

It is proposed hereafter to address each of these over the course of four separate chapters, primarily addressing one focus per chapter (although there may be some overlap in terms of insights). In order to address these concerns from a critical perspective and derive insight, these research foci will be formulated into a series of central research questions, which serve to elicit insights from questions asked of the data. These are illustrated in the below diagram. Importantly, these questions will form the points of departure for each chapter. Yet, to render these addressable from a discourse-analytical perspective, they will further be divided into a series of operational research questions, which target specific strategies or discourse features to serve the over-arching, central research questions. These are outlined at the start of each chapter and will be revisited in lieu of analysis in the ensuing discussion sections.

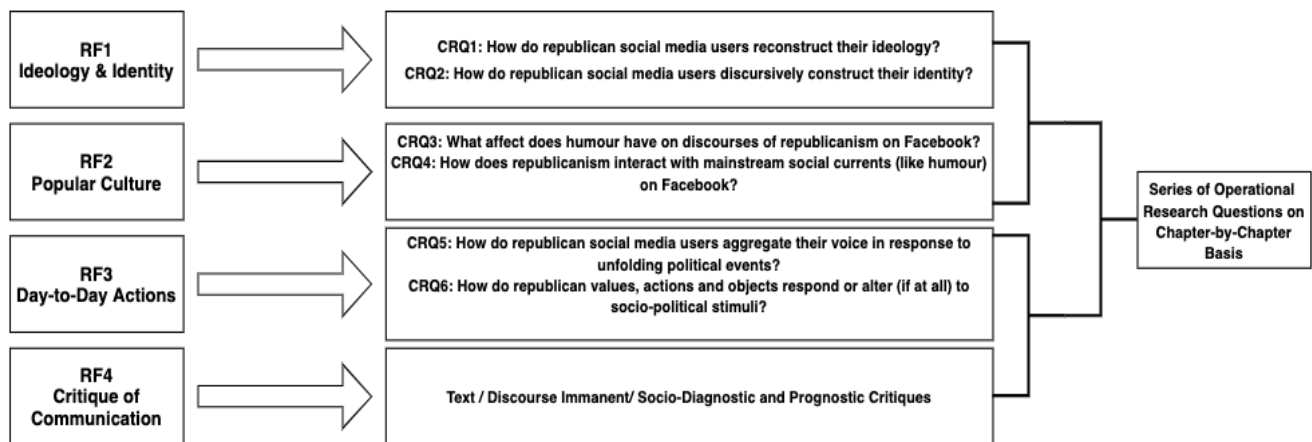


Figure 7 – Operationalisation of Research Foci as Central Research Questions

The foci and central research questions will, in turn, be revisited to inform the various levels of critique addressed in the concluding chapter of the dissertation. The diagrams provided offer an overview of the general research design, integration of the analytical framework and addressing of research foci. What remains for the purpose of this methodology is to revisit the researcher’s own position in regard to the project—which is dealt with next—before introducing measures to mitigate against this and outlining how they have been incorporated into the project’s methods. Thereafter the broad analytical and methodological trajectories of the research are overviewed to inform how various layers of context are analytically accounted for, whilst also maintaining sufficient critical distance between the researcher and the data. Finally, some notes on the presentation of the ensuing analytical chapters are offered.

Position of the Researcher:

While I do hold some ideological affinity with Irish republicanism, I am not active in any of its political organisations, and I base this affinity more in terms of its civic

vision (and related social concerns) than any ethnic claims of sovereignty. Moreover, I would classify my political allegiances as being left of centre. Beyond this, my interest in republicanism derives mainly from my past research. That said, my own political predispositions cannot be discounted when it comes to analysis, and, importantly, my own interests as a researcher must further be mitigated against. Accordingly, corpus linguistic tools, and their integration into discourse analytical research, are overviewed below.

Corpus Linguistic Tools:

The integration of corpus linguistic tools with critical discourse analysis (cf. Baker et al. 2008) has been cited by many as a means of both lessening researcher bias in the selection of analytical objects whilst also enhancing the macro-representativity of the data under consideration. As such, the benefits of fusing corpus linguistic with CDA (variously termed Corpus Assisted or Driven Critical Discourse Analysis, depending on the extent of reliance on statistical insights) are two-fold: firstly, the analyst can cover, analyse and dissect a much larger volume of texts with relative ease. The second is that corpus-driven analyses rule out researcher bias as the texts and categories of analyses are (somewhat) dictated by statistical data. As such they can counteract charges of ‘cherry-picking’ (Mautner 2016) which have been levelled at the field in the past.

For corpus linguistic analysis, rather than analysing texts on a line-by-line basis, texts are compiled as plain text files which are turned into large bodies of statistically appraisable text, or corpora. Corpus analysis takes place using software programs known as concordancers which can reveal frequencies of lexical items (words) as statistical units (the frequencies of which are denoted through a ‘n=X’ stylistic convention). Beyond individual lexical units, concordancers can isolate clusters/n-grams, which are statistically prevalent word clusters which recur in a given corpus. Salient lexical items and n-grams indicate both topical and thematic

concerns which are prevalent in the data, as well as identifying key linguistic patterns invoked in their representations. Various other foci are rendered analysable through this macro, quantitative point of departure. As these are integrated hereafter, they will only be noted as and when they are required and utilised.

Advances in concordance software (SketchEngine, AntConc, LancsBox, Wordsmith Tools) have now enabled the corpus assisted discourse analyst to check the immediate co-textual environment in which a lexical item appears, as well as its statistical frequencies and macro patterning: identifying the above-listed strategies through frequency lists, as opposed to independent assessment. As such, the incorporation of corpus linguistic tools assists in quelling claims of biased data selection procedures, invalidity of findings and a lack of representativity in terms of data, etc. which can varyingly be levelled against critical discourse analyses. Accordingly, where possible and expedient, a corpus approach to textual data analysis will be adopted as the first point of departure for analysis. The goal of this is to mitigate against potential researcher bias in the data selection process, but, also to identify loci of analysis which are statistically shown to be representative and salient within each data site.

Crucially, when integrating corpus linguistic tools with the DHA – a meshing which has featured in several influential CDS studies in the past decades, (see Baker et al. 2013, for example) the analytical categories and strategies can be easily operationalised into assessable research foci through concordancing software. The triangulation of approach adopted within the DHA, which espouses a consideration of data on i) topical, ii) discourse strategy iii) micro -linguistic levels, is also operationalizable from the perspective of corpus linguistics. It is proposed hereafter that a broadly quantitative to qualitative approach be adopted in analysis

(moving recursively between both to yield insights). As such, two broad research trajectories will be adopted hereafter in terms of the analytical chapters:

i) The analysis will strive to depart from quantitative insights and work toward more qualitative levels of consideration

and

ii) The analysis will, at the level of data, focus on i) topicality, ii) discourse strategies and iii) micro-linguistic realisations

Explication of how these trajectories have been realised is offered at the start of each analytical chapter. Yet, the above provides an indication of the general order of the research's analytical processes. For clarity in this regard, and as a final methodological concern, some notes on the presentation and ordering of material included in the ensuing analytical chapters is offered.

Notes on Presentation of Material:

So as to ensure that the previously outlined steps are adhered to over the subsequent analyses, a general order or structure of chapters is provided hereafter. This will illustrate how the methods of data collection and analysis, as well as specific analytical foci and the integration of meso theories, has been catered for within each chapter.

After an introduction which presents the pertinent central and operational research questions, chapters will begin with an overview of the data site in question. This contextualisation will cite key insights related to the specific site which are of pertinence to analytical concerns before moving to an application of Herring's (2007) medium factors which offers a multi-faceted instrument for the categorisation of online spaces of computer mediated communication. If

necessary, the various meso-theoretical concerns that are incorporated into analysis will also be outlined, paying attention to their realisation in the analytical processes. Data collection is then outlined, paying attention to efforts which strive for representativity, clarity or transparency of data, including corpus compilation etc. The methods applied in analysis are summarised thereafter before the main analysis begins. Prior to analysing discourse fragments, some brief analytical consideration is given to the practices of production of each site which characterises their processes of discourse production. Within the analytical section, as noted above, considerations will run broadly from quantitative, macro, statistical concerns to more qualitative, contextual concerns. Importantly too, in terms of the DHA, consideration at the data levels starts out with i) discourse topics, followed by ii) discourse strategies and, finally, iii) their realisation through linguistic means. Insights are then discussed in relation to research questions. Lastly, in the closing chapter, a triangulated approach to critique provides the structural basis of a discussion where central research questions and foci are critiqued and conclusions drawn from this process are summarised.

REUBLICAN.IE ANALYSIS

RF1 -republicanism's identity and ideology—which remains nebulous and shady, connotative and charged from the outside, and is potentially undergoing discursive shifts internally

Introduction:

This chapter analyses the construction of Irish republican identity and ideology in online contexts. Drawing a corpus of data from a popular, long-running republican forum (*www.republican.ie*), the chapter utilizes a semi-quantitative approach to data collection and analysis by invoking corpus linguistic tools (Baker et al. 2008). In previous chapters, republicanism (and its virtual manifestations) was conceptualised as a historically conditioned nationalist ideological discourse (Wodak 2017, Calhoun 1997), its discourse participants were conceived of as a counter-hegemonic public (Hoey 2018) and as undergoing a process of mainstreaming in regard to centralised power (Frampton 2016, Maillot 2004, etc.). Additionally, the literature of republicanism was shown to be lacking any contemporary account of republican identification from a discursive perspective and has, thus far, tended to focus on elite sources of information (Özkirimli 2017). Elsewhere in these chapters, both nationalism and Irish republicanism, were theorised as being predicated on an elite/non-elite axis, with those with status and resources instrumentally exploiting the affective devotion of their ideologues toward their own, elite goals (Brass 1991, 1994, Hutchinson 1994). Communicatively, this entails high levels of formulaic communication and

reproduction of elite discourse at the grassroots level –something which republican-specific research has seemingly corroborated (Wilson and Stapleton 2003, 2010, Filardo-Llamas 2013, Goulding and McCroy 2020). In light of these insights, republicanism’s digitised practices of discursive identification at the grassroots level were isolated as a potential (hereto neglected) site of analytical insight.

In line with the findings of the previous theoretical chapters and the specified research foci of this thesis, the present chapter sets out to answer the following central research questions:

Central:

- How do republican social media users (re)construct their ideology?
- How do republican social media users discursively construct their identity?

These have been further divided into the following operational research questions:

Operational

How do republican social media (RSM hereafter) users:

Ideology:

- RQ1: Linguistically construct the present/ *status quo*?
- RQ2: Discursively construct the future and a normative national vision?
- RQ3: Discursively argue and reason about how to attain this vision?
- RQ4: Construct and utilise (their perceptions of) the past?

Identity:

RQ5: Linguistically construct and qualify their in-group (as differentiated in terms of status etc.)?

And finally,

RQ6: What can a consideration of RSM users' construction out-groups tell us about contemporary republican identification in new media ecologies?

The chapter begins with an overview of the type of data source being utilised here: web fora. Subsequent to this, the data source, www.republican.ie, is introduced. Its choice is rationalised in line with key points drawn from the literature and an overview of the site, its history and its communicative dynamics in accordance with Herring (2007) is then provided. Data collection for the chapter, and the technical measures utilised toward this phase, are then overviewed, as well as ethical and transparency concerns related to this. Next, the chapter offers an outline of how categories of analysis outlined in previous chapters have been integrated into the present chapter's design and fused with corpus linguistic techniques. Analyses of the corpus thereafter are delineated in regard to the foci of i) ideology and ii) identity. Finally, findings from these analyses are discussed after RQs 4 and 6 respectively.

Overview of *Republican.ie*:

Internet discussion forums, or 'web' forums, emerged as a popular mode of online group interaction with the rise of new information communication technologies. Similar to Usenet news-groups, wherein members shared and commented on topical discussion threads (Marcoxia 2004), web forums—elsewhere termed cyber-forums, discussion boards, bulletin-boards etc. (Döring 2003)—can be regarded as one of the earliest forms of mass interaction online which still prevail to the present day as a popular form of online communication. For instance, sites like Reddit.com or 4-Chan all follow a basic forum-style

format insofar as they ‘group together topically related threads’ for users to navigate (Androutsopoulos 2007: 345). The topical affinity underlying each forum serves not only to ensure sufficient mutual interest within the user community, but also, from our perspective here, as a means of ensuring discursive breadth and representativeness

The theory of discourse presented previously—as being centred around a topical node—holds some semblance to the structure of forums which, as noted by Androutsopoulos (2007), typically adopt a ‘standardized architecture’ (345) and organise around a tripartite structure. Administrators typically install a series of over-arching topical sections (which are deemed to be the constituting categories of the forum’s focus, whether specific or general), which are further divided into topical groups. These groups can then be added to by participants in their posts/discussion threads (which are subjected to varying degrees of monitoring/moderation). The proliferation of these sites, coupled with their standard but broad topical structure, positions them as expedient to the analytical requirements of this chapter: to identify a topically relevant and discursively representative data site to analyse processes of discursive identification and ideology construction. As such, the initial search for a data source for the present chapter resolved to identify: i) a republican based web forum which ii) had sufficient levels of engagement to produce representative data for analysis.

Initial searches were carried out using web search engines, yet the process proved to be relatively short-lived inasmuch as republican.ie was quickly identified as fitting the proposed criteria. Further searches yielded little in the way of potential sites that could match or surpass republican.ie for its topical affinity or levels of engagement from its users. Beyond having a good search engine ranking, the site was decided on as a potential data source for a number of reasons. These are quickly overviewed below before a discussion of the site’s practices of production

are outlined. Finally, Herring's medium factors (2007) are applied to the site so as to offer a communicative contextualisation for the following analysis.

Republican.ie, at the time of analysis, was active in its most current form for close to 10 years (Bowman Grieve 2010). Throughout this timespan it maintained relatively stable levels of participation and contribution from members, largely following a tidal pattern of sporadic activity followed by comparable dormancy of idleness that is typical of such sites (Androutsopoulos 2007). Such engagement was shown to be more connective (not orchestrated) in its logic but did have the capacity to emerge in synoptic or collective patterns, too, where participants engaged with the site and fellow members in response to real world political stimuli. For instance, Bowman-Grieve and Herron (2020: 114) identified the orchestration of flash mobs in Belfast in discussion threads of the forum. From our discursive perspective here, this stands out as promising as it intimates the existence of a large body of textual data that is naturally occurring—thus, it is suited to analysing the organic processes of in-group identity formation and ideology construction. Moreover, the forum structure and length of time which the site has been running can be theorised to result in strong community-related communication practices, as well as representativity in terms of these discussions. This mirrors the contention of Bowman Grieve and Herron (2020) who note that since their inception such sites have 'showcased the evolving face of Irish republicanism' (116), providing a wealth of analysable, bottom-up discursive data. Importantly, this data was analysable both 'in context' (i.e through observation) and through dissection via corpus linguistic tools (see below). As 'found' data, the site's naturalness (and processability as a corpus) is analytically appealing as it can mitigate against researcher bias in data selection. These concerns are revisited in regard to data collection subsequently.

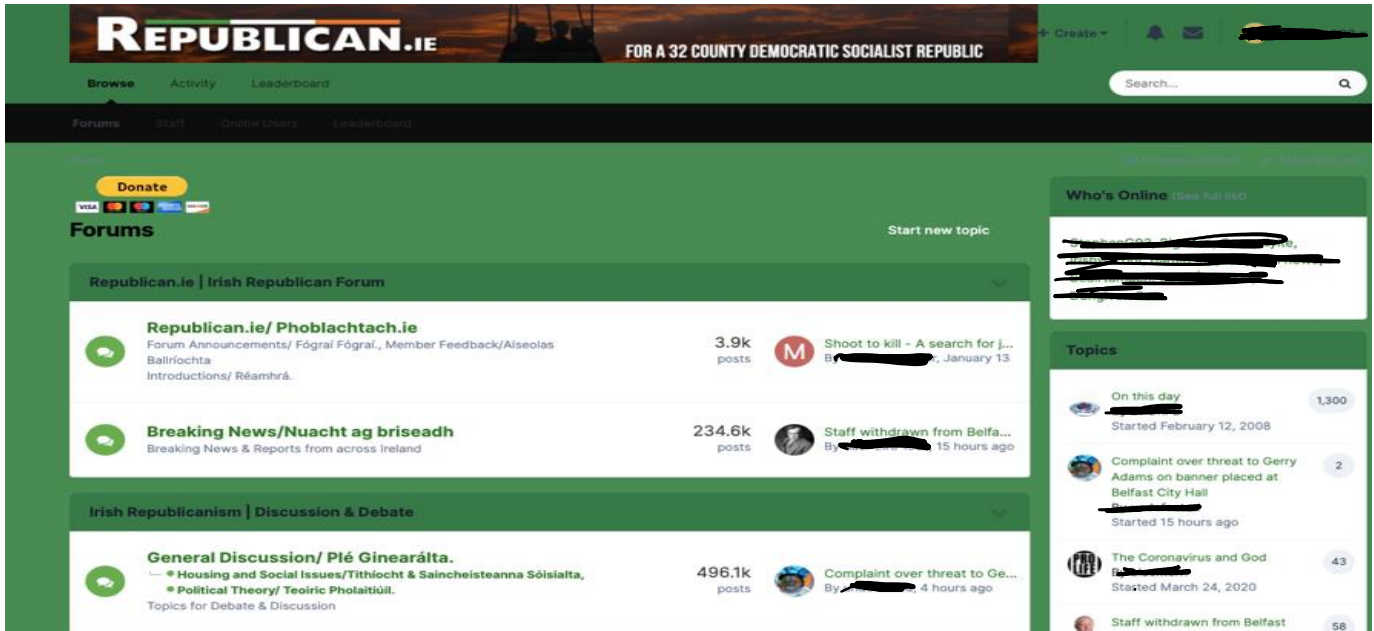


Figure 8 – Republican.ie Homepage

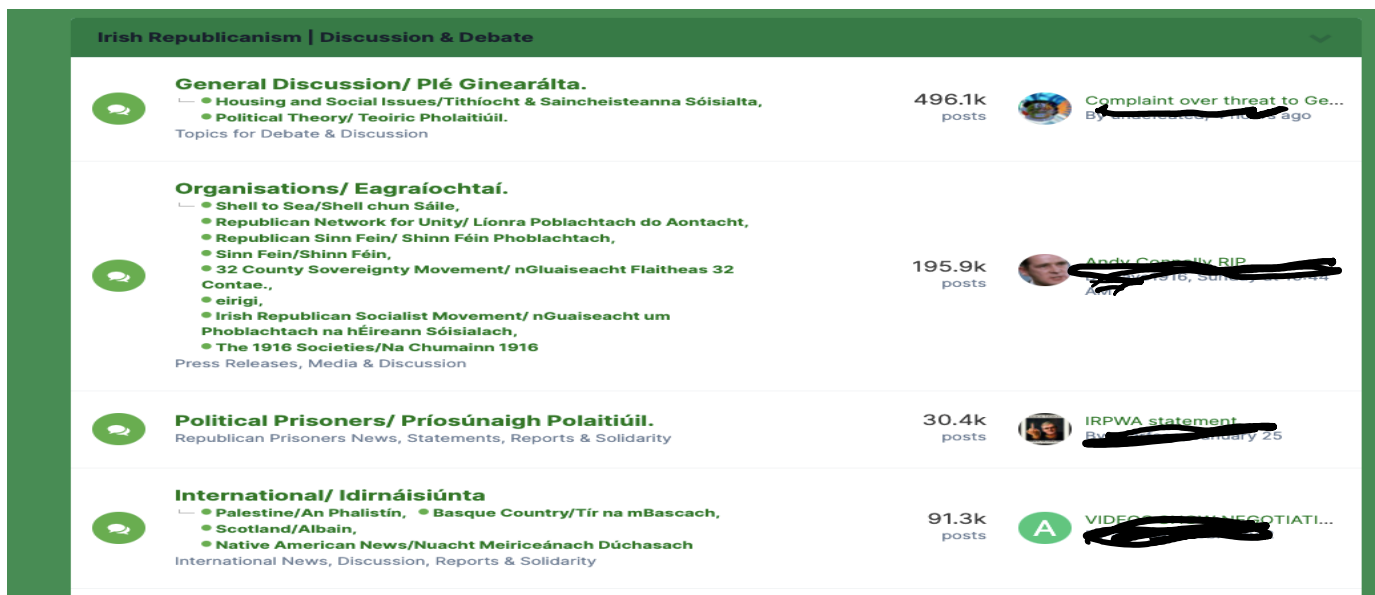


Figure 9 – Republican.ie Discussion Threads

In characterising the practices of production of the site, one can identify a core membership that routinely engages with it. These regulars have, through interaction and engagement, accrued positions of comparably elevated status within the forum. Members are unanimously identified through their username and accompanying image. Additionally, whilst not revered by participants, their status is signified through varying titles which are listed under their avatars. These titles, as noted, do not hold cultural currency within the community, but can be seen, from an analytical perspective, to be indicative of high engagement levels on behalf of a user. Such users typically contribute to the forum under the ‘General Discussion/ *Plé Ginearálta*’ section wherein a number of threads can be expected to be active at any one time. Activity here should not be interpreted to denote synchronous communication (see below in regard to the application of Herring’s medium factors (2007)). Rather, a thread’s activity can be assessed through the intentions of participants to continue the discussion. In general, whilst interactions were frequented by a core membership, there were also notable levels

of non-core interaction, too. That is, interactions whereby outliers, previous lurkers or not-as-active members contribute to discussions. Such interactions were not treated as incongruous by members or as deviating from some communicative norm on the site. As such, we can see that, in spite of maintaining some community-like features, the forum still retained its capacity to act as a site of dissemination and information exchange from diverging perspectives.

Moderation on the site was rare, but some instances were noted where codes of conduct were transgressed etc. As such, we can identify a habitual and loyal user base for the site. These members engage semi-routinely and in a relatively uninhibited way. Members can interact with threads by replying to posts (having the ability to quote when doing so). Once published, members can react to these posts through a series of pre-determined responses, signified by corresponding images/emoticons: a trophy to denote high approval or, as listed, to say 'thanks', a sad face emoticon to denote a negatively perceived reaction, a confused face emoticon to denote a perplexed reaction, and finally, a laughing emoticon to signify a humorous reaction. Finally, users use and engage with the site for reasons that cannot be situated decidedly on either end of the collective/connective spectrum. That is to say, their reasons for engagement with the site vary from personal and affective, to group-oriented and political. As such, we can note a heterogeneity of communicative function here as well as a breadth of discursive topicality.

With respect to Herring (2007), we can conceive of the site as being asynchronous (synchronicity) as users are not required to be present for the site to function, and communication can take place with participants not being mutually present on the site. Accordingly, transmission of messages is on a message-by-message basis— either in discussion threads (which Androutsopoulos (2007) notes is where interpersonal relationships are formed) or

through the direct message function of the site (message transmission)—on a one-way basis (Cherny 1999). As a web-forum which is stored as a continuously accessible text, the site can be seen to have a persistent transcript (persistence of transcript) that can be harnessed for discourse analytical purposes. Moreover, participant's interactions are not subjected to limitations of word count (size of the message buffer), but rarely veer beyond 500+ words. As is the case with most web fora of its kind, *republican.ie* relies predominantly on textual interaction as the dominant channel of communication. Yet, users have at their disposal the ability to share multimedia files and content in a variety of formats, either in the designated sections of the forum or as embedded links/ content in discussion threads. Whilst private messaging (private messaging) is permitted on the site (routinely abbreviated to 'PM' by members), anonymous messaging is not (anonymous messaging). As noted above, the use of quotes is commonplace in replying to messages/posts to ensure communicative specificity in asynchronous contexts. Members must rely on moderation to filter their usage experience (filtering) as they do not have the ability to do so themselves (although they can report specific users/posts). Finally, message ordering is determined by temporality of posts both in private message contexts as well as communal threads (message formatting). The above paints a picture of *republican.ie* as being a proto-typical user-based web forum specifically designated to the discussion of Irish republicanism. Moreover, the rationale for its inclusion and selection were outlined above. In the following section, how data from the set were collected and utilised for analysis is overviewed.

Data Collection:

As outlined in the methodology, the integration of quantitative research methods with critical discourse analysis can mitigate against potential pitfalls like an overly qualitative approach or potentials in researcher bias (Mautner 2003, 2005). As

such, it was rationalised that the least biased and most transparent and insightful approach to analysing this site was to analyse and consider it initially as a corpus. Particularly given that corpus approaches were shown to be fruitful in their application to virtually produced corpora (Mautner 2005). Such an approach, however, removes data almost entirely from their initial communicative contexts. As such, pure corpus analysis is best complemented with a qualitative appraisal of data and contemplative exposure to contextual factors. Virtual ethnographic approaches (cf. Hine 2017) have proven to be insightful, but again rely on a lack of critical distance between the researcher and the participants- something that for reasons outlined previously the researcher wished to avoid.

As such it was theorised that the communal nature of forums meant that objectivity could best be maintained by 'lurking' and browsing the myriad threads to gain a better personal sense of communicative practices on the site. This process, however, was undertaken for insight, with the main analytical component deriving from an analysis of statistically salient aspects isolated through corpus frequency assessments. Moreover, lurking, in and of itself, poses some, admittedly minor, ethical dilemmas, as does the nature of online research related to fora. Web forums which are 'closed off' to non-members, for instance, cannot be seen to fully meet the suggested levels of openness of data outlined by the AoIR 3.0 ethic guidelines (AoIR 2019).

In line with this, a primary consideration for the process of data collection was to ensure that the research would have no negative ramifications for its participants. This entailed, firstly, seeking approval from Ulster University's ethics committee. As it relates to this chapter, a corpus approach was introduced as a means of removing user-generated content from their initial attributable textual contexts and a means of striving toward anonymity, thus mitigating against negative ramifications. Moreover, where possible, the removal of personally identifying

information (Zimmer 2010) and the adoption of pseudonyms was applied. The core aim in adopting and implementing these measures was to ensure that, as it was presented, the data obfuscated any traceable link back to the users. Whilst lurking in itself is not impermissible, and the site under analysis does, by default, overview all of the members that are currently online, it does pose some potential dilemmas from the purposes of research. That is to say, members of the community, who can be theorised as potentially holding affective bonds within the site (Papacharissi 2015), may feel exploited if they learn, especially, after the fact, that the forum they utilise was used for research purposes. Setting aside that the republican community typically is welcoming of researchers—often seeing such academic exposure as a means of conveying their perspective into the public sphere—it was reasoned that prior to any data collection, some contact should be made by the researcher with the site /its community. Androutsopoulos (2008) proved insightful in informing the content of this initial contact, which sought to emulate the transparency levels associated with informed consent.

Toward this end, an account was registered on the site for the specific purpose of research. Before any data was collected, contact was made with senior members of the site's administration team that were active at the time. Shortly afterwards, I received a reply from one of these users who, in turn, copied me into a reply with the site's administrator and founder, a member named Unity. After outlining the nature of my research – how it would be used, disseminated, etc. - the administrator indicated that they were supportive of the project. They advised that it would be useful to 'introduce' myself and my research to the community. Toward this end, a new thread was started wherein Unity outlined our exchange and included the script of my initial contact. Owing to the fact it was posted by the administrator, the post received a notable amount of feedback (amassing 11 replies in total, which is not insignificant for non-contentious discussion threads). The tone and nature of replies varied greatly with some users demonstrating a

scepticism of me, my intentions and my research: one stating the introduction was ‘shady’ and another senior member noting that the community had no way of ‘know[ing] what kind of cunt he [the researcher] could be.’ Others were more supportive and welcoming, stating that the research sounded ‘interesting’ and another commending the researcher: ‘fair play to them if they can make a PhD out of that, there must be more to it.’ Having made my introductions to the user community and my presence on the site known, the next step involved collecting data for analysis. As outlined below, this required a shift in focus away from the community toward a treatment of their text as data.

Toward this end, methods of text-scraping were utilised. Python (van Rossum 1991) was used to program and develop a text scraper that could isolate the user-generated content from the forum’s pages, and scrape all of this into a text document. The parameters of the scraper were set to only include user-generated content in the form of replies: omitting superfluous information (user names, post-times, thread titles, etc.) from the corpus. This process was applied to the forum on a topic-by-topic basis, producing several hundred MS Word (.docx) documents of user-generated data. Owing to its persistent transcript, the site provided a temporally traceable textual link back to its founding in 2009 through to the present day (at the time of data collection in 2019). This period broadly corresponded with the time-frame of supposed mainstreaming of republicanism that was identified in chapter two and corresponds to a significant phase in new media activism within republicanism (Hoey 2018). As such, data from the entire site was scraped from 2009 through to 2019 with a view to enhancing the overall representativity of the corpus, and the analytical insights it could yield.

The size of the resulting .docx files meant that this amounted to a significant number of gigabytes of purely textual data. This would be difficult to process and analyse using concordancing software. To mitigate against this difficulty in

analysing the data, these documents were firstly converted into .txt files (which greatly reduced their size in terms of gigabytes whilst maintaining their textual word counts and original form). These were then collated into one combined-corpus of text as a .txt file. Whilst greatly reduced, the sheer size of this data meant it was still too large to be run through most concordancing platforms. As such, the concordancing and corpus analysis platform Sketchengine (Kilgariff et al. (2014) for overview) was isolated as a concordancer that was capable of assessing a corpus of this size. Once a subscription to the platform was attained, the .txt formatted corpus was uploaded.

Converting and uploading the corpus enabled the researcher to begin to ‘clean’ the data for any insight-skewing information or features within the text. Whilst this process was long, drawn out and laborious, the following examples can provide an indication of what it involved. As Sketchengine processes data solely as text, it can find it difficult to differentiate between abbreviations and their homographs: for example, the tendency for users to refer to the United States of America in its abbreviated form the ‘US’ was collated under the frequencies of the personal pronoun ‘us’; similarly, the abbreviated form of Prime Minister – ‘PM’ –was treated as the same lexical item as the abbreviation ‘pm’, which in this context more often referred to the private message function of the site. Notes of these potentially insight-skewing information were made and, where possible, they were addressed within the corpus by making changes or through calculative adjustments.

The resulting corpus is overviewed below in terms of its final statistical constitution:

Tokens	25,693,864
Words	22,459,926
Sentences	1,285,154
Paragraphs	582,001

Figure 10 – Republican.ie Corpus Composition Statistic

Totalling over 25 and a half million tokens (22 and a half million of which were lexical items) the corpus populated over 1 million two hundred thousand sentences. Whilst there have been larger scale corpus assisted CDAs undertaken (Baker et al 2013, for instance), this does stand out as a sizeable amount of data to be produced within one textual environment. The analytical measures adhered to in analysing this data are overviewed in the next section.

Data Analysis:

The methodological chapter of this dissertation outlined a broad approach to critical discourse analysis which espoused an analysis of data along macro (topical)/ discursive (strategic) / and micro (linguistic) levels of discourse. How this has been realised in each chapter varies according to nuances and specifics of the data site, as well as the research questions being posed. Irrespective of context, it was reasoned that the trajectory or order of attention should run broadly from macro through to micro: considering the topicality and themes of a discourse, then, the realisation of discursive strategies and, finally, the micro linguistic resources utilised toward this realisation. In a similar vein, the integration of corpus linguistic tools was introduced as a potential means of combatting researcher bias and cherry-picking of data. As such, a second broad

analytical trajectory of moving from quantitative frequencies (to identify statistically representative data) toward qualitative textual analysis was decided on.

In keeping with the above, topical analysis formed the first step of the present chapter's analysis: this was conducted via the production and interpretation of frequency tables (which have been included as appendices here). This was followed by an analysis of discourse features using Sketchengine's many analytical functions: ranging from concordance lines and collocation analysis to N-gram frequencies— all of which were suitable objects of analysis in this regard and permitted a comprehensive analysis of discursive foci. Finally, micro-linguistic realisations were considered through collocational analysis, word sketches and concordance line analysis, too. Summarising these broad steps, the following order was adhered to during the analytical phase of this chapter:

- 1) **Frequency Analysis** – an analysis of salient lexical items with a view to identifying key topics and themes within the data.
- 2) **Discourse Analysis** – a corpus assisted analysis of discursive strategies through collocation, frequency list, concordance and N-Gram analysis
- 3) **Micro Linguistic Analysis** – an analysis of representative or illustrative segments of lexical items in regard to their strategic form and function nexus

Whilst a corpus *driven* analysis would rely solely on an inductive process whereby the data 'reveals' the foci, this chapter strives to ask specific questions of this data in order to produce a corpus *assisted* analysis: where corpus linguistic tools are used to offer a statistical basis for analytical foci identified on the basis of pertinence to research questions (Baker et al. 2008). Accordingly, the

instrumentation of discursive foci into the research questions for the present chapter (and the linguistic operationalisation of these) is addressed below.

Operationalisation of RQs:

In keeping with the general abductive approach adopted in this dissertation, the analysis aims to interrogate the data with specific avenues of intrigue in mind. Accordingly, the research questions outlined previously will form the structural basis of the analysis hereafter and will each be addressed in turn. Yet, as presented, the above RQs map onto various aspects of nationalist and ideological discourses which are viewed to be important in terms of in-group ideology or practices of identification.

We can regard RQs 1-3 as corresponding to the foci identified by Reisigl and Wodak (2016) (representational, programmatic and visionary model) and their account of the constituent discourse models of ideological grand-narrative structures (here applied to the context of Irish republicanism). RQ4 is, for reasons elucidated below, included here as a temporal extension of this narrative into history. The macro nationalist discursive strategies of construction, transformation, justification etc. (de Cillia et al. 1999). will be unveiled through an analysis of discourse strategies employed in their realisation (i.e. nomination, predication, legitimation, argumentation, etc.) The macro-analytical perspective permitted by the integration of corpus linguistic tools enables a reflection on novel foci in this regard, too. Dissecting and considering the data as statistical information can point toward areas of interests which, when reconsidered against varying levels of context, prove significant, such as the discursive concepts of ‘frames’ and ‘scripts.’ Discourse frames are ‘mainly characterised in terms of memory-modelling or knowledge-organising unities of actions’ (de Cillia et al. 1999: 34). As such, frames can be seen as the discursive realisations of ‘discourse

schemes' (de Cillia et al. 1999) or perceptual schema inasmuch as they habitually organise and collate information in a way that conditions its perception or 'framing' to an audience (Goffmann 1974). Relatedly, scripts can be interpreted as the implicit reproduction and representation in terms of 'knowledge about prototypical action sequences.' (de Cillia et al. 1999: 34) Scripts, therefore, are communicatively realised and enacted where participants interact in a ritualised or codified way, adopting changes in lexicon, tone, register, etc. for socio-political reasons. As such, the habitual realisation and production of these concepts will be assessed critically below in regard to their ideologically legitimising or identity constructing functions.

In analysing the identification patterns of participants, the discursive foci of macro-constructive strategies as well as perpetuation strategies are sought out. Some differentiation can be expected here in regard to constructions of the Self-group and the Other-group (van Dijk 1998). As such the analysis of identification presented through RQs 5 and 6 pays some strategic attention to ensuring representativity in terms of power, status, centrality and structure, as well as in-/out-group fealty.

In addressing all of the chapter's RQs, linguistic features which were either i) shown (or revealed *through* analysis) to be statistically significant or insightful to the topic at hand or ii) theorised in advance to be pertinent to these questions are included in the discussion sections for each question. To ensure that the linguistic analysis provided insights targeted at addressing the RQs, some consideration was given to the linguistic and topical features of the data that could be theorised as being predictable in their realisation. This was based predominantly on theoretical insights drawn from literature (chiefly, de Cillia et al. 1999 and Reisigl and Wodak 2016) as well as the theory chapters of this dissertation. An indicative illustration

of the linguistic operationalisation of RQs 1-4 is provided below (identity-related RQs are overviewed in the second analytical section below).

Figure 11 Operationalisation of RQs 1 - 4

Research Question	Potential Discourse/ Language Features
<p>RQ1: Linguistically construct the present/ status quo?</p> <p><i>Representational Model of Ideology</i></p> <p>Macro Strategies: Construction Perpetuation Transformation</p>	<p>-Present Tense Constructions</p> <p>-Verbs: Epistemic Existential Transitive Possessive</p> <p>-Evaluative predication and nomination strategies – which convey a negative connotation/ evaluation</p> <p>-Problematising terms</p>
<p>RQ2: Discursively construct the future and a normative national vision?</p> <p><i>Visionary Model of Ideology</i></p>	<p>-Future Tense Constructions</p> <p>-Verbs: -Ideational (aspirational) -Modal ‘will’ – or immediate future tense, deontic</p>

<p>Macro Strategies: Construction Perpetuation Justification</p>	<p>-Legitimation/ Argumentation Strategies applied to visionary model</p> <p>-Positive nomination and predication discourse strategies</p>
<p>RQ3: Discursively argue and reason about how to attain this vision?</p> <p><i>Programmatic Model of Ideology</i></p> <p>Macro Strategies: Construction Perpetuation Transformation</p>	<p>-Present Future tense</p> <p>-Evaluative Verbs/ Prescriptive Verbs: -Materialistic -Transitive -Ideational -Modal: 'ought to' -Modal: 'should' – normative uses</p> <p>-Processes of power contestation</p> <p>-Argumentation schemas rationalising future action</p> <p>-Legitimation strategies applied to visionary model</p>
<p>RQ4: Construct and utilise (their</p>	<p>-Past Tense Construction</p> <p>Verbs:</p>

<p>perceptions of) the past?</p> <p><i>Collective Memory</i></p> <p>Macro Strategies:</p> <p>Construction</p> <p>Perpetuation</p> <p>Justification</p> <p>Transformation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Existential -Materialistic -Transitive -Ideational construction of past and present (invocation of collective memory) -Salient, historicised lexical items (identified in pilot analysis) -Temporal Prepositions – before, long ago etc. -Causal argumentation schemas – triggered by ‘because of, thanks to etc.’ – which link past to present
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As noted above, a statistically guided consideration of these points formed the initial phase of analysis. However, in what follows, this information has been textually meshed with insights revealed *through* analysis. Ultimately, decisions regarding which items to present were made on the basis of salience, representativity and pertinence to specific RQs. Importantly, in terms of formatting, these sections have been subjected to some selection and ordering of information. That said, the general order of discussion (although not always explicitly flagged) will adhere to the previously identified trajectory: beginning with frequential analysis, followed by discursive patterning and finally, an analysis of linguistic realisation. In doing so, active frequency lists were typically consulted

before objective frequency lists— an order that is mirrored in presentation below.

Discourse Analysis:

i) Ideology: RQ 1-4

RQ1: How do republican social media users linguistically (re)construct the status quo?

In line with the above operationalisation of research questions, the first analytical measure undertaken toward assessing RQ1 entailed an analysis of the transitive frame of the data (considered through the active frequency list). Specifically, verbs which were theorised to relate to the construction of a representational model were assessed. Verb types which were considered here were in the present tense and were either existential, transitive, possessive or epistemic/ideational. After this, lexical items which were shown to be invoked strategically for the purpose of problematising the representational model were assessed. Finally, a general appraisal of the salient items in the active (verb) frequency list, followed by a consideration of the objective list helped to isolate potential areas of interest within the corpus.

The frequency tables produced reveal high frequencies of commonplace verbs used in daily discourse. To begin to consider these in more detail, linguistic forms typically invoked in the realisation of the construction of a representational model were sought out. The first analytical endeavour applied to the corpus, then, was an analysis of the active/ verb frequency list for the discursive construction of (im)material processes of the participants. Existential verbs provided an

indication of how participants construct and problematise the present as it 'is' in their co-constructed socio-political reality. Below the most illustrative lexical items in this regard are overviewed:

To Be (n = 947, 639 – as a lemma)

Analysis of the lexical environment³⁷ of the lemma 'to be' reveals some interesting patterns of use in the data. Typically, such verbs are integral in nationalist discourse, particularly in their application to macro-strategies of construction (Wodak 2001), yet the literature which supports this point has relied largely on banal or, less evaluatively 'established' nationalisms like those in de Cillia et al. (1999) who focus on Austrian nationalism. Strategically, such discourses seek to positively convey (construction) and (im)memorialise the nation as ancient and natural in order to defend/maintain it over time (perpetuation)—the nation's tale is both reproduced for inculcation purposes, but also legitimisation purposes (de Cillia et al. 1999, Calhoun 1997, Özkirimli 2017). Republicanism's ideological position as an unrealised narrative, however, means its participants adopt and reproduce different discursive frames: as a movement that is yet to realise or attain its vision. As such, rather than being employed toward the existential construction of a positive self-representation (van Dijk 1998) of the in-group's established power, we find existential verbs being employed toward the construction, categorisation and negotiation of the community's socio-political reality.

For instance, an analysis of the lexical field of the lemma of the verb 'to be' (n = 947, 639) reveals high levels of application in the evaluative classification of entities and objects outside of the community.

³⁷ Unless stated elsewhere, all concordance analysis were set to a span of 5L / 5R from the KWIC.



Figure 12 –Word Sketch of lemma ‘To Be’

For example, categorisations of what is/n’t in the view of the RSM user community in the data can be illustrated from the above word-sketch (and significant concordance analysis of these nodes on Sketchengine). High salencies of inclusive prepositional phrases such as ‘part’ (n = 15, 315) and more specifically the n-gram ‘part of’ (n= 9,848) suggest high uses of existential verbs in the categorisation and organisation of the RSM user’s worldview. To further unpack this point, an analysis of the collocates of the n-gram ‘part of’ reveals its salient usages as being split between positive/ affinitive or negative/excoriating categorisation:

world (n = 17,576)
problem (n = 5,667)

country (n = 19,584)
plan (n = 3046)
strategy (n = 1,835)
Culture (n = 2238)

Figure 13 – Collocates of ‘Part of’

The above collocative objects provides an indication of what concepts ‘to be’ is applied to in evaluating/ classifying/ and categorising. For instance, we can infer that the nation and its territory –‘country’ (n= 19, 584) –is heavily claimed or classified. That is to say, participants use text (and existential prepositional phrases like the above) to linguistically construct or contest boundaries between national territories and (perhaps, as will be explored later) the actions of their correlating states. Similar categorisations can be seen to be applied to the cultural system of the movement (‘culture’ n = 2238), its programmatic model of attaining its vision (‘strategy’ n = 1835/ ‘plan’ n= 3046) and general conceptual universe/ globe (depending on its usage, ‘world’ n =17576). This classification ostensibly shares some relation to the process of identification – negotiating and classifying who ‘we’ are (not)— but for the purpose of this section, attention will remain on the reproduction of ideological elements of the discourse (identification is dealt with in the subsequent section). What can also be deduced from the above table, however, is a high salience of uses of such linking prepositional phrases toward the negative representation/ out-group classification of socio-political reality and the (re)production of its conceptual schemes in the minds of RSM users.

‘Problem’ (n = 5,667) and its high collocative preference for prepositional phrases suggests the strategic nomination strategy of labelling an entity or object as problematic. Indeed, in spite of having initially been considered here for the

purposes of assessing the macro-constructive strategies of republican discourse, the most salient and key uses of such existential phrases can be seen to be used toward linguistically (and by extension, conceptually) organising and collating negative information into psycho-discursive bundles of oppositive entities, which broadly correlate to the axes identified in van Dijk’s ideological square (1998). The in-group’s categorised entities connote positively and are nominated or classified in terms of their expediency to the republican movement (‘plan’ or ‘strategy’ for instance), whereas the out-group’s entities are classified and qualified negatively (‘problem’).

Similar problematisation/ negative classification can also be lexically realised through positive existential linguistic construction: for example, through simplistic, declarative constructions like: ‘X’ is and attack (n = 24,886) or threat (n = 6,613), for example. Relatedly, the ‘thing is’ (n = 962) as an n-gram holds high frequencies, which again points toward a prolific problematising function. Further n-gram analysis reveals similar functions centred around ‘thing’:

‘the thing is’ (n = 162)
‘thing is that’ (n = 191)
‘sad thing is’ (n = 92)
‘whole thing is’ (n = 339)

Figure 14 – N-Grams of ‘Thing’

Again, we can infer that the high usages of such terms are employed toward the organisation and collation of information relating to political contestation. This macro-transformative strategy of problematisation is unpacked further below when analysis shifts to the nomination of objects and entities in the data –

specifically in regard to nuanced problematising lexical choices like ‘situation’ or ‘a matter’.

As noted in the above, analyses of ‘is part of’ or similar existential-prepositional phrases—such as ‘be on’, ‘be in’, ‘be against’ etc. and, importantly, their negative constructions, too—‘to *not* be’ (n = 45,233) in/part of etc.— all reveal similar functions playing out in the data. There is a high keyness of existential verbs being used toward the classification of what is expedient/ detrimental or desirable/ undesirable to the republican movement. This indicates that the discourse participants abide by, and reproduce, a strong structuring principle which informs a republican interpretation of social reality, and perhaps suggests the inculcation of a republican system of values, perspectives and dispositions. Below, more detail of the objective corollaries of these prepositional phrases (*viz.* the objects which are being categorised) will be provided. Yet, from this, we can begin to describe the existential frame of the data as it applies to the present/ *status quo*/ representational model of the RSM users. The analysis of existential verbs suggests that participants construct the present along dichotomous lines, and as a place that is contested, conceptually, at least. While such categorisation may seem typical for a political information exchange medium, it does seem to deviate from more prototypical nationalist existential frames, where the core strategy is to perpetuate and positively construct (de Cillia et al. 1999). When we move away from pure lexical data, however, to consider these forms against the broader socio-political context, we can begin to account for this incongruity. Republicanism’s position as a counter-hegemonic movement, which is predicated on a critique of hegemonic centres of power, necessitates the linguistic derogation of the existing hegemonic order. Within a hot nationalist frame of contestation – one where the hegemonic power is an established nation-state — this necessitates much higher frequencies of destructive strategies to be circulate in the counter-hegemonic public’s discourse. As a final remark on existential verbs, these high

saliencies and frequencies they enjoyed within the data seems to point toward frequent reproduction of elite-determined agonisms at the grassroots level.

In a similar vein to the analysis of existential verbs, epistemic verbs (which signify processes of ideation) can provide insight into how discourse participants reproduce the *status quo* (and qualify/ delegitimize it) in the data at the level of mental processes and conceptualisation. That is to say, the perceptive schema of republicanism can begin to be characterised by analysing epistemic verb processes in the data. For analysis toward this end, the verbs ‘to think’, ‘to know’ and ‘to believe’ have been identified as illustrative examples. The existential verb analysis above intimated a strong structuring function of said verbs within the data. This categorising and classification function can also be seen to be reproduced at the ideational level. Analysis of the verb ‘to think’ (n = 40, 046) – and its collocates— suggests high uses of the verb for imperative or evaluative purposes. For instance, the imperative form ‘don’t think’ (n = 3,572) enjoys high applications in the data, particularly in its use in evaluative exchanges.

would	(n= 65,737)
that	(n= 261,291)
should	(n=28,203)
they	(n= 120,389)
about	(n= 58,169)

Figure 15 – Collocates of ‘(Don’t) Think’

From the above, we can see that ‘think’ frequently appears in the same lexical fields as the modals ‘would’ and ‘should’ suggesting deontic, normative and argumentative ideational exchanges are highly salient in the data. Moreover, the high frequency of ‘about’ (n = 58, 169) suggests a habitual linkage to topicality in

these usages. The objective linguistic relations of these usages will be considered later in this section. Before this, we can further exemplify how RSM users linguistically construct the conceptualisation of the present through an analysis of the lemma ‘to believe’ (n = 16,820).

‘To believe’ (n = 16,820):

Participants on the site construct belief in a gradated manner: that is to say, information (and the participants’ belief in it) can be intensified/ mitigated in regard to their perception of it. For example, consider the following n-grams which centred around ‘to believe’:

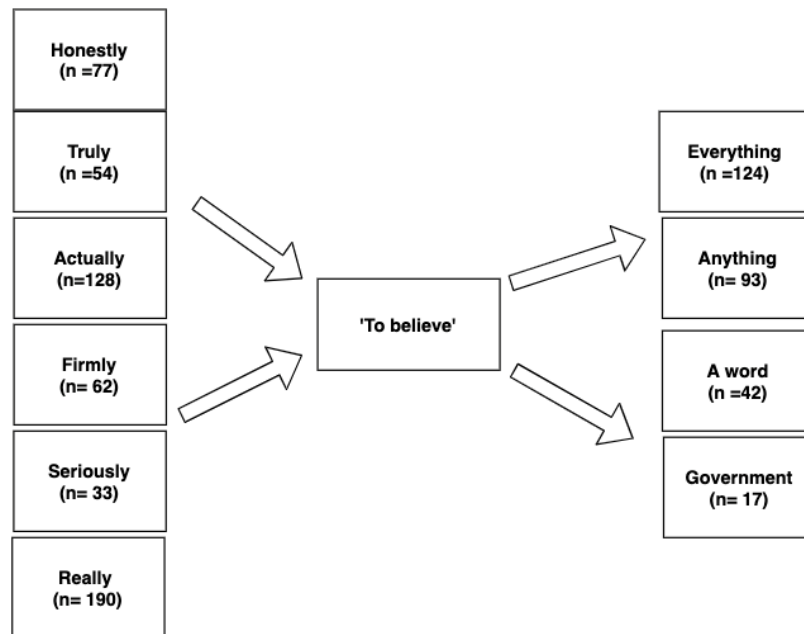


Figure 16- Visualisation of ‘To Believe’

In the lexical space to the left of the verb we can identify a regular realisation of an intensification strategy through the use of adverbial qualification, which middles around gradations of veracity (honesty, actually, truly) and severity

(firmly, really, seriously) of belief. Such lexical construction tends to be reserved for positively appraised information –i.e. from elite sources or which relates to in-group values. See the below examples from ‘firmly believe’ (n= 62), for instance:

Hold your belief all you want, I	<u>firmly believe</u>	abortion is a hideous reality that I wish didn't exist
i	<u>firmly believe</u>	sinn fein could solve this in the blink of an eye
called KATZ it there years I still	<u>firmly believe</u>	it stands for kill all taigs, stone throw away then 2006

Figure 17- Selected Concordance Lines of ‘Firmly Believe’

Yet the lemma of ‘to believe’ can also be seen to be lexically employed toward the derogation of certain information through the strategic tainting of its veracity- again, something more akin to a macro destructive strategy (de Cillia et al.1999). Such uses typically take an inversed structure of object and verb, either as a question form (or, to a lesser extent, as an imperative ‘do not believe’ (n = 1196)).

a sort of minority ballot taken by the few in secret	<u>do you honestly believe</u>	that there was no grass root Sinn fein Cumann rejections?
last two years being a focus on your future.	<u>do you honestly believe</u>	Irish being mandatory for the LC helps the language?
unaltered since the 1700s	<u>do you honestly believe</u>	that the abolishment of the second amendment would

Figure 18 – Selected Concordance Lines of ‘Do Not Believe’

The result of these dynamic realisations of (collective) belief is that, as a process, believing is treated as something is contested or negotiated, and orientates around a nuanced system of values and norms. Collocation analysis of the lexical field to the right of the verb’s lemma reveals that such inversed/ derogatory realisations tend to target elite sources of information:

Government (n= 133)

Propaganda (n= 51)
narrative (n= 183)
Official (n= 142)

Figure 19- R-Collocates of ‘Believe’

As such, a counter-hegemonic perspective of believing is negotiated and legitimated: that is, one that actively discredits elite sources of information which strive to perpetuate the *status quo*. Pride of place among these are mainstream media outlets, state institutions and governing bodies (how these actors/ entities are linguistically constructed is dealt with in regard to RQ 8). Perhaps the most revealing in this regard, however, is the lemma of the verb ‘to know’ (n = 39, 508).

‘To know’ (n = 39, 508)

Whilst the previously examined verbs signified an assumed relation to knowledge and information (intensified by modals and adverbs), ‘to know’ semantically presupposes a certainty of fact. In this light, it stands out as an interesting example of how RSM users linguistically delegitimize and negatively predicate elite sources of knowledge—chiefly through diminutive terms in the lexical field to the right of the verb. To a lesser extent, this can also be noted through the construction of a topos of common knowledge that can be invoked in argumentation to legitimate the radical/ counter-hegemonic critique of elite knowledge.

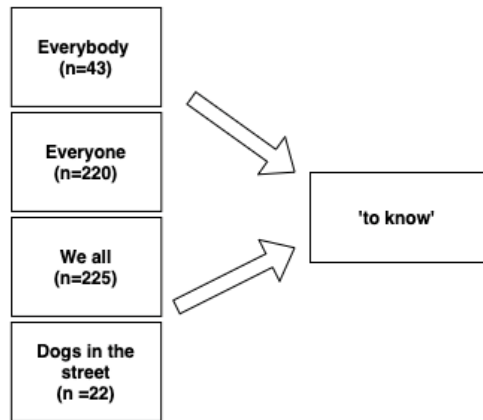


Figure 20 – Visualisation of To Know

In addition, negative predication strategies can be seen to be employed in the construction of elite sources. Such a dichotomous treatment of these lexical items indicates that knowledge — and how it is traditionally organised, utilised and conveyed through elite sources of information – is regarded with criticality and scepticism by the RSM users. The veracity of this information is routinely questioned, its ulterior motives linked to elite interest or delegitimated *ad hominem*, where the media outlet/ individual becomes the target of the critique. Rather than being regarded as eliding key critical points, however, such *ad hominem* utterances are, from the perspective of participants, legitimated through (dis) authorisation: coined here to suggest an inverse category of van Leeuwen’s (2008) category of authorisation—whereby an argument is legitimated by deference to a perceived authorised status—in this instance denoting an inherent and customary disregard for orthodox, hegemonic power and status.

look when Martin McGuinness was running for president and the	Free State media	went into a frenzy and a lot of notable people in the radio, TV and
but were afraid to challenge it openly because of the nature of the	Free state media	, that shifted once she became a Labour politician gifted a role
At the end of the day this Brit/	Free State media	bullshit about Mountbatten being a gentle harmless old man is exactly that... bullshit

Figure 21 – Selected Concordance Lines of Free-State Media

In the above examples, we see that political and media actors are linguistically conflated into a homogenised out-group – this strategic assimilation, and how it manifests in terms of nomination strategies and construction of other(s) identities will be addressed in due course (see RQ8). For here, though, it suffices to say that such a habitually produced conflating representation pattern suggests both a mental enmeshment of these actors in the psycho-discursive processes of the discourse participants. Additionally, when regarded from the perspective of a counter-public, this implies that a critical strategic motivation underlies this construction.

In terms of delegitimising these sources, we can find high frequencies of codified nomination strategies, realised through lexical choices of ‘propaganda’, ‘version’, and n-grams like ‘tory media’ in collocative environments of codified signifiers of elite actors/ other publics: for instance, ‘Free state’ quite frequently precedes ‘media’ to form a negatively connoting referential for media outlets perceived to be complicit in the Republic of Ireland’s hegemonic order (free-state media n = 172). From all of the above examples, we can begin to piece together a picture of how the RSM user community construct socio-political reality: as a space impeded and marred by a hegemonic false consciousness. A space where elite information flows clandestinely serve their gatekeepers or proprietors. Although not presented until later, this grouping of institutional actors is strategically conflated in the data through metonymic constructions terms or negative assimilation (see RQs 6-8). Nothing about the above linguistic patterns implies

any sense of integration into the mainstream, rather, the active list data is heavily perspectivised from the periphery of power. The discursive corollary of the construction of a tainted public sphere political structure, however, is the implicit representation of a fairer, more equitable system of governance and mass participation in the visionary model of participant's ideology (for more see RQ2). Moreover, this space ought to, from the normative position of a counter-public, be an informative space where peripheral (in this context, republican) values are realised and institutionalised.

Such salient and strategic lexical construction patterns of elite information sources are rife in the data (hence the extensive discussion they have been afforded here). As a closing point to this, statistically significant patterning can be seen to provide evidence that republicanism is, at least at the surface level of its discourse, openly counter-hegemonic and at the grassroots level often vociferously and fervently (self)positions itself in open polemic with elite narratives/ information. Such critical insights will be returned to in the concluding critique of this dissertation. A final caveat to this, though, can be noted in the fact that there was significant evidence of RSM users relying and re-contextualising elite sources of information.³⁸

Want: (n= 23, 443):

A consideration of evaluative verbs ('to want') can also prove insightful. In this regard, power and status form the boundary for construction patterning in terms of the lemma.

³⁸ In fact observation and exploration of the site reveals a communicative practice of users sharing links to media reports into threads to anchor or initiate reactions/ discussions.

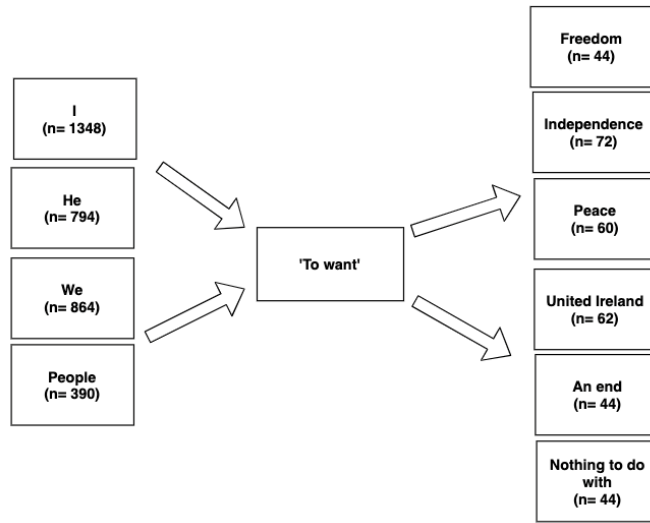


Figure 22 - Visualisation of 'To Want'

When the lexical field to the left of the verb is populated by a personal pronoun, analysis of the lexical space to the right of the verb produces an illustrative list of collocates and n-grams that prove insightful to an assessment of republican ideology. As the above illustration conveys, there is a high salience of support being applied to concepts like independence, peace, and a united Ireland. The above can also be seen to reproduce a list of typical values in Irish republicanism and, more broadly, civic republicanism and socialism/ democracy. The out-group patterning, conversely, reveals a significant level of construction in terms of mechanisms of elite contestation of power and the exploitation/manipulation of others:

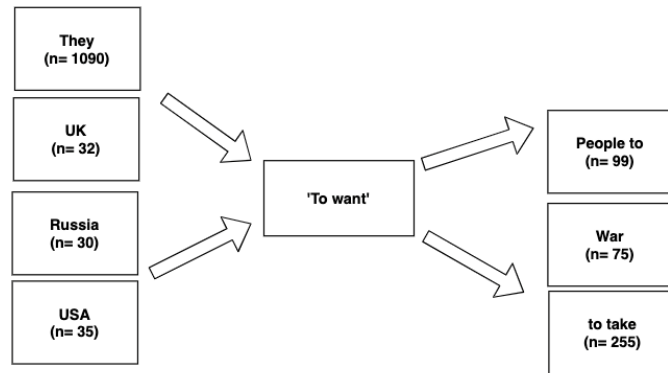


Figure 23 – Further Visualisation of ‘To Want’

Again we see that these elite powers are aggregated through impersonal pronouns. The high salience of the n-gram ‘want people to’ being found predominantly after elite referential phrases intimates a desire for the masses to act in accordance with the wishes of these elites. This contention is borne out further when ‘the people’ is considered below in some detail. Such analysis can also be seen to be expedient to an assessment of the visionary model of Irish republicanism, too (see RQ2). In terms of the present, however, the lexical construction of in-group desires (as being desired) linguistically presupposes a lack of possession. By extension we can infer that these values are missing from/ under-represented in the *status quo*. As such, in addition to constructing their visions of the future, participants are simultaneously delegitimizing and problematising the present. Here, and elsewhere in the corpus we can identify recurrent patterns of construction in regard to materialistic agonisms and disparities. As nationalism can be seen – in terms of discourse at least— to be predicated on materialistic frames of reference (us v them/ have v have nots, etc.), concordance analysis can be seen to uncover quiescent linguistic forms which participants frequently invoke toward the construction of republicanism’s perception of materialistic capital.

The above analyses isolated statistically significant verbal lexical units as loci of analysis. The verbs listed were chosen on the basis of their high frequencies, keyness and relatedness to the topic. In spite of being statistically proven to be representative, the above provides only a snippet of a much larger body of textual data. Yet from a close analysis of this, clear strategic and critical insights were discernible relating to the construction of the present temporal span and participants' perception of the *status quo*. A critical recapitulation of these insights is provided after RQ4 of this chapter where they are considered from the perspective of a wider ideological narrative.

Problematizing Terminology:

The above analysis pointed toward a habitual problematisation through construction in RSM users' representations of the *status quo*. This section, therefore, has been given over to an analysis of lexical items that were either i) theorised to be of relevance to the strategy of problematisation and/or, ii) uncovered through analysis to serve a problematising function in the discourse - viz. a function which imbues an external entity with strategically significant attributes that are constraining/ detrimental to the in-group (and their habitus / visions).

For illustrative purposes, the lexical items found to the right of the lemma 'to be' can offer a good indication of how this plays out through simplistic predication strategic construction (X is 'problematizing predicate'):

Issue (n=12, 359)
the reason (n= 8,957)
The case (n= 3,860)

Is (no) evidence (n= 242)
Is the problem (n= 109)
Is a fact (n= 166)
Is an attack (n= 59)
is a (good) idea (n= 128)
Is a matter (n= 122)

Figure 24 – Problematising Terminology R- ‘To Be’

We can note, here, the use of existential verbs being applied to noun phrases which categorise the republican perception of reality –for instance labelling something ‘a good idea’ or ‘an attack’ are evaluative terms which aim to elicit specific collective emotive/ ideational responses – and to problematise aspects of it, too. As such, in what follows, an assessment of how such nominative and predicative constructions (which label and qualify something as problematic) are realised linguistically. The following survey of lexical items has been sampled on the basis of their illustrative potential and keyness within the RSM user community.

Thing (n= 16,956):

An analysis of ‘thing’ reveals its presence in lexical environments where it semantically acts as a substitute for an issue/ problem/ constraint facing the in-group (and their allied actors):

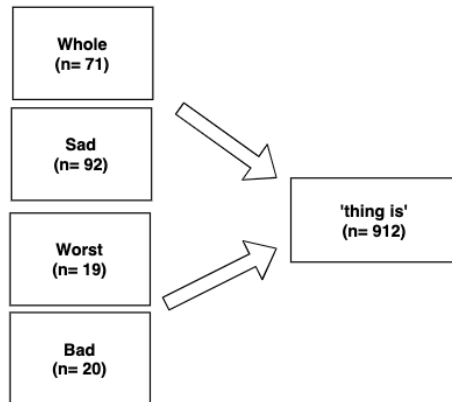


Figure 25 – Visualisation of ‘Thing is’

We see that the pre-lexical environment is populated by evaluative intensifiers which paint or qualify the ‘thing’ in terms of inclusivity (whole) or negativity (sad, bad, worst). Such habitual reproduction of ‘thing’ in negative lexical environments has seemingly resulted in semantic prosody unfolding: where neutrally connoting words (like ‘thing’) begin to attain new (negative or positive connoting) meanings through frequent association with semantically evaluative words. In such lexical environments, ‘thing’ less frequently applies to immaterial constructs, and, more often, to external constraints facing the in-group. Discursively, this construction is used in argumentation to realise two common argumentative topoi. Where the ‘thing’ constraining or prohibiting action is imperialism, we see the topos of heteronomy (de Cillia et al. 1999) being realised, where the constraint is less historicised/ specific (van Leeuwen 2008) we see the topos of external constraints being used to legitimate in-group inaction/ inertia. To illustrate the similarity in construction and function, consider the below overview of ‘issue’ (n = 14,842):

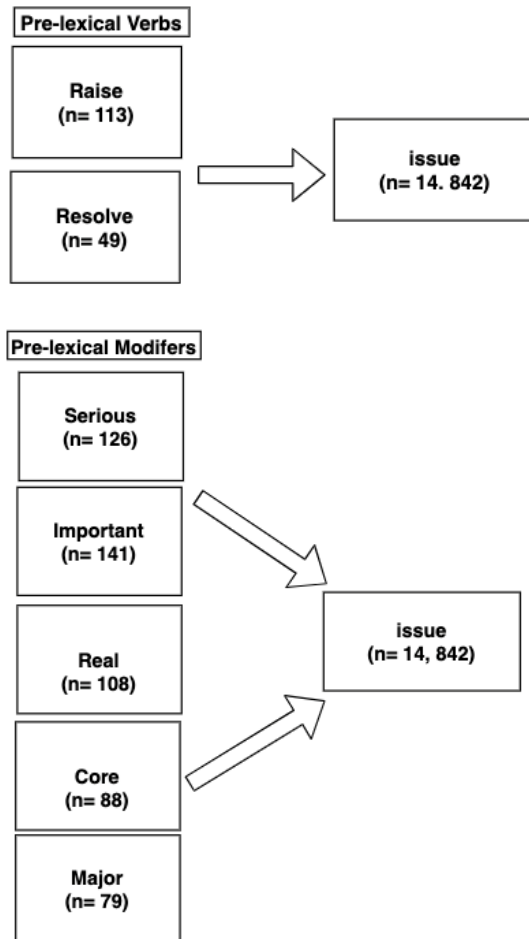


Figure 26 – Visualisation of Pre-Lexical Modifiers/ Verbs of ‘Issue’

Such salient frequencies point to high levels of reproduction of elite frames of reference in terms of political unfoldings which republican actors aim to problematise and resolve.

Situation (n= 8,279):

‘Situation’ stands out as an interesting example of how prevalent and systemic this strategy of problematisation is in the corpus. Anecdotally, the term ‘situation’

holds – at least from the perspective of the researcher – an association with the north of Ireland and parodic remediations of the Troubles.³⁹ Moreover, it is an ideological lexical choice that has been empirically proven to be frequently utilised by republican actors in statements made by IRA spokespeople (Filardo-Llamas 2013). Similar usages seem to be reproduced by RSM users in the data:

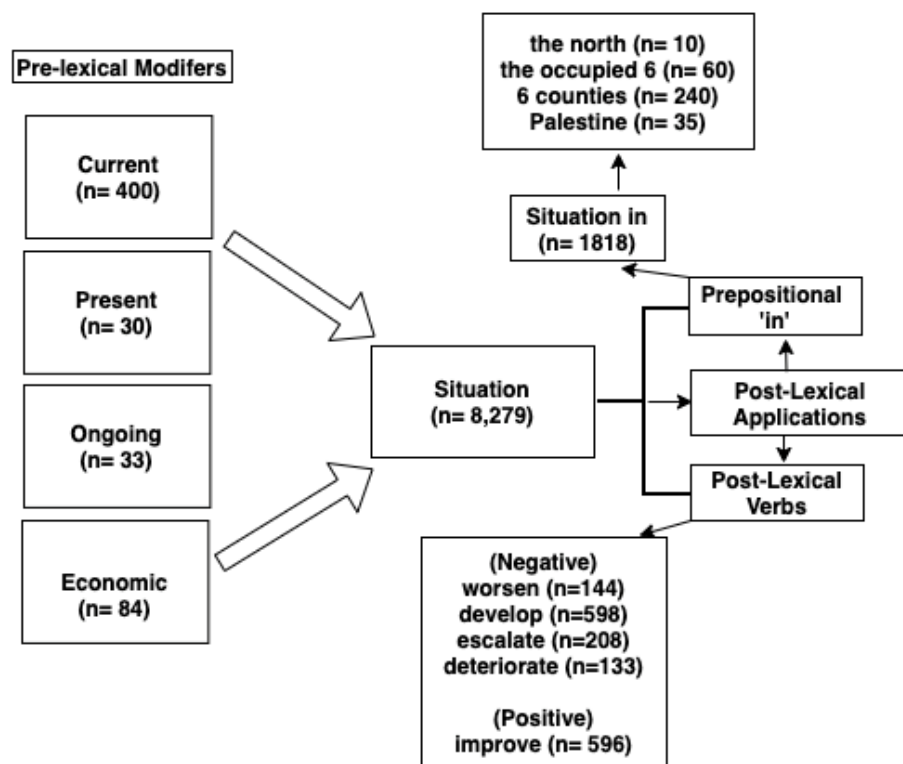


Figure 27 – Visualisation of ‘Situation’ and its Lexical Environments

The above provides an illustration of the uses of ‘situation.’ We can note it is chiefly employed toward the recontextualization and reproduction of social

³⁹ See, for instance, *Dublin’s 98 FM’s* comedic sketch ‘Norn Iron Trolls’ sketch series, or *The Daily Edge’s* (2015) account of words which are associated with a ‘nordie’ accent: ‘<https://www.dailyedge.ie/nordie-accent-2139800-Jun2015/>’

events (from a counter-hegemonic perspective). This lexical construction points toward the re-narration by participants of political unfoldings which can ameliorate/ deteriorate (from the in-group's perspective) as time progresses. Moreover, the nominations of these spaces intimate the realisation of codified republican strategies of destruction and de-legitimation ('occupied 6', 'in the north' etc.).

The final section of analysis for RQ1 considers the objective frequency list. While noun phrases have featured heavily in the above, their overview was limited to their relation to verbs and processes in the data. Part of the aim of considering how actors and their objects are discursively constructed is to identify the topics which, from the perspective of the RSM user community, relate to (and are conceptually pertinent to) the problematisation and construction of the *status quo*. As such, the loci of analysis included below have been selected on the basis that they are utilised by participants toward this strategic end, but also on the basis of their salience within the data set.

(The) People (n = 84, 795):

'The people' is marked as a lexical item owing to the high frequency and salience it holds in the data. Such a centrality means that it acts as the intersecting linguistic locus of many strategic functions of republicanism. That is to say, how 'people' is discursively employed positions it as a key semantic and linguistic resource for the RSM user community and their reproduction of republican ideology. The below provides a frequential illustration of its (empowering/derogating) uses:

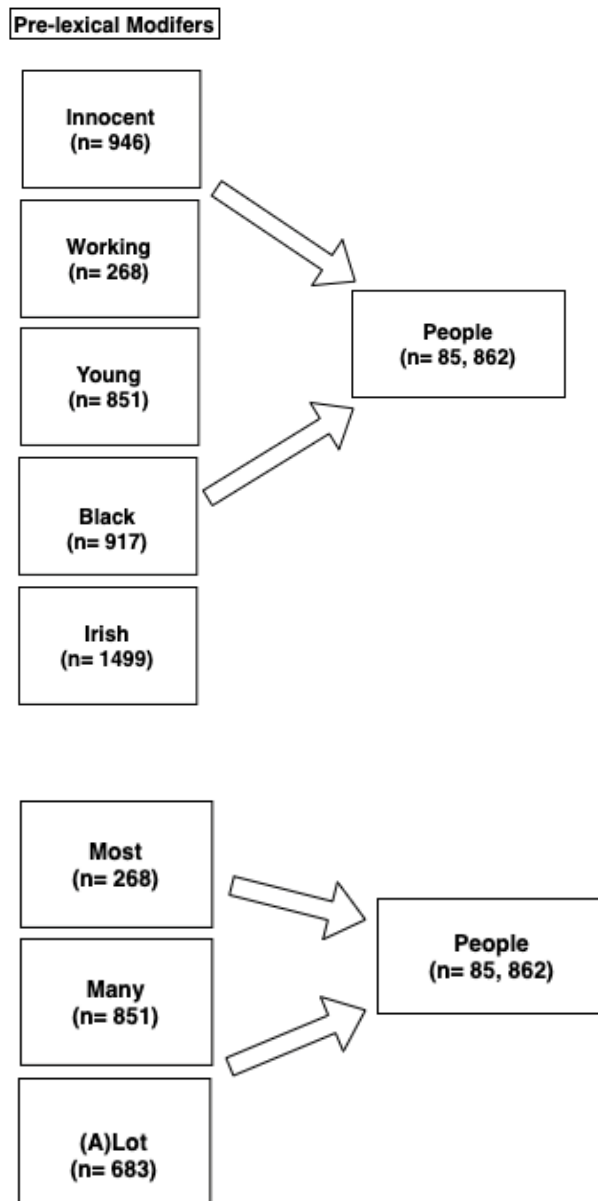


Figure 28 - Visualisation of 'People' and its Lexical Patterning

From the above we can identify two frequently realised discursive formulations which centre around the lexical item 'the people.' Most commonly, 'the people' can be seen to be semanto-prosodically coloured (Low 1993) by its modifiers to

the lexical field to the left of the keyword. The referential and predication strategies employed in the nomination and qualification of these actors reveals a strategically depowered construction pattern—where actors are labelled or categorised in terms of various social identity components (and their related connotations of prestige or stigma/ status or lack thereof), nationality or moralised attributes (innocent). The amalgam of these constructions is a prevalent, pre-lexically realised, positive framing of ‘the people.’ That is, the above concepts are regarded positively from the in-group perspective. More specifically, they are regarded as virtues or excoriated components of the hegemonic order. In terms of transitivity (Halliday 1973), the lexical field to the right of this discursive construction is typically populated with negative, excoriating or oppressing predications in which they are the object of elite processes.

Discursively, RSM users here reproduce a populist frame of representation. One that positions republicanism on the ‘side’ of the people. This discursive frame can be seen to be utilised in argumentation where generic superlatives (most/ many) precede the term. Such constructions frame the following assertion (which typically conveys a deontic, generally desired outcome) as being the democratic will of wider society. As such, we can regard these constructions as legitimating their perspective through authorisation by numbers (van Leeuwen 2008) and through an invocation of the topos of general will. In this light, ‘the people’ can be regarded as an entity or grouping which RSM users routinely (self) position themselves as defending. More specifically, they are the legitimate defenders on the basis of moralised and ethical intervention against exploitation and manipulation of the people. Beyond denoting an actual group, we can also identify lexical uses of ‘the people’ which suggest that, semantically and functionally, it is used to signify something akin to Rousseau’s (1997, 1762) *volonté générale* (‘the will of the people’- the best outcome of the people) and public

opinion.

Combining the above insights, we can see that ‘people’ serve as the denizens of the RSM user’s representational model. Additionally, and less overtly, they can also be regarded as the means or object of contestation: as something akin to public opinion (and the contest to win its favour in the public sphere). We see then, that such populist argumentative frames are couched in inherently civic terms: the critique of elite power is premised on the same ideals of civic nationalism and civic republicanism—which can arguably be seen to deviate from its more orthodox realisations in other nationalist discourses, where it tends to adopt more organic and ethnic based claims of superiority (Fuchs 2019). Finally, in terms of its lexical realisation, ‘people’ features in several prevalent environments which see it be identified with (almost as part of the in-group) by the RSM community, as a morally defensible or affinitive group:

<p>The people of the 6 counties (n=7) People in the free state (n=11) Ordinary people in the (n= 9) Innocent people (n= 946)</p>
--

Figure 29 – In-Group Applications of ‘People’:

However, ‘our people’ stands out as the most insightful in terms of how RSM users use and position people as a lexical item. The high frequencies and concordance analysis can reveal that ‘our people’ (n= 1,198) seems to denote an in-between group – not fully encompassed by the in-group, but too marginalised to be considered part of hegemonic order /out-group— a group which, from the perspective of participants, is at risk of exploitation by the social and political elites. Such a construction legitimates the republican movement – its intervention, alleged mandate and self-asserted right to represent and defend this collective.

This defence ought to take place through the systems of political contestation where, presently, from the RSM user's perspective, the 'will of the people' (n= 122) is under-represented. This political contest is one where exploitative elite actors are routinely pitted against 'the people', 'society' or the 'ordinary people.' Words, which from a hegemonic perspective hold neutral or positive connotations, are subjected to a derogating semantic prosody in republican discourse. For example, 'government' (n = 29,009) is almost exclusively reserved for the construction of institutional actors. For example, an analysis of the lexical field to the right reveals high frequencies of collocative noun-phrases which see government modify the following word.

Government troops (n= 142)
Government office (n= 80)
Government policy (n= 128)
Government official (n= 294)

Figure 30 – Government as a Modifier

Its occurrences are almost unanimously employed toward describing out-groups and are, therefore, negative and tainted as abusive of power. Lexical items such as 'state' fulfil much the same lexical functions. This pattern abates only in the reproduction of the visionary model of Irish republicanism, where self-governance is positively evaluated. Such patterning points to the adoption of a critical outlook on power: something that tallies with the philosophical commitment of republicanism against the vesting of power to elite minorities. Analysis of 'power' (n = 10, 956) supports this contention:

Power (n=10, 956):

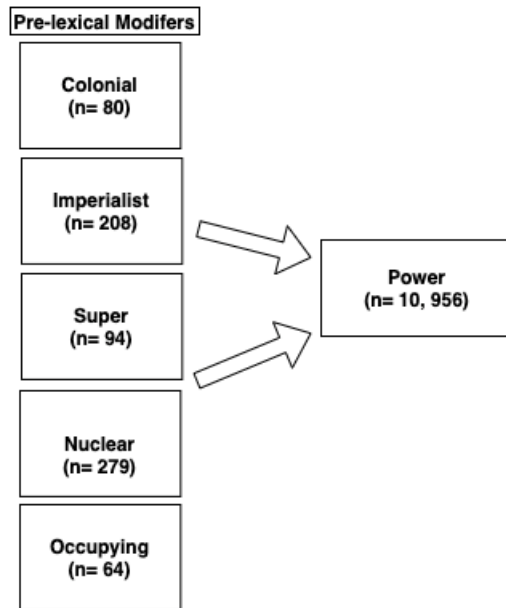


Figure 31 – Pre-Lexical Modifiers of ‘Power’

Empowerment for the republican movement comes in the form of support of/from the people. The result of this is that ‘power’ in its elitist formulations undergoes a negative prosodic shift in its semantic meaning, whereas its lateral formulations take on more populist argumentative functions that legitimate in-group action. As ‘people’ features high levels of objective transitive construction (i.e. they are the ones who undergo the process) in terms of processes that are exploitative, a fruitful follow-up analytical step was to consider what they are discursively deprived of. Luckily, an analysis of the objective frequency list can yield many potential loci of consideration to answer this question. The most productive and salient in this light is the lexical item ‘right’ (n = 19, 778).

Right (n=19,778)

A core characteristic of the *status quo* is its failure to deliver ‘rights’ to ‘the people.’ We see that the construction—through nomination and qualification—of these

rights mirrors the lateral power trajectory associated with egalitarian social agendas. That is to say, claims to ‘rights’ are anchored in the democratically defined, majority rule of the people (vertical claims tend to be more characteristic of organic nationalisms who claim ancestral or God-given rights):

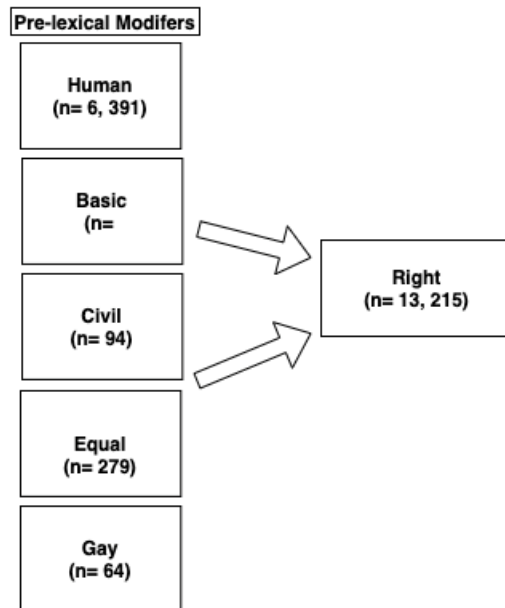


Figure 32 – Pre-Lexical Modification of ‘Right’

Aside from predicating the *status quo* with negative, unethical attributes, couching their discourse of rights in civic terms legitimates the wider republican interpretation of socio-political reality and its programmatic responses. As such, we can regard the *status quo* as being de-legitimated through abstraction to moralised discourses (van Leeuwen 2008). The result of this is that many in-group activities and beliefs are legitimated *de facto* as, firstly, retaliatory and, secondly, ethical. Considerations of lexical items such as ‘family’ and ‘home’ can also further elucidate this strategy of painting the present (and its denizen) as being vulnerable to exploitation by elites. Again, this formulation can also be

utilised in argumentation where a topos of threat (to positively evaluated/vulnerable aspects of the social order) is utilised to rationalise in-group action and ideation, as below in instances where the personal pronoun 'our' signifies the in-group.

Family (n= 15,774)

We fight to the last quarter espeically if someone threatens our **family** , our way of life, our country.

In a statement, republican prisoners in Maghaberry described the incident as "an attack on our **families** " .

I have no doubt that the Republican **family** will unite and show these B@stards that we and OUR POWs will never submit to their attempts to hinder the Campaign for

Home (n= 2,852)

Well done to everyone for coming out, hopefully that is the last time those child killing rats tramp through our **home**. The true face of loyalism, orangeism and their supporters.

That's how and I others who experienced unionist government attacks on civil rights marchers, the burning of our **homes** , the killing of our neighbours

there was a confrontation at the Peters Hill end of Carrickhill where loyalists had attacked nationalist **homes** . Community and political representatives

Figure 33- Sample uses of Family and Home around 'Our'

The contestation of the *status quo* and beliefs which perpetuate it also necessitate a problematisation of mass media and information flows in society as well as the perceptive schemata they inculcate the masses with through elite mediation and representations. That is to say, gatekeepers and sources of elite information are routinely derogated and delegitimised in the data on the basis that they are untruthful. Perhaps, more broadly, it is useful to suggest that RSM users delineate between information/ points/ narratives which support the hegemonic order or an alternative counter-public, (i.e fascism) and the information which supports their own particular worldview. This elision, framing and setting of parameters is typical of political discourse and its participants, but as it plays out here, it

provides an interesting example of a leftist critique of centralised power, its control of mass media systems and status within the public sphere. Moreover, as it is reproduced here by grassroots SM users, it shows the level of criticality that is reproduced at the grassroots level of the movement. The following high-frequency items can prove insightful in this regard: ‘facts’, ‘news’ and ‘report.’ Yet, in terms of insightfulness, ‘media’ (n= 10, 009), more accurately the lemma ‘medium’, stands out as the most elucidatory. The potential for analysis of its lexical treatment is vast. Yet, the below word-sketch can begin to illustrate its core formulations and functions:

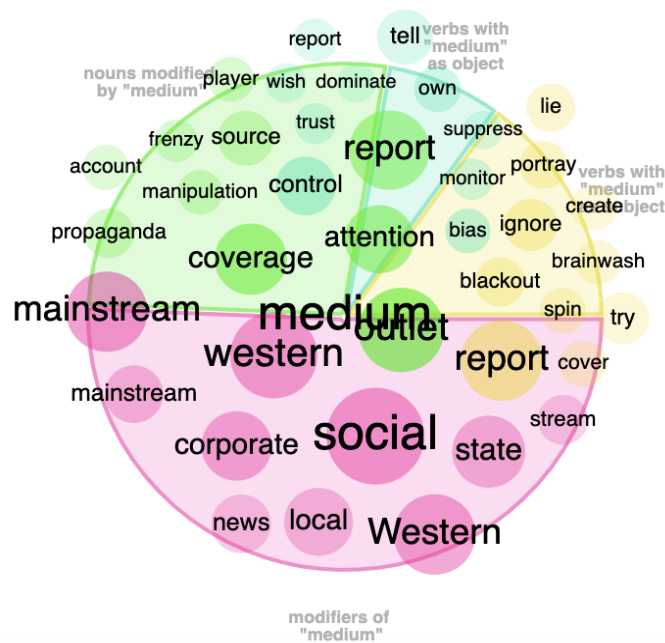


Figure 34 – Image of WordSketch of Medium

Analysis of the modifying lexical items of ‘medium/media’ reveals the re-occurrence of an elitist and corporatized constriction of them media system:

Mainstream media (n= 456)
State Media (n=212)
Western Media (n= 757)

Figure 35 – Pre-Lexical Modifiers of Media

This corrupted and tainted system’s objects, tactics and values can be discerned from an investigation of the lexical space to the right of the term, broadly correlating to the upper half of the circle in the word-sketch diagram above. Terms associated with press systems that deviate from the normative ideal of the fourth estate hold high saliences as collocates:

‘Propaganda’ (148)	‘Spin’ (n= 51)
‘Control’ (n=114)	‘Bias/biased’ (n= 67)
‘manipulation’ (n= 49)	‘brainwash’ (n= 24)
‘Blackout’ (n= 52)	‘lie’ (n= 19)

Figure 36 – Collocates of ‘Media’

As noted earlier, the media and elite sources of information can be conflated into a homogenous out-group, whilst evidenced from a scrutinization of the lower semi-circle of the above diagram/ lexical space to the left of the term, we can also identify this through post-lexical terms like ‘own’, as in ‘media owned by X’, ‘media suppressed by’, and ‘media monitored.’ The resulting frame of interpretation of the mainstream media is marked by scepticism and criticality. Thus, we can conclude that RSM users reproduce an orthodox critique of power and elite information from the perspective of a counter-public. In this interpretation, the dominant media systems of the ROI and the UK symbiotically perpetuate their own privileged position and the position of political elites. The

information disseminated by these elite gatekeepers is by default regarded by participants as ideologically tainted and implicit in the reproduction of the *status quo*. This however, should not be seen to detract from the notable evidence of reliance on/ neutral construction of media sources, too (evidenced by lexical items like ‘local’ ‘social’ and ‘report’).

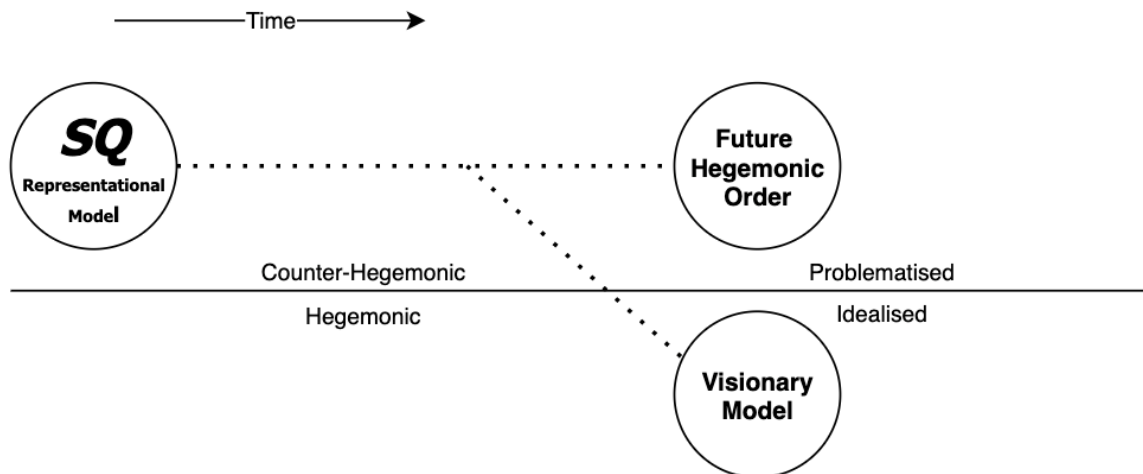
Before concluding the analysis for RQ1, it is prudent to address an important omission in consideration, thus far. One that ostensibly holds a strong relevance to the temporal span under discussion and also high frequencies of denotative terms in the objective frequency list. I am referring here to time. Whilst some temporal considerations have been used to guide this analysis, no explicit discussion of time (and its narrative structure) has been offered thus far. These will be addressed in due course after the conclusion of analysis for RQ4. This is to facilitate a broader reflection of how temporal spans are constructed on a continuum are strategically linked in an ideological narrative. The high levels of focus and consideration afforded to the present here derives from the centrality of the present as a temporal span. Moving forward, discussions of other RQs—beginning hereafter with RQ2—will be less expansive and rely more on strategically isolated analytical foci to elicit answers and insights.

RQ2: Discursively construct the future and a normative national visionary model?

The radical and peripheral critique of power uncovered in RQ1’s analysis pointed toward a strong problematisation of the *status quo* on behalf of RSM users. In ideological terms, the solutions to these problems are usually discursively constructed in the visionary model of the nationalist ideology. This visionary model, it must be noted, is not the sole future temporality that can be noted in the data under analysis here. Returning to the core contention that republicanism

is a counter hegemonic movement, we must differentiate between the desired attainment of their political goals and its representation (theoretically, a future scenario where republicanism centralises or becomes hegemonic) and the construction of the future as a temporal extension of the *status quo* (a future plagued by the same shortcomings, grievances and power asymmetries identifiable in the present). As such, it is the discursive construction and legitimation of this yet-unrealised, altered political order that the present section considers. Key to this, however, is the hegemonisation of republicanism (signified below through a linear transgression of the (counter)hegemonic dividing line).

Figure 37- Visualisation of Visionary Model and Hegemonic Status



Departing from the operationalisation of research questions, the first analytical measure undertaken toward addressing the second RQ entailed an analysis of the active frequency list. Given this ideological component is unrealised, a less expansive range of verbs enjoy key salencies in the data. That is to say, how the yet-to-be-realised outcomes of republican empowerment are linguistically

conveyed requires a less diverse range of verb forms and modalities to be realised. The implication of this, however, is that certain verb forms which are less salient in the representational model (e.g., future continuous tense and its typical linguistic features) become more salient in the visionary model. From the perspective of corpus assisted CDA, however, this bodes well for easily isolating ideologically revealing lexical choices. The heavier linguistic load required to construct this potential future requires the participants to invoke categories of words which prove to be fruitful in terms of the ideological information they can reveal.

Chief among these are modal verbs which, as closed-class word forms, traditionally are regarded as being 'devoid of separate meaning' and 'end not to be as interesting to discourse analysts as to grammarians, and it is generally safe in a CDA setting to ignore them.' (Mautner 2003, cited in Pearce 2014) Yet Pearce (2014) notes that such a conception glosses over the structuring functions of closed-class words, as well as their ideological salience. As such, function words are considered here for their ability to illuminate analytical perspectives not permitted by solely lexical analysis. In this regard, analyses of political discourse in different genres has pointed toward the potential value of deontic uses of the modal 'will' in corpus analysis where research has demonstrated a capacity to uncover the future intentions, as conceived of from a perspective of moral obligation, duty or desired outcome (Pearce 2014). Applied to the present research, such patterning could be hypothesised to reveal the intentions of RSM users from the perspective of future aspirations of the movement. As such collocates and n-gram analysis of 'will' was undertaken in the corpus. The results produced statistically marked levels of n-grams centred around 'will' in a variety of modalities: 'they will' (n= 5514) 'will not' (n=4,447) and 'it will' (n= 4,967) etc. The most productive in terms of insights, however, was 'will be' (n = 18, 835).

'Will be' (n= 18, 835):

Such high saliences and constructions suggest a certainty of outcome on behalf of the participants. This can be thought of as signifying high levels of reproduction of the visionary model (i.e participants re-producing their idealised, normative aspirations), and this contention does seem to be borne out by the data (see below examples of high saliency n-gram constructions). However, one caveat to this is the fact that the n-gram 'will be' also features notably *outside* of the future continuous tense, too, and outside of the re-narration of the visionary model of republicanism. This aside, the below n-grams point toward statistically high collocations of phrases which produce a deontic or volitive modality, outlining future desires, aspirations and (obligatory) outcomes of the future:

suggest that that to allow killing in one circumstances means	It will	be allowed in all circumstances. History shows that is not the case. ritual killing was an example
I have full belief when a campaign in in motion to have a poll called	It will	be successful, but this is the only thing that could be remotely argued
When 50 plus one is passed if the british state recognise the vote or not	It will	bring about a change.

Figure 38 – Sample Concordance Lines of 'It Will'

These all point toward high levels of certainty on behalf of the outcome, unity and other related aims are treated, in places, as a forgone conclusion or inevitability. Such uses are prevalent in elite discourse, too.⁴⁰ Analysis of concordancing lines suggest that this patterning is reproduced in the data – a vision of the future as right or inevitable—but the nature of the communicative context meant that the need for re-narrating and reproducing the visionary model

⁴⁰ For instance, similar uses can be noted in the infamous Bobby Sands' quote 'our revenge will be the laughter of our children' or (in Gaelic) in the popular slogan, Tfiocaidh Ar La (our day will come).

was not a commonplace necessity. Clear-cut, long-form textual constructions of visionary models can be found in political discourse, but usually in contexts where alternate or competing visions are vying for broader support (election manifestoes, political debates, etc.) Concordance analysis of the corpus reveals that within the data, such constructs and outcomes are left implicit. RSM users do not see fit to frequently reproduce their ideology, as it exists as an adopted shared schema by most (if not all) already. Yet, where the visionary model does experience discursive reproduction it is often linguistically realised as an inexorable, preordained outcome. The visionary model can also be discerned from an investigation of less certain/ deontic verbs: ones which convey a desired, but unrealised, aspiration. In this regard, ‘hope’ (n = 7,045) and its collocates prove illustrative.

Hope: (n= 7045):

The collocative salience of ‘hope’ and ‘gets’ (n-gram ‘hope gets’) indicates a strong linguistic construction of the future being a place of material or capital attainment, or amelioration. Analysis of the concordancing lines of these collocates unveils high levels of immediate-future oriented aspirations:

i think auld benji is wanting his cake and to eat it,i really	Hope Palestine gets	numbers to be reconized as a state as the British still
be packed with people, then no better place to highlight the issue	Hope the protest gets	the turn out it deserves
can't see what other option Gavin has so support his stance I	hope this gets	the required media attention or it may have little effect.

Figure 39 – Sample Concordance Lines of ‘Hope _ Gets’

These wishes relate less to core ideological components and political structures, and more to the day-to-day process level concerns of the discourse participants. As such we can note a gradated construction of the visionary model in terms of certainty (at least in its habitual linguistic construction). At one extreme, core

facets of the ideological narrative are presented as a forgone conclusion and inevitable outcome to republican agitation, at the other, the more immediate future desires of RSM users show high salencies of desired materialistic gain at the grassroots, process level.

A final consideration to illustrating the visionary model of RSM users must be to consider the objective frequency list. In doing so, loci of analysis relating to high frequency lexical items denoting future goals and aspirations of the movement were sought out. Toward this end, below analytical discussions of ‘united Ireland’ and ‘unity’ are provided.

United Ireland (n = 870) & UI (n=236)

The n-gram ‘united Ireland’ and its abbreviated form ‘UI’ sees high levels of usage in the data. As a visionary model, a ‘united Ireland’ has existed in the republican lexicon since partition (circa 1921). Yet approximately a century later it remains prevalent in the discursive construction of the ideological goal of the movement. This prolonged presence in the collective representation of republican ideals seemingly tallies the alleged ideological ‘lightness’ that critics of the movement decry (Frampton 2009). Yet, for our purposes here, we can avail of Sketchengine’s capacity to produce functional summaries of words, that is, a general lexico-semantic overview of the lexical item’s functions and occurrences in the corpus. For instance, a collocation analysis of united Ireland can begin to elucidate how participants discursively regard it, which concepts they see fit to link to its attainment and how the position their collective in regards to the ideal. The below table provides a frequential illustration of salient collocates toward this end:

Achieve (lemma) (n= 1,229)	Unstoppable (n= 81)
Momentum (n= 395)	Desire (n= 710)
Close (n= 840)	Turn (n= 87)
Marxist (n= 176)	Deciding (n= 183)
Support (lemma) (n= 25, 659)	Border (n= 5,981) Poll (n= 2,100)
Border-Poll (n= 96)	Closer (n= 840)

Figure 40– Collocates of United Ireland

These outline how participants pre-lexically qualify the visionary model of the ideology. The salience of volitive/ deontic moods being realised in the construction of this can be identified through the high uses of ‘desire’ and ‘achieve.’ This points toward the collectively held aspiration of achieving Irish unity, which is constructed from the perspective of a moral obligation or desired outcome. A ‘United Ireland’ is often positioned at the end of spatial metaphors like POLITICS IS A MEANINGFUL JOURNEY, or more particularly, a STRUGGLE:

we all know what we see wrong with Sinn Féin but as of yet **in our political journeys** we have failed to present it to the people in a manner that appeals to them. When your opponent is on top of you there is more deaths and just as much heartache before **getting to where we are now**. It's not perfect, but hopefully **bit at a time we'll get there** .
Hypothetical Scenario: Had Sunningdale been accepted by republicans, would unionists have went for it? On
could ever experience in order to defend their neighbours and communities while engaged fully in **the wider Republican struggle** to secure a 32 country Socialist Republic. All of them are heroes, Tomás Begley is a martyr. What has happened here in the
women who faced down the British empire, not only at easter 1916 , but to those who sacrificed their lives in **the ongoing struggle** since in pursuit of a socialist Republic. On Easter Saturday Republicans in Irgan were doing just that when they were

Figure 41 – Samples of Conceptual Metaphors

Similarly, the metaphoric form of HOMELAND IS A SUBJUGATED FEMALE also is utilised frequently.

well done Leo. oiche mhaith **Ireland has voted to slaughter her own offspring...** The only defence for Irish lives in the north now lies in the hands of the

"A Nation Once Again". That one album taught me more **about Ireland and her History** than I learned in the whole of primary school. So yeah, the Wolfe Tone had a big impact on me in that album.

Ireland is an ancient nation which from earliest times had a distinct civilization. **What made Ireland what she was was her** people living within the whole island as a separate and distinct community, or nation, by virtue of a

issues, policies and planning required for the **peaceful unity of Ireland and her people** by a committee of the Dáil or Seanad

. We are not fighting to free Ireland from foreign tyrant in order to place under the thumb of domestic tyrants. Socially **Ireland has never given up her old civilization**. It was the workers of Ireland who are fighting now, it was the worker who always

Figure 42 – Samples of Conceptual Metaphors

The above has purposively included examples of these metaphoric process representations emanating from disparate temporal models to illustrate the extent to which they pervade the data. Both of these serve to enhance the affective and rational arguments underpinning the visionary model: the deontic obligation to protect the maternal, iconoclastic female archetype, as well as the logical, just and moralised resolution to the republican movement's historical trajectory. Such a resolution is often regarded with the previously identified certainty of outcome and expectedness (often realised through the employment of deontic 'will', see above). In terms of the objective frame, this expectedness and deontic construction of the future can be interpreted to be further legitimated by participants through collocative patterning which qualifies Irish unity (or a united Ireland) as 'unstoppable' 'close' or, to a lesser degree, as enjoying a lot of 'momentum'. Again, we witness the grassroots reproduction of spatialised metaphors which construct Irish unity as something the in-group (and republicanism's 'in-between' groups like 'the people') are moving toward. As

noted above, from the perspective of the participants this movement is strident, empowered (laterally) and tenacious. Exploring how the concepts of ‘unity’ is sketched by participants can further unpack how the ideal is constructed and conceptualised by RSM users.

Unity (n = 2985):

Again, assessing how ‘unity’ is lexically modified and positioned can reveal its ideological character within the data. For instance, the pre-lexical environment of the lexical item is populated with the below, illustrative list of items which serve to qualify or predicate unity, or to perceptually position it with regard to the collective.

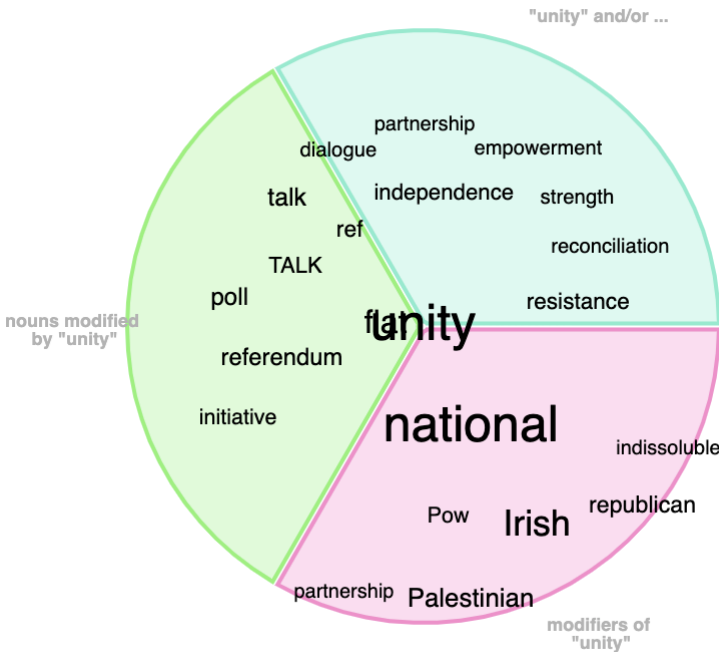


Figure 43 – WordSketch of ‘Unity’

Above we see that unity is qualified as something to be ‘restored’, which again

suggests a nuanced interpretation of Irish history being collectively adopted by participants. Moreover, the qualification of unity as ‘national’ unity reasserts the republican commitment to a conceptualisation of republicans’ imagined community, and its corresponding territory, as being congruent with the island of Ireland. Similar to modal verbs, Pearce (2014) revealed that functional, closed-class words like prepositions serve to structure the ideologies they convey. Accordingly, an analysis of prepositional collocates of the term can also provide insight into how participants position the movement and its relation to unity.

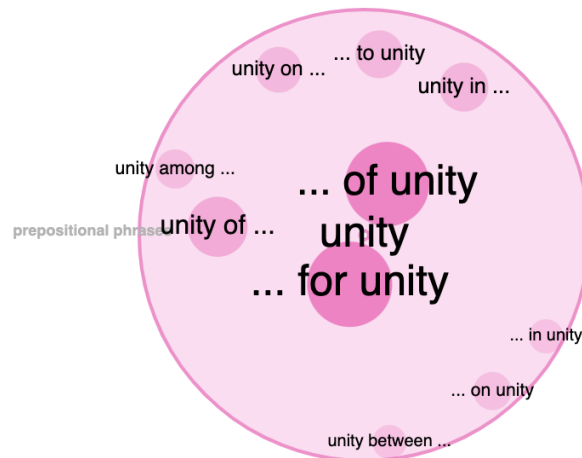


Figure 44 – WordSketch of ‘Of Unity’

As we see the two dominant prepositional phrases employed in the construction of unity are ‘for’ and ‘of’. Further concordance analysis supports the contention that these structural uses are employed by participants to position the in-group as being ‘for’ unity – its uses suggests both a conceptual, cognitive support ‘for’ unity as well as material, physical efforts in the ‘struggle for’ unity. Likewise, the high salience of ‘of’ can be accounted for through analysis of concordance lines which reveal high levels of participants weighing up/ legitimating the benefits and

pros 'of' Irish unity—which is, unsurprisingly, nearly always positively constructed.

proactive in preparing now for the economic, social, and political realities	<u>of Unity</u>	Irish Unity makes sense. <u>It</u> has always made sense.
the road to ending division and for the construction	<u>ofunity</u>	They concurred that there would be no return to bilateral
groups were again invited to attend. These apparent advocates	<u>ofunity</u>	<u>again</u> failed to show (FACT). <u>More</u> recently, a leading member

Figure 45 – Sample Concordance Lines of ‘Of Unity’

Such salient and habitual patterns serve to perspectivise (de Cillia et al. 1999) Irish republicanism as a movement ‘in pursuit’, a hot nationalism that is yet to realise its ultimate goal. This perspectivisation is furthered by argumentation strategies which legitimate and provide affectively resonant justificatory and explanatory frameworks for participants to adopt in order to legitimate the group’s existence and outlook (strategies which, again, can be noted to transcend temporal boundaries)

should be very wary of it. **One thing history tells us , we cannot ever ever trust the brits.** And **everything they do is for their own** selfish interests. Settlement reached in

helicopter shot down Irelands32 I'd agree with you **but the great majority of us** don't want to be here except a few crazy right wing nuts

drugs policy why is it acceptable or important to have a radical position on gay rights transgender or abortion because **most people** don't support a radial legalisation policy, that's just reality I would argue internally for that kind of policy but it

I think that **most would agree** that the IRA would not have accepted (and would have fought against) the latter. there revolution as they see we were confronted by a huge amount of bureaucracy, excuses, apologies (sometimes), **denial of our rights**, negligence, etc. I'm very glad that we finally succeeded in organizing

efforts for national unity and reconciliation as the only way to defeat the occupation, **protect our people** , and **ensure our rights** to return, to self-determination, to freedom and independence.

Figure 46 – Sample of Argumentation Strategies

We see that unity is justified along populist, democratic lines: as being the desired,

statistically representative aspiration of the collective (and occasionally, wider society). History and the past as temporal spans are characterised as i) problematic and ii) sites of learning for the movement as it progresses into future temporal spans. Whilst the construction of a collective memory is dealt with in more detail below, for here it suffices to say that the past informs the RSM user's perception of the hegemonic future. It is cited in the discursive legitimisation of the movement's visionary model as a cautionary tale (van Leeuwen 2008) or as a means of (dis)authorisation of hegemonic structures (partition etc.) which prevail from the past into the present and, potentially – sans future republican intervention—will prevail into the future. Similar patterns of justification and construction can be noted across lexical items such as: 'independence', 'sovereignty', 'self-determination' and 'freedom'. The future is collectively constructed by participants as the temporal span where such idealised concepts (deontically) must be realised in order to bring about the necessary changes for a more equitable, representative and righteous society. The analysis thus far has revealed the visionary model of Irish republicanism to enjoy strong saliences of lexical items related to national sovereignty and the nation's borders (and their congruency with desired national boundaries). This, however, can only ever reveal part of what the visionary model of the movement entails. Irish republicanism is, like all civic nationalisms, less inclined to rely solely on elitist or territorial claims to sovereignty. As such, some consideration of the civic or political components of the visionary model (as opposed to spatio-geographical) ought to be provided. Although surveyed above in regard to RQ1, as reconsideration of 'Rights' (n = 13, 215) proved to be insightful in this regard.

Yet how it was broached for the purpose of this RQ required some attention. In the representational model analysis, we noted that the *status quo* was problematised as a place where values and rights were unrealised or deprived from the perspective of the RSM user community. Unpacking these further, we

noted high statistical frequencies of collocates which denoted marginalised or non-elite actors—producing a generalised opposition to elitist power. Such a problematising representation of the present holds some pertinence to participants’ perceptions and construction of future temporal spans: both idealised and critical versions. The non-visionary/ hegemonic future of participants is plagued by the same absence of civil rights and power asymmetries, whereas the visionary model is one that has realised these, normalised them and rendered them hegemonic. As such, when analysing ‘rights’ for the purposes of RQ1 we ought to identify lexical realisations which facilitate the construction of a future yet-unrealised righteous nationalist society and the group’s relation toward it. In this light, analysing the lexical field to the left of ‘rights’ for salient collocates can reveal either i) concepts which the participants see fit to link conceptually to the visionary model (chiefly through noun-noun collocates or, ii) the lexical nomination of group processes relating to these rights (chiefly through noun-verb collocates, which reveal how the group collectively reproduces its own actions regarding rights in the visionary model).

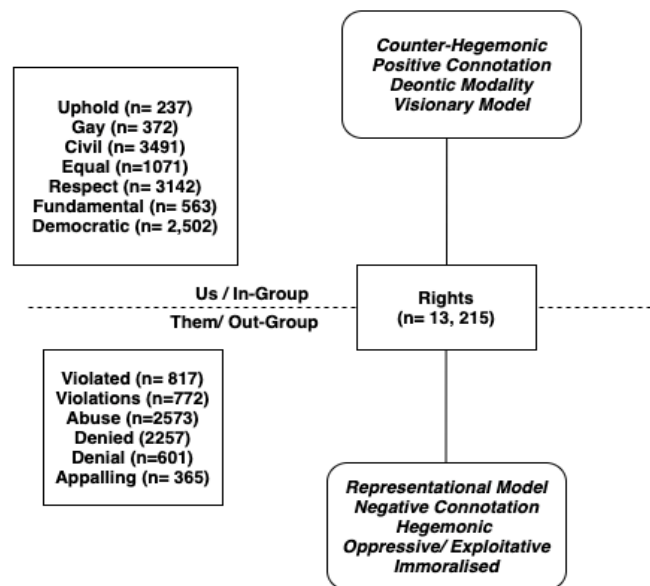


Figure 47 – Visualisation of Lexical Environments of ‘Rights’

All of the above paint a sketch of the visionary model as a righteous, moralised outcome of a nationalist narrative. Republicanism (in its hegemonic formulation) will continue to be the self-asserted defender of civil rights and guardian of non-elite members of society. High saliences of lexical items like ‘equal’, ‘gay’, ‘civil’ and ‘democratic’ indicate that republicanism’s visionary model will be typified by a more equitable distribution of power and realisation of human and civil rights (previously denied under the oppressive and problematised *status quo*). More specifically, republicanism is both the vehicle through which this change will be realised and republicans are the actors who will bring about its realisation/perpetuate and defend its existence upon realisation. Argumentatively, such lexical constructions can again be seen to be heavily couched in moralised discourses and nuanced perspectives of socio-political normativity. The combative lexicon employed in the construction of contestation mirrors the militaristic tone of elite republican discourse of the past (and its moralising/legitimating function (cf. Filardo-Llamas 2013). Yet it is applied in the data to a solely civic and constitutional mode of agitation/ political contestation, which—as noted in regard to the representational model—centred around somewhat globalised leftist and egalitarian social issues. This suggests that while the topics and themes invoked by participants might become increasingly diversified as the movement centralises, they still share the same inherent (negative) conceptualisation of elite power and utilise many of the same formal resources employed in historic militaristic discourse (defend, etc.).

RQ3: Discursively argue and reason about how to attain this vision?

Whereas the previous research question successfully yielded insights into the

construction and legitimation of the in-group's ideals and strategic visions (i.e. the visionary model), what follows addresses the critical temporal phase separating the problematised present from the idealised visionary future. The fuzzy, semi-futuristic and heavily normative temporal span that lies in between the representational model and visionary model, what Reisigl and Wodak (2016) refer to as the programmatic model of an ideology. As the name suggests, this model outlines a program of action that the in-group must undertake in order to realise their visionary model. Again, a distinction here ought to be drawn between the immediate future tense and its construction on the data, versus the imperative steps the movement must take toward Irish unity (and its associated values and social benefits) as perceived by the participants. The latter is the focus of this section and it shares similarities to the visionary model inasmuch as it, too, is unrealised and subjected to moralisation/ legitimation. The ostensible normativity of this model – that is, its self-evident arguments for *how* to make things *better*—enhanced the analytical specificity with which lexical items within the corpus were isolated for analysis. In other words, the linguistic resources necessary to construct a morally imperative program of action which ought to/needs to be taken by the in-group in the near future were utilised as loci of analysis. Below an illustrative list of these has been analysed, beginning firstly with salient verbs in the corpus.

In constructing a program of necessary action to realise the visionary model of their ideology, RSM users understandably rely on high levels of previously assessed grammatical moods, chiefly realised through modal verbs and phrasing. As such, modal verbs served as the first loci of consideration toward addressing RQ3. Specifically, verbs which conveyed a sense of obligation (things that imperatively *have* to happen for moral reasons) as well uses of verbs which conveyed a desired outcome.

Have to (n= 8814):

Where ‘have to’ (n=8814) was used by participants to construct a sense of imperativeness related to in-group, collective action we can note an abstraction to moralised discourse and value systems, as well as populist argumentation schemes. In particular, concordance analysis of the n-gram ‘we have to’ (n= 495) proves insightful in this regard.

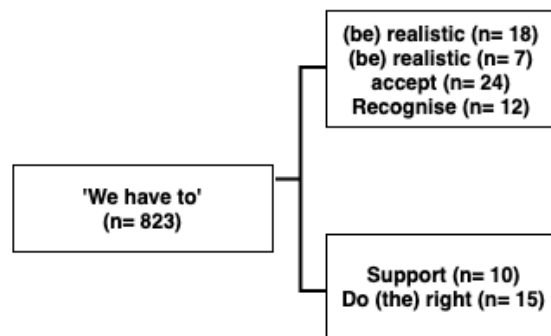


Figure 48 – Visualisation of ‘We have to’

Underpinning the above construction patterns is an (often inexplicit) system of values. These values broadly correlate to democratic and republican ideals in regard to power: that is, they demonstrated a commitment to democratic processes and participation, as well as the necessity for honest information in the public sphere and the need to engage with this in a reflective and progressive manner (reflect, confront). The present’s saturation with falsified or exploitative information (and the viewpoints and ideologies they inculcate) needs to be actively challenged in the view of the RSM user community, the vehicle for doing so is the republican struggle which, as we have established already, is held by participants to be morally justified and a solution to the ills of the *status quo*.

The above exploration of auxiliary and modal uses of verbs has revealed salient

patterning that seemingly tallies with other insights drawn from the representation model and visionary models' analyses. Participants reconstruct an imperative/deontic need for their volitive/ model of desired outcomes. Ideals which are foregrounded in the visionary model (i.e rights and unity) are treated as obligations which the RSM community perceive to be the ulterior goals of their ideological narrative. Such goals must be achieved through collective action (which can be seen to be solely political in nature- more on this below) and through a re-consideration/ repositioning of the hegemonic order's immaterial structures—that is, the discourses which perpetuate them, the belief systems that justify the *status quo* etc. All of these, from the RSM user community's perspective, *must* be confronted in order to i) rectify the problems of the representational model and ii) bring them in line with the ideals laid out in the visionary model. As such, the programmatic model is where the solutions to the *status quo* are activated, enacted and legitimated. It is the ideological model where the struggle continues to challenge the hegemonic order by temporally linking contemporary critique and future aspirations through change.

The previous analyses have yielded a lot of insight into how RSM users discursively construct a sense of obligation and imperativeness in regard to its program of action. Yet, the above has drawn solely on verbs as lexical loci of analysis. As such, the focus has been on the lexical construction of the processes of the programmatic model. The remainder of this section is devoted to an overview of the objective frequency list and its ability to elucidate key objects or events which the RSM user community regard as being key to progress along the desired counter-hegemonic lines they espouse. Toward this end, salient lexical items which featured high frequencies or keyness scores were scanned and analysed. This process produced varying insights which are best accounted for through discussions of the noun form of 'change' (n= 3672, although its verb form was also very insightful), and 'border' (n= 7101).

'Change' (n = 3672)

As a model, the function of the programmatic model of Irish Republicanism is to outline a change in status or structure, a shift from periphery to centralised position, from counter-public to hegemonic so on and so forth. Thus, an analysis of how the concept of change is constructed and qualified by participants can reveal how it is conceptualised by grassroots republicans. The below diagram illustrates its dominant patterning in the corpus:

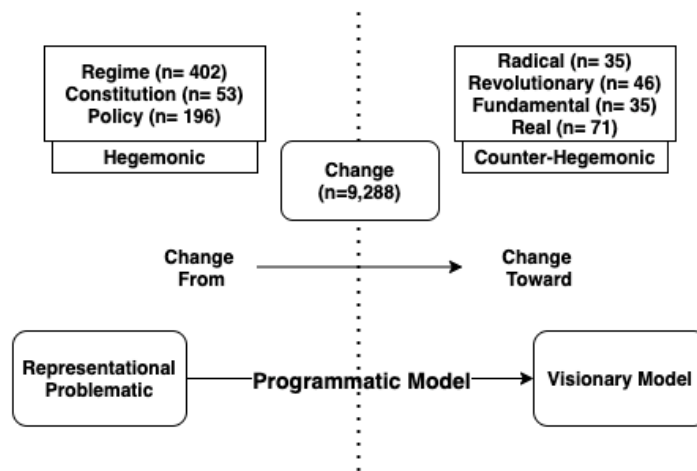


Figure 49 – Visualisation of ‘Change’

We can see that ‘change’ is conceptualised and linguistically realised in two dominant ways within the data. Change can be seen to be regarded by participants as being inherently political—it is achieved through the negotiation of power among individuals or groups. This can be coercive, unrepresentative (regime) or representative (constitution), and requires a collective change in approach from established centres of power (policy). Such elite or institutional construction is offset by the habitual employment of intensification strategies in the pre-lexical environment of ‘change’. The desired outcome of the visionary

model, therefore, is often regarded as requiring ‘radical’ or ‘fundamental’ change in order to be realised. Such a dichotomous treatment of an ostensibly neutral lexical item like ‘change’ can reveal the underlying strategy it serves: Firstly, change is positioned by the in-group as necessary owing to the problematic *status quo* and its domination by elite sources of power. Secondly, the intensification of the changes perceived to be necessary to the realisation of the visionary model also suggests that participants legitimate their desired changes by painting them as grandiose, radical or revolutionary. Thus, from the above, we can identify a typical counter-hegemonic perspective of change being reproduced in the data. On the one hand, change is something necessary and desired, on the other it is something that is necessarily expansive and complex in order to bring about the vision adhered to by participants. Change needs to be structurally significant to be effective (radical, fundamental), it centres around power and its distribution in society (regime), and is negotiated through politics (policy, constitution).

Border (n= 7101)

Owing to its high salience and semantic relation to a contentious object from the perspective of Irish republicanism (the border which was introduced during partition), ‘border’ has been isolated for its ability to produce insight into an object of contention within republicanism. That is to say, in order for republicanism to realise its ultimate goal of Irish unity, the border dividing the north and south of Ireland must be dissolved. As such, analysing how participants linguistically construct and negotiate this process can be revealing. Toward this end, the n-gram ‘border poll’ (n = 527) was identified as being analytically fruitful.

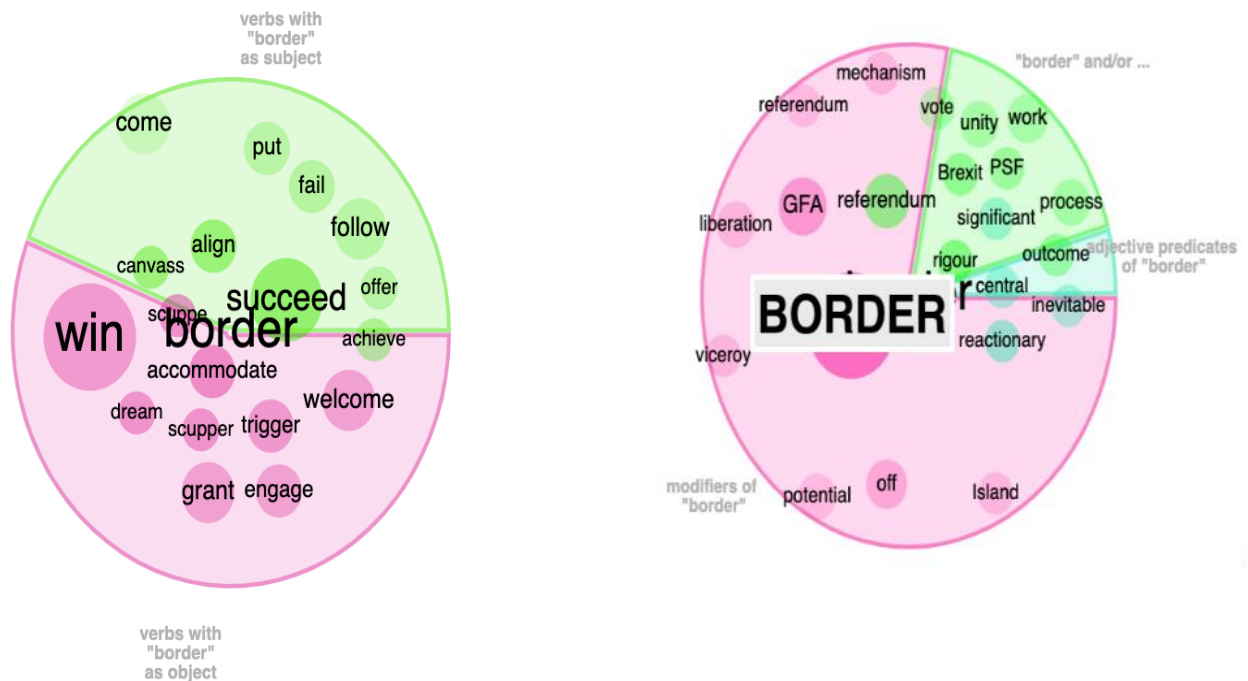


Figure 50 – WordSketches of ‘Border’

Border Poll (n=572)

Semantically the meaning of what is, on the surface, a neutral term becomes prosodically modified through frequent co-occurrence with positively evaluated words. Thus, beyond proving insight as a statistically frequent lexical item, ‘border poll’ is also fruitful in terms of providing insights into how participants regard the political decision making process and its relation to the republican struggle. As can be discerned from high frequencies of ‘achieve’ succeed etc. RSM users see a border poll as a stepping stone to unity. It is something that is conducive to realising the rights and values missing from the *status quo* (liberation, potential etc.) in the visionary model (future). Similar conceptual linking of outcomes and processes can be seen revealed through an analysis of ‘referendum’ and its semantically influential collocates: ‘Unity’ ‘Marriage’ ‘Abortion’

‘independence’, all of which, in some way, trace back to republican social or political ideals, and some of which have been politically contested through referenda in recent times (abortion and marriage). Whilst it is beyond the purview of this chapter to truly appraise the significance of these saliences, it can be theorised that such topics are relatively novel features in the wider pantheon of historic republican discourse. That is to say, civic, social and political goals like marriage equality or the repeal of the 8th amendment –and their positive reproduction by republicanism and its grassroots – are newer topical introductions to republican discourse than the concept of liberation, freedom etc. (although, philosophically they are related). Whilst the formal realisations of these and how they conceived of power might remain the same, we can theorise that, at the thematic or topical level of discourse, the programmatic model undergoes the highest levels of variation and change of content by virtue of its function and focus on the process level of ideology and political culture. How such events become enshrined in republican discourse and recontextualised post-fact will be addressed later in regard to RQ4.

RQ4: Construct and utilise a collective memory?

Thus far, we have deconstructed what Reisigl and Wodak (2016) regard as the core constituent models of prototypical ideological narratives as they relate to Irish republicanism. Broadly, these have corresponded to the temporal spans of the present/ *status quo* (representational), the desired future (visionary) and the intermediate linking timespan outlining a proposed course of action (programmatic). Yet, the conception of discourse as being historically conditioned which is adhered to in this dissertation warrants some focus on a temporal span which can be seen to influence and mould the previously analysed ideological models. The time-frame which temporally precedes all of these: the

past. More specifically, the goal here is to deconstruct what we can term the ‘collective memory’ of RSM users as they reproduce it discursively on the site. Like the other models, this is an inherently subjective discursive/cognitive construct. Rather than being seen as the objective recontextualization of past social practice, however, the users’ collective memory is understood here as the collective and strategic reproduction of a group’s history (as it relates to their ideology/ identity), and as a construct it serves to link the past to the present (Wertsch 2009). As such, the goal of the following section is to provide an outline of how participants make use of their subjective interpretations of the past for (contemporary) political purposes. This entails assessing the topics, frames and argumentation and legitimation schemas utilised by participants (as well as their micro-linguistic realisations) with a view to critically analysing how all of these components interact toward a strategic ideological goal: the framing and utilisation of the past in a way that benefits the in-group.

To approach this task, some thought needed to be afforded to the selection of appropriate loci of analysis. Given the aim is to generally understand how RSM users construct and utilise the past, a frequency analysis forms a good point of departure to ensure representativity in this regard. Drawing from the active frequency list, an analysis of salient verb-lexical items reveals a disparity in occurrences of transitive and violent verbs employed in the representation of past social practice compared to the present day. Such disparities are not easily identified from the frequency list alone. Rather this provides a mere suggestion of potentially fruitful lexical items for analysis. In this regard, the lemmas of ‘to kill’ (n= 35, 923), ‘shoot’ (n= 12, 753) and ‘attack’ (n= 24, 886) are marked insofar as they denote violent, transitive activities. Upon further concordance analysis of these items, we can note that the vast majority of their occurrences are employed toward the re-narration of past instances of violence—chiefly toward republican-related military conflicts, like the Troubles, War of Independence etc. (One caveat

to this is that from the mid-2010s onward, ‘shoot’ saw higher saliencies in regard to the re-narration of police shootings in the USA).

and Kells on this job is still in republican circles. The Brit army	<u>shot</u>	a friend of Sean and Kells at bootsy's wake- then the Brits sh1t-stirred
at three properties in the Belfast area on Friday. Six men were	<u>shot</u>	dead inside the bar while watching Ireland play Italy
Joe McCann was	<u>shot</u>	near his home in the Markets area of Belfast in April 1972 Two ex-soldiers
Foundry worker William Kerr from Whiterock who was	<u>killed</u>	in action aged 22, Alfred Wynne who died aged only 18 from the New Lodge
its a fruitless exercise - you can acknowledge remembrance for people	<u>killed</u>	without bending to say you'll wear a poppy - i also get that she meant
Some got away to America etc-Some were later	<u>killed</u>	on active service-some are in Sinn Fein today and some are not
sectarian attacks.We all know that the Short Strand has been	<u>attacked</u>	time and time again.But your either bigoted yourself or your
There are still 3 former RAF members on the run. They	<u>attacked</u>	an amored car in 1999 in the city of Duisburg with a bazooka and
there were many clashes there as many Catholics were	<u>attacked</u>	as they crossed from Millfield to Carrick Hill and

Figure 51 – Sample Concordance lines of Shot/ Killed /Attacked

As we can see the past is a temporal span that is populated with high saliencies of violent verb processes. Furthermore, we can discern that republican actors are both the subjects and objects of this violence depending on the context. Considering the above in unison, we can begin to appreciate the statistically high levels of participants re-narrating past events, particularly related to violence, militarism and conflict. Further concordance analysis reveals that such past instances of violence are not muted or mitigated in the discussion. They are not subjected to mitigation strategies which seek to lessen their severity, nor do participants seek to distance themselves from them via the use of perspectivisation strategies (as is the case with other nationalisms (Wodak 2017)). Instead, what we find is a glorification and legitimation of these past activities, when they were conducted by republican/in-group actors. Where the in-group was not the object of violence, a victimhood frame is habitually invoked by

participants (see below). While a dissection of the data in regard to temporal/ tense variables is not permitted by Sketchengine, concordance analysis does prove to be insightful in identifying the habitual reproduction of the past as a place marred by violence and militaristic transgressions. How these are predicated and implicitly evaluated through language-use and how both are justified through argumentation and legitimation strategies are dealt with subsequently. Prior to this, the next analytical measure undertaken here assesses how participants discursively construct the process of remembering.

Similar to previous analyses undertaken in this chapter, how remembering is regarded and enacted by participants can be evaluated through collocation analysis of the lexical fields surrounding the word under scrutiny—in this instance, the verb ‘to remember’ (n= 6,616) is marked. Doing so produces a workable outline of frequent lexical patterns that prosodically colour the meaning of remembering as it appears in the data. The results of this process yielded two dominant patterns of construction and their corresponding functions in the corpus.

Honour (n= 59)
Commemoration (n= 90)
Pride (n= 118)
Proudly (n= 55)
Volunteer(s) / Oglaiach (n= 175)

Figure 52 – Collocates of ‘To Remember’

Firstly, concordance analysis reveals a high keyness for collocative verbs like ‘to honour’ and ‘to commemorate’. Indeed, analysis of the collocates of ‘to remember’ yields high frequencies of co-occurrences for ‘name of’, ‘sacrifice of’,

‘victim’, and ‘POW’ which also proves to be insightful. From this we can see that remembering, as it is discursively qualified and utilised by RSM users in the data, holds a strong relationship to the idea of commemoration—i.e. remembering specific actors/events for a specific, group-oriented purpose. Commemorative texts and communication are, as noted by scholars (Hoey 2013, Filardo-Llamas 2013, and Goulding 2022 forthcoming), a core feature of republican discourse. Their aim is to martyr/ glorify the ‘sacrifices’ (n= 623) of past republican interventions, elite actors or political endeavours. This is routinely conducted by republican elite political organisations who invariably use them to legitimate their own contemporary political realities and perspectives. Yet, within the data we can note the same process of respectful commemoration being reproduced by grassroots social media users. At all levels, such commemorative re-narration serves to positively evaluate an alternative interpretation of historical events to the dominant narratives (which is, from the perspective of RSM users, unwarrantedly critical of republican violence). The reproduction of a commemorative script again foregrounds the centrality and ritualism of commemoration to republican praxis. Moreover, the status of actors included in the collective memory is signified through strategies such as functionalisation (cf. van Leeuwen 2008) where actors are constructed through officialised functions etc.

Secondly, we can note notably high frequencies of a pattern of pre-lexical modification of the remembering process by participants.

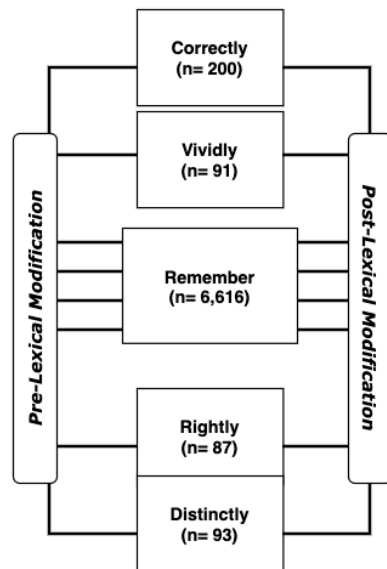


Figure 53 – Visualisation of Lexical Modifiers of ‘To Remember’

Discursively, this can be regarded as intensifying the illocutionary and perlocutionary (cf. Austin 1975, as cited in Reisigl and Wodak 2016) force of the commemorative statement, that is, the effect of the utterance as a communicative performance of commemoration (i.e what’s done) and its socio-functional produce (i.e its effect on the listener). Moreover, the modifiers of ‘to remember’ also suggest that from the perspective of RSM users, that past is also subject to (re)interpretation and exploitation by gatekeeping/ agenda-setting elites (this aspect is unpacked much further below in regard to ‘history’).

Historical re-narration often serves to construct a direct temporal lineage to previous republican interventions, texts, organisations and events. By discursively linking and re-narrating history in the present, participants (both elite and grassroots) construct a conceptual and temporal nexus which connects the historic and militaristic republican struggle with contemporary political actions of the movement and its members. Notably, the discontinuation of violence does

not form a salient topic within the data, nor is it treated as problematic. Rather, participants (predominantly) view the transition of the provisional movement from para-militancy to constitutional politics as legitimate and justified. The uniting affinity here is established by the foregrounding of a commitment to the same aims and the same visionary model of ideology. While the construction of identity is dealt with at length below, historic republican actors are unanimously constructed in a positive light and in terms of military might and bravery (often through a David vs Goliath / grassroots vs elites populist frame). But more importantly, they are routinely predicated and qualified in terms of their political and ideological aspirations or grievances. As such, their past militancy is regarded solely as *political* violence- a method of the movement or a resource employed in a political struggle. They themselves are not heroic individuals, but brave martyrs or volunteers in a wider struggle engaged by the collective. Similar strategic representation (albeit through visualisation) was noted by Goulding and McCroy (2020) in their study of (dissident) republican murals in Belfast. Both in the previously mentioned publication and the present corpus of data, the pattern of elites/ out-group actors being constructed in regard to their elevated status, and marginalised actors being constructed in terms of their ideological commitments and exploited/ oppressed/ victimised position, can be noted.

We see then that ‘to remember’ provides much in the way of information pertaining to the strategic utilisation of the collective memory by RSM users. Remembering is a strategically informed process, one that mediates which information to convey and which to elide. Actors and actions are framed in a way that positions historic republican violence as a necessary pre-requisite to the political position enjoyed by the movement presently. As such, historic actions are foregrounded in terms of their ideological commitments and beneficial outcomes to the movement (as opposed to their unethical, militaristic aspects).

From the above, we can also identify the extent to which participants rely on prior knowledge of historic texts (and their codified, counter-hegemonic interpretation by the in-group). Given that such texts are elite-produced and ideologically polemical, we can see their habitual citation by participants as akin to members of a religious community citing passages of scriptures to ascribe meaning to their political realities. As such, we can see the collective memory of RSM users can be invoked simply from mentioning a specific text which is regarded as holding a kernel of wisdom or embodying a core tenet of the ideology (and which was deemed to be of relevance etc. by participants at that time). Argumentatively, this typically manifests through a habitual employment of the topos of history (as a teacher).

gh platform but I've seen the bad bad shit that their **proclamations** of holiness have done to this country
 nselves Republicans as they have went against the **Proclamation** and what it stands for. </s></s> Jabha
 > We know about the seven signatories of the 1916 **proclamation** but this is about the other men who w
 This took my mind to the signing and reading of the **Proclamation** on the steps of the GPO, then to the
 so for our political beliefs. </s></s> Our belief in the **Proclamation** of 1916 and all that it entails is steadf
 cluded in Beirut on January 17, 2010, followed by a **proclamation** of its final appeal in Maroun al-Ras in
 revolutionary! </s></s> England's Uprising </s></s> **Proclamation** of the Irish Republic 1867 The Irish P
 t Irish republicans should aspire to according to our **proclamation** ??? </s></s> Seamy said: Irish republ
 o expel the Russians from the region. </s></s> That **proclamation** effectively constituted the defeat and
 believe god was real. </s></s> Did Pearse read the **proclamation** from the steps of the GPO? </s></s> I

it republicanism had on the 1916 Proclamation and the **Democratic Programme** of the First Dáil. </s></s> The rights of workers became
 I to pursue an Ireland that approaches that of the 1919 **Democratic Programme** etc. </s></s> I support Éire Nua and I support Socialism
 e around the lip-service paid to the social values of the **Democratic Programme** after its adoption by the first Dail in 1919. </s></s> By fr
 s intensely Nationalistic and Socialist as evident by the **Democratic Programme** and the Declaration of Independence. </s></s> Liam M
 social, economic and cultural dimensions. </s></s> The **Democratic Programme** of the First Dáil in 1919 which fulfilled this role has sinc
 /sletter ,link </s></s> Its well known Collins thiaught the **democratic programme** was to radical. </s></s> an Spailpin Fánach </s></s> W
 or the nations wealth, soil, resources etc as in the 1919 **democratic programme** : "we declare that the Nation's sovereignty extends not
 far avoided such a move saying it will press on with it's **democratic programme** . <http://conflictreport.blogspot.com/2011/07/13-soldiers->

Figure 54 – Sample Concordance Lines of Key Text Signifiers

Such texts are legitimated and are themselves authorised as legitimising devices (cf. Van Leeuwen 2008) insofar as they provide a justificatory framework for participants to (re)contextualise in new contexts and employ toward novel or long-held strategic goals. Similarly, history itself (or, more specifically republicanism's interpretation of history) can be regarded as a subjective topos (cf. Richardson 2018, Krzyżanowski 2010) – a reservoir of knowledge that is reproduced and strategically utilised by a group.

Previously the chapter noted a disparity in regard to the linguistic construction of historic elite out-group actors and republican in-group actors (and their activities etc.) The result of this habitual elevation and negative empowerment of the out-group (and correlating derogation of the in-group, or adoption of an objective linguistic position) is that it becomes easier to shift the blame for past transgressions to the out-group. As it applies to the argumentation and legitimation schemes of participants, this point warrants some focus. The high frequencies of RSM users reconstructing their collective memory for argumentative purposes is very revealing inasmuch as it statistically quantifies the degree to which users rely on the ideological model as a deliberative and discursive resource. For instance it can be utilised to justify the continuation of action on the basis of previous in-group losses – i.e. the topos of sunk costs. Similarly, historic transgressions committed against the in-group are discursively utilised and ordered in in-group communication so as to strategically self-victimise and convey a narrative of provocation (Boudana and Segev 2017)—both of which are displayed *inter alia* below.

i harm its own supporters just so its enemy gets the blame? **History tells us** that these operations, while seemingly not all that credible ' absolute disgrace this thread go and **re-read the proclamation** if you are not sure about all the children of Ireland as equals part to me it is the cornerstone of my faith and I abide by it as faithfully as I can. **The Proclamation is not vague when it comes to this issue:** "We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to

Too many Irish men & women throughout the years have had to endure the hardships of isolation in Long Kesh, Maghaberry, Armagh, As Easter approaches Republicans across this island will be commemorating the men and women **who paid the ultimate sacrifice** in the struggle for Irish Independence. Today comrades we **pay our respects, at this magnificent monument, and continue our struggle** in their honour

has come through we will be **remembering all our comrades** and indeed all those **who paid the ultimate sacrifice**, but it is also about **dedicating ourselves for the struggle that lies ahead 40 years on** and still we will be

and in turn to reinstate the sovereign **republic declared in 1916**, for which they gave up their lives. They have lit a path for us to follow, a **path to that republic, a path to freedom and peace**. Together we will march towards our nation's destiny, we owe

too many vols. and comrades **laid down their lives for us to sit back** and watch FG and Labour spout their nonsense. It is this

Figure 55 – Sample of Topoi and Argumentation Schema

Van Dijk's (1998) contention that co-ideologues foreground their own group's positives and other groups' negatives is corroborated in the corpus, yet as applied to the collective memory here, such a selective framing of information can be used to either glorify the past actions of republican militants and/or position the in-group as a victim of unwarranted, unjustified oppression and exploitation perpetrated by the out-group. This results in the macro construction of a victim–perpetrator frame (de Cillia et al. 1999) or what Al-Ghazzi (2020) terms 'historical victimhood', a construct which the author notes is also prevalent in populist ideologies/discourses. Such a discourse frame is realised through a number of discursive and linguistic resource. For example, strategically ordering participants as the objects of out-group agency helps to construct both a topos of heteronomy as well as a strategic depowering representation in the in-group collective memory:

that is only a portion of what the **Brits did** to people here
context of the troubles of Ireland you will see that the Russians are doing what the **Brits did** to the 6 counties
Look at Ireland, we have had Loyalist, **Brits Murdering** innocent people just because they where Catholic,

Figure 56 – Heteronymic Frame and De-legitimizing Construction

Similarly, a victimised position (and retaliatory militancy, constructed through the frame of heroism) is legitimised through abstraction to moralised discourses which temporally position the in-group as provoked and paint their actions as retaliatory and righteous:

I was nearby the night the **brits murdered** him, **criminals** the lot of them
Because British soldiers undoubtedly join for the same reasons, it **doesn't justify their** actions in my eyes, but does it in yours?
group historically but not that long ago, **had to defend** its name from attack from criminal British counter agents and drug dealers

Figure 57 – Provocation Narrative and Victimhood Frames

In the above, we see that the in-group is constructed as undergoing the negative, oppressive process perpetrated by the out-group. Moreover, the normative devaluation of the out-group's action is realised through nomination strategies which paint such activities in a negative, immoral light (for instance, the lexical choice 'murder' is quite explicitly evaluative). This ultimately has the effect of delegitimizing out-group actions (and in-group responses) through abstraction to moralised discourses (van Leeuwen 2008). Key to this strategy of utilising the collective memory to legitimate the present is the temporal ordering of in-group assertion: The collective (re)ordering of '*who did what and to whom?*' in the discourse is strategically significant in the sense that it ultimately attributes/ shifts blame. The discursive product of this is what Boudana and Segev (2017) term a provocation narrative. A communicative construct where the macro-ordering of

information habitually places an out-group transgression as the inception of conflict in the past (similar patterning was found in regard to dissident republican discourse by Goulding (2022, forthcoming)) The result is that the responding in-group action is, *de facto*, legitimated as warranted retaliation. Participants habitually adopt this narrativization strategy in the data, thus demonstrating its salience and resonance within the RSM user community. Effectively and routinely shifting the blame to the out-group goes beyond legitimating/ justifying specific historic events. Rather, writ large, the reproduction of a provocation narrative by participants can be seen to legitimate the *raison d'être* of the movement in the first place. In lieu of the above, it is evident that the collective memory of participants is heavily employed as a legitimacy device for the movement's counter-hegemonic critique and perspective. That is to say, the collective memory evident within the data (and by extension wider republican discourse), can be seen to offer a counter-hegemonic critique of the hegemonic historical narrative (which broadly corresponds to the foundational tales of established centres of political power/ state structures). As a final analytical measure, this point is explored in regard to an analysis of 'history' (n = 7, 467) below, before a general discussion of *all* temporal spans is provided.

History (n = 7, 467):

A consideration of the semantic prosodic treatment of 'history' (n = 7,467) as well as its collocates reveal how it is constructed from a counter-hegemonic perspective in the corpus.

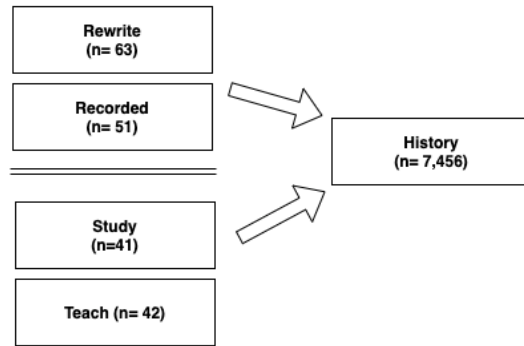


Figure 58 – Visualisation of Pre-Lexical Modification of ‘History’

In one sense, we can identify history is positioned as being under threat, specifically, as having its veracity challenged, or more explicitly, re-written (n=63) by elites for their own purposes. As such, this gives rise to an avid collective interest in history (as denoted by the activities of teach and study). In this sense, history (or more specifically, the republican collective memory) is held by participants as something that ought to be studied, recorded and passed onto future generations so as to prevail over time. More affectively, this commitment to preservation takes the form of a defensive call or construction of an external threat. In this formation, ‘true’/republican history is marginalised but righteous, silenced but true and provides a justificatory basis for core ideological assertions and contemporary actions of the movement across varying ideological temporal spans. The past, then, is collectively reproduced by participants in open polemic and contest with the dominant historical narratives perpetuated by established national elites. The collective memory of participants is produced from the perspective of a provoked, victimised and moralised position of the in-group and is (re)applied in contemporary contexts by participants who wish to construct a direct lineage to previous republican actors and/or utilise it (and its lessons) to legitimate present actions/ perspectives. The corollary of this is that the hegemonic order (and its collective memory) is challenged, critiqued and

delegitimised in the corpus, too. Finally, the collective memory of participants functions as a launching board for critical assertions levelled by participants in the data. That is, the past acts as the collective, empirical reservoir of knowledge (Richardson 2017), which participants (often quiescently) draw from to inform their perceptions of the problematic *status quo* (representational model), proposed program of action to ameliorate matters (programmatic model) and their ultimate strategic aim of unity (visionary model). Accordingly, the current juncture presents itself as a suitable point of departure for a broader re-visitation of the concept of time in the data and, more critically, how the surveyed model components interact within the data to form a cohesive ideological narrative.

Ideology Discussion:

By calibrating insights drawn from previous analyses, a more holistic appreciation of how respective temporal imageries are inter-utilised by participants in the data can be ascertained. The emergent description of the ideological temporal spans of RSM users is one that is characterised by high levels of contestation: that is, one where the hegemonic order and its superstructure are critiqued and derided. This criticality is realised through the interaction of various, collectively constructed imageries of thought, or as they have been termed here, ideological models. To facilitate and ensure that this critique prevails over time, each of these models necessarily interacts and conditions the others. The way, in terms of the ideological strategies of RSM users, this manifests in the corpus forms the concluding segment of this RQ's analysis directly below.

Beginning with the present day, or what in terms of representation can be regarded as the *status quo*: participants on the site were shown to routinely construct the present as problematic for varying (often implicit) reasons. Broadly, however, the *status quo* was derogated due to its asymmetric distribution of power

and the socio-political ramifications this brought forth. Problematisation, it was shown, was realised through the use of several discursive strategies which strived to delegitimize the *status quo* (in particular established centres of political power and their machinations). Yet, such a construction was also shown in this section to derive, at least in part, from a problematic understanding of the past. That is to say, as a counter-public, the criticality of republicanism's representational model relies on claims and assertions of previously committed oppression and transgressions. In this light, the representational model of the present becomes the product of past hegemonic exploitation and oppression. In terms of teleological causality, the present is discursively constructed as the extension of all that is negative and wrong (from the RSM user's perspective) with history. Yet it was also noted that such a counter-hegemonic critique of the present was also shown to 'exist' in the data as a futuristic temporal extension of the *status quo*, too. As a form of undesired outcome, or cautionary tale (van Leeuwen 2008) or topos of history as a teacher which has the effect of delegitimizing the prevalence of established hegemonic powers.

In the present section, it was shown that the broad republican perspective of the past can best be regarded through an assessment of the fluid, discursively constructed model of the participants' collective memory. While fluid—insofar as it is negotiated, reproduced and added to over time—this model was shown to be somewhat formulaic inasmuch as it conveyed a prototypical republican critique of history and power structures: one which characterised the past as a place of historic violence and transgressions against the in-group, which legitimated the republican movement's collective (and militant) response. Such militancy and counter-hegemonic agitation is not elided or backgrounded, nor is it regarded as problematic to the movement's contemporary constitutional modality. Rather, the reconstruction of the movement's collective memory sees such actions as necessary to the movement's progression and as the provoked

justified, legitimate responses of a marginalised and oppressed grouping. This has the effect of moralising and legitimating the participant's worldview and their movement's *raison d'être* but also— significant to the focus of this section— various other ideological models, too. As such, a case has to be made for an account of the collective memory as forming part of the ideological narrative of republicanism. This is not something typically adhered to by scholars and practitioners of CDA who have studied nationalism (for example de Cillia et al. 1999, where it is typically regarded as being adjunct to the ideological narrative), but given that participants construct succeeding temporal spans with such connectedness and cohesivity in order to convey a critique, this is significant.

This indebtedness can be noted, for instance, in the extent to which the programmatic model of users relies on varying formulations of the topos of history (as a teacher) and the (de)legitimating effects this schema elicits. How users conceptualise and rationalise how to attain a united Ireland relies on critiques of power formulated in the past and discursively enshrined in the group's collective memory—in places as references to codified key texts (proclamation) or events (Easter Rising) and, elsewhere, as explicit argumentation schemata that invoke past activities the in-group was subjected to/ can intellectually drawn from in the present. As such, when reasoning how to best move toward their desired vision of Irish unity, participants draw from the past and its relevance to the present to inform their decisions. Moreover, these actions can be abstracted to moralised discourses through a strategic use of the past to victimise the movement (so as to paint its actions as retaliatory or provoked) or as painting these actions as righting a historical wrong perpetrated against the in-group. Yet this program of action will also be conditioned by its desired outcome, by the direction it needs to take the movement in. As such, the programmatic model must also be seen to be habituated by the visionary model of the movement, or its aspirations for the future. Actions *must* tally (or at least appear

to tally) with the strategic aim of activists in order to be reproduced discursively at the grassroots level. In this light, the collective memory legitimates a change in tactics (i.e the adoption of non-physical force nationalism) whereas the visionary model is constructed as a politically attainable goal –something which is an ostensible change from historic republican discourse, but is reproduced without (much) contention in the data.

The above points indicate that, as imageries of thought or models within an ideological narrative, these constructs' functions are mutually reliant or symbiotic. More specifically, the counter-hegemonic criticality of republicanism relies on its critique of elite power being reproduced across timespans. The historic wrongs of the past legitimate the in-group's take on the present and outlook to the future, as well as their plans for progress. The linguistic resources and discursive strategies required in realising this atemporal critique vary on the basis of context, but the salient patterning within each has been unveiled above. Yet appreciating the extent to which their interaction is key to the republican critique of power and its ideological cogency can be difficult from a reflection on siloed analytical sections. As such, a final measure offered below is an illustration of these discursive constructs as a functional model.

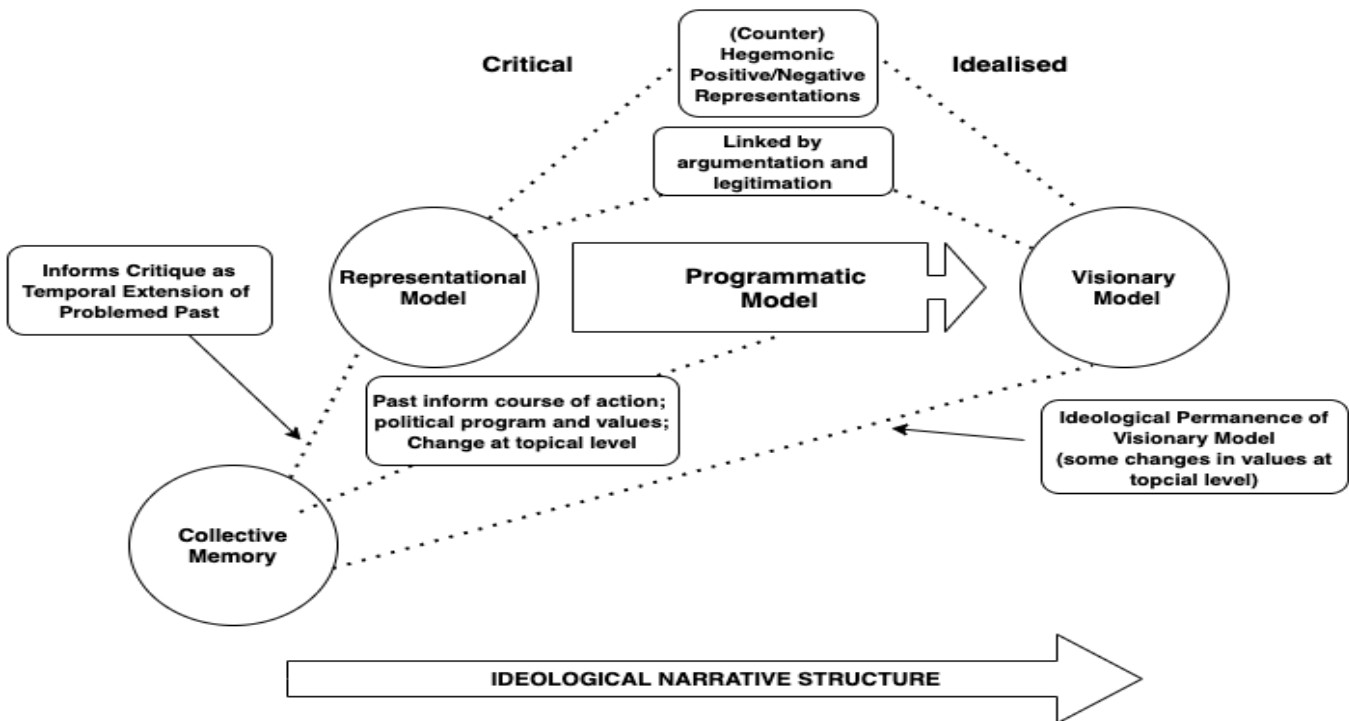


Figure 59 - Functional Model of Republicanism's Ideological Narrative Structure and Inter-Workings of Temporal Models

As we can note, each respective segment of the model (and the discursive resources it employs) relies on those which surround (and how it legitimates them.) These insights will be revisited in detail in the conclusion chapter of this dissertation.

Identity: RQs 5 – 6:

In the following sections, analytical measures taken toward the respective research questions pertaining to the identity component of this chapter are overviewed. The foci selected therein were chosen after an operationalisation of the proposed research questions—a selection of these are overviewed in the figure below.

Operationalisation of RQS:

Figure 60 – Operationalisation of Identity Research Questions

Research Question	Potential Discourse and Linguistic Foci
<p>RQ5: Linguistically construct and qualify their in-group (as differentiated in terms of status etc.)?</p> <p><u>Macro:</u> Construction strategies/ perpetuation strategies/ implicit justification strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Personal Pronouns (inclusive) ii) Collective referentials iii) Lateral referentials iv) Elite referentials and v) Intra-republican differentiation vi) Codes and objects <p>-Nomination/Predication strategies</p> <p>-Argumentation schema</p> <p>- (Dis)assimilation identity strategies</p> <p>- noun phrases denoting in-group actors (and their objects etc.)</p> <p>-personal pronouns (we, our, us)</p> <p>-adjectives modifying the above</p>
<p>RQ6: What can a consideration of RSM users' out-groups tell us about contemporary process of republican identification in new media ecologies?</p>	<p>-Nomination and predication strategies</p> <p>-Perspectivisation strategies</p> <p>-Impersonal pronouns</p>

<p><u>Macro</u>: Constructive, Destructive, Transformative, (de)legitimation</p>	<p>-Spatialised constructions</p> <p>-Modifying adjectives</p> <p>-Out-group referentials</p>
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The following section’s focus on identification has some ramifications in terms of the methodological approach adopted. More specifically, what follows will be less abductive and more strategic than the previous analysis, insofar as we are solely concerned with discursive identification practices here (as opposed to the construction of inter-linking ideological models). As such our focus here congregates around the antipodal groupings of the in-group and out-group (van Dijk 1998). Accordingly, analytical focus will be strategically limited to lexical items employed in their construction/ positioning/ differentiation with the data.

RQ6: Linguistically construct and qualify their in-group (as differentiated in terms of status etc.)?

To provide a holistic account of the discursive construction of the republican in-group identity in the corpus, some thought must first be given to the previously determined conceptualisations of RSM users and the republican movement. As noted in chapter three, we can conceive of these grassroots media users and political activists as members of a counter-public who, as discourse participants, (re)construct republican identity and ideology. Yet our understanding of these actors positions them as the grassroots/non-elite of a broader collective which encompasses everyone from (historic) instantiations of republicanism through to contemporary grassroots activists (both analogue and digital) and elite actors, like elected representatives or political parties. As such, our analysis of the in-group must differentiate in terms of status, centrality and quantity so as to produce a

structurally demarcated consideration of its respective components. As constructed in the corpus, the in-group can be denoted through (im)personal (often vaguely defined) personal pronouns, and/or referentials which signify the collective (often in nuanced ways). Furthermore, it can be signified through the construction of elite actors as well as in discursive domains where RSM users seek to construct affinity as a grassroots community, that is, in more laterally oriented communicative contexts and grassroots group functions. The boundaries of this group are vaguely delineated and openly contested and negotiated by participants, as such a further reflection here on in-group construction entails a consideration of how participants dissimilate the ‘other within’, that is, in-group actors who they perceive to have deviated from the norms, habitus, worldview of the in-group (as negotiated by its participants). Finally, some consideration is given here to codified aspects of in-group discourse, as well as in-group objects: jointly addressed through an analysis of ‘language’. Each of these are dealt with in turn below through an analysis of linguistic foci realised in the construction of assimilation, sameness, unity, cohesion and/or disunity, dissimilation, etc.

i) Personal Pronouns:

As noted by de Cillia et al. (1999) the use of first person (collective) personal pronouns—such as ‘we’—can be seen to fulfil a complex array of identification function. Often (usually in elite contexts) they serve to exert a form of linguistic imperialism (Volmert 1989) whereby membership of the addressed is usurped and presupposed. This is achievable as the specificity of the actor the term is being used to denote is not always readily identifiable in discursive events. To illustrate, the below diagram details the manifold variation of the personal pronoun ‘we’ and its potential addressees.

a)	I + you	partially/totally addressee-inclusive
b)	I + he/ I + she	addressee-exclusive
c)	I + you (plural) (= I + n x you)	partially/totally addressee-inclusive
d)	I + they (= I + n x s/he)	addressee-exclusive
e)	I + you + he/ I + you + she	partially/totally addressee-inclusive + ?
f)	I + you (plural) + he I + you + she	partially/totally addressee-inclusive + ?
g)	I + you (plural) + they (= I + n x you + n x s/he)	partially/totally addressee-inclusive + ?

Figure 61 – Personal Pronouns (taken from de Cillia et al. 1999: 46)

From our critical perspective, here, this is notable as it provides actors with a frequently used lexical means of negotiating group boundaries and concealing efforts of in-group construction. As such, as an initial point of departure for the analysis of discursive identification will be an examination of personal pronouns in the data, namely ‘we’ and ‘our’.

‘We’ (n= 65, 032):

The high frequencies of ‘we’ (n = 65, 032) ought not to be regarded *de facto* as suggesting high levels of strategic uses by participants aiming to linguistically encompass other actors into their grouping. Rather, in analysing its salient uses, the goal is to decipher *who* its occurrences typically denote (through concordance analysis) but, also, the attributes and processes typically undertaken by the ‘we-group.’ (van Dijk 1998)

n one bit as long as we don't leave ones behind who got us where	we	are now at-(that's me off my soapbox-)- Whose bed were you hiding
j celibacy </s></s> 2018-01-27 </s></s> It's the end of the world as	we	know it </s></s> On 1/27/2018 at 12:28 AM, Moriarty83 said: You sure
been 60 to 70 people present when the attack occurred. </s></s> "	We	're appealing for anyone who was in the area at the time, or anyone v
mach and one his leg near blew off for growing a few plants while	we	have known drug dealers openly cursing around in their flashy cars, c
s that allow this sort of carry on. </s></s> So if this is your agenda,	we	suggest that you find another forum that suits your needs. </s></s> Tf
e !!!! </s></s> Fantastic poster Sceal, We all need to do everything	we	can now to help to try and secure Brendans release back to his fami
it and there only interest is to try and protect their rights. </s></s> "	We	're interested in educating people about their rights and defending the
/s></s> Seabird, I know your points, but how can you tell? </s></s> "	We	should trust this. </s></s> After all, do we really believe it can't be true
. JC II would love us to be as gullable as the british public however	we	know what "OUR" soldiers were capable of when they executed thos
think it important to discuss international issues, hence the reason	we	have an International section for debate. </s></s> You didnt answer w

Figure 62 – Sample Concordance Lines of ‘We’

The above reveals a dynamic and diverse range of uses of ‘we’ in the data. In places we can interpret it to denote the republican movement as a cohesive, personalised collective which shares harmonised opinions, perspectives and reactions. Yet, examination of its broader co-textual environments also reveals instances where ‘we’ is used to denote a non-politically defined, non-elite grouping (typically juxtaposed against elite actors): As such, we can identify a gradated inclusivity in terms of its uses. Simultaneously, participants may use it to denote in a generalised, non-specific way which presupposes membership on behalf of a larger populist group, whereas elsewhere it can be invoked to denote a cohesive community with discernible beliefs, dispositions, etc. The differentiating variable in determining which form is realised tends to be the strategic intentions of participants. Where participants employ construction strategies – designed to construct and reproduce a group identity—the specific (cf. van Leeuwen 2008) construction form is typically realised. Where the pronoun is invoked in discursive events in which the primary strategic goal is to legitimate, rationalise or justify, the more populist and imperialistically pre-suppositive form is habitually invoked (often as an implicit form of *argumentum ad populum*).

As such, in spite of witnessing a similar dynamism of terms of its designation to other nationalist discourses, the uses of ‘we’ in the corpus prove striking in terms of *how* they realise this dynamism. Whereas nationalists typically use such vague forms of ‘we’ to strategically broaden its inclusivity (which is evident in the corpus), we can also note an argumentation function, too. De Cillia et al. (1999: 46) note the potential use of what they term ‘paternalistic’ we, used where a (national) elite realises the personal pronoun ‘we’ but conveys a meaning more akin to ‘you’ (they provide the example of a parent addressing a child through ‘we are going to bed’ as an illustrative example). Nationalist discourses see such uses where members (usually elites) construct an action with a sense of deontic obligation or authorisation (van Leeuwen 2008). Yet, as they appear in the data, the occurrences of ‘we’ do not seem to corroborate this type of use in terms of its underlying power dynamic. Rather, they seem to instil a sense of normativity which is critical of such coercive, linguistic manipulation along populist lines. To unpack this further, we must consider how the term ‘we’ (and its broader lexical environment) is semantically coloured and imbued with a deontic modality by its co-textual lexical items.

Verb	Modality
Can (n= 3,261)	Deontic (Commissive)
Will (n= 4,458)	Deontic (Obligation)
Have (n= 8,740)	Materialistic
Know (n= 1,472)	Epistemic

Figure 63 – Modal Verb and Frequencies

Most salient collocates all denote to highly modal or ideologically revealing verb processes. Such statistically prevalent patterns point toward their uses in day-to-day discourse. An investigation of the lexical items further reveals high

correlations to deontic (both commissive and volitive) materialistic and epistemic uses. Where the ‘we-group’ is constructed as (being able to) possessing, knowing etc. in unison. Similarly, the use of commissive (can) and volitive (will) deontic modals constructs the in-group as holding the same (psycho-emotive) dispositions as linguistically realised by the participants. Such construction has the effect of representing the in-group as a cogent, cohesive and united group which holds the same perspectives, opinions etc. (often constructed in the data in order to differentiate it from the hegemonic norm). This constructive assimilation strategy can also be seen to be realised through the high saliences of post-lexical qualification of ‘we’ through the term ‘all’ forming the n-gram ‘we all’ (n= 1,679).

you agree with sectarian attacks.	We all	know that the Short Strand has been attacked
Commemoration. Firstly I think	We all	must commend the Derry youth for their defence
his fate this way, we may all point fingers and	We all	have responsibility but at the end of the day

Figure 63 – Sample Concordance Lines of ‘We All’

These examples encapsulate the function of we as a strategically inclusive group identifier but also a lexical trigger for a populist argumentation scheme whereby the beliefs, desires, views of the many/ numbered ‘we’ group are conceptually pitted against the hegemonic order and its (im)material systems as a united and cohesive group that is presupposed as sharing a socio-political affinity. The takeaways here are that the in-group in the corpus is constructed and qualified through pro-nominal nomination strategies which are i) strategically oriented toward positive and inclusive in-group construction and, ii) linguistically facilitative of populist argumentation and legitimation schemes that are routinely reproduced by participants. While ‘we’ provides a good locus for analysis of subjective self-positioning in the data, the in-group’s objective self-construction

and predication can be analysed through a consideration of ‘our’ (to consider how the in-group constructs itself in regard to its perceived possessions).

‘Our’ (n= 25,127):

Similar to the analytical measures applied previously, ‘our’ (n = 25,127) was considered from two analytical approaches. The first of these entailed an analysis of the concordance lines of ‘our’ to render its co-textual environment more discernible in order to decipher the grouping it typically denotes. What was noted during this reflection was the high frequencies of ‘our’ being used, like ‘we’, in dynamic and diverse ways. In places, ‘our’ can be co-textually revealed to signify the republican movement:

moving on one bit as long as we don't leave ones behind who got us where	we	are now at-(that's me off my soapbox)- Whose bed were you hiding under'
promoting celibacy </s></s> 2018-01-27 </s></s> It's the end of the world as	we	know it </s></s> On 1/27/2018 at 12:28 AM, Moriarty83 said: You sure they ;
ld have been 60 to 70 people present when the attack occurred. </s></s> "	We	're appealing for anyone who was in the area at the time, or anyone with a c
in the stomach and one his leg near blew off for growing a few plants while	we	have known drug dealers openly cursing around in their flashy cars, drinking
websites that allow this sort of carry on. </s></s> So if this is your agenda,	we	suggest that you find another forum that suits your needs. </s></s> The Moc
the brave !!!! </s></s> Fantastic poster Sceal, We all need to do everything	we	can now to help to try and secure Brendans release back to his family </s>
! be violent and there only interest is to try and protect their rights. </s></s> "	We	're interested in educating people about their rights and defending their com
! lo this? </s></s> Seabird, I know your points, but how can you tell? </s></s>	We	should trust this. </s></s> After all, do we really believe it can't be true? </s>
! </s></s> JC II would love us to be as gullable as the british public however	we	know what "OUR" soldiers were capable of when they executed those two €
! ublicans think it important to discuss international issues, hence the reason	we	have an International section for debate. </s></s> You didnt answer what I a

Figure 63- Sample Concordance Lines of ‘We’

Like ‘we’, ‘our’, too, can be seen to perpetrate a form of linguistic imperialism, where objects are presupposed in language as being possessed/ desired by the in-group. As such, these uses are politically strategic insofar as they position objects as being on the in-group’s agenda, part of its deliberations etc. Naming and labelling something as ‘ours’ in the corpus, therefore, has a legitimising effect. As such, similar to the way in which problematising terms were shown to exert a structuring influence in regard to the republican habitus (by categorising what

is/n't problematic), 'ours' can be considered to fulfil a similar function by being employed in the categorisation of what is/n't ours (from the perspective of a counter-hegemonic movement).

recently we remain unbroken and determined to continue espousing	<u>our</u>	republican socialist political agenda. We send our solidarity to all
Just point him in the direction of middle earth and he'll be gone from	<u>our</u>	shores, forever. Lads, we'll tell him there's a 6
part of the Brits strategy in trying to break Republicanism up, flooding	<u>our</u>	communities with Heroin in the hope that young people have no interest in

Figure 64 Sample Concordance Lines of 'Our'

The second angle that 'our' was broached from related to its semantic and functional properties: that is, the concepts, entities, actors and objects it typically denotes. This can be assessed through an analysis of the terms' most salient collocates (which in this instance are taken solely from the lexical field to the right of the term), which are listed below:

Own (n= 840)
Country (n= 769)
Comrades (314)
People (n=1,3360)
Struggle (n=263)
Children (n= 269)
Lives (n= 232)

Figure 65 Collocates of 'Our'

The above collocates produce an indicative outline of the calculated qualification of in-group objects, which can be characterised in terms of their righteousness, laterality and perceived vulnerability from the in-group's perspective. We can see a form of paternalistic perpetuation strategy manifesting through such nomination strategies: whereby in-group objects are labelled and qualified in terms of their vulnerable/ paternalistically evocative attributes. For instance, the

lexical choices of 'children' and 'lives' (as well as other family-related terminology) construct the in-group (and its possessions) in terms of affectively-charged familial discourse (and the righteous defence of such a value laden institution). Van Leeuwen (2008) notes that such affective abstraction to familial and parental frames exerts a notable legitimising effect on discursive postulates, de Cillia et al. (1999) similarly note such discourse frames elicit cohesivising effects on in-group boundary construction. And, finally in this light, Özkirimli (2017) overviews several authors across various paradigms of nationalism studies who note a habitual couching of nationalist discourse in familial phraseology, invariably linked to its instrumental Brass (1994) or affective Geertz (1993) capacity.

From the above collocational overview, we can also note an explicit moralisation in the nomination of the 'our'-group objects: for instance, the metaphoric representation of republicanism's history as a cogent 'struggle' often serves to abstract participant's arguments and points to moralised discourses of rights and civic/ political agitation. Finally, from the above we can note in-group as being imbued with a populist or lateral power dynamic. This is achieved through the frequent lexical choices of 'people' and 'comrade'. The frequent co-occurrence of 'our' within the abovementioned lexical contexts renders it key to discursive processes of participant identification. Indeed, this keyness of 'our' as an identification resource which categorises can easily be identified in elite republican discourse, too: the Irish name 'Sinn Féin', for example, broadly translates to we/us ourselves/alone. Similarly, Filardo-Llamas (2013) noted such categorising uses in (commemoratively purposed) epigraphs and quotes that were recontextualised by contemporary republicans. Yet where the above analysis derives its insightfulness from is its ability to utilise a statistical dissection of the reproduction of such discourse strategies at a grassroots level, yielding insights into processes of in-group discursive identification, but also the RSM user community's self-perception and construction in the corpus.

In this light, we can note that –beyond being modally imbued with moralised and righteous evaluations (realised through nomination strategies)—the in-group are pro-nominally legitimated through salient nomination and predication strategies which construct it along a lateral power dynamic and in terms of its depowered actors and their actions: ‘lives’ ‘people’ ‘children’ ‘struggle’. As such, the pro-nominal construction of the in-group must be conceived of as inherently strategic. It is realised by participants through the reproduction of populist frames of reference and schemes of argumentation (Wodak 2017) whilst, in terms of representation and mediation, it foregrounds its own victimised, depowered and sympathy-eliciting attributes (de Cillia et al. 1999, van Dijk 1998).

ii) Collective Construction Strategies:

The choice to consider pro-nouns (as opposed to simple nouns) first was made on the basis of salience. That is to say, pro-nominal referential construction (wherein a generic term stands in for the denotative noun) was shown to be far more commonplace in the corpus than explicit construction (where a noun phrase is used). Such a disparity begins to make sense when we consider the data within its original communicative context of a republican internet forum.

Members of this site, by default, already self-identify as republicans.

Communicatively, this fact sees them forgo frequent explicit self-construction in favour of its pro-nominal counterpart. This seems to tally with other studies of internal/ community-based fora (Androutsopoulos 2007). Simply put, members of the RSM user community do not use lexical items to refer to themselves as they do not see a need to consistently qualify oneself as a republican (this is an implicit assumption).

‘Republican’ (n= 11, 691):

That said, an overview of ‘republican’ (n= 11, 691) and its collocates does provide a good point of departure for the present point of focus.

Irish (n= 3,723)
Dissident (n= 541)
Genuine (n=142)
Fellow (n= 109)
Socialist (n= 1021)
Staunch (n= 77)
Independent (n= 127)

Figure 66 – Collocates of ‘Republican’

As we can see, the above collocates reveal the qualifications and gradations that are implicit in the linguistic construction of the in-group. So, in spite of not featuring prevalently in the data as a lexical resource employed in explicit self-construction, we can begin to discern an understanding of how ‘republican’ acts as a label that can modify its signified actor/object, and, additionally, be modified by lexical items preceding it. Some of the above will be returned to in later discussions of lateral identification practices. Yet, for our purposes here, the above paints an illustrative picture of the attributional aspects of identification with the collective—i.e the qualities that are habitually linguistically embedded in the construction of the in-group. In particular, the above implies a graded categorisation of (idealised) republican actors (which is dynamic and value-laden). Differentiations in this light can be noted in terms of perceived legitimacy (‘genuine’, ‘staunch’), ideological/ organisational-affiliation (‘independent’, ‘socialist’) and operational modalities (‘dissident’).

Further to the above, and we can note high levels of collocates that colour the meaning of republican as being positively connotative and as embodying a lateral

power distribution. This can be noted through the high frequencies of collocates of republican like:

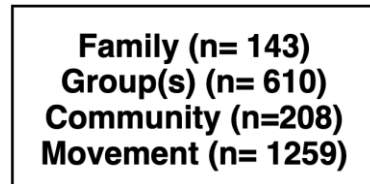


Figure 67 – Lateral Collocates of Republican

All of the above elucidate how ‘republican’ acts as an identity anchor (which imbues the collective with a political and philosophical evaluation) that semantically colours the laterally quantified group. Moreover, these salient terms often convey a positive sense of group identity as being emotive and affectively resonant (family, community) (similar to the above-surveyed examples related to ‘our’). Similarly, such collocative constructions can implicitly transmit a sense of positive transitivity—i.e through the frequently realised term ‘republican movement’— which constructs the collective as being cohesive and cogent unit that acts in unison toward the same strategic goal.

Strategically the above reveals macro strategies of assimilation and coherence at play in the linguistic construction of the collective. Nomination strategies that foreground the lateral structure of the movement (thus, foregrounding its democratic, civic commitments) are habitually used by participants to construct the movement as an affectively bound collective united by its ‘republican’ vision (which it strives to realise through collective action). As such, in-group unity is linguistically constructed as part of the discursive identification process. Salient and codified terms were shown to have within them linguistic stimuli that represent the movement in terms of its positive aspects, in a way that is routinely realised by grassroots users.

iii)Lateral:

The above frequency analysis of ‘republican’ and its collocates revealed several insightful points from the perspective of lateral-group construction. That is, discursive events wherein participants’ language functions to construct and maintain a sense of community among RSM users in the corpus. For instance, ‘fellow’ was shown to be a salient collocate of ‘republican’ to form the key n-gram ‘fellow republican’ (n= 91). This usage is explicit (insofar as it labels an actor as republican) and lateral (insofar as it denotes someone who is positioned on the same plane as the speaker/ or as part of the same group). Moreover, the discursive construction of the in-group analysed in the previous section was shown to centre around laterally dynamized social structures: for instance, republicanism was constructed as a ‘family’ or, elsewhere, as a ‘community’, for example. Finally, in this regard, it was posited that the nature of the communicative context in which the data was instantiated could account for the comparably low levels of explicit self-construction among members of an in-group, who are more likely reproduce their membership through lateral exchanges as opposed to explicit identity construction. As such, a consideration of the lexical construction of affinity, lateral solidarity and group identity between grassroots members is warranted. Toward this end, the lexical items ‘comrade’ as well as ‘friend’/ ‘chara’ are overviewed below.

Comrade (n= 6,989):

As an initially fraternal signifier of affinity or co-membership of an organisation, comrade gained currency in (and an association with) leftist social and political movements around the globe. As the republican movement increasingly incorporated ideals informed by internationalist and leftist critiques of society

into its ideology, comrade enjoyed an increase in currency within the republican lexicon. We can theorise such an ameliorative shift in meaning as a form of semantic augmentation (here coined to signify an inverse of the concept of semantic derogation (cf. Schulz 1975)), whereby the term has undergone a (broadly positive) aggrandisement of its semantic weighting. As such, the salient frequencies of ‘comrade’ in the corpus merits some attention both as an ideologically revealing lexical choice which fulfils a dualistic identification and positioning function: it serves to i) position the individual it denotes as a member of the in-group community, but moreover, it serves to ii) position the community as part of a broader, globalised struggle and as sharing some affinity to a grand narrative. In this sense, the utilisation of ‘comrade’ can be regarded as part of the republican script (de Cillia et al. 1999) as it is a lexical resource which— in terms of identification— constructs and situates individual utterances within a political movement and its broader socio-political context.

Dear (n= 81) Fellow (n= 36) Fallen (n= 352) Former (n= 180)
--

Figure 68 - Collocates of ‘Comrade’

As a signifier, ‘comrade’ is not overtly nationalist, but relates to a political evaluation typified by an aversion to elite power, privatisation and power asymmetries. This shows that the lateral interaction script is heavily characterised by a civic nationalist frame, even in contexts where one might typically expect to find such affective frames being invoked – i.e. commemorative contexts. In fact, the high collocative frequencies of ‘former’ and ‘fallen’ suggest high co-occurrences and uses of these terms being used in the commemoration and construction of previous republican militants. As such, comrade—beyond signifying membership of a group, commitment to a cause – also signifies and

constructs a direct link to previous historic republicans, something that has been lined to republican strategy elsewhere in the literature (Hoey 2013, Brown 2016). This has a legitimising effect (realised through rationalisation by reference to history, (van Leeuwen 2008)), but also an authorising effect as ‘comrade’ is an official title.

Chara (n= 7,740):

A less authoritative construction of affinity, cohesion and solidarity can be found through an analysis of the Irish word ‘chara’ (n= 7,740) (and also its English counterpart ‘friend’). ‘Comrade’ forms part of the script of RSM users in the sense that it is a typical signifier habitually used in instances of identification where participants seek to construct their relationship as a political one (i.e where their political bond is the over-riding characteristic). ‘Chara’ differs to this insofar as its occurrences can be seen to function toward the construction of affinity along a less political, and more cultural or social level.

Ahoghill? Carrick Hill MFB Saoirse Banner What year mo	chara	? they where marching at easter mate at the Loup. You ar
come near the spectators during their routines. I was at that myself	chara	its diffrent that was an air show this is air races. There could be 5-4
on't know how to describe my feelings to you... Deepest sympathy	chara	. I'm from a British forces family. I haven't experienced wh
I in all of Ireland and beyond. There's creggans all over Ireland mo	chara	it comes from the Irish 'Creagán' which means 'Rocky place'. Ther
using it to peddle the views of neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers. A	chara	, we are wasting time talking about the people who made the video, when v
lle. weasel features,lol.....im stealing that one for you know who	chara	,i thought weasel was good enough,but this describes others better
ould very well have been 'some oul doll' that wrote it , don't know for sure, A	Chara	. Quote Instead of just approaching the 32Csm and askin
the same way roe3 got out the previous day,i know it sounds complacated	chara	but that the best way i can word it,hope it helps go raibh maith aga
YouTube. He's a few videos about Mao that you'd like. A	chara	, I'm in bed now hammered from last night so I'll have to get back to you ab
listen to there preferred music over there and get arrested for listening to it	chara	? Breaking News: Russia: Dozens killed in Moscow subway blasts

Figure 69 – Sample Concordance Lines of ‘Chara’

This can be further elucidated through a comparison of the collocational environments of both ‘chara’ and ‘comrade’. Whereas ‘comrade’ is typically

utilised in overtly political co-texts and context—signified through collocates such as ‘power’ (n=43), ‘leader’ (n= 48) and ‘known’ (n= 28), we can note a less institutionalised register in the collocates of ‘chara’— ‘sorry’ ‘agat’(as in ‘*Go Raibh Maith Agat*’), ‘thanks’ ‘(no) worry’ and ‘cheers.’ As such, we can note that RSM users construct lateral and affective bonds through a number of routine lexical patterns. Where the goal is to construct affinity and assimilate on the basis of ideological and political affinity, the term comrade functions to position participants in broader discourses and ideological narratives. Yet, where the constructive strategic goal is less political (with a capital P) and more related to the negotiation of inter-group dynamics and membership (interpersonal politics), we can note the insightfulness of ‘chara’ as an analytical in-road. Regarded in this light, we can note a salient assimilative and cohesivative strategies of participants through the codified use of culturally salient (not to be taken to suggest that the Irish language is culturally systemic, but rather revered as a value) signifiers of in-group membership and solidarity. How participants construct actors at the other end of the power hierarchy is dealt with next.

iv) vertical/ elite

A further endeavour necessary to holistically appraising the process of identification as it manifests in the data is an analysis of elite-designated construction. That is, instances where grassroots participants linguistically construct elite republican actors (with a conceptual link or sense of unity). Such an analysis can provide insight into the emotive and affective dispositions which underpin the grassroots perception of their movement’s elites as well as their reproduction of (counter) hegemonic loyalty to the over-arching structure. The two salient lexical items of ‘IRA’ and ‘Sinn Féin’ were isolated for analysis below.

‘IRA’ (n= 10, 963):

Republicanism's history of in-fighting (Kee 2000) has seen many organisations move toward elevated status within the broader republican counter-public. Central to republican interventions in the 20th century, however, were paramilitary outfit the IRA- a term that has been claimed by many incarnations of republican para-militancy (and is still claimed by some to this day). As such, much lexical pre-modification can be noted, which serves to identify *which* specific variation is being denoted:

rism. It is understood they were acting on intelligence that the **Continuity IRA's** top officials were meeting at the property to plot a major terrorist attack
 ile from a brit minister .upthera: John O'Dowd on the **Continuity IRA** (2008) As soon as anyone who calls themselves a Republican
 eal SF/Conto SF/ RSF - the self proclaimed political wing of one of the **Continuity IRAs** no fake news there, just embarrassing news Republic
 rs parted ways with Daltons faction of RSF in the 2010 split, as did the **Continuity IRA** prisoners on E1 landing of Portlaoise at the time. You have to
 /s> If the British security forces, mi5, psni, recognise these men as **continuity IRA** then that can be taken that they are in fact.. Continuity IRA. /:
 in the bogs and the nastiness came over him he wrote up the **continuity IRA** all over the bogs as well then ran away spittin at the portraits of the qt
 vs stories. Really irritating Men arrested in Newry not **Continuity IRA** On 3/9/2015 at 9:58 PM, Robert Emmet said: This is |
 >> On 11/25/2012 at 4:56 PM, mick1 said: Statement from **Continuity IRA** POWs, Roe 3, Maghaberry jail, Co Antrim On 11/25/2012 at 4:
 licence was connected to allegations of "operational activity within the **Continuity IRA** ". Earlier this month, a High Court judge ruled that Corey's det
 " Approximately 30 prisoners, some with links to the Real and **Continuity IRA** and ONH, are protesting against the use of strip searches and freedor
 i Philippines. Enver Hoxha said: So if several members of the **Continuity IRA** shot and killed an unarmed British soldier or RUC/PSNI officer you'd cc
 i IRA are the only armed group in ireland to not have killed civilians,The **Continuity IRA** has been involved in a number of bombing and shooting incidents (non
 ifast boiler house fire Real Fire Arms 2018-11-16 **New IRA** 'weapons haul' discovered in Belfast boiler house fire "Police believ
 boiler house fire On 11/22/2018 at 7:10 PM, BelfastROI- said: The **New IRA** show how hard it is to hide machine guns. 😊Are you still talking your usual
 :fast that day when they decided to change from the name real ira to.....the **new ira** . Think they should have just kept it as the RIRA. Maybe th
 > One of, if not the worst movie I've seen is 'IRA - King of nothing'. **New IRA** film coming out. Exacta said: In the film they used real foo
 M, rbreathnach said: is the real IRA not dissolved chara ? **New IRA** ,whatever,you get what I'm saying. Merits Of The Current Phrase C
 nding the nationalist Short Strand enclave in 1969, Joey eagerly joined the **new IRA** unit which was being organised. A dedicated and fearless fighter, h
 urate? RSF - Cabhair - CIRA 32CSM - IRPWA - RIRA (or **new IRA**) IRSP - Teach na Fáilte - INLA RNU - Cogús - OnahÉ </s

IRA, a dissident republican organisation formed by former members of the **Real IRA**, Republican Action Against Drugs and some former Provisional IRA members War' - Spotlight </s></s> Stephen Dempster investigates the murder of **Real IRA** leader Alan Ryan and the consequences unfolding on both sides of the border. Military operations hold more weight. They should know that </s></s> **Real IRA** sniper rifle </s></s> bustermmcc said: </s></s> More chance of getting used to about Dil that Fergus doesn't know, either. </s></s> 15 August 1998: the **Real IRA** exploded a bomb on a crowded street in Omagh, just into Northern Ireland. I, Barrack Buster said: </s></s> RSF are on the record as having called the **Real IRA** "traitors". </s></s> The 32Csm as far as I was ever aware were considered </s></s> Sounds like a story from war of the worlds or something! </s></s> **Real IRA** Warns Sleeper Cells Have Plans To Attack Major Cities In England </s></s> Campbell has dismissed any role of his elder brother Liam, one of four **Real IRA** leaders found liable by a civil court for a 1998 bombing in Omagh, Northern Ireland (Suzanne Breen, Sunday World) </s></s> A man who helped mastermind a **Real IRA** bombing campaign in Britain has been freed from jail years early because </s></s> as a result, the prisoners have gone back on a dirty protest". </s></s> The **Real IRA** prisoners are understood to be refusing to shave or have their hair cut. </s></s> If he is an innocent man) would be in turmoil on the outside. </s></s> If the **real IRA** came out with a statement claiming a man who was on remand as a member

Figure 70 – Sample Concordance Lines of IRA Organisational Actors

Such specification is not arbitrary (and is actually quite integral) in the republican habitus as determining *which* strand of republicanism you are denoting has ramifications for the political point being conveyed and (de)legitimated. As a counter-public, republicanism can be regarded as enjoying an internal provisional hegemony in the sense that the Provisional IRA (and more saliently its political descendants, Sinn Féin) represent the dominant perspective in the group). Yet the high levels of lexical items which denote other groupings points toward strong frequencies of discussions regarding non-provisional or dissident variations. How the internal identity boundaries presented by these agonisms are linguistically negotiated and constructed is dealt with in the final analysis for the present research question below. Prior to this, however, an appraisal of the linguistic construction of the primary (non-militant) elite actor in the data is offered.

Sinn Féin (n= 10, 900):

As the most representative elite political actor of the participants, how Sinn Féin is linguistically constructed deserves some attention. Assessing both its co-textual environment as well as the verb processes which it regularly features in can prove to be expedient in i) explicating how participants perceive and represent their elevated status and ii) construct and qualify their political activities through the

representation of their political activities (or processes they are subjected to). In regard to the first of these, the below illustrates the salient collocates of ‘Sinn Féin’:

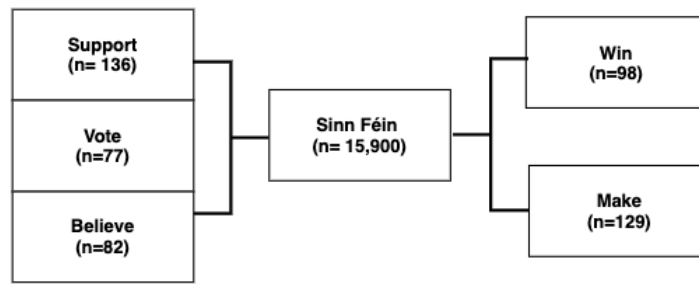


Figure 71 – Visualisation of Sinn Féin

What renders the above insightful is their proto-typicality in political discourse. In particular as they relate to the construction of elite political actors and their support by grassroots activists. The below concordance lines of the n-gram ‘believe Sinn Féin’ (n= 82) are revealing of the elevated and authoritative status the party holds within the data.

RIP Vol Eddie Dynes brave son of Eireann, I believe Republican Sinn Fein have a Cumman named after him Rest in peace Volunteer
 ere convicted by these special courts? And finally do you believe Sinn Fein will, if in Government in the South, pay compensation to all those unfortun
 very same. Does anyone genuinely believe that these 'continuity Sinn Fein ' prisoners should be on the republican wing? could anyone really argue th
 row between different Republican groups eh? Do you not believe sinn fein should be doing more Another Republican Has Licence Revoked.
 -Block brutality. Was Sinn Fein right? The British believe Sinn Fein is now so tightly wedded to its offices that the party will never divorce them
 has in the past served only to divide support. I do not believe that sinn fein nor any party should seek to be identified as a separate entity within the pr
 rch, which is their right. And as far as Marion Price, I truly believe Sinn Fein is working politically to gain her release. Thing is this thread is not
 in the non public discussions prior to that - ... I don't believe that sinn fein were privy to such an underhand position, as that would be the finish of the
 signed, sealed and then not delivered. I believe very strongly that Sinn Fein considering there history of gaol struggle need to step up here and do all ir
 at the prisoners are being forced to endure today. i firmly believe sinn fein could solve this in the blink of an eye. Sinn Féin's Response to the

Figure 72 – Sample Concordance Lines of ‘Sinn Féin’

The above shows that in spite of not enjoying total support, Sinn Féin does have enjoy a hegemonic status within the republican counter-public. Moreover, their

actions are positively constructed and positioned as being akin to those of the in-group. Where their actions are met with resistance, we can also identify high levels of re-contextualization of political practice on the site by participants, the over-riding lexical image of this practice is characterised by an inherent defence of Sinn Féin.

v) Intra-republican differentiation:

To illustrate how RSM users differentiate between discourse participants who identify with disparate strands of republican ideology, the archetypal provisional republican in-group's discursive differentiation processes are overviewed. Particular attention is paid here to dissident republicanism's identification in the data, given their status within the republican counter public as a marginal (but ever-dynamizing) fringe of the movement. Broadly, collocates of 'dissident' (n=2,875) are marked insofar as they have a higher linguistic preference for more explicitly militant collocates ('armed', 'violent', 'campaign' etc.). This point is somewhat predictable, however, given the varying commitment to paramilitancy on behalf of dissident factions. From our perspective, here, however, the linguistic and discursive resources employed in the construction of difference and distance between these groupings can isolate potential loci of critical insight in terms of RSM users' discursive identification. In this light, several macro-transformation/ destruction strategies can be identified, all of which function to excoriate and delegitimise dissidents and their critiques.

Such strategic measures can best be assessed through an analysis of transformation of the pre-lexical modification of such uses of 'republican', in particular where the modification serves to perspectivize or depower it. In terms of linguistic construction, this takes the form of mitigation, nomination and perspectivisation strategies which distance or negatively label an actor. In this

light, we can note the habitual exacting of delegitimising nomination strategies which perspectivize the denoted actor as other to the in-group (or as lesser in terms of their ideological affinity).

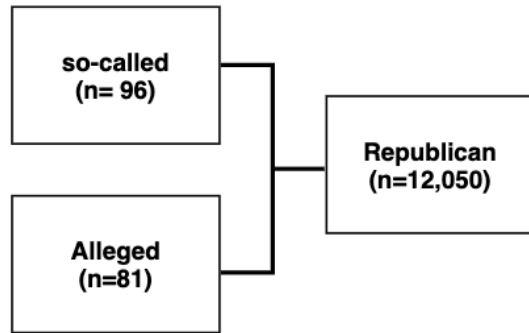


Figure 73 – Visualisation of Republican Diminutives

In addition to having their republican attributes lessened or weakened through derogatory diminutives (illustrated in the above diagram), such actors are conflated through catch-all terms. This stands in contrast to the positively evaluated in-group which can further be regarded as being inherently structured in terms of: genuineness, contemporality and status/age.

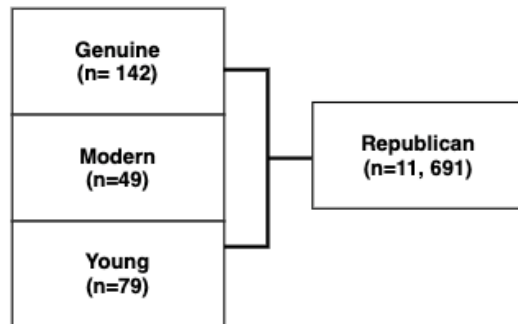


Figure 74 – Visualisation of Republican Pre-Lexical Qualification

Key to the above identification pattern is the elision of any major incongruence in terms of new modalities being transitioned toward in the ideological narrative. The result of this, in terms of identification, is that provisional RSM users routinely identify with previous historical instantiations of militant republicanism in order to self-legitimise as the legitimate torch-bearers of republicanism.

The above provides an indication of intra-republican differentiation from the perspective of provisional republicanism. Yet this paints only half of a much broader picture. Significantly in terms of marginalised republican differentiation practices, where the provisional in-group traditionally produces a structured group identity that adopts habitual scripts to enact its habitus, we can note a clear (albeit incongruous) transgression of such codified patterns of interaction and the values they typically hold in regard to the linguistic constructive patterning of non-provisional republicans. For instance, the reverence and respect paid by provisional discourse participant— which as noted above are enshrined in republicanism's broader practices of commemoration—toward the patriot dead of Irish republicanism can be seen to be totally abandoned by non-provisional republicans in certain contexts. It must be noted that these transgressions do not constitute the norm (that is to say, republicans of all shade typically adopt such reverent and devoted perspectives). But such transgressions are marked as they provide insights into the negotiation of in-group boundaries by participants, the perceived (dis)utility of commemorative discourse in terms of internal/external identification practices as well as the criteria which merit respect from the perspective of participants.

Whereas commemorative/ respectful interactions typically adopt Irish language phrasing and codified patterns of communication, non-provisional republicans

can, in specific contexts, forgo this script and strategically derogate (deceased) provisional republican actors through nomination strategies. In such instances, provisional actors are subjected to a process of stigmatisation, where marks of social disgrace are attached to members of the group so as to derogate them or paint them as Other. In the context of the corpus, this takes the form of imbuing such republican actors with imperialist/ elitist/ British traits through their linguistic construction. For example, the referentials ‘British viceroy in Ireland’ to denote former first minister Martin McGuinness and ‘Free-state cheerleaders’ to denote Sinn Féin are two popular contributions in this regard.

the malignant influence of SF and the former Dep	Viceroy	McGuinness was of course no great
insidious act and it's truly fitting that it is departed deputy	viceroy	mcguinness legacy
le in Ireland. Dep.	Viceroy	MMcG to resign today, Stormont Dead GFA Abandoned

Figure 75 – Sample Concordance Lines of ‘Viceroy’

As such, intra-republican differentiation from the perspective of non-republicans is typified an i) inverse-imperialisation strategy (to dissimilate and other provisional republicans) and ii) metonymic construction where out-group qualities are embedded in the linguistic construction of (deceased) provisional actors. Moreover, there are notable—but sporadic—transgressions of codes of communication and value systems which typically habituated the republican habitus.

Generally, then, in terms of the in-group’s discursive construction, we can note some clear, habitual patterns from the above analyses. The in-group is typically conceived of as structured and is reproduced in discourses as being differentiated in terms of status, but also centrality and ideological commitment to tenets covered in the previous section’s analysis. Personal pronouns are realised as strategically inclusive or argumentative depending on the context. Elite and non-elite actors are habitually denoted through codified and nuanced signifiers which

through discursive reproduction, reconstruct a conception of the republican in-group as a structured political movement that embodies the ideological theses identified previously. Where participants deviate from this (by espousing a different ideological commitment or through identifying as other to the in-group) they are disassimilated through the use of nuanced nomination strategies that are modified through mitigation strategies. Such constructions typically utilise diminutives and inversed construction patterns. What is most notable in regard to all of the above, however, is the prevalence of this structuring principle in the data. The communicative complexity of discursively negotiating and constructing a counter-hegemonic, hot-nationalist group identity is significant. The linguistic and discursive resources necessary in the construction of a yet-to-be-realised identity/ideology, one that is permeated by a lack of internal resolution, far outweigh those necessary in the construction of established/ hegemonic/ banal national identities. Yet, in the data, we can witness the heightened levels of modality, perspectivisation and temporality required to construct such an identity being consistently and customarily employed by grassroots participants. Such high levels of grassroots reproduction results in the co-production of populist (many vs the elite) or tribal (us vs them) discourse frames which serve to structure and legitimate who is/n't a member of the in-group.

iv) Codes and Objects:

Unlike previous analyses thus far, language is considered here systematically and lexically: that is, both as the communicative code of participants itself but also as a lexical item in the objective frequency list ('language' n = 4,173).

Language (n= 4,173):

In regard to the first interpretation, we can note near unanimous communication

in vernacular forms of Hiberno-English on the site. Yet, in terms of its ideology, Irish republicanism holds an (elite level) kinship with the Irish language (Wilson and Stapleton 2003). Yet concordance line analysis reveals that, in spite of seeing some levels of code-switching—the site enjoyed comparably low levels of communication in (any dialect of) the Irish language. A good encapsulation of this point can be identified in the fact that the Irish language section (An Gaelige) of the site was among the lowest frequented and contributed to by users. Whereas general (496,100 post approximately) or organisational (195,900 post approximately) discussion constituted the conversational core, with the foci of internationalism (91,000), prisoner solidarity (30,000) and other/miscellaneous topics (181,500) constituting significant sub-topics on the site. An Gaelige receives comparably low post frequencies, totalling a mere 5,900 posts approximately (at the time of writing). From this we can infer, that a topical level, and in terms of codified usage in inter-user communication, #the Irish language lacks salience. Where Irish language phrases/words were invoked, they tended to hold moderate saliences and fulfil relatively formulaic functions like the construction of group affinity.⁴¹

For example, words such as ‘chara’ or pluralised ‘charide’ (friend/s) were frequently used by members when addressing other users on the site (see the identity analysis for a more expansive discussion). Similar uses of the language can be noted in the more ritualised practices of the group. Take for instance, the previously mentioned habitual practice of commemoration. In such communicative contexts, it is commonplace for users to convey religious hopes through the Irish language. For instance, the concordance lines below overview the phrase ‘*Ar dheis Dé go raibh n-anam(acha)*’, a Christian religious blessing,

⁴¹ Interestingly, similar non-dominant bi-lingual group-formation functions were noted by Androutsopoulos (2007)

(broadly translating to may they be seated at the right hand of God) that is routinely used for commemorative purpose in the republican movement.

ooked him calmly in the eye as a Soldier of the Irish Republic.	</s></s>	Ar dheis	Dé go raibh a anam ró-dhílis.	</s></s>	he is one man i have the
ce, Ronan McLoughlin.	</s></s>	Ar dheis	Dé go raibh a anam.	</s></s>	Ar dheis
Dé go raibh a anam dílis.	</s></s>	I can only hope the vermin w			
chine guns and a mortar.	</s></s>	Remember them with pride	</s></s>	Ar dheis	Dé go siad
</s></s>		Óglaigh Patsy Quinn agus Dan McAnallen			
acaigh lig forsaí Sasana piléir in aghaidh pobal a bhí ag an g-cluithé; -	</s></s>	Ar dheis	Dé go raibh a n-anamacha	</s></s>	On this was the Free state
mada	</s></s>	Legends of the World Anti-imperialist Struggle.	</s></s>	Ar dheis	Dé go raibh a n-anamacha ró-uasal.
</s></s>		James Connolly,			
blicanism in Armagh - he was only 32 years old when he died.	</s></s>	Ar dheis	Dé go raibh a anam.	</s></s>	Iplo vol tony mc closkey
</s></s>		College Dublin from 1961.	</s></s>	He passed away in 1995.	</s></s>
</s></s>		Ar dheis	Dé go raibh a anam dílis.	</s></s>	As Canon Ó Cuinn is transla
umber of Islamists in Mali.) God rest all of these fallen heroes.	</s></s>	Ar dheis	Dé go raibh a n-anamacha uasal.	</s></s>	48 Syrian Soldiers K
a continua Viva la FARC.	</s></s>	31 members of FARC killed	</s></s>	Ar dheis	Dé go raibh a n-anam dílis.
</s></s>		Ireland may join fight agair			
e that those who made this suggestion would be more than happy with	</s></s>	Ar dheis	Dé go raibh a anam	</s></s>	"Rest in Peace" (RIP) Your views

Figure 76 – Sample Concordance Lines of Ar Dheis Dé go Raibh

As such, we can infer that the phrasing and choice of Irish language here is made on the basis of convention/ tradition of the genre as opposed to the ideolectic preference of users. This point is corroborated by the notable lack of high saliences for corresponding phrases constructed in English. As such, we can regard the Irish language as being a code (or part of a script) that is adopted by grassroots members for a number of reasons. From the perspective of the movement, however, its uses seem to be largely reserved for nuanced and ritualised or formulaic group functions, such as commemorating previous republicans or strengthening bonds between co-ideologues. So, in spite of decrying the lack of official status for the Irish language (see below), there is a markedly low level of exclusive use of Irish in the forum.

A critical analysis of ‘language’ as lexical item reveals it to be a site of cultural and political contestation. For instance, the salient frequencies of its collocate ‘culture’ (n= 122) suggest that topically and conceptually, participants regard language and culture as being interconnected. Beyond collocational analysis, however, an

overview of words which colour the meaning of ‘language’ also proved effective in revealing how grassroots users perceive and evaluate the Irish language:

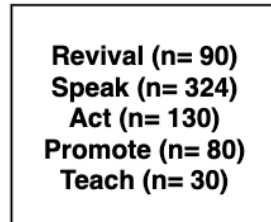


Figure 77 – Collocates of Language

As the above collocational items illustrate, language is constructed as something that is under threat (very similar to the other previously considered aspects of the in-group’s habitus that are positioned as being under threat from external constraints). Such a construction relies on language, in this instance the Irish language, being regarded as a value or a right. This conceptualisation can further be noted through analysis of concordance lines relating to the pre-lexical verbs ‘promote’ and ‘teach’ which demonstrates the extent to which participants endorse the sustaining and protection of the language. Moreover, terms like ‘revival’ and ‘act’ point toward the reproduction of elite-led endeavours related to the promulgation of the Irish language in society: revival denoting efforts to return the (use of the) Irish language to historically realised levels and ‘act’ here typically denoting the collective agitation of contemporary Irish language speakers toward a standalone Irish language act for Northern Ireland, affording the language official status. As such, we can note high levels of similarity in regard to how language is typically constructed at a parliamentary level in Northern Ireland. Wilson and Stapleton (2003) note that elite political actors tend to adopt the following four frames when discussing/ advocating their respective languages:

‘language [is operationalised] (a) as a form of agreed and formally recognised

communication, (b) as a natural right, reflecting individual culture or heritage, (c) as a legal and formal right, (d) as a political symbol.’

(Wilson and Stapleton 2003: 5)

In spite of the above framework resulting from an analysis of various ideological perspectives (and arguments for and against both Irish and Ulster-Scots), we can note high levels of similarity with insights yielded from the above analysis. Participants reproduce language as a communicative code and part of various identification scripts (like commemorative discourse) (a) and as a political symbol/ object of ethno-nationalist grouping (a, and to a less salient extent b). Importantly, though, language is conceived of by participants as something that ought to have legal recognition (c) as a civic right. As such language is not so much a (communicative) code that holds a reverence in the habitus of participants but rather, as it is treated in the data, it is seen as a site of political struggle: its political recognition, a stepping stone in achieving perceived parity for the in-group (often fallaciously extrapolated to be congruent with a language community). Language, then, in spite of being a key cultural component, is regarded as a deontic, political right that ought to be realised as opposed to a culturally thwarted medium that participants habitually use to convey and construct their identities. In this sense, RSM user’s conceptualisation of language is devoid of a lot of the affective and emotive bonds one can typically expect nationalists to express in regard to their in-group’s features (i.e claims of linguistic superiority or linguistic nationalism) (Özkirimli 2017, Brass 1994). Where language is used by participants, it can be seen to fulfil a lateral, group-formation function and— to a less direct/ salient extent— fulfil the vertical aim of the language’s revival. Importantly, however, the concept of language itself, whilst regarded as a right, is not justified as such on the basis of ethnicity or historic claims, but reasons of political equality.

RQ6: What can a consideration of RSM users' out-groups tell us about contemporary process of republican identification in new media ecologies?

Finally, for the present chapter, we turn to the realisation of out-group identification in the corpus. Although a holistic account of this aspect of the data would warrant a chapter in itself, we can use statistical insights to narrow the consideration to salient lexical items. In doing so, the goal of this final analytical measure is to illuminate the most salient lexical items that denote an out-group with a view to identifying the negative traits that are foregrounded and embedded in their linguistic construction. Departing from the objective frequency list, we can note several high frequency lexical items which –across contexts—can be regarded such an out-group from the perspective of the RSM user community.

For example, a cursory analysis of the list shows terms like ‘soldier’, ‘war’, ‘government’, ‘nation’ and ‘state’ to hold high frequencies. Indeed, an investigation of the entire list shows these to be representative of the typical lexical items employed in out-group construction: words which are semantically rooted in conflict, the organised (non)violent contestation of power and control of national communities. Given our focus on a site of nationalist discourse, this is not revelatory in itself. Yet when quantified through insights provided by corpus linguistic tools, we can begin to appreciate the statistical prevalence of this pattern and frame of representation. Below we see the out-group are typically nominated and qualified in terms of their elite power, centrality and status.

Number 10 (n= 56) Downing Street (n=258) Westminster (n=438) Dail (n=192)
--

Figure 78 – Out-Group Signifiers

The above table illustrates the typical linguistic forms utilised in the realisation of these entities. Strategically, the goal of this pattern is to conflate and assimilate the out-group: cohesivising them in a reductionist way which foregrounds their negative or institutional characteristics. Where an item taken from the same field of meaning is used to denote a relate term (like ‘Number 10’ being used to denote the office of the British Prime Minister) we can note the strategic realisation of a particularised synecdoche in terms of *pars pro toto/ a part for the whole*. Similarly, where we can identify a construction that substitutes a lesser part for the whole (such as Westminster being used to denote the actions of legislators in parliament) we can note the strategic realisation of metonymic construction where an ‘Institution [stands in] for (responsible) representatives of the institution.’ (de Cillia et al.. 1999: 43)

Both of these linguistic forms have the effect of constructing its signified in a reductionist light. That is, the aspect which participants foreground in the construction – which, as we know from van Dijk (1998), is likely to be negative—become the over-riding, salient identity features from the perspective of the group. From the above table, we can note that the out-group are constructed, stereotyped and qualified in terms of their desire for power. Taken in the broader context of republican discourse (and its philosophical aversion to elite, arbitrary power) we can regard such power-hungriness as being negatively evaluated by the in-group. As such, the constructive patterns applied to out-group actors involve a

delegitimising nomination strategy. These are realised through metonymised and synechdochised forms so as to foreground their exploitative, elite and manipulative characteristics (and elide their civic, benevolent and altruistic attributes). We see then that even in the mere process of labelling other groups, we can witness macro destructive and transformative strategies at play. In this regard, the existing national powers are derogated as immoral and delegitimised on the basis of a perceived lack of authority and morality. To further unpack this strategic construction of out-groups, the salient lexical items ‘Brit’ and ‘state’ are overviewed below.

Brit (n = 8,451):

An analysis of the objective frequency list as well as keyword list revealed a high positioning on both for the lexical item ‘Brit’ (n = 8,451). As a referential, ‘Brit’ holds a high cultural salience within the republican lexicon as an abbreviated denotator for British actors, acting as a signifier itself or as an identity anchor. For example, the n-gram ‘west brit’ is used to denote non-British actors who are regarded as holding an affinity with perceived British imperialism. Sketching the term through concordancing software, we can dissect and collate its occurrences.

There is nothing to be gained and everything to be lost from lick arseing	west Brit	The people that won't vote for you because you said you won't wear a poppy were never going to vote for you anyway.
elected heads till they become one- how the fuck was it voted by the people of the 32 counties. check the facts you	west Brit	Legal challenge in Dublin to new Garda commissioner
They are	west Brit	who have just gifted policing on this island to the brits.
ey're f**k all British, their da's are Irish traitor Irish liars. Complete	west Brit	Irish prods.
Theres many a	west Brit	in Donegal town but thankfully we're culchies dopey fucker,
boylan and her commie hubby are an infection in Dublin SF up yer hole you right wing anti union anti left blueshirt	west Brit	ballbag ...the opening post, don;t know

Figure 79 – Sample Concordance Lines of ‘West Brit’

The above illustrates strong derogating functions associated with the term. Yet the predominant formulations of ‘brit’ denote a more discernible and oppositional group. As ‘republican’ serves to positively imbue an object with attributes desired by the in-group or to lay claim to said object, ‘brit’ is used by the RSM community to dissimilate, other and position an actor/ object in the opposing identity camp. Negative attributes and processes can be seen to hold high collocative frequencies in this regard.

Kill (n= 41)	Remove (n=19)
Killing (n= 58)	Shot (n= 268)
Killed (n= 266)	Execution (n= 80)

Figure 80 – Collocates of ‘Brit’

The high saliences of collocative, conflictive verb processes suggest that this in-group is the target and source of much aggression in the data. In terms of the subjective uses of ‘brit’, we can identify high frequencies of verbs which negatively activate their actions: ‘shoot’ ‘invade’ ‘occupy’ and ‘use.’ Further analysis of concordance lines reveals a transitive frame where ‘brit’ actors are constructed as perpetrating (often historic) transgressions. Thus, beyond denoting an ethnic and political out-grouping, we must also conceive of brit as being subjected to high levels of prosodic, semantic influencing by negative verb processes. As such, the core characteristic of ‘brits’ in the data is their violence and lust for power, indicating the tone of their conceptualisation as heteronymic occupiers in the minds of participants.

State (n = 34, 414):

Finally, while ‘brit’ proved insightful as an ideologically charged, ethnically

realised nomination strategy, an analysis of the lexical item ‘state’ can also yield similarly strategically insightful results, from a more civically rooted perspective. That is to say, while the analysis of ‘brit’ provided much insight into how participants construct out-groups through ethnic terms, ‘state’ provides an analytical in-road for assessing the same process of out-group identification, couched in explicitly political terminology as the political component of modern-day nation-states. As such, gaining an impression of ‘state’ can provide important insights into how RSM users both position themselves against political entities which they oppose, whilst also discursively constructing a hegemonic/ political status that they themselves desire to attain (nation-statehood).

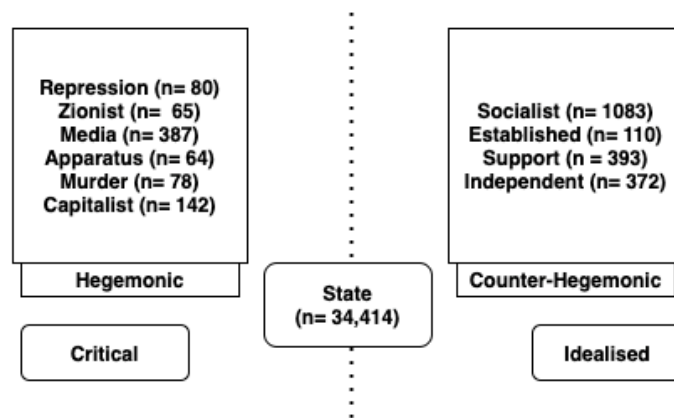


Figure 81 – Visualisation of ‘State’

We can again note a disparity of in/out-group construction: this is achieved through (dis)empowering nomination strategies which (de)legitimize the state under discursive construction. Where the state is an idealised (more often than not unrealised) entity, we can see a pattern of lateral empowerment (socialist), or autonomisation (independent). Yet these idealised constructions stand in contrast to the more critical and descriptive constructions that out-group states are subjected to in the corpus. In such instances we can note a habitual construction strategy centred around their negative nomination and qualification. This is

achieved through lexical choices which, from the perspective of the in-group, connote negatively: 'zionist' 'repression' 'capitalism' etc. All denote elitist, ideological commitments which stand against those of republicanism. Similarly, the high saliences of 'medium' and 'apparatus' indicate the extent to which 'state' is used as a qualifying noun/adjective to paint the following noun – here, state-media or state-apparatus— as being the puppets of elite political actors. Thus, an assimilation strategy is used toward negative construction of delegitimizing of such actors through a strategic conflation of elite power structures (which results in their collapsing in perceptive schema of participants).

Identity Discussion:

The above analytical sections offer sufficient insight to provide responses to the RQs set out at the beginning of this section. In regard to RQ6, we can note that the collective identification practices of RSM users in the corpus is governed by habitual scripts and frames in order to produce a structured perception of the in-group. This structure is dynamized in terms of status, centrality and elevation within the broader movement. Scripts and frames were shown to be strategically beneficial to the in-group or to be laden with nuanced in-group values. The strategically desired outcome of such a convoluted process of identification was theorised to be the cohesivisation and assimilation of the in-group: the self-construction of the movement as a cogent and coordinated whole. Such a macro-strategic aim necessitates the negotiation and maintenance of group boundaries. Accordingly, strategic disassimilation was evident in the data in instances where participants sought to draw a boundary between (perceived) others from within the republican movement as well as out-groups (lateral), chiefly related to centralised political powers and facets of the hegemonic order (vertical). Critically, the lateral differentiation was shown to be legitimated on the basis of a perceived deviation from ideological tenets of the movement, a criticism which is

underpinned by a provisional centric interpretation of the republican struggle— thus indicating their hegemony within the republican counter-public. Differentiation from elite and institutional power was legitimated on the basis of morality and participants' immanent critique of elite power.

Analysis of such participants' identification practices were revealed to differentiate and dissimilate from elite power. Such actors are qualified and delegitimated in terms of their elitist, exploitative power and status, which is routinely juxtaposed and framed against the lateral commitments of republicanism. In regard to out-group identification, the analysis revealed high levels of linguistic metonymic construction: the result of which was a conflation in representation of elite power and their oppressive/ coercive instruments. This construction elides any humanising attributes and foregrounds their institutional/ power-preserving traits. Significantly, the foregrounding of elite-vested power can be seen to corroborate with republicanism's philosophical aversion to elite power and its machinations. In contrast to the complex and codified negotiation of in-group identity and the structured model of the movement that it (re)produces, the process of out-group identity construction can be seen to exact strategies of positive self-construction, self-legitimation and perpetuation.

Such identification practices were shown to rely on frames of self-victimisation (and its facilitative temporal (re)ordering), as well as an over-riding frame of heteronomy, the aim of which is to construct the in-group as (historically) subservient to external constraints. This was achieved through the strategic disassimilation of the in-group from their out-groups (as well as their territories and spatialised delimitations), as well as the realisation of transformation strategies in the construction of the out-group's territory as a *locus a horribilus*, and elite actors as qualified solely in terms of their desire for power asymmetries.

We can note, then, how the various levels of discursive identification of participants serve to coalesce the in-group, legitimise its existence and outlook and delegitimise a host of different out-groups. The over-arching result of this is an identity frame characterised by radicalism and aversion in regard to established power—something that squares with an account of republicanism as a counter-public, and its civic republican provenance. Critical insights yielded above will be returned to in regard to the principal critique offered hereafter in chapter 9. Before this, in the next chapter, republicanism's proliferation into mainstream cultural virtual spheres is analysed.

FACEBOOK MEME ANALYSIS

RF2-republicanism's proliferation into / reproduction in popular culture and public, non-political discourse from which it has historically been marginalised and excluded.

A key point emerging from the literature reviews in chapters two and three related to the contentions that republicanism is a movement which is counter-hegemonic and, as a result of its unresolved ideological status, a 'hot' form of nationalist discourse. The result of this is that, traditionally, republicanism has remained excoriated and is marginalised from popular culture and mass media (Hayes 2012) and, discursively structured at an elite level (Whiting 2016). This point is also furthered by the analytical insight that (provisional) republicans discursively position themselves on the periphery of centres of political power, in spite of consistently aiming to integrate into the fabric of Irish politics since the 1980s (Frampton 2016). Other literature paints republicanism as a movement which is modernising and increasingly becoming aware of its media image and PR efforts (Watson et al. 2011, Reilly 2013, Hoey 2018). As social movements progress and gain power, they necessarily interact with other (hegemonic) structures and institutions—such as the media or popular culture. This chapter is designed to assess how republicanism undergoes this process (if at all) of interacting with the mainstream from which it has historically been excluded. Using popular humour as a case study, this chapter investigates how social media users use popular cultural forms to construct humorous messages related to republicanism.

The chapter firstly presents key insights pertaining to Facebook, before focus is then shifted to the role of humour in politics and how the intersection of both domains plays out online. The aim of the present chapter is to analyse how political discourse participants employ humour in online media ecologies, therefore, the textual genre of political internet memes is introduced as a means of analysing how political messages merge with or exploit popular social currents and humour. The data source page—a connectively sustained Group Page devoted to Irish satirical memes—is then isolated as a suitable site for the analysis. Data selection is overviewed before a multi-level, multimodal critical discourse analysis of this data is undertaken, with reference to existing theories of humour. The below research questions will guide the analysis hereafter:

Central:

- What effect does humour have on discourses of republicanism on Facebook?
- How does republicanism interact with mainstream social currents (like humour) on Facebook?

Contributory:

- Which topics/ actors are derided/invoked in republican internet memes?
- What visual techniques are employed to construct republican internet memes?
- How can dominant theories of humour inform our understanding of republican internet memes?

Facebook Overview:

The roots of Facebook can be traced back to 2004, when a group of American university students founded a nascent site (termed ‘The Facebook’). This site was initially limited to users with a valid educational institutional email address (ending with .edu) (Croft 2007). After a substantial investment in 2004, the site became

publicly accessible in 2006 (and dropped the ‘the’ from its title). The site grew rapidly (Croft 2007) and quickly became one of the most accessed websites in the world (Fuchs 2011). In 2007 Facebook introduced direct advertising in order to harness the site’s popularity to yield profits (Croft 2007), something it proved effective at, quickly turning over billions of dollars in revenue within a matter of years (Fuchs 2011) and filing for an IPO in 2012. Facebook Inc. is currently headquartered in Menlo Park, California but holds offices throughout the globe. At the time of writing, the site enjoys 2.6 billion monthly users, 1.73 billion of which are daily users (obrelo.com). On average, users spend just shy of one hour per day browsing the site (oberlo.com). In spite of the ephemeral nature of social media, Facebook has remained in the list of most frequently visited websites in the world, currently ranking as the fourth most visited site (Alexa.com). As a social networking site, Facebook’s reach is somewhat unparalleled, reaching 60.6% of all internet users (oberlo.com). The site’s revenue from advertising in the first quarter of 2020 reached \$17.44 billion: a marked increase of 17% on Q1 2019, indicating a continuance of popularity and success of its business model.

Facebook has developed a number of different functions which permit users to interact in different ways. Users create individual accounts (or ‘Profiles’) for themselves, where they share information such as their ‘interests, photos, videos, current city and hometown.’ (Facebook.com 2020) Facebook operates on a real name policy which requires users to ‘provide the name they use in real life.’ Users add ‘friends’ to their network by sending (or receiving) and accepting friend requests. User profiles appear as ‘Timelines’ which feature components such as a profile picture, a cover photo, basic demographic information (age, gender, religion, political beliefs etc.) and updates related to their account listed in a temporal order. Users can post status updates—microblog posts which are visible to those in their networks— as well as share photos, web links, polls, questions, videos. Updates and posts from friends in their networks appear on users’

'Newsfeeds'. These algorithmically determined streams of updates—which users encounter as their homepage when visiting the site—are the primary means through which users keep abreast of the lives of those in their networks or areas of interest on the site. Additionally, Facebook users receive notifications when others interact or add something to their Timeline or their posts receive interactions. Users engage with updates by responding with 'Comments' in an allocated interaction space below each post. Moreover, they can interact by 'liking' a post or comment or reacting with one of 5 pre-set emotive responses 'Love', 'Haha', 'Wow', 'Sad', or 'Angry'. Alternatively, users may 'share' a post as a new update (with the possibility to add a new status line) from their own profile. Interaction between individual profiles is conducted through an instant messaging application known as Facebook Messenger. This enables users to direct message each other in both individual or group dynamics. Originally limited to textual interaction, Messenger has since expanded to allow voice and video calls also available in group formant, too. Among other functions, users may congregate in Group pages, dedicated spaces of interaction which can be created for any reason.

With respect to Herring (2007), communication on Facebook is asynchronous insofar users do not have to be logged on to receive messages (Synchronicity). Moreover, the site operates on a one-way communication system: users do not have access to new messages or comments as they are being typed. However, Messenger features a 'typing' indicator to signify when a user is in the process of creating a message (Message Transmission). Posts and interactions are stored indefinitely on the site (Persistence of Transcript). Textual interactions are not capped at a given wordcount (Size of Message Buffer), and, as touched upon above, the site facilitates a number of different audio-visual modalities of communication via various applications (Channel of Communication). The site is, in theory, a nonymous space where the terms of use dictate users ought to

interact using real names and anonymous messaging is prohibited (Anonymity). It must be added that this, however, does not totally prohibit users from creating profiles under a pseudonym. Private messaging is facilitated on the site via the Messenger application. However, other interactions (comments, posts, status updates) can vary from semi-public to public depending on users' individual privacy settings (Private Messaging). Filtering people out of social networks or communicative spaces can take a variety of forms, from unfriending profiles, to blocking users from profiles, pages or groups (Filtering). Responses to posts or messages are automatically stacked in chronological order below the original, with the notable exception of comment sections which receive high levels of interaction, which often list popular comments (in terms of likes and reactions) at the top. A recent addition to the Messenger platform also enabled the use of quotations in chats to respond directly to messages (quoting), although, this is not structurally facilitated elsewhere on the site.

For political actors of all status, SNSs provide a space where 'the boundaries between politics, cultural values and identity processes... become blurred.' (Vesnic-Alujevic 2011: 467, referring to Dahlgren 2005) As such, from their earliest conceptualisations, SNSs such as Facebook were conceived of as spaces where the political becomes bound up with notions of (social) identity formation, networked individualism and cultural pursuits. Furthermore, as SNSs become more and more embedded into our day-to-day lives, engagement becomes less novel and more routine (Muhlberger 2005). As such, users seek out many of the same gratifications associated with offline media usage: such as entertainment, sociality or information. Given that the political proliferates many aspects of society and day-to-day life— what Verba et al. (1995: 40) term 'the embeddedness of political activity in...non-political institutions'—it follows that such an implosion of these domains is also possible in virtual media ecologies, too. Dahlgren (2005: 153) refers to this enmeshed topical area as the pre-political or

para-political domain: where the boundaries of the political merge with ‘social and cultural topics having to do with common interests and/or collective identities.’ Adding to this, Facebook’s structure means that users can be exposed to (para)political content without actively seeking it out, if it is shared by someone in their network (Bossetta et al. 2018). This is not so much pertinent to the present research in the sense that uninterested users may become politicised by indirect exposure—as noted elsewhere, Facebook’s structure enables the uninterested to stay further away (Tang and Lee 2013) and promotes a high choice environment leading to higher levels of audience selectivity (Bennett and Iyengar 2008)—but rather, its relevance lies in the fact that political content is circulated alongside (if not already embedded in) content from other topical domains. As such, politics is but one of many areas of interest with which users can (indirectly) engage with on these sites and, in a sense, the political competes with users’ other social currents and interests.

Individual users’ primary motivations for using social media lies in the fact that humans are a social species, driven to formulate meaningful connections with members of our in-groups (Marichal 2012, Krienen 2010). SNSs play into our underlying urge for connectedness with others and provide an easily accessible means of satiating this desire. Facebook usage was shown to elicit chemical reactions akin to those produced when humans engage in close physical contact (Zak et al. 2004)—producing ‘a warm and fuzzy feeling that “hooks” users.’ (Maricahl 2012: 5) Additionally, these sites act as loci of identity construction for our networked selves (Papacharissi 2010), part of which entails identification with social identities and collectives (Coretti and Pica 2015). As such, individual user’s engagement with these sites can be traced to relational impulses and their own self-perception. Research focusing on the use of SNSs by social movements also foregrounds the necessity for intimacy and trust between users (Palczewski 2001) to maintain

cogency over time, which is also true of their analogue predecessors (Diani 2000).

Facebook itself offers more functionalities than one single user could realistically avail of. As such, interactions with the site are best conceptualised as ‘functional domains’ (Leiner et al. 2018): an individually specific subset of features and usage habits related to their own interests and motivations. In Quan-Haase and Young’s (2010) study on the uses and motivations of Facebook, both Affection (2nd) and Sociability (5th) ranked highly in the list of factors which spurred engagement with the site. Similarly, Social Information (‘or feeling involved with what’s going on with other people’, which encompasses political engagement) also featured on the list in 6th place. This empirically corroborates with literature pertaining to emotional and relational impulses overviewed above. The most salient reason for using Facebook listed by participants, however, was to pass the time (encompassing aspects such as entertainment, enjoyment, fun and relaxation). Similarly, Park et al. (2009) found that Facebook groups were predominantly used for socializing or entertainment purposes. Additionally, they noted that self-status seeking and information seeking were also key drivers of engagement with the site. Taking these into consideration for the present project, we can surmise that users who reproduce republican discourse on Facebook are socially and psychologically driven to identify with a sense of community online in order to form affective horizontal bonds. Moreover, empirical studies point toward the likelihood that political engagement will be but one of many usage habits in their respective functional domains, and similarly, republicanism will be one of many topical domains they exhibit interest in.

Thus, a number of points have been established which warrant reconsideration in terms of their pertinence to this chapter. Firstly, SNSs are inherently discursive spaces which rely and thrive on user interaction. Users’ engagement on Facebook comprises functional domains of individual habits, but predominantly orient

toward entertainment for passing the time and socialisation to sate basic relational impulses. Moreover, individual users benefit from more horizontal communicative affordances permitted by these sites in seeking out entertaining content, kinship, and information. The diversity of user generated content mirrors analogue spaces and, as such, the political is regularly embedded in the (seemingly) apolitical, or users may be exposed to political content shared by those in their network. Given this chapter's aim is to assess how republican discourse responds and interdiscursively relates to popular social currents and mainstream discourses, the above points toward the potentiality of communicative endeavours related to socialisation and entertainment as a potential point of intersection. Regardless of user intention and motivation, from an academic perspective, the use of social media for political and social discussion necessarily results in the creation of large data sets, suited to discursive analysis (KhosraviNik and Unger 2016).

Humour, Online Satire and the Internet Meme:

Humour is forwarded here as a means of bridging the analytical gulf between popular culture/social currents which inform and shape socialisation and entertainment on Facebook and computer mediated communication related to republicanism (in particular, where republicanism embodies para-political characteristics, or might not be the core focus). This mirrors a growing body of similar research efforts—see Moreno-Almedia and Gerbauo (2021), for example—which have recognised the political currency of humour in a global networked society. Humour has been deemed ‘essential to human existence and social life’ (Zijderveld 1983: 4) and presents itself as a well-documented feature of user’s functional domains and the content they produce (Lewin Jones 2015, Locher and Bolander 2015, Taecharungroj and Nueangjamnong 2015). It was established that users saw Facebook predominantly as a means of passing the time (Quan-Haase and Young 2010), which was further deconstructed to sub-motivations such as:

killing time, entertainment, enjoyment, fun, having a pleasant rest, relaxation, release from pressures and responsibilities, escapism and procrastination (adapted from Quan-Haase and Young 2010). Humour is germane (if not conducive) to all of these pursuits. Some scholars contend that fun—or the pursuit or challenge of fun—is a core aspect of humour, as are entertainment and playfulness (Gruner 2017 for example) (entertainment, fun, enjoyment). Elsewhere, humour has also been theorised as a mode of releasing tensions associated with the constrictions of social reality (Bergson 2013) (escapism, procrastination, and release from pressures and responsibilities). Also, humour has been conceptualised as inherent in ‘interactions, emotions, play, leisure, private life and other things’ which are deemed to be ‘unserious.’ (Kuipers 2008: 365) Thus, para-political messages can embed in humorous content to communicate below the threshold of perception.

The social functions of humour, too, are well established in the literature. Humour has been posited as having a structuring role on the social order by promoting in-group cohesion through shared-experiences solidarity, social approval and acceptance. As such it can act as a social lubricant for the process of group identity formation. Similarly, in relation to social movements, humour and playfulness have been shown to promote mobilisation and media attention (da Silva and Garcia 2012). Likewise, online communities on Facebook employ creative and playful humour to produce affective horizontal bonds through shared pursuits (Deller 2014). Finally, humour has a rich history of being applied in the contexts of critique and politics (da Silva and Garcia 2012) having the capacity to broach issues held to be taboo or on the blurry boundaries of social acceptability and decorum (Chen 2016, Lockyer 2006) or topical areas that ‘are otherwise sealed off’ outside of humour contexts (da Silva and Garcia 2012: 91). As such it holds the capacity to make us challenge ‘our beliefs as well as what we hold for granted and stable’ (da Silva and Garcia 2012: 92). Nowhere is this capacity more evident than in the genre of satire which has a deep-rooted

historical association with political commentary and societal critique. Moreover, this capacity has been demonstrated to flourish in contexts where technological development permitted it to do so (see Chen 2016 for a case study, or da Silva and Garcia 2012 for a chronology).

The proliferation of cartoons as staple features of public-political discourse was catalysed by the technological amelioration of the printing press which permitted broader reach in audience and clearer, more detailed imagery (Pierce 2008). Twentieth century satire evolved in tandem with the media it was channelled through. As such, the development of broadcast technology saw satire take firstly to the ether and, latterly, to the television screens of the modernised Western world. The mantle of comedic critique was passed through influential talk-shows like *Saturday Night Live* (Jones 2009), *The Daily Show* (Morreale 2009) and *The Colbert Report* (Baym 2009). Comparable shows from the UK (such as *Spitting Image*) and Ireland (such as *Bull Island*) also provide an indication of the popularity of the genre in this period. Importantly, cartoons also still remained an active genre for satire in this period, too, with popular TV series like *South Park*, *Family Guy* (Hughey and Muradi 2009) and *The Simpsons* (Gray 2006) all providing varying degrees of satirical commentary, with the latter being a standout example in this regard.

The advent of the internet provided yet another new horizon for satire to adapt to. Additionally, new creative capacities and possibilities were made widely available to the masses, who could now more actively engage in the production of satire in the participatory Web 2.0 (Chen 2016). For instance, sites such as YouTube lowered the barriers and gates associated with media production and permitted users to upload their own videos (da Silva and Garcia 2012). In light of its novel, devolved production, crowdsourced internet satire tended to be subversive in tone and featured high levels of intertextuality and creative

emulation—displaying a form of memetic logic (Chen 2016).

The term meme was first coined by biologist Richard Dawkins (2016 (1976)) to denote a cultural analogue to a gene: as a unit which transmitted cultural information and ideas from person to person, generation to generation and so forth. This process of transmission was likened by Dawkin to Chinese whispers (Denisova 2019). Some critics of the term (see Knobel and Lankshear 2007), note, with Dawkin's original use of the term, that there is some semantic overlap with other 'designations of cultural production: 'idea', 'pattern', 'tune', 'structure' and 'set.'" In the context of the internet, memes denote 'multimodal artefacts remixed by countless participants, employing popular culture for public commentary.' (Milner 2013: 2357) More colloquially, however, the term has become synonymous with what Chen (2016: 39) terms 'image-macros, which are pictures with text superimposed on them,' typically to communicate both humorous or political messages (Vickery 2014). Incorporating this from a discursive perspective, such memes are conceptualised here as multimodal, culturally- and genus-derived textual skeletons, which are fleshed out (and transmitted through time) by their creative reproduction by the masses. They are inherently intertextual, relying on their latent embeddedness in cultural contexts to achieve resonance and reproduction. This echoes Denisova's (2019) conceptualisation of memes as 'the context-bound viral texts that proliferate on mutation and replication' (10), but permits a more in-depth textual consideration of memes as texts which are (co)constructed in co-textual, discursive environments.

As conduits for (para)political messages, the socio-political dynamics of memes are reasonably well-documented in existing literature. Moreover, given the logic of participatory reproduction which underpins them, memes have been suggested as a viable means of enhancing online political participations (Heiskanen 2017, Milner

2013). This study's line of analysis differs from previous research foci insofar as the use of humour for political purposes—and the discursive and ideological effects this brings forth—is the topic of consideration. Given that political internet memes are both textual and visual, the multimodal adaptation of the Discourse Historical Approach and SM-CDS outlined in this dissertation's analytical framework is applied hereafter. The genealogy of a meme (Kennerly and Pfister 2018) must also be borne in mind during this analysis, as it largely correlates with the discursive notion of intertextuality (Krivestá 1967) and sets loosely defined parameters for potential mutations. In lieu of this, an analytical toolkit suitable for deconstructing memes as discursive events has been identified. However, beyond a simply subversive/elite dyadic understanding of the humorous purposes and functions of memes, this chapter requires a more theoretical understanding of the motivations and purposes of humour in general to inform its analysis of how it is operationalised in Irish republican memes. As such, the final part of this theoretical contextualisation will overview the dominant theories of humour to produce a potential array of uses, which will inform the analysis of republican internet meme humour. Whilst discussed as theories, the main goal of this discussion is to isolate the motivations postulated by each school of thought as a meso-theoretical integration into the DHA's analysis (Reisigl and Wodak 2016).

Humour has been theorised in three influential schools of thought, each of which posit conflicting motivations for its discharge (Chen 2016). The first of these approaches, known as Superiority Theory, contends that humour's primary purpose is to elevate one's own status (whilst simultaneously putting others down). The negotiation of humour and wit is seen as an arena of contest for the survival of the fittest (Ludovici 1932). Translating this to the present concerns: political actors on social media can employ humour to gain social capital, imbue their own identity with status or visibility, or to attract followers, etc. Or alternatively by representing a contentious political issue through a humorous frame which

accentuates their own perceived accomplishments and the alleged failures or shortcomings of their out-group(s) or adversaries. A second school of thought on humour posits that fears and anxieties brought about by mere existence and the realities and constraints of the social order cause a build-up of nervous energy in each individual (Penjon 1893). This Relief Theory of humours argues that this build-up necessitates some form of discharge or relief. Humour and laughter, then, act as a means of relieving tensions brought about by the rigid socio-cultural and legal constraints which individuals are forced to adhere to on a daily basis (Penjon 1893): a form of catharsis, a homeostatic state which provides a social mechanism for addressing these psychological ills. A final approach to the theorisation of humour, termed Incongruity Theory, can trace its roots back through history to the work of Kant (1987 (1790)) who conceived of humour as ‘the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing.’ (135) Or as Mindess (2017: 22) phrases it, being ‘led along one line of thought and then [being] booted out of it.’ In this perspective, humour has deep sociocultural roots: norms and values are established through inculcation and acculturation. Humour’s role is to then interrogate or violate these in a playful (predominantly communicative) manner. In this sense, humour is not derived from the juxtaposition of two conflicting cultural norms, but the audiences’ recognition and resolution of this. For the purpose of this project, another use of humour is added for consideration. There is ample literature (which is admittedly less polemic and dogmatic than the three previously mentioned schools of thought) which has begun to demonstrate the social role of humour (Radcliffe-Brown 1940). Emulating largely from sociological inquiry, this approach positions humour as a social lubricant which serves to ratify existing social structures, form affective bonds or achieve other social goals. As such, this approach does not focus on humour as an end itself. Rather, it foregrounds its functionalities and the social ends it is employed toward (Radcliffe-Brown 1940). Accordingly, socialisation is proposed here as a fourth potential mode of

employing humour. Emerging from this discussion, then, we can begin to produce a more holistic picture of humour as a field of inquiry.

For application to critical discourse studies, where power and identity are key foci, it is proposed here that these approaches are demarcated along two axes. The first axis gradates the power dynamic of each approach along the lines of vertical/ horizontal. As such, the status (or desired status) of the producer becomes the key focus here. Superiority theory accounts for usages of humour in which the producer (aims to) achieve an elevated status against their targeted audience. In a similar vein, but to a lesser extent, incongruity theory's take on humour requires the producer to hold an initial privileged position which is then lessened (although, not entirely eradicated) after resolution and recognition. Conversely, relief theory lists internal, psychological motivations as being the primary driver behind humour. Finally, whilst admitting that usages of humour to gain superior status is a social goal, socialisation here is used to denote uses of humour which serve to maintain horizontal bonds as opposed to the elevation of a particular actor. A second axis signifies the approaches' individual/social reliance: by this, I mean the extent to which it relies on the 'presence' of one or more individual(s). For instance, the logic which underpins incongruity theory can be arrived at internally and independently of others. Similarly, relief theory's release mechanism for internal energies does not rely on the presence of others. Conversely, humour that is employed for social purposes relies on its uptake and addressing to others in society. And, comparably, humour that is discharged with the intention of elevating one's own status requires the existence of others to assess your status against. These axes are best conceptualised as broad, functional modes of humour with which the present analysis can assess usages of internet memes.

This section has forwarded a number of points that will inform the analytical operationalisation of this chapter and the selection of data sites. Firstly, humour was identified as an area which was germane to entertainment and socialisation: the two key uses of Facebook identified in the previous section. Political humour—with a focus on cartoons, caricatures and satire— was then considered for both its subversive and elite functions, whilst a genealogy of political humour illustrated a clear relationship between form and technological affordances in each age. This genealogy led to the political internet meme being identified as a key site of crowdsourced political discussion in the 21st century. Furthermore, the political internet meme was identified as a suitable genre for the present research owing to its ability to embed political messages in popular culture and social currents, and its reliance on reproduction and mutation by actors of all status. Finally, a means of assessing the uses of humour with a specific focus on power an identity, was developed in light of a consideration of the major theories of humour. Prior to outlining how this will be operationalised analytically, the next section overviews data collection for the present chapter.

Data Collection:

The capacity for memes to embed republican discourse features into para-political contexts will be harnessed hereafter. More specifically, given the cultural generativity of memes, they provide a suitable loci of analysis for assessing how republicanism is reproduced in popular cultural contexts at the grassroots level. Although rarely a clear-cut distinction, crowdsourced memes are held here to embody more of a connective or synoptic logic, insofar as they rely on memetic reproduction and mutation by grassroots users. Accordingly, Facebook's Group function provides an ideal platform for the connective, crowdsourced production of socio-political memes. As such, a site where republican discourses were reproduced in humorous ways, where republicanism was not the main topic was

sought out. Thus, positioning the present chapter's focus on the fringe of the republican counter-public (if not bordering into other broader social domains). Toward this end, Ireland Simpsons Fans, a popular crowdsourced Facebook group for memes related to the popular satirical TV cartoon *The Simpsons*, was deemed to be suitable as a site which operated on connective logic and saw republicanism abound in a para-political modality. Moreover, as will be outlined in its presentation below, its popularity and cultural generativity are somewhat unprecedented.

A corpus of memes was compiled in light of a period of observation of the site, which further informed the researcher's understanding of its production and discourse practices. As criteria, at a minimum, data set memes from the sites were included on the basis they:

- 1) drew from popular culture
- 2) featured embedded republican messages
- 3) were satirical

Each meme in the corpus was then cleaned of personal identifying information (in particular where individual users were the author). The corpus was then tagged as ISF and memes within it denoted with individual numbers (eg, ISF1, ISF2 and so on).

Data Analysis of Ireland Simpsons Fans Analysis:

A number of factors must be taken into consideration when developing the analytical instrument for the present chapter. As outlined in the methodology chapter—and in keeping with the general abductive approach of CDS and its capacity for integrating meso-ranging theories to inform analysis of semiotic data,

this chapter's analysis integrates the above-mentioned insights from existing theories of humour. The two axes along which dominant theories were delineated in the earlier discussion will, thus, be used to consider the usage of political humour in each data set meme. Categories of analysis posited by the DHA are expedient in determining whether instances of humour are discharged to elevate or belittle others (vertical power axis), or whether they are intended to release pent up emotive responses or facilitate affective bonding between participants (horizontal power axis). As such, humour is considered largely in terms of its expediency to group identity formation processes. Moreover, the inherently multimodal nature of computer mediated communication necessitates an adaption the DHA's categories to account for non-linguistic content. By integrating inventories of analytical categories from other notable works which build on the same theoretical genus as the DHA—namely, van Leeuwen (2008) and Machin and Mayr (2012)—this chapter's approach mirrors other works which have broadened the analytical gaze of CDS to multimodal analyses of republican discourse (Goulding and McCroy 2020) and online nationalism, too (KhosraviNik and Zia 2014, KhosraviNik and Unger 2016). The same contextual layers of analysis identified in previous chapters are also considered hereafter: the socio-political/vertical context as well as the horizontal context of the site, its users and practices of production will be outlined prior to analysis of discourse fragments. In keeping with the broad two-step analytical trajectory outlined in the methodology, analysis will endeavour, firstly, to consider the discourse of republican memes in terms of the topics invoked by participants, and, secondly, the micro discursive and semiotic choices which are used in its construction.

Furthermore, as discussed above, the reliance of internet memes on reproduction and mutation also warrants a thorough consideration of their genealogy: viz. where a meme derives from, where it sources its cultural significance, etc. Beyond merely tracing a meme's roots, such a contextualisation also bares significance in

terms of an images' circulation—which Rose (2016) notes is key site of analysis in visual cultures – and its intertextual linkages, which is a key analytical component of literary and textual analysis. This level will be given specific consideration for each data-set image. Combining these layers in order from broadest to narrowest parameters of consideration, then, the analysis hereafter will undertake the following steps:

Data Site Level

- 1) Contextual Overview of Data Site
- 2) Practices of Production

Corpus of Images Level

- 3) Topical Analysis

Meme-by-Meme Level

- 4) Genealogy and Intertextuality of Memes
- 5) Micro Analysis of Discourse Fragments
- 6) Application of Dominant Theories of Humour

Presenting the data site:

Ireland Simpsons Fans (ISF) is a Facebook group page that was founded in January 2016 by two members of the student union movement in Ireland. The group, which allows users to contribute memes based on the popular satirical TV show *The Simpsons*, aimed to emulate many popular UK based Simpsons meme groups, adding a nuanced Irish twist—but has since surpassed its counterparts in terms of popularity. The page is a public group: meaning anyone can search and find it, and it is visible to search engines, also. The group currently has over 136,000 members and is run by a dedicated team of administrators and

moderators. Admission to the group requires users to submit a request to join which is typically approved in the same day. The page also has a public organisation profile on Facebook (with 16,000 likes), a Twitter account (with 71,000 followers) which shares some of its best content, and an Instagram profile (with over 20,000 followers). Moreover, the group page acts as a frequent topic of discussion on other popular social networking sites like reddit.com. Whilst it maintains a presence across several sites, the group page remains the main source of interaction and meme production, receiving over 500 submissions a day. Furthermore, the group is well known in Irish society and has been the subject of a number of media stories in recent years, as a result of its capacity to produce high volumes of satirical memes related to ongoing current affairs and Irish culture.

As such, ISF embodies distinctly connective and synoptic characteristics, which are mirrored by the sentiments of its moderators who note that in times of high political volatility, they anticipate high levels of submissions (dailyedge.com). In lieu of this, it stands out as an example of a bottom-up source of discourses, where political discourses and ideology become intertwined and embedded in cultural content and social commentary. Moreover, the page has, in the past, exhibited many viral characteristics and social influence beyond the parameters of social media. For instance, the group was a key driver behind getting the Wolf Tones' song '*Come Out Ye Black and Tans*' into the UK top 40 in January 2020 after a video of comedian Steve Coogan singing the song while in the role of stereotypical Irishman Martin Brennan on BBC's *This Time with Alan Partridge* went viral.

While we can draw a distinction between viral and memetic logics, in the context of Ireland, ISF remains largely unparalleled in recent years as a social-media based arena for social commentary and satire, and has a reach and influence beyond

virtual domains, exhibiting viral characteristics. This is perhaps signified by its production of apparel and merchandise, or its venture of becoming a political party in 2019 (which has yet to contest an election). For the context of this research, ISF remains an active source of meme-based social commentary which frequently relates to republicanism. But, more importantly, where republicanism is but one of many discourses and ideologies being circulated and reproduced through the group.

Practices of Production:

ISF acts as the central hub for an active community of Facebook users. In spite of already being a number of years old and only permitting original content Simpsons memes (*viz.* memes which build on something related to the show, not using Simpsons characters on other memes), the page still receives high daily volumes of new memes, with peak numbers reaching up to 500 submission per day. Users are required to agree to the following rules prior to joining:

1

Keep it original and keep it Simpsons

ISF is for OC Simpsons memes. Reference something that happened in the Simpsons rather than adding a Simpsons character onto a non-Simpsons meme. No shares from other pages, text posts, threads.

2

Your meme has been done

At peak traffic ISF gets up to 300 submissions a day - we realise you won't have seen them all. If your meme (or a very similar meme) has been done recently we will remove it to keep the page fresh.

3

No shilling

No trying to sell stuff or plug events, pages, groups (even if Simpsons related) without prior permission. Just PM the page and we'll usually approve it.

4

No soapboxing

eg We don't want posts that consist of an unedited still and an unrelated opinion in the caption, or your opinion typed onto Lisa's whiteboard, the bus driver's sign, etc.

5

Be nice, we don't tolerate abuse of any kind

If your post relies on putting down another race/sexual orientation/gender identity etc to make its joke it will be deleted. No harassment in comments (no lifting profile photos of other members)

6

Not getting/liking the joke isn't that funny

"I have absolutely no idea what's going on", "I don't get it" etc have been posted for every trend. If you don't like or understand a trend no need to meme about it.

7

PM the page, not the people

The page Ireland Simpsons Fans is the main admin account and is the only account you should PM with queries. Don't post about deletions or other admin decisions publicly.

8

Don't turn comment section into debates

If you want to counter a point do so with a Simpsons meme or reference. We will mute any members and delete comments as necessary.

9

Know the one that's one too many

If a trend drags on too long and clogging the feed we will start deleting posts to keep the page fresh.

10

Don't report a post just because you don't like it

If you don't agree with a post, just ignore it. Please only report posts to us if you feel they violate any rules above. Continued needless reporting may result in a ban. (ISF 2019)

As such, while being fundamentally crowdsourced, the page is also subjected to editing and gatekeeping which determine which memes stay on the page. This process is designed to ensure meme commentary stays fresh and original, but can also be exercised in content the page deems unsuitable. Whilst not outlined in the rules, the page indirectly promotes broadly left-leaning content related to social justice and often censors content which it deems to be offensive or harmful.

Moreover, it has actively denounced organisations which it (or more accurately, its administrative team) perceives to be an impediment to the introduction of a new social agenda in Ireland. For instance, it has in the past urged voters to vote against the DUP (for impeding abortion and same-sex marriage) and Aontú (for their opposition to the legalisation of abortion). As such, whilst the page itself permits (and indeed thrives on) commentary relating to/ originating from a number of political ideologies, it itself is not apolitical, and, thus, cannot be thought of as being totally objective. Moreover, it cannot be thought of as being

purely crowdsourced, with a number of censoring and filtering practices being routinely implemented. A recurring criticism of *The Simpsons* as a show relates to the hyperbolic assertion that it has covered or broached a massive number of social issues: giving rise to the adage ‘the Simpsons did it... (already)’. In this light, the structural necessitation of original content and inherently limited source data has given rise to diverse and creative practices of meme production. Whilst simple image macros comprise the bulk of contributions, the page also features frequent panel submissions (which require users to flick through memes in order, much like a story board), and, to a lesser extent, video memes. These communicative factors of censoring and filtering as well as the prevalent use of multiple channels of communication must be borne in mind for data selection and analysis.

The group’s content is quite heterogenous and subject to viral trends. Moreover, the memetic logic underpinning content production naturally leads to works of the same genus being reproduced in close temporal proximity. As such, some users integrate signifiers of content using conventions borne out of internet forums and other computer mediated communicative platforms. For example, the group actively tries to mitigate against ‘shitposting’—deliberatively obstructive commentary used to derail conversations—to keep interactions focussed and to censor any commentary that amounts to flaming or elides any *Simpsons* references. This term’s structure has since given rise to a convention where users signify the topic of their post followed by the suffix ‘-posting’ (often in hashtag form). For example, ‘Father Ted posting’ signifies the meme in question relates somehow to the popular Irish-based sitcom of the same name. Similarly, coronavirus posting denotes that the post relates to the covid-19 pandemic. The mutative reliance of memes and communal structure of the group naturally result in trends emerging within crowdsourced content. While the moderating team monitor trends with a view to ensuring that they remain fresh and original, some trends or motifs

frequently recur. One prime example which has gained some currency in the context of the group is 'big bag of cans' related memes. The bag of cans is an imagery invoked here to represent Ireland's thrift-oriented, pervasive drinking culture (a logic of as much drink as possible, for as cheap as possible). Moreover, literature which documents Ireland's active drinking culture (Wilson 2005, for example) suggests that a bag of cans is an image that will be relatable to Irish people from their teens through to adulthood. The point of isolating this specific example is not to bemoan Irish drinking culture, but more so to illustrate that, in the context of the group, recurring trends tend to relate to concepts which the group deem to be core aspects of Irish culture and society (its ills and graces). It is within this context that republicanism is best understood (in terms of its reproduction in ISF): as something quintessentially Irish, a part of the fabric of the Irish collective psyche, which frames collective understandings of (and reactions to) events. Alternatively, we can see republicanism as constituting a secondary discourse topic in the construction of this community's (humorously reproduced) national identities. Indeed, in this regard, it invokes what can be seen as 'externally' conditioned stereotypes of republicanism, mirroring the militancy foregrounded in reportage of the Troubles (see chapter 3).

Finally, the satirical nature of the group means that humour is often discharged with an intended target or subject of derision. Trends which hold a continued target (either individual or collective) are often signified with the suffix '_____ -bashing' (for example, 'Cummings bashing' to signify memes targeting the Prime Minister's former chief political advisor, Dominic Cummings). Of particular salience (and pertinence to this chapter) in this regard, is the trend of 'tan bashing', which, as the name suggests, builds on the pejorative term for the English (tan being the colour of the Black and Tans' tunic) and labels the practice of deriding the UK and British politics or society in general. This practice will be

considered again below in terms of the topics and targets it invokes, and types of humour it conveys.

Topic Analysis:

After observation, a corpus of memes was compiled using targeted searches and browsing. Owing to a diverse range of content found in this data source, targeted searches enabled the researcher to cut through unrelated memes and isolate those which dealt with republicanism. This process resulted in 17 memes being compiled for topical analysis. The results of this coding are listed in the below table:

Topic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
IRA	x	x	x		x	x							x	x		x	X	9
Gerry Adams		x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x				x			9
Tans/Brits/Other	x						x			x	x	x	x			x	x	8
United Ireland							x	x				x						3
History	x		x						x									3
Border Poll								x		x								2
Sinn Féin														x	x			2
Rebel Music													x	x				2
Bomb	x	x																2
Drink		x																1

Figure 82 – Topical Frequential Analysis of Ireland Simpsons Fans

The above illustrates the extent to which crowdsourced republican memes in ISF rely heavily on actors. This would seem to fit with the genre of Simpsons memes which, in drawing image macros from a cartoon, lend themselves to character substitution. Memes in ISF invoke the IRA as the main organisational front of republicanism. Furthermore, Gerry Adams is frequently invoked as the main ‘face’ of republicanism, and has, as later analysis will explicate, achieved folks

status in the Irish meme-sphere. His questionable past is a frequent source of humour in the group, as well as his (denied) relationship to the IRA. Also identifiable from the above is the prevalence of ‘tan bashing’ in these republican memes which frequently hold an anti-English/British (tans/Brits) sentiment or target specific UK-aligned actors (such as Thatcher). Republicanism appears in proximity to other Irish cultural pursuits (drinking and rebel music), and in relation to violence (bombing) and the past (history). Taking the above in aggregate, one can begin to develop an overall impression of how republicanism is discoursed in the group: as a social movement associated with the IRA/Sinn Féin and Gerry Adams, and a violent, shady past. But also as akin (or at least related to) aspects of Irish culture like music and drinking. As such there were mostly positive representations of republicanism included, with some memes also targeting republicanism itself. Using the topical coding as a basis for selection, the above corpus was whittled down to a representative down-sample of 6 memes, which was demarcated for meme-by-meme analysis on the basis of representativity in respect to the above topics. These were: ISF1, ISF2, ISF5, ISF8 and ISF16.

Meme-by-Meme:

Figure 83 - ISF1



Genealogy:

This meme is constructed on a snapshot from the Radio Bart episode (season 3 episode 13) of *The Simpsons*. The snapshot paraphrases the character Jasper Beardly whose original quote expressed delight at a ‘old-fashioned hole digging’. The snapshot has since been used as a meme which expresses positive sentiment toward a recurrence of phenomena associated with the past (often in a nostalgic way).

Discourse Analysis:

In its presented usage, the producer has associated the bombing campaign orchestrated by the provisional IRA in the late twentieth century as something which the general Irish populace can hark back to and recognise. The producer’s tagline signifies that it is in response to the discovery of an alleged New IRA mail bomb plot in March 2019. As such, the meme humorously conveys a sense of intrigue on behalf of Irish people who—whilst not necessarily supportive of the new attacks—can associate it with the spectacle and spectre of previous bombings.

Of note here is the abbreviation of IRA to simply RA (which is typically pronounced as opposed to spelt out). This term, again, harks back to the Old IRA and has since become a short-term referential for all violent manifestations of republicanism that claim lineage to the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Fenianism. This contrasts with the referential in the tagline of ‘dissident’ republican which is a specific term used to denote the various factions of the republican movement which did not subscribe to the peace agreements (Goulding 2022 forthcoming). As such, through the use of this referential, the producer signifies different temporal spans in which republican violence emerged. This contributes to the overall sentiment of the meme, which humorously broaches the idea that republicanism is atavistically reverting back to its violent past.

Theories of Humour:

Relief theory can provide some insight into how humour is discharged in the above instance. In one sense, the producer is suggesting that the relative dearth of republican bomb scares in the post-conflict gives rise to feelings of relief (or nostalgia) when news of a contemporary bomb emerges. This, however, clearly contravenes the a more orthodox perspective that bombings of any kind are egregious violations of social boundaries. As such, humour is also derived from the socially taboo nature of this humour, and the incongruity of espousing such unorthodox cultural values, too.

Figure 84 - ISF2



Genealogy:

This meme derives its macros from a short cutaway gag, used to signify a recollection, from the Homer's Night Out episode (season 1 episode 10) of *The Simpsons*. The original sequence mimics an old-timey silent film score, with accompanying piano and shows Homer passing Moe's tavern, pondering to himself that 'Hmm. Perhaps I will wet my whistle' before entering and ordering a beer. The sequence then cuts away to a screen which reads 'scene missing' before cutting back to a bizarre scene of homer frolicking around a poll with woodland creatures. The original cutaway builds on a phenomenon colloquially known as 'blacking out'—large gaps in one's memory resulting from excessive alcohol consumption. As such, this meme has been adapted to build on the humorous aspects of blacking out and debauchery.

Discourse Analysis:

This particular mutation of the meme—labelled ‘Gerry the biopic’—uses the sequence to outline a satirical take on Gerry Adams’ political career. Re-labelling the sequence ‘Gerry’s Night Out’, the sequence depicts a specific representation of Adams’ head edited onto Homer’s body. He passes a tri-colour clad bar named ‘The RA’—here used to signify the same entity outlined above—before pondering to himself ‘Hmm. Perhaps I’ll bash some tans.’ This is a clear reference to the practice which emerged from the group and refers to the expressing/enacting of anti-English sentiment. The next two snapshots show Adams downing beers accompanied by marked IRA volunteers before cutting away to a screen that reads ‘scene missing’. The next snippet is a screengrab from another episode of the show (Homer vs the Eighteenth Amendment, Season 8 Episode 18) in which a stereotypical representation of a British pub—signified by the name ‘John Bull’ (a historical folk figure used to personify the UK, in particular England)—is blown up. Moreover, the stereotypical British meal of ‘Fish and Chips’ also signifies this as a stereotypically British setting (Machin and Mayr 2012). The crime in the initial episode was committed by drunken Irishmen, however, in the re-ordering and meshing of the slides in this instance, Adams was responsible for the act. As such, the meme humorously invokes a mixture of stereotypical and specific representations to broach the issues of Adams’ questionable past and opaque relationship with the Provisional IRA. Of note, too, is the conflation of Irishness as being not-British, and the mapping of republicanism onto an Irish form of ethnicity, aspects not typically found in contemporary republican discourse of elites.

Theories of Humour:

The subversive nature of political memes naturally lends itself to expressions of frustration or the derision of (the limitations of) existing social structures. As such, many of the data-set memes feature recurring expressions of frustrations at the realities of partition and Irish history. This meme, yet again, embodies this trend

by showing the protagonist as desiring fun or enjoyment—which is conflated here with the practice of ‘bashing tans’ and bombing British pubs. Outside the confines of this group, such humour would prove to be divisive. However, in the context of ISF, such humour is commonplace and, in part, derives from the implicit knowledge that content such as this meme, resonates *within* the community. As such, the incongruity of republicanism (or more specifically the assertion that republicanism is incongruous with contemporary political correctness and institutions) acts as a source of much humour. Finally, this meme refers to a specific out-group over its course, as do others elsewhere in the corpus. As such, humour is derived from elevating the community of ISF in contrast to those they choose to deride.

Figure 85 - ISF 5



Genealogy:

The next down-sample meme presented for analysis is ISF5. This meme takes its macro from season 10 episode 2 of *The Simpsons*, *The Wizard of Evergreen Terrace*. The macro is taken from a scene in which Homer visits the Thomas Edison Natural Historical Park museum. During the visit the tour guide approaches a door behind which he states is Edison's preserved brain. Unlatching the connector of a rope which cordons the door off, he states that 'ordinarily, folks, tour groups are not allowed to see it.' He then swiftly re-attaches the rope and concludes by saying that 'and of course, today will be no exception.' As such the original macro leads its audience down a path of expectancy only to have this dashed at the final juncture, and it is frequently re-appropriated in memes which serve this purpose.

Discourse Analysis:

Again, this mutation of the meme draws on a specific representation of Adams' face being superimposed onto a character's body. The meme simply refashions the first line of the macro to read 'Ordinarily, folks I wouldn't admit to being in the Ra'. As such the meme makes explicit reference to the charge that is often levelled against Adams (that he was a leading member of the PIRA). In this sense, in the meme, Adams is flaunting something which is held to be a form of common knowledge, but is yet to be confirmed by admission. Thus, it relies heavily on an epistemic context which presupposes this insider's perspective.

Theories of Humour:

As with its genus macro, this meme derives humour from an abrupt dismissal of a hinted revelation. Therefore, incongruity theory can enable us to understand how the author leads the audience to expect one thing, but then ultimately delivers another, anti-climactic resolution. Yet the meme's socio-political significance results from the fact that it is used to broach an issue which is quite controversial. The question of Adams' past is frequently mentioned in the media and used to delegitimise the contemporary political efforts of provisional republicanism. However, in this context, it is humorized as a form of 'in-joke', where the community 'knows' the truth and humour derives from a brief, passing mention of this knowledge. Importantly, there is a notable absence of stigma or reverence for victims in doing so, again empirically corroborating the capacity for humour to negotiate contentious topics in public domains.

Figure 86 - ISF8



Genealogy:

The next data set meme is taken from season 11 episode 10, Little Big Mom. In the macro, Homer is skiing when he is approached by his neighbour Ned Flanders who is wearing a new red and blue, skin-tight ski suit. He remarks that the suits 'allows for maximum mobility.' And that it feels like he's wearing 'nothing at all.' As a macro, this meme has been mutated primarily through re-workings of this final caption.

Discourse analysis:

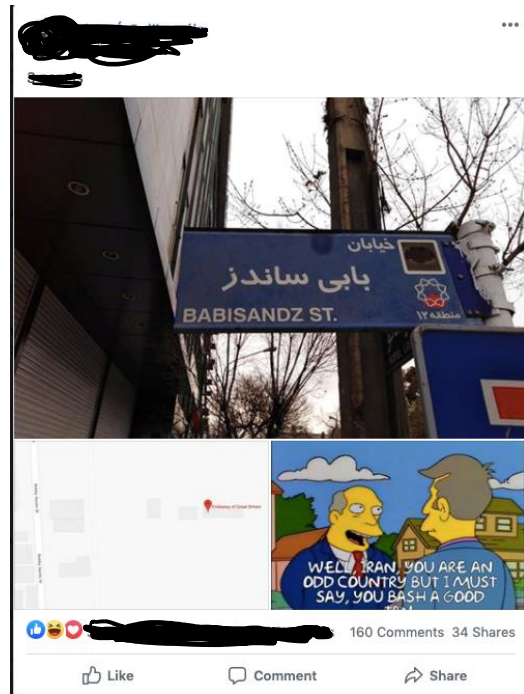
In the present mutation of the meme, Flanders' suit has been recoloured in line with the potent cultural codes of Ireland: invoking green and orange to denote a sense of Irishness (Machin and Mary 2012). Moreover, Flanders' face has been

edited over with a Cartoon likeness of Gerry Adams. The caption, then, humorously plays on the original by stating that this is Gerry's new 'United Ireland suit' which 'feels like there's no border at all'. As such, the meme uses humour to broach the issue of Irish unification (a central ideological concept) and the border (a peripheral one) in a way which viewers of *The Simpsons* can relate.

Theories of Humour:

Humour in this instance derives from the refashioning of a popular image macro into political commentary and the audience noting the incongruity of Adams' cartoon representation in place of Flanders. Moreover, the meme builds on the idea that the structures of partition are a source of frustration for participants which can be eased by unification. Thus, republicanism's ideological tenets can be seen to be negotiated in the group through the above type of memetic humour.

Figure 87 - ISF16



Genealogy:

The final meme for this chapter is a panel series, two of which are not taken from *The Simpsons* and will be overviewed below. The final panel is taken from the 22 Short Films About Springfield Episode (Season 7 episode 21) in which Superintendent Chalmers compliments Principal Seymour Skinner by stating that, although he is an odd character he has a proven ability to cook steamed hams (a humorous term Skinner coined for hamburgers). Mutations of this meme pivot around the node of 'Steamed ham' as a playful way of intimating that something is contrived/ deceptive, etc., in particular where one actor is trying to sell its legitimacy. Moreover, Chalmers' compliment has been mutated to deride compliments made by prolific actors.

Discourse Analysis:

The above meme panel begins with an image of a street sign in Iran which is named after republican hunger striker Bobby Sands (spelt out phonetically in the Greco-

Roman realisation of Iranian). The second panel is an overview of the street from Google maps which illustrates the streets' proximity to the British embassy in Iran. The final slide is a refashioning of the image macro which rephrases Chalmers' original words to read: 'Well Iran, you are an odd country, but I must admit you bash a good tan.' This makes clear reference to the practice of Tan bashing which emerged in the group: both humourizing and normalizing it as a practice. Moreover, it frames the decision to position the street close to the British embassy as purposive and deigned to convey an anti-British sentiment. Again, this meme implicitly draws ethnically demarcated identity boundaries between 'us' (the Irish) and 'them' (the British/Tans). Similarly, we can note the recurrent conflation of republicanism with this Irish in-group, and the predominance of ethnic identity frames.

Theories of Humour:

Given the clear focus on an external Other from which humour is derived, this particular meme exhibits strong characteristics of superiority theory. As outlined above the practice of Tan bashing is a communal endeavour which emerged connectively through the group and is legitimated by the group's function as a space of satire and also Ireland's history of colonial oppression (and resistance). As such, expressions of anti-English sentiment both vent frustration at the structures of partition whilst also acting as a means of socialisation in creating lateral, affective bonds built on a practice which emerged from the community.

Discussion:

Expectedly—given the selection criteria—the data set memes featured a core of republican related topics: such as Irish unity, Irish history and the Irish Republican Army. Topical identification of discourses of republicanism in other alternative media reveals a disparity in relation to the genre and function of texts

(Goulding and McCroy 2020) and the results from the current sites seem to corroborate this finding. The data contained a core of republican-esque topic which correspond to the visionary model, collective memory and chief militant actor of republicanism during the 20th century: suggesting that it is an essentialist version of republicanism being reproduced through such memetic discourse. Significantly, participants were also shown to rely on negative-Other representation in their memes. The visual techniques used in memes are overviewed in more detail below. However, at a topical level this fact proves insightful insofar as foregrounds the extent to which the memes target others or derive humour from elevating oneself (or one's in-group) against an external other. The targets invoked typically related to popular and recognisable opponents to republicanism such as rival political parties or key anti-republican politicians. This again points toward a reduced narrative of republicanism that plays out in these memes: they form a discourse world in which the ideology plays out through its key figures and one which elides historical complexities. As such republicanism is associated with the past violence of the IRA and or its leading politicians who, in essence, act as paragons for the wider movement. Thus, the proliferation of ethnic frames and the foregrounding of aspects of republicanism that the movement actively tried to mitigate against (see chapter 3) suggests a reduction of communicative control on behalf of centralised republican actors in memetic, peripheral discourse spaces like ISF.

Yet, this does not mean that such elite actors do not feature in this discourse. Whilst some memes in the corpus made reference to other actors, in the context of Irish republican memes, no figure is more central than former President of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams who features as a recurring theme throughout both sites (featuring as the second and eighth most salient theme in each corpus). Taking the genre of a meme into consideration, this pattern begins to make sense. Where memes rely on visual narration (like those which build on *Simpsons* image macros)

characters become key devices through which information is conveyed. As such, employing easily identifiable and diverse characters which embody the core components of a political ideology enables new modes of communicating and deriding political ideologies or their opponents (comparable patterns of representation can be found in Communist related memes where Karl Marx is frequently invoked). This point seems to be furthered by the fact that Adams has achieved quasi-folk status in the contexts of the Irish republican social media sphere: in part due to his Twitter antics, but also due to the popularity of his 'character' being frequently embedded in republican memes as the face of the movement. Moreover, this pattern has continued in practice after his resignation and succession. As such, the ability for its key actors to withstand this memetic reproduction over time, as well as the demonstrated capacity for such memes to negotiate and discuss stigmatised aspects of republicanism, are key insights from the perspective of this research.

Finally, from topical analysis, users were shown to employ memes for what can broadly be assigned as responsive commentary: viz. where memes are used to respond to social events etc. Whilst this responsive capacity is the focus of the next chapter, it suffices here to say that memes (which are easy and quick to produce) are frequently used to provide humorous commentary on (ongoing) political events. Thus, republicanism can be seen to be topically pertinent to much of the discussion within ISF, which itself was chosen for its cultural generativity in Irish society. The picture emerging from a topical consideration, then, is one which paints republicanism in a reductionist light: one which is boiled down to its core visions, collective past and key actors. Moreover, the analysis proved insightful regarding the relation of republicanism to Irish society and culture in the context of Irish memes. Whilst topical analysis alone is unable to flesh out these claims, contextual observation and further discourse analysis revealed that republicanism is held to be fundamental aspect of Irish society, akin

to Irish drinking culture or its religious past. How these (historically conditioned) components translate into the 21st century becomes a key source of humour. Taking these points—the reductionist and essentialist nature of representation and the formative relationship of republicanism to wider Irish society—in tandem, it can be concluded that republicanism is subjected to stereotyping and the perpetuation of stereotypical myths associated with the movement. Some of which can be linked to external imageries conditioned by hegemonic efforts during the Troubles (see chapter 3).

Meme producers draw on a wide variety of creative visual techniques in constructing their memes. The textual components of memes are quite sparse and, as such, communication is inherently multimodal. Furthermore, the mutative logic of memes entails a reliance on creative adaption. As such memes in the data set, whilst relying heavily on their macros, chiefly gain significance and meaning through adaptations in text and image. Some of the adaptations noted in the corpus were the usage of specific representation (van Leeuwen 2008) of Adams (mainly through cutting and pasting his head onto image macros), but also, through the creative adaption of potent cultural symbols and codes: like the Irish tricolour scheme which can be frequently identified in memes (Machin and Mayr 2012). While comparably scant, the textual components of memes were largely communicated using a colloquial Hiberno-English vernacular with many contentious lexical items being discoursed. As outlined above, the frequent use of the word ‘tan’ as a pejorative term for the English/ British stands out as a good example of how the Irish meme-sphere pushes the boundaries of what is linguistically/ socially acceptable. Finally, memes by their very nature are limited: part of their meaning derives from the fact that they build upon the same core text or draw from the same source material. As such, creative techniques to convey temporal flows were also identified, predominantly in the Ireland Simpsons Fans group, which frequently used voiced-over videos or panelling of

memes to communicate non-static messages.

Existing theories of humour also proved insightful in assessing individual memes in terms of how their humour targeted others or facilitated the maintenance/production of horizontal bonds. Analysis of each down-sample meme revealed a diversity in humour in regards to these two factors in both data sites. At a surface level, this suggests that humour (or more accurately, its underlying logic) does not change on the basis of visibility or power. Essentially, in the context of these memes, humour is used to target others and create social bonds irrespective of power status. That said, the communal nature of Ireland Simpsons Fans meant that it was, naturally, home to more instances of humour which sought to create affective, inter-user bonds. Interestingly, however, Ireland Simpsons Fans was also host to more instances of humour which sought to elevate the producer's (in-group). This emerged at least in part due to the popularity of the practice which became known as 'tan bashing': as such, superiority-oriented humour became enshrined in practice, and couched in ethnic frames of nationalism not routinely found in elite republican discourse. A recurring note in the analysis of each meme was their capacity to channel frustration or voice pent up negative energy resulting from a non-republican *status quo*. By this I mean that memes frequently derided the social realities of partition and British colonialism. Humour often aims to reveal the hypocrisies or perceived illogicality of such aspects of imperialism. This has the effect of positioning republicanism against these arrangements and structures. This point is also furthered by insights afforded by incongruity theory. Humour is frequently sourced from positioning republicanism (its codes, values and actions) as taboo or gauche in the context of mainstream social arrangements, civility and decorum. The incongruity of such an act in the public context of Irish life acts as the source of humour. This frame is repeatedly up-taken and reproduced in memes, seemingly mirroring the republican tendency to discursively position itself as a movement on the

periphery of centres of power and as a threat to the *status quo*. While the latter is a discursive strategy employed by key republican actors, the reproduction of this humorous frame seems to communicate a similar sentiment: that republicanism as an ideology is incompatible with the current social structures. In spite of being chiefly (re)produced by grassroots activists and being para-politically embedded, the message conveyed remains quite simplistic: that republicanism is an affront to contemporary social arrangement, yet remains as a residual aspect of Irish culture, inherited from the nation's gloomy past.

Having considered the foci of each of the contributory research questions, all that remains for this chapter is to return to the two central questions posed in the introduction of this chapter, beginning with the effects of humour on republican discourse. A recurring point in analyses of discourses of republicanism is that they tend to be quite formulaic (Goulding 2022 forthcoming, Filardo-Illamas 2013). Humour, then, acts as a means of diversifying content and innovating the textual practices which sustain such discourses. Moreover, discourses of republicanism can be delineated along a broadly positive/negative dyad. However, the subversive potential of republican internet memes is not limited in gaze to state structures. Rather, humour opens up the potential for republicanism to become the target of derision or satirical critique within the same co-textual contexts. As such, humour has the effect of making republican discourse less formulaic and rigid, and more susceptible to play. This point must be caveated by reference to the previous paragraphs, however, which revealed that in spite of this potential for critique, republican memes invoke similar topics and themes as non-humorous republican discourse and also construct a largely ethnic relational dynamic between republicanism and Irish society. The value of humour, then, lies in its ability to communicate below the threshold of perception: for it to convey inherently political messages under the guise of ethnic humour—bringing the political into the para-political domain. This naturally lends itself to a broader appeal. As such,

humour has a dynamic relation to republicanism: on the one hand it has the effect of increasing the reach and appeal of republicanism, but also, as potentially delegitimizing it and relegating it as an artefact of a troubled national history.

Finally, then, we can conclude that republicanism interacts with mainstream social currents like humour in manner indicative of a movement that is modernising, yet historically bound to the past and indelibly impressed in Irish culture. On the one hand, actors reproduce and mutate popular cultural forms to communicate messages which propagate republican ideological concepts. Yet, simultaneously, they deride republicanism as archaic and weighed-down with historical baggage. This brings with it both positives and negatives from the perspective of republicanism and its implicit critique: while more people are engaging with republican discourse, it also increases the potential for more negative discourse, too. Put simply, with increased reach and resonance, comes an increased potential for critique. As such the analysis seems to point toward the idea that discursively positioning itself on the periphery of centres of power is a strategy which allows republican actors to exert control over its own communication and claim a sense of difference from the communication of other actors. This privilege and control seems to dissipate in mainstream sites where higher numbers of participants engage in the discourse and reduce it to a simplistic, yet humorous form. Yet analysis showed that negative memes were very much in the minority, suggesting that for now republicanism is positively evaluated in the context of the Irish meme-sphere and is, at the very least, seen as a vehicle for subversive satirical critique and integral part of Irish society.

TWITTER HASHTAG ANALYSIS

RF3 - *how republicanism's ideological principles inform the day to day (re)actions of its grassroots*

The focus of this dissertation, on spaces of republican discourse that are marginalised from the republican counter-hegemonic centre, has seen the previous chapters draw data from sources which were purposively maintained over time as sites for topical discussion or participation in memetic and viral satire. This chapter takes a different approach insofar as it examines how discourses of republicanism are reproduced and re-contextualised in online spaces *in response* to unfolding political events in an *ad hoc*, ephemeral space of interaction. Drawing data from Twitter, a popular microblogging platform, this chapter examines how republican social media users aggregate their voice online in response to real world happenings (Bruns and Burgess 2011, 2015). These responsive communicative endeavours are highly affective (Papacharissi 2015), and embody connective characteristics (Bennett and Segerberg 2012), as such an analysis of these discursive events can provide insight into how participants reproduce republican discourse in their day-to-day routines. More critically, it can illuminate the peripheral and adjacent ideological concepts which participants reproduce in within these discursive events. As such, insights elicited can further be applied to an assessment of how (if at all) republicanism's rigid communicative structure and discipline influences these *ad hoc* instances of republican discourse. Integrating keyword analysis and corpus linguistic tools (cf. Baker 2012) into its analytical framework, this chapter aims to answer the following central research

questions:

Research Questions:

Central:

- How do republican social media users aggregate their voice in response to unfolding political events?
- How do republicanism's central ideological concepts respond or alter (if at all) to socio-political stimuli?

Operational:

- What topics are invoked by discourse participants? And what ideological concepts can be deduced from these?
- What can analysis of the lexical construction of key topics/concepts reveal about republicanism's response to political events?
- To what extent are top-down discourses reproduced in these spaces?
- What discursive features are invoked by individual users to (co)construct meaning in these discussions?

The chapter begins with a general overview of the site, before outlining republicanism's interactions with Twitter. Disparities in visibility and engagement on the site, as well as more critical interpretations of its ideological functions, are then discussed and used to inform the chapter's theorisation of 'republican Twitter' as a discursive arena. Methods of collecting and cleaning data are briefly surveyed, with special focus given to the keyword search-based sampling adhered to in this chapter. The hashtag #irishunity is then analysed with a view to addressing the above questions. Finally, insights are overviewed in the chapter's closing section.

Overview of Twitter:

Twitter is a for-profit, microblogging social networking site that was launched in the USA in 2006 and is currently headquartered in San Francisco, California, but has since opened offices throughout the globe (Weller et al. 2014, Rogers 2014). Although not a static indication of its current status, the site's Alexa Ranking positions it at as the 40th most popular site on the web (Alexa.com), with its 330 million users (oberlo.com) spending an average of 12 minutes per day on the site (a relatively high amount in comparison to other sites such as #19 Reddit.com (5:54) and #24 Blogspot.com (3:42)). The platform permits users to share short blog posts, or 'tweets' from individual profiles to profiles of those they have connected with (their followers), who then have the ability to engage with the tweet in various ways (more below) (Asynchronicity). As such it operates on a one-way transmission model, insofar as users communicate on a message-by-message basis where 'the receiver does not typically have any indication that the sender is composing a message until it is sent and received' (Herring 2007: 1) (Transmission). Moreover, tweets form a persistent transcript insofar as they do not self-delete (Persistence of transcript).

Twitter permits users to operate either public (open and accessible to all) or semi-public/ protected accounts (accessible only to those you have permitted to follow your profile). Whilst operating on an asynchronous communication model, like most popular social networking sites, Twitter has become renowned for its ability to provide near instantaneous commentary on events in analogue contexts: (Papacharissi 2015, Rogers 2014, Weller et al. 2014) A capacity demonstrated by the fact that it often acts as a source of information for journalists (Broersma and Graham 2013). Tweets were initially limited to a maximum of 140 characters; however this was doubled to 280 characters in 2018 (Rogers 2014) (Size of the

Buffer). Tweets can also include multimodal material such as (links to) videos, images, gifs and other interactive functions like polls and questionnaires (Channels of communication). Tweets from followed accounts appear to users via their Twitter feed page (essentially a home or landing page for the site), and users can engage with these tweets by signifying approval (known as liking), re-sharing the tweet from their own profile—with the capacity for another tweet to precede it— (known as retweeting). The order of user's feeds is determined by a blend of (reverse) chronology and algorithms (Schmidt 2014). Users may also engage in keyword search whereby they use a hashtag (#) to aggregate contributions based on a thematic node. A complete overview on how hashtags are used is beyond the purview of this section, however, more information on their usages related to advocacy and campaigns is provided below and informed by the typology forwarded by Saxton et al. (2015). For now, it suffices to say that hashtags can be used to signify pertinence to a given topic⁴² or to respond to unfolding events⁴³. Popular hashtags from a given geographic area are listed on users' feed pages to provide them with an indication of general Twitter discourse that day. Finally, users can also use the less popular direct message function, which enables one-way non-public messaging between individual accounts.

Overview of 'Republican' Twitter:

This section outlines the discursive field of 'republican Twitter.' However, doing so necessitates that we firstly arrive at an understanding of the term. At one level 'republican Twitter' can be taken to denote the sum of all statements related to republicanism on the site. In this project, a core feature of discourses is that they

⁴² For example using #Brexit to intimate a connectedness to wider public discussion on Brexit

⁴³ For examples #PMQs is used frequently by users responding, often in real-time, to unfolding Prime Minister's questions in the UK House of Commons

are defined as being related to a macro topical node. In this sense, user-generated tweets and content relating to Irish republicanism form a discourse. However, at another level, the term republican Twitter can also be taken to signify those which sustain this discourse: the users and the activists whose commentary comprise it. At this level, the constituent elements of republican Twitter are its actors: the collection of individual, networked-Selfs which, through dialogue, interaction and consolidation, form a communicative nexus. Synthesising the two, we see that republican Twitter simultaneously denotes group of republican Twitter users *and* the ideologically cogent and cohesive voice they collectively produce. As such it is a form of political discussion ‘brought into being by the agency of ... a set of individuals, who draw from specific social and symbolic capital, to summon audiences through text’ (Omanga 2017: 178). Hence, it embodies the deliberative and discursive formation of a public’s opinion whilst also accounting for ‘the totality of those actors more or less directly participating in these processes of public opinion formation.’ (Celikates 2015: 159) In this sense, republican Twitter is conceived of as being a digital public which Omanga (2017: 178) suggests is ‘constituted through and in relation to texts; it is neither a social totality nor a bounded group, but a discursive space existing by virtue of being addressed’.

Yet this does not paint a full picture. Following Fuchs (2017), we understand Twitter to be a domain in which the hegemonic order is reproduced and a channel for dominant ideologies to be circulated and reproduced by the general⁴⁴ public sphere. This does not seemingly fit with the voice produced by republican Twitter, however. Republicanism, and its virtual manifestations, are inherently counter-hegemonic. Republican actors position themselves on the periphery of political centres of power. Its overarching ideological message preaches

⁴⁴ General is used here to differentiate from republican Twitter and its position in the republican counter-public.

revolution and wholesale social and civic upheaval of existing state structures. Its ideology challenges, in open polemic, the legitimacy of all national institutions on the island (Kee 2000). As such it cannot be thought of as ratifying the existing hegemonic order. Rather, republican Twitter capitalises on the capacity for alternative media to be used to foster self-organisation, open participation (Sampedro 2018, KhosraviNik and Unger 2016, Miladi 2016) and to legitimate counterhegemonic discourses (Goulding 2022 forthcoming). Republican activists openly use social media to question the validity of states and their actions. As such, they embody an intrinsically counterhegemonic perspective in the context of the Irish/British public sphere. Such an understanding of Twitter-specific media activism reconciles with our previously established understanding of broader republican media activism as a counter hegemonic public (Hoey 2018, Fraser 1992).

Further to this, we can infer that this public is subject to power asymmetries related to visibility and following (Fuchs 2017). That is to say, republican centres of power in analogue contexts will, most likely, receive high visibility in virtual media ecologies, too. Moreover, it would be naïve to assume that republican Twitter did not succumb to the same pitfalls associated with general political discourse on social media. As such, we can infer that most of the interaction will be conducted by a disproportionately small minority of users (with most users simply consuming information) (Jungheer 2016). Moreover, such virtual loci of political discourse tend to not produce meaningful debate and exchange of viewpoints, rather, they have a propensity for developing into echo chambers (KhosraviNik 2017b), where users seek out (affective) consolidation (Papacharissi 2015) and validation of predisposed political tendencies and beliefs (Kulshrestha et al. 2017). These last points indicate a potential pitfall regarding the representativeness of data for the present chapter: ensuring horizontal representativeness over vertical (KhosraviNik 2017a) and assessing the sources of

discourse features, too (i.e. are they disseminated on a top down power trajectory?). Measures invoked in producing a down sample are laid out hereafter. Before this however, a very short overview of republican Twitter, in terms of its actors and visibility, is provided. Cha et al.'s (2010) three proposed variables are employed in informing the scope of this discussion: i) popularity in terms of number of followers, ii) the social value of content in terms of retweets, and iii) the name value or number of likes associated with a given account.

Actors with symbolic and material status in analogue republican contexts form loci of public interaction in the context of republican Twitter. That is to say, the Twitter accounts of real world republican centres of power are the core sites of dissemination and communication in republican Twitter. For instance, Sinn Féin's account (@sinnfeinireland) has 126,000 followers at the time of writing and receives high levels of retweets and favourites on a daily basis. The party's president Mary Lou MacDonald (@maryloumcdonald, 116,000 followers), deputy president Michelle O'Neill (@moneillsf, 58,000 followers) and ex-president Gerry Adams (@GerryAdamsSF, 181,000 followers) illustrate the tendency for elite actors of republican Twitter to exhibit celebrity-like patterns of visibility, following and (self) representation (Marwick and Boyd 2011b) in the digital public sphere. As outlined in chapter 2, 'republican' is a title claimed by a number of (opposing) political movements and organisations. This heterogeneity is mirrored in republicanism's virtual contexts with non/elite actors from centre right parties (like Fianna Fáil), civic nationalists (like the Shared Ireland initiative), provisional republicans (such as Sinn Féin) and more dissident factions of the ideology (Saoradh, for example) intermixing and interacting on the site. In spite of their differences, as outlined above, taken in the wider context of Twitter as a whole, these actors can be thought of as constituting cogent, public voice: broadly promoting the same message, united by the same stance, etc. The methods adopted hereafter in attempting to deconstruct this message and

understand how it adapts and responds to unfolding political events are laid out below.

Data Collection:

This thesis broadly focuses on the discursive means through which non elite members of a counter hegemonic public construct (and legitimate) their own submission to dominance and identification with the collective. As such, from the perspective of data, focus *has* to remain on sites of bottom-up discourse where grassroots interactants have equal access (and, ideally, comparable visibility). Moreover, the current chapter's aim is to understand how (if at all) republican values, objects and actions (as they manifest in social media activity) respond to analogue socio-political developments. As such, a core theoretical distinction introduced in chapter four must be revisited presently: that between vertical and horizontal context, as they were conceived of for SM-CDS by KhosraviNik (2017a). In light of this, down sampling for this chapter strived to ensure that horizontal contextual representativeness (in terms of reach and participation across users and discourses) was linked to the vertical socio-political context of participants. Accordingly, this section outlines how a method of collating commentary on political events produced by individual republican social media users within a given time frame was developed and applied hereafter.

As outlined in the previous section, offline republican centres of power hold high visibility within republican Twitter: enjoying high followings, reshares and favourites (Cha et al. 2010). As such they can be thought of as loci of power within republican Twitter, toward which grassroots users will inevitably gravitate. Therefore, the first step toward producing a down sample was to observe these accounts for a short period of time. This observation provided the researcher with an understanding of the daily practices of production for these sites, but

also—and somewhat more importantly—this enabled the researcher to identify grassroots republican user accounts (aggregated as likes, reshares and positive comments on elite actors’ pages). Literature surveyed previously indicated that such users will most likely be supportive of (or non-conflictual toward) these elite accounts (Kulshrestha et al. 2017), and potentially be engaged in reproducing these ideological messages themselves as part of the vocal minority of users that actually produce political discourse (Jungherr 2016). Furthermore, we can hypothesise that the commentary of these users is highly affective and politically charged (Papacharissi 2015). As such, these users (and their interactions) were invaluable in conducting the second phase of preliminary analysis, which involved undertaking a retrospective examination of their feeds in order to identify key topics and themes of debate (paying special focus to those which related or responding to real world events).

This step afforded the researcher insights relating to bottom-up practices of production, scripts and codes of participants, but also relating to topics of salience with republican Twitter which informed the third phase of sample production: keyword searches. While a focus on individual accounts is conducive to insights regarding contextual information, it is wholly unsuited to producing data which guarantees horizontal representativeness. Put simply, focusing on individual accounts cannot provide a proper indication of exactly *what* many users were saying (in a collective voice) at one particular time. As such a means of aggregating such conversations was required. Thankfully, Twitter features such a function as part of its structure: the hashtag, a widely used feature on the site (Weller et al. 2014, Halavais 2014). The functions (and its political usages) are outlined below, before the remainder of this section turns to an overview of hashtag isolated for analysis hereafter and the methods employed toward this end.

Of the many communicative conventions of Twitter (such as favouriting, retweeting or ‘facilitating @replies), the hashtag feature is arguably its most impactful in terms of socio-political functions (Konnolly 2015) and ‘cultural generativity’ (Bruns and Burgess 2011: 3). Beginning in 2007, the hashtag convention developed in order to channel individual accounts into new shared publics (Halavais 2014). By placing a hash symbol in front of a keyword users indicate their tweets’ relatedness to a topic and effectively compile meaningful lists, related to topical nodes, which are retrievable to all those with public accounts. Therefore, they are indicative of users wanting their tweets to form part of a wider, non-centralised discussion that is aggregable via searches and, at one level, can be seen as a means of addressing ‘an imagined community of users who are following and discussing a specific topic’ (Bruns and Burgess 2011: 4). Apart from being used to assert identity and social affiliation of the networked self (Papacharissi 2015, Konnelly 2015), hashtags have also been conceived of by researchers as conduit for constructing issue-oriented publics (Bruns and Burgess 2011, 2015, and Kelsey and Bennett 2014). In this light, the communicative formations produced by hashtags can themselves also be thought of as publics, insofar as they are ‘formed, re-formed, and coordinated via dynamic networks of communication and social connectivity organised primarily around issues or events rather than pre-existing social groups’ (Warner 2002, cited in Bruns and Burgess 2015: 7). As such, hashtag searches produce sites of discourse which are privileged in terms of focus and content: regarded in this light, they are ideal loci of analysis for the present research.

One final but important distinction in regard to the present chapter’s understanding of digital publics is that between *ad hoc* and calculated publics, as postulated by Bruns and Burgess (2011) and (2015) respectively. The authors note that hashtag publics can (and do) form from the bottom-up in response to events, but that, often, a digital public’s self-perception is moulded by exogenous

influences such as algorithms (Gillespie 2014). Moreover, and in keeping with critical scholarly work, societal institutions and elite actors engage in these publics inevitably introduce ‘an additional layer of coordination and institutionalisation to the hashtag, not destroying or displacing the collective activity that constituted it, but most definitely shaping and curating it’ (Bruns and Burgess 2015: 26). As such, they ought not to be understood as entirely free from regulation and influence, and in some instances, can be thought of as being ‘calculated.’ Accordingly, at a macro level, the analysis hereafter considers the extent to which elite actors propagate messages and drive social currents in these purposive discussion spaces.

Two more insights related to hashtags ought to be introduced here prior to analysis. The first relates to the use of hashtags for campaigning, advocacy and social movements. At face value, as a communicative apparatus, the hashtag can be seen to fulfil different functions: to persuasive (*#voteleave*), promotional (*#Bernie2020*) or simply denotational (*#Wimbledon*). Whilst these may often overlap, it is important to develop a means of categorising these to determine what functions they fulfil when invoked by republican social media user. Saxton et al. (2015) document various functionalities of hashtags used in health advocacy campaigns. Although it emanates from a different domain, the authors’ typology of functions is useful for the purposes of the present chapter insofar as it provides researchers with a means of categorising the uses of hashtags by organisations and actors involved in advocacy (Saxton et al. 2015). Secondly, as discursive events, hashtags can be graded in terms of their collective-connective character (Bennett and Segerberg 2012). That is to say, some hashtags (and their collective reproduction in virtual spaces) derive from a process of centralised consultation, whereas others abound with no orchestration, where users reached a ‘quickly reached consensus’ (Bruns and Burgess 2011: 1) and respond synoptically to events (Kelsey and Bennett 2014). Acknowledging that this last

distinction (and indeed the general categorisation of hashtag functionality) is blurrable, the researcher resolved to identify a hashtag that was primarily connective and synoptic in character, to assess the putative diffuse communicative discipline of participants in responsively reproducing republican ideological concepts.

Subsequent to the secondary phase of preliminary observation, a list of keywords/ hashtags which were frequently identified during observation was produced. Considering this list on the basis of representativity and pertinence to the research questions, #IrishUnity was identified as a sufficiently popular and connective hashtag that was apposite to the present research's focus on republican ideology. A three-month time frame (28.02.19 to 28.05.19) was retrospectively isolated for analytical purposes. Given this chapter's focus on the ways in which republican discourse is reproduced in response to political happenings, the chosen timeframe corresponds to a series of important political occurrences (some expected, others unanticipated) which relate to the republican movement and its agenda. For instance, the allotted time-frame encompasses the planned date of the UK withdrawal from the EU, general elections in the UK, local and European elections in the Republic of Ireland, as well as the murder of journalist Lyra McKee in Derry by a dissident republican gunman. Whilst these events and the corresponding time-frame have been purposively selected, the adoption of a three-month search parameter is to ensure that the boundaries the cross-section under analysis have not been cherry-picked.⁴⁵ Advanced and focused keyword searches of #IrishUnity were conducted. The results feed page was scanned for veracity, before relevant user-generated textual content was scraped using a purposively designed Python web scraper. These data were then compiled

⁴⁵ In other words, the choice to operationalise 'monthly' units of measurement is deliberately arbitrary, so as to avoid a biased demarcation of a temporal span, which would taint data transparency.

into a corpus (initially as MS words files) and cleaned for anomalies and incongruities. Finally, this file was converted to .txt format. Multimodal data collection is discussed prior to its analysis.

Data Analysis:

Following the methodological steps adhered to in previous chapters, the following analysis undertakes two broad analytical phases: 1) topical thematic analysis (of what users are discussing) followed by 2) subsequent micro-analysis of discourse fragments (or how they discuss it). As with each site, however, Twitter presents its own nuances and pitfalls to researchers. For instance, the expansive, asynchronous layout of the site (and its microblogging format) means that it can prove difficult for researchers to keep abreast of all interactions within a time frame. While the hashtag function can aggregate utterances related to a topic, it does little to reveal what other topics or discourses users chose to introduce into their contributions. In lieu of this, a means of gaining a thematic overview of user-generated content related to these hashtags was identified required. Accordingly, corpus linguistic methods were synthesised into the chapter's analytical approach.

By compiling all aggregated user-generated content from within the allotted time-frame as a corpus, horizontal representativeness (among users) is ensured. To facilitate an identification of themes and topics within a corpus word-frequency analysis, AntConc concordancing software (see Anthony 2006 for overview) was employed. The produced frequency lists allowed the researcher to attain a general sense of the aboutness of the corpus (Baker 2006) and avoided limitations of researcher bias and fatigue in deducing topics associated with solely qualitative observation. Secondary to this, analysis of clusters and concordance lines enabled the identification of prospective areas of interest (Baker et al. 2008), allowing a

more thorough investigation of topics (and their discursive realisation) in the corpus. Although, corpus linguistic techniques enrich macro-analytical perspectives, when data are removed from their original contexts a trade-off occurs in terms of the depth of insight. As such it is prudent to compliment macro analytical approaches rooted in corpus linguistic techniques with close, qualitative analysis. Moreover, a corpus approach is purely textual in its focus and prohibits analysis of multimodal materials disseminated via Twitter's many potential channels of communication (Herring 2007). As such, the secondary phase of this chapter's analysis will draw on a representative down sample of tweets taken from this corpus. The methods and criteria employed in producing this sample are outlined in lieu of findings from the first phase below. Prior to analysis, a brief (horizontal and vertical) contextualisation of the hashtag is offered –paying particular attention to its connective origins— before its practices of production are discussed.

#IrishUnity Analysis:

Presenting the sub-sample:

#IrishUnity, most fundamentally, denotes the visionary model of Irish republicans and nationalists. In this sense, it fulfils what Saxton et al. (2015) term a values and goals function, where a tweet captures and reinforces the core message of an organisation (or in this case a wider ideology), what they term their 'ultimate strategic goal.' (13) However, given the communicative context in which the hashtag was (and still is) (re)produced, it can also be seen to promote and raise awareness of the perceived benefits of a united Ireland. As such it can also be taken to fulfil a public education (Saxton et al. 2015) function, too.

Given the hashtag promotes a primary aspiration of republicans and nationalists

since partition, it is unsurprising that its usages on Twitter stem back to early 2010. Moreover, it is equally unsurprising that the early usages of this hashtag emanated from personal accounts or vociferous, small-scale political commentators which ‘represent a small, nonrepresentative, politically interested, and partisan subgroup of the public’ (Jungherr 2016: 84) and cannot be taken as being symptomatic of a wider public demand. Owing to limitations of Twitter’s API, a comprehensive, quantitative overview of the hashtag’s usages is regrettably prohibited. Interestingly, however, from its first usage identified on Twitter, the hashtag has been associated with Sinn Féin. Jungherr (2016) notes of Twitter usages during political campaigns, that the invocation of political hashtags tend to spike in response to socio-political stimuli from the real world during ‘days of high public attention on politics.’ (84). As such, the simple, unambiguous message of #IrishUnity means it provides a good means of examining how the central ideological concept of Irish republicanism responds to unfolding political events, as well as the adjacent and peripheral concepts that are recontextualised in micro-contextual interactions relating to unfolding events, and which participants see fit to introduce.

Practice of Production:

The earliest usages of #IrishUnity cannot be interpreted as collective or strategic in their intention. Rather, the hashtag abounded naturally (perhaps with some connective logic) in Irish political discourse on Twitter owing to the fact it denotes a core concept of the Irish political landscape. Connective logic may have seen its usages increased in response to the electoral rise of Sinn Féin and a growing demand for Irish unity⁴⁶. The below diagram provides a categorisation of the dominant users of the hashtag in the time frame under consideration.

⁴⁶ Again, this point is difficult to assess owing to limited search parameters of Twitter’s API. However, systematic reviews of literature pertaining to Twitter usage during election campaigns suggests that such

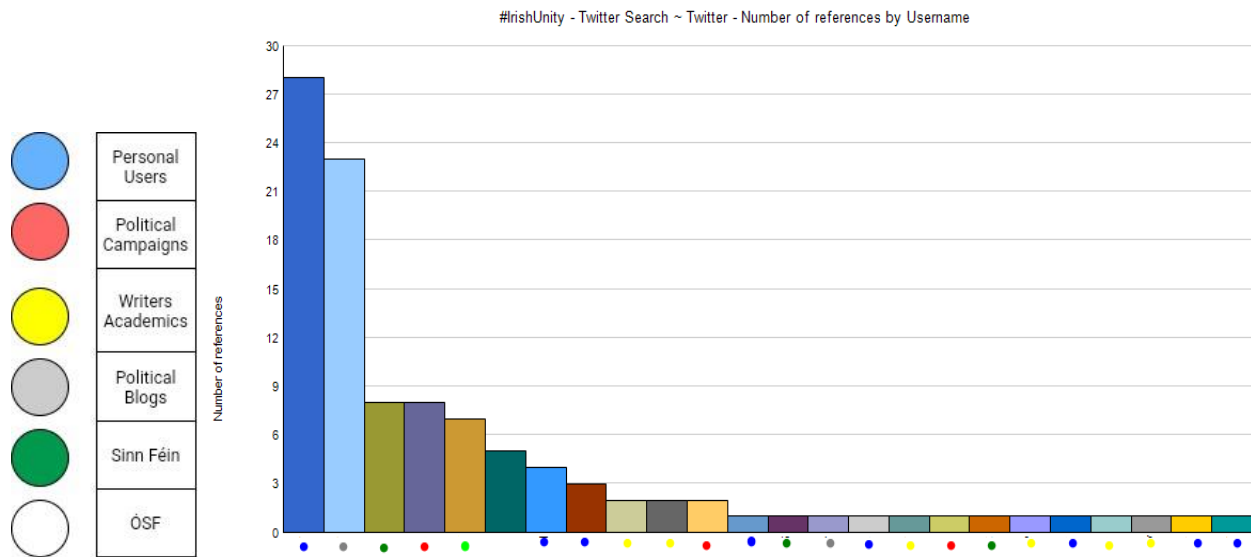


Figure 88 – #IrishUnity Social Network Chart

In line with AoIR guidelines, user’s Twitter handles have been removed to preserve their anonymity. An analysis of the above graph shows that #IrishUnity was predominantly used by personal users (signified above by blue dots) who shared the hashtag’s values and ideals. It also received references in the Twitter feeds of media publications, podcasts and political blogs (grey dots), with the most prominent being the *Share Ireland* podcast, the second most frequent invoker. Expectedly, Sinn Féin representatives, activists (green dots) and the party’s youth wing, Óghra Shinn Féin (white dot), also regularly used the hashtag, as well as a number of other political campaigns (red dots), the most significant in this regard being the Yes Unity campaign (fourth most frequent reference), which is the united Irish left’s campaign for Irish Unity. Finally, the hashtag received

value- and issue-oriented hashtags are invoked more frequently due to higher public attention on political developments. (Jungherr 2016)

repeated references from political commentators, authors, writers and academics (yellow dots) such as Kevin Meagher, author of *A United Ireland: Why Unification is Inevitable and How It Will Come About*. As such, we see that Fuchs' (2017) contention that analogue centres of power hold increased visibility in virtual contexts is borne out by further investigation. Moreover, from the above, we can begin to gauge the levels of interaction with the hashtag, but also the prototypical account categories which engage it. In this light, it seems to follow international trends of political hashtags with 'most [users] contributing very little and few contributing very heavily' (Jungher 2016: 84). As such, the above can only be thought of as listing those with power 'within' (Fuchs 2017) a given virtual socio-political context. In this sense, it provides a good illustration of key stakeholders related to the concept of Irish unity and those who contribute heavily to its debate on Twitter. However, it must be conceded that this does not paint a complete picture of hashtag uses. For instance, the majority of tweets in the corpora came from personal users, not accounts from elite, visible actors. To elicit representative insights about the hashtags' usages it will be necessary to provide a deeper level of topical and discursive analysis, as offered in the next section.

Word Frequency Analysis:

The below table outlines frequencies of the most prevalent lexical items within the #IrishUnity corpus, which comprised 14981 tokens and 3008 word types. As in the previous analysis, the cut-off point for consideration was set at 0.2% of the entire corpus, or n=34 in this instance.

Word	Frequency
IrishUnity	497
Is	206
Ireland	169
Irish	124
Brexit	119
Be	113
This	83
Time	79
Will	76
Rights	64
No	62
Unitedireland	61
Think	60
Are	59
Unity	59
People	58
Not	52
Can	51
Equality	51
Have	51
British	49
Borderpoll	46
Has	43
United	42
Border	40
DUP	40
All	39

But	38
Poll	38
Vote	38

Figure 89 – Frequency List of #IrishUnity Corpus

Conceptually and thematically the corpus centres around Irish unity (n=497), predominantly being expressed in its hashtag form. Intuitively, Ireland (n=169) and the Irish (n=124) are constructed as the corpora’s deictic centre (Filardo-Llamas 2013) and collective in-group/ ethnic identity with both being somewhat synonymous with the ‘people’ (n=58), whose wishes and collective aspirations are captured by the hashtag. There is a notable lack of institutional actors for this group in the corpus. Rather they are constructed in equal power dynamics: as a homogenous, congruent, national collective. The ‘British’ (n=49)— which as later collocation analysis will reveal are frequently institutionalised in their construction—and the DUP stand in contrast to this group. And their most salient objects are held to be both pertinent (and potentially conducive) (Brexit n= 119) to, yet also impeding (border n= 40), Irish unity. The juxtaposition of big institutional actors and nations being pitted against a loosely defined collective is a prototypical transitive frame adopted in nationalist and populist political discourse. Such a vertical power dynamic legitimates resistant actions against what are perceived to be oppressive measures being foisted upon a particular group.

This contrasts to the in-group objects which appear as aspirations/ objectives as opposed to possessed, tangible objects and are seen as a means of addressing materialistic and social deprivations brought about by partition. For instance, Borderpoll (n=46) and Poll (n=38) (both of which appear frequently in hashtag form) are frequently invoked as peripheral concepts or means of rectifying the social wrongs of partition and attaining the visionary model of a united Ireland.

Similarly, aspirational values –most prominently rights (n=63) and equality (n=51) –are represented in the corpus as being incompatible with partition and only attainable through unification. The prevalence of these hashtags in the corpus suggests that the in-group’s (re)actions are conferred with legitimacy by abstraction to moralised discourses of (in)justice (van Leeuwen 2008) and, by correlation, delegitimizing the actions of others.

In the corpora users espouse the value of voting (‘vote’(n=38)) as a means of bringing about desired social change. Subsequent concordance analysis can delve deeper into what this might entail and which actors are legitimated (and the reasoning for this). Expected high frequencies of existential verbs can also be identified along with the high salience of ‘have’ (n=51), pointing toward the adoption of an archetypal materialistic frame of nationalist rhetoric. Interestingly, the high frequencies of can (n=51) and will (n=76) suggest that enacting change is possible (Pearce 2014). Assessing the temporal span of the user’s constructed programmatic model is difficult owing to time (n=79) being the only temporally related lexical item in the frequency table. However, of pertinence to the present chapters focus is the high frequency of Brexit (n=119), which has become a key variable in the debate surrounding Irish unity, and a peripheral concept to republicanism. Finally, the frequencies of other campaign and value hashtags which have been referenced by users—namely #borderpoll and #unitedireland—demonstrate a programmatic objective and visionary model of the users, and reaffirm the typical, leftist republican values and goals espoused by the hashtag.

Cluster Analysis:

To identify key thematic foci within the corpus, cluster analysis with a span of 5L and 5R (that is, five words either side) was conducted. Only items of pertinence to current chapter’s focus on responsive tweets to political events have been

included below, as well as those which deal with core aspects of the wider ideological schema.

Irish Unity:

i) Left:

Irish Unity (24)	Irish unity is coming (7)
Irish Unity Border Poll (5)*	Irish Unity Brexit (5)*

*hashtag form

Figure 90 – Irish Unity Left Collocates

Analysis of the lexical space to the right of ‘Irish Unity’ can provide insights into topics which participants saw as pertinent to introduce into the debate on Irish Unity, and their underlying attitudes toward unification in general. A certain expectancy of unification is identifiable within the corpus (Irish Unity is coming n=7), which is mirrored in the high levels of modal verbs (such as can and deontic uses of will) in the word frequency analysis (see Pearce 2014 for more). Clear indications of the hashtag being used in response to socio-political stimuli is evidenced by the collocations of #borderpoll and #Brexit (both n=5). This suggests not only that participants make a conceptual link between the two, but have also sought to aggregate conversations between both concepts via hashtags.

ii) Right

Referendum on Irish Unity (13)	Borderpoll for Irish Unity (8)
Time for Irish Unity (5)	Think32 (8)

Figure 91 – Irish Unity Right Collocates

As the above demonstrates, the lexical space to the right of Irish Unity features high frequencies of programmatic steps to bring about unification, namely referenda and border polls. The relatively high frequency of ‘time for Irish unity’ (n= 5) also begins to expand on the temporal span which was left nebulous by the topical word frequency analysis. Unsurprisingly, participants perceive the need for Irish unity to be an immediate one. Finally, the various interdiscursive links to campaigns identified in the topical analysis indicates that as a connective values and goals hashtag it is applicable within other (perhaps more collective) environs, too.

Ireland:

Analysis of the lexical field to the right of ‘Ireland’ follows formulaic patterns of existential and predicative construction. The lexical field to the left, conversely, reveals a variance in referential strategies used to denote the island, which indicate participant’s ideological perceptions of the nation, its boundaries, and their aspirations for it moving forward.

United Ireland (32)	New Ireland (10)
Island of Ireland (9)	

Figure 92 – Ireland Collocates

In the corpus, ‘United Ireland’ is the most frequent left-based cluster, with (a humorously appropriate) 32 references. This, along with ‘new Ireland’ (10) shows the prevalence of the republican and nationalist visionary model within the data, which is iterated and reconstructed consistently in republican discourse. As identified in other analyses of republican discourse (Goulding 2022 forthcoming,

Filardo-Llamas 2013), the term ‘island of Ireland’ (n=9) is used as a preferred term among republicans to signify a homogenous national unit that is congruent with natural boundaries and elides any mention of what republicans perceive to be a border implemented by a foreign government. As such, participants appropriate natural geographical boundaries to textually demarcate a sovereign deictic centre for their in-group. Collocative analysis of ‘Irish’ supports this mode of identity construction with ‘people’ (n=6) being the most popular collocate after ‘unity’.

Brexit:

The attributive space to the right of ‘Brexit is’ (n=7) sees participants employ a number of negatively evaluative predicative strategies to delegitimize and denounce Britain’s exit from the European Union (interestingly, 6 of its 7 usages appear in hashtag form).

ese applications aren't from Irish Nationalists. # **Brexit is a terrible** idea for #NorthernIreland, and this is a hardening of the border, # **Brexit is fundamentally incompatible** with the Good Friday Westminster giving POV that one impact of # **Brexit is likely to be increased demand** for Pandora's Box once, if ever, # **Brexit is out of** the way. Unionist are \xC9ire renewing diplomacy with Wales. If **Brexit is the disaster** we all expect, relations mmons #Westminster #Labour #UK The problem with # **Brexit is the lack** of democracy in #London 7ZH For us, the worst part of # **Brexit is @theresa_may** defecating on the \x91

Figure 93 – Sample Concordance Lines of Brexit

Similarly, participants use Brexit as a constituent of delegitimizing compound noun phrases, as in the below table. The accumulative effect of this construction is that the UK’s exit from the EU is delegitimized, but also problematised as being a messy affair, with negative ramifications for the people of Ireland. As

previous analysis in this chapter has revealed, republicanism (and its programmatic model) are held in the corpus to be resolute of this ‘mess’ (n=2). As such, in addition to being seen as a farcical mess, Brexit is also seen as an opportunity to the anti-imperialist actions of republicanism to unfold.

Brexit Mess (2)	Brexit Farce (2)
-----------------	------------------

Figure 94 – Collocates of Brexit

Time:

In the data, participants perceive the need for Irish unity to be an immediate one. Analysis of the lexical space to the left of ‘time’ reveals prototypical existential construction where participants state that it is time for the values and goals they are advocating to be realised. Interestingly this combination can simultaneously act as a call-to-arms function, as in certain instance below examples taken from concordance analysis of ‘it’s time’ (n=28)

UK can leave for all I care. **It's time** for a #BorderPoll on #IrishUnit @
not? Shouldn't even be a border **it's time** for #Irishunity #\xC9irexit #Ireland #
Barrier. We need a referendum on #IrishUnity - **it's time** for the people of northern
. We've already lost many EU citizens. **It's time** that every nation of this
THERE TOO FOR AN #IrishUnity & A #BorderPoll, **IT'S TIME** THE I.R. IS UNITED
TOO FOR AN #IrishUnity AND A #BorderPoll, **IT'S TIME** THE IRISH REPUBLICANISM IS UNITED
's economy to the tune of billions. **It's time** we started talking about and

Figure 95 – Sample Concordance Lines of It’s Time

This immediacy is also found in analyses of the lexical space to the right of ‘time’. In order to ascertain which values and actions are being promoted in this

immediate temporal span, the collocates ‘time for’ (n=20) and ‘time to’ (n=12) Examination of concordance lines ‘Time for’ (n=20) produces an indicative list of immediate objectives, aspirations and social change-related goals, in which referenda, border-polls and the concept of (re)unification feature prevalently.

#Brexit #IrishUnity #Politics #HasMayResignedYet	Time for a border poll. #IrishUnity #Think First
leave for all I care. It's	time for a #BorderPoll on #IrishUnit @columeastwood @Richa
\x92t convince you it\x92s	time for a #BorderPoll and #IrishUnity, you\x92
ol of OUR destiny. #Scotref #IrishUnity #Welshre	Time for a national discussion on #IrishUnity, involving
will not be left behind again #YOURWORDS	time for a referendum on #IrishUnity https://www.
the UK get on with their #Brexit	Time for a referendum on #IrishUni Please can
le lot. #ItsTime #IrishUnity #Think32 #BorderPo	Time for #irishuni Love the desperation. #IrishUnity's
what the game is up move on	time for #irishunity #BrexitShambles clueless DUP Alan Par
as much right to vote in Ireland	time for #irishunity #EQUALITY on votes in #32 Bye,
luck with that party in England scary.	Time for #IrishUnity https://medium.com/@SJHolloway/this-
remaining in the EU and #IrishUnit #NoDirectRule	time for #irishunity Mayhem is right (looking forward
ntrimmp @paulgivan @little_pengelly @eastantrimmp	time for #irishunity On #irishunity No one speaks
start planning for #IrishUnit For @M_AndersonSF,	time for #IrishUnity People on the island of
tottaly lost the plot It really is	time for #irishunity to shut these #FakeNews fools
't even be a border it's	time for #Irishunity #\xC9irexit #Ireland #Scotland #Isleo
what a Constitution means... It\x92s	time for #2ndRepublic Then #Uni l\x92d
need a referendum on #IrishUnity - it's	time for the people of northern Ireland to
Irish Unity centre stage, it\x92s	time for the planning& activism to deliver a #
support of #IrishUnity \x96 it\x92s	time for unity! #T\xE132 #Time4Unit #IrishUnity
tish independence referendum in 2020 @LeoVaradkar	time for you to stand over your words

Figure 95 – Sample Concordance Lines of Time For

Likewise, analysis of ‘time to’ (n=12), can reveal the actions which participants perceive to be necessary to attain/bring about these social changes. As illustrated below, verbs related to anticipation and planning are employed by participants to communicate the necessity for preparation.

empire offer Unionism anymore?? It's future
 and politically it makes sense for reunification. **Time to choose your children's** future
 to park sovereignty question has never worked. **Time to #EndPartitio** The Last Gasp of Northern
 , there has never been a more apt **Time to face up** to that and look
 That should keep us in the EU **time to get involved** Can't wait
 @DUP @NigelDoddsDUP @GRobinsonDUP @DianeDoddsMEP **Time to get ready** for #Irishuni I'm
 on the island. It can be don **Time to leave** 1690 and move with the times #
 not be protected in a British parliament **Time to make plans** for an Irish unity
 for a referendum for a United Ireland . **time to plan and** debate for a referendum
 is past it's sell-by date. **Time to prepare for** #IrishUnity #time4uni Try
 is reason @theresa_may #brexit plan failed. **Time to reboot** this beautiful island of ours,
 don't think it's **Time to rething** how the rest of UK
time to talk about #IrishUnity or #ScottishIndependence A

Figure 96 – Sample Concordance Lines of Time To

Finally, an interdiscursive link with the time4unity campaign was also identified. This campaign, similar to the one under analysis in this section, acts as a call to arms and values and goals hashtag that mirrors the sentiments expressed by #IrishUnity. Source analysis for this hashtag reveals that it was frequently shared via accounts directly related to or supportive of Sinn Féin.

British:

Referential strategies employed by participants in the construction of British/out-group actors follow patterns identified elsewhere in critical analyses of republican discourse (Goulding and McCroy 2020, Goulding 2022 forthcoming, Filardo-Llamas 2013). In contrast to the lateral power dynamic evident in participants self-construction of the in-group (people etc.), representations of the out group are institutionalised insofar as the entire entity (nation state, people, actors etc.) are homogenised and signified through metonymic referentials. The British state (n=3) and government (8) (and their actions) are pitted against the Irish people (and their desires/goals/values).

British government (n=5)	British govt (n=3)
British state (n=3)	British Imperialism (2)

Figure 97 – 2N-Grams of British

This juxtaposition again confers legitimacy to those being subjugated (and by correlation, delegitimizes the oppressive actions of the institutional actors atop the hierarchy). Whereas the resistive actions of the in-group were situated in the justificatory framework of republicanism, the oppressive actions of Britain are delegitimized through abstraction to discourse of imperialism which, owing to historical grievances, connotes negatively in the socio-political context of Irish republican Twitter.

Vote:

As identified in the earlier topical analysis, various actions and stepping stones to bring about Irish unity are promoted in the corpus. Unsurprisingly, these relate mostly to political processes such as advocating for a border poll (n=15), but also the act of voting. Source analysis of these tweets reveals high frequencies of vote (n=38) emanating from Sinn Féin candidate or related accounts and endorsing predominantly Sinn Féin candidates, although there were some instances of SDLP support. This suggests that these hashtags have acted as indirect channels for pushing party-political programs, again demonstrating the capacity for overtly party-political manifestations of Irish republicanism to filtrate into supposedly nonpartisan fields of discourse in which broad ideological concurrence can be expected. These usages of vote appear predominantly as imperatives ('vote for' n=16) with the space to the right of the term being populated with political

parties, candidates and values and goals hashtags outlined above.

better society for all. On May 2nd
Sinn Féin is now a
SF posters beside your Polling Station. A
#IrishUnity Seven in 10 Irish adults would
the DUP's antics, would now
May 2nd vote for a new Ireland.
2019/ .@moneillsf with @FrancieMolloy casting her
tereach Council today in this historic election!
news to him a overwhelming majority would
be radical and inspiring. A majority will
Ireland that will be negotiated when 50%plus 1
itizens agree. Referendum on #IrishUnity? Another
#IrishUnity in Clonoe today Today you can
one of us are called upon to
ishUnity as envisaged under the Proclamation Every
polling day. Come out on Thursday and

vote for a new Ireland. Vote for an
vote for a ring-fenced agreed new
VOTE for a SF candidate is advancing the
vote for a #UnitedIreland #IrishUnity #Think32 #ThinkE
vote for a #UnitedIreland #IrishUnity #Think32 #ThinkEq
Vote for an Ireland we can be proud
vote for #Equality #Rights #IrishUnity in Clonoe today
Vote for #Equality #Rights #IrishUnity on 2 May! #SF201
vote for #IrishUnity Canvassing in Clanna Rury for @
Vote for #IrishUnity by 2023 #Think3 There's a
vote for #IrishUnity Democracy wins. I am English -
vote for #IrishUnity in the oven, baby number 3
vote for REAL change! For #NoReturnToTheStatusQuo For equa
vote for reunification.#IrishUnity Its come to a
vote for Sinn Féin is now
vote for your local candidates #Equality #Rights #IrishUni

Figure 98 – Sample Concordance Lines for Vote For

Insights uncovered through the above cluster analysis will be re-visited shortly.

Prior to this, the second, multi-modal analysis of data is outlined below.

Down-Sample Production:

To ensure representative nature on behalf of the tweets considered hereafter, the following criteria were used to guide the production of a representative down-sample for analysis. At a minimum, tweets within the corpus were considered in they:

- 1) used #IrishUnity
- 2) responded to political events
- 3) were used by high and low visibility actors

and

4) used multimodal communication

A sample of 5 tweets was identified on the basis of meeting these criteria and is analysed below. These have been labelled UI1-UI5 respectively.

Discourse Analysis:

Figure 99 – UI1



The first tweet for consideration came from the former Sinn Féin MEP for the Northern constituency of Ireland, Martina Anderson's Twitter account. The tweet documents an event organised by Ireland's Future, a self-described discussion group which is not affiliated with any political party and promotes a non-partisan brand of civic nationalism. Held in the republican stronghold of

Newry, the event was part of a number organised across the island and was heavily attended and promoted by Sinn Féin members and featured speakers including Colin Harvey (pro-unity Professor at Queen's University Belfast) and Emma DeSouza (whose partner's legal fight for citizenship received high levels of media coverage).

The image choices omit any specific representations of individuals, and instead provide homogenised shots of groups, connoting strength in numbers (van Leeuwen 2008). Otherwise, the text is relatively sparse in terms of analysable semiotic choices and effectively it acts as a values and goal hashtag which ties Sinn Féin (its aspirations, programs etc.) to the cause of civic nationalism. As such, this tweet demonstrates the capacity for such non-partisan hashtags (and wider campaigns) to be appropriated by political actors. In this sense, hashtag publics created by connective logic can be targeted as loci of interaction by elite actors to channel messages with broad ideological appeal or republican valence issues.

Figure 100 - UI2



The second tweet in the sample comes from an elected Sinn Féin representative, Caoimhe Archibald MLA. The tweet is one of many in the wider corpus that emanated from a Sinn Féin related account and featured the Irish Unity hashtag in this timeframe. Significantly, the bulk of tweets in this period—in particular those around the time of the elections—came from partisan accounts. The temporal and transitive frames identified in the topical analysis can be seen also be identified here, with positively connoting verbs being used to construct a sense of continuance to political programs. The author states that the party will ‘continue’ to ‘work’ and ‘deliver’ into the future, which again is positioned as the temporal span in which these goals and aspirations, in this case ‘equality’, ‘rights’ and ‘a new Ireland for all’ will be achieved. A populist power dynamic is also borne out in this example where the author represents the party as ‘stand[ing] up’ for ‘the people’, again positioning Sinn Féin on the side of ‘the people’ at the bottom of an oppressive national hierarchal structure.

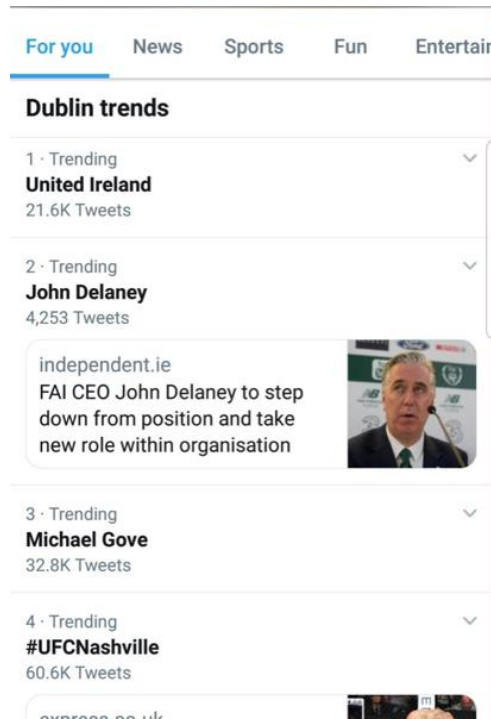
The choice of ‘continue’ again reproduces an archetypal aspect of republican discourse insofar as it presupposes the existence of work done prior the utterance. This is significant in the context of republican discourse as it is often invoked by political actors to foreground their legitimacy as the successors of the republican movement (Goulding 2022 forthcoming).⁴⁷ Similar uses have been identified in analogue republican discourse by Wilson and Stapleton (2017), suggesting that this is a recurring discourse feature. The material deprivations

⁴⁷ For instance, Sinn Féin related actors make reference to their past political successes to confer legitimacy over their dissident counterparts, whereas dissidents often self-identify as the continuation of real republicanism that has not compromised on its values. This is captured for instance in the name of the Continuity IRA.

brought about by this oppression are, in the view of this participant, related to the concepts of equality and rights, which as previous analysis revealed, featured high saliences in the frequency list and often appeared as collocations, and effectively legitimate associated actions by abstraction to moralised discourses (van Leeuwen 2008).

Figure 101 – UI3





The next tweet comes an account for a group known as the United Ireland Society which is a non-party republican organisation dedicated to ‘promoting a free, independent and egalitarian Ireland that is united in its diversity.’ (Twitter 2019) Like a growing number of pages in the republican online milieu, it lacks overt party affiliation, but has high visibility within the context of republican twitter. This tweet documents the fact that United Ireland was a trending topic among Twitter users in Dublin, due to a synoptic response to increased debate around Brexit. As outlined above, Brexit connotes negatively within the corpus, as a process being foisted upon ‘us’, but simultaneously presents itself as an opportunity for republicanism to address partitional deprivation and oppression. Ideologically, Brexit (and other contextual obstacle/ opportunities) amount to peripheral concepts from the perspective of Irish republicanism. This sentiment is explicitly captured in this tweet which predicatively qualifies Brexit as a ‘gift’ to the movement for increasing the debate and demand for unity.

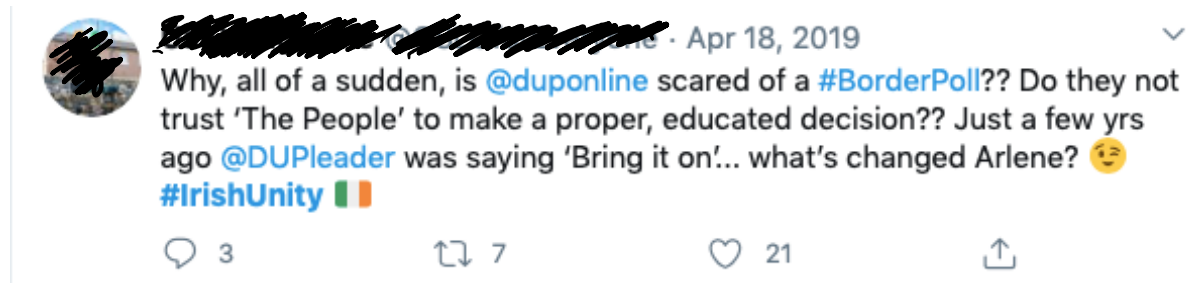
Spatially, (mainstream) republicanism conceives of itself as being on the periphery of political systems: a fringe political movement determined to do away with the *status quo* of the established political centres of Dublin and London (Goulding 2020, Filardo-Llamas 2013). As such, republicans frequently bemoan a lack of positive attention in mainstream political discourse: a habitual marginalisation which this tweet's author contends has ceased in the wake of Brexit. In this light, this tweet reproduces an interesting antagonism identified in the corpus: the tension between not compromising on underlying principles of a fringe movement and the necessity of partaking in (or at least having proximity to) political/national centres of power in order to bring about change. Brexit is represented in this text as being a happy medium between the two by bringing hard-line republican goals 'into the mainstream'. Lastly, the previously mentioned temporal immediacy associated with the demand for Irish unity is also reproduced here with the author signifying 'Its'Time' [sic] for Irish unity and expressing a desire for such mainstream attention on the issue to continue.

Figure 102 - UI4



The above tweet was produced in response to then Prime Minister Theresa May acknowledging the release of new polling data which indicated a majority preference on behalf of Northern Irish citizens toward leaving the union, in the event of a no deal Brexit. The author frames this action as an unprecedented admission of guilt by stating that it is the ‘first time’ a British official has ‘admitted’ the border in Ireland lacks popular support, lexically presupposing British guilt (triggered by ‘admitted’). The result is that the disclosure is framed as an unprecedented progression of the republican agenda, and a victory over yet another institutionally constructed British political actor. The border is further delegitimated through abstraction to populist power dynamics and invocation of a negative, codified referential strategy. This constructs the division of Ireland is qualified as being an undemocratic partition(ing) and was a decision made without popular support. The author denounces this and calls for a more inclusive and democratic approach to determining national borders: again, adopting the populist transitive frame of social change (foisted from the top down/ resisted from the bottom up), this notion is furthered by the inclusion of the hashtag #letthepeopledecide. Such direct communication with elected officials is commonplace on Twitter, as the site was originally conceived of as a virtual cultural common (Rogers 2014), yet communicatively, such interaction is infrequently reciprocated, thus, pointing toward the rhetorical illocutionary force behind the statement. Finally, the author constructs the same sense of temporal immediacy identified in previous sections by demanding a #borderpollnow.

Figure 103 - UI5



Through the use of rhetorical questions, this author produces a scathing critique of DUP policy in response to increasing demand for a border poll. Again, the author reproduces a populist power dynamic by pitting the institutionalised, homogenised DUP against 'The People'. The tweet paints the DUP (and their leader Arlene Foster) as having been overconfident regarding the stability of the union, a position which the author intimates was the product of prohibiting a democratic vote. The author suggests that the recent rise in demand for unification has caused Foster and the DUP to become scared of the prospect, thus presupposing the attribution of cowardice as a negative trait of this group. In light of this, the author reconstructs a sense of expectancy of unification whilst also recreating the temporal immediacy (or sense of novelty) identified elsewhere too by stating that this change in attitude has occurred 'all of a sudden'. Thus in structuring the tweet around questions which presuppose a shift in outlook on behalf of the DUP, the author is effectively foregrounding the perceived demand for Irish unity and the seismic shifts in public cognition which would underpin such an occurrence. Broadly, then, we can infer that the in-group identity is victimised (as historically deprived) and temporarily positioned against elite/impardised powers such as the DUP (a negativity that is notably absent in

constructions of the DUP's consociational partners, Sinn Féin).

Discussion:

Topics invoked by participants in the data set can be thought of as having a *secondary* (cf. Krzyżanowski 2008) character, insofar as they are introduced from the bottom up in response to the setting of a topical node (i.e. the hashtag Irish Unity). In this sense, they can be thought of as being indicative of the conceptual links made by participants between concepts, topics actions and objects which, from their perspective, hold currency when considered collectively. More critically, they can be seen to embody the adjacent and peripheral concepts which participants invoke in discursively reproducing their identity, and in rationalising or legitimating the attainment of Irish unification. As such the first analytical measure entailed a method of topical and thematic analysis scaled-large through word-frequency analysis with a focus on topics, temporality actions and objects invoked by participants. Given the focus of the selected hashtag, it is unsurprising that these results yielded high frequencies of topics and concepts related the field of (supra)national politics and identity. Relatedly, in the construction of in-groups and out-groups. participants overwhelmingly associated Ireland (and its various related lexical items, 'Irish' etc.) as being the publics' deictic centre or imagined homeland, the only exceptions being the lexical representation of Irish institutional centres of power (e.g. Irish government), which participants routinely construct as other. Objects mentioned by participants were broadly divisible into the dyadic categories of positive/self and negative/ other (van Dijk 1998). 'Our' objects connote positively and generally denote political machineries that correlate to peripheral ideological commitments and programmatic concerns: 'vote' (as a noun phrase), 'border poll' etc. are all indicative of this patterning. Lastly in relation to objects, materialism—or the notion of (not) having—played

a central part in the discourse of participants in both data sets: with both foregrounding the social and material deprivations of partition and the potential rewards (rights, unity, etc.) brought about by republicanism.

In the data, participants foreground the historical shortcomings and deprivations brought about by partition to justify and provide rationale for their current political undertakings. The current temporal span, or the 'now', is problematised in the data with clear senses of urgency and immediacy. That is to say, participants represent the present as a time for action, as a time for setting out to address the goals and aims of republicanism, or as a time when the values espoused by republicanism are relevant and pertinent to addressing social grievances. The future is represented in the data with a sense of expectancy: as a temporal span in which the goals of Irish republicanism will be realised. This is evidenced by high usages of modals –'would', 'can' and in particular the deontic uses of modal 'will'—which have in the past been correlated to expectancy of power on behalf of political actors (Pearce 2014, Goulding 2016) but also by the inclusion of after-the-fact referentials such as 'post-unification' which lexically presuppose its attainment. Thus the central concept of Irish republicanism are reproduced as a forgone conclusion. Peripheral and adjacent concepts constitute less salient topics in the discourse, but largely centre around leftist commitments to an equality agenda, and constitutional politics, which are legitimated and constructed in a variety of positive modalities. Moreover, peripheral concerns which are heavily reproduced in the data can be regarded as pre-requisite to the ideological central concepts of unity. For instance, border poll and vote(s) are desirable only inasmuch as they facilitate (re)unification.

This leads onto the next question asked of the data, relating to republican twitter's response to unfolding political events. One of the patterns uncovered through analysis related to positive and negative attribution and qualification. A

variance in representations relating to political events was identified. Events desired by the in-group were represented as being deprived by external political actors (heteronymic or oppressive frames), whereas those republicanism was engaged in were seen as being means of bringing about positive social changes. Negative representations were associated with events brought about by external actors. The reproduction of Brexit, for instance, constructs the event as being foisted upon the people against their will. This ultimately has a delegitimizing effect, painting Brexit as the product of British imperialism. The corollary of this is that the event is also represented as opportune or germane to the cause of republicanism: a sentiment supported by the aforementioned sense of immediacy that characterises the data. Relatedly, horizontal links to other campaigns were also identified, suggesting that employing hashtags to respond (both collectively and connectively) to unfolding political events is common practice among participants of republican twitter, and offer a means to participants who wish to create direct linkages between concepts and events in a complex, virtual socio-political terrain. For instance, whereas #irishunity featured very high collocative frequencies of #rights and #equality (in proximity to #vote), thus discursively legitimating a nationalist struggle as a moralised one (for rights/equality) and as attainable through a peripheral commitment to constitutional politics.

This last point seemingly indicates a level of pre-orchestration. That is to say, the high keyness and collocative preferences of #vote and #rights revealed through frequency concordance analysis of the #irishunity corpus, suggest that these are the product of collective action. Indeed, previous analysis has empirically illustrated the centrality of 'rights' to republican discourse (Filardo-Llamas 2013). This is of pertinence for two reasons: the first being that it reaffirms the materialistic perception held by participants that these values have, thus far, been deprived by partition. The second is that it illustrates the extent to which hashtags can be used for collective performances and appropriated as channels for

propagating party-political messages or programs. As theorised in the contextual section of this chapter, (republican) Twitter can be interpreted as a highly stratified domain of interaction in which analogue centres of power receive higher visibility and status. The above insight suggests that this hierarchical power dynamic is evidenced in the data insofar as instance of collective action emanates from the top down: from the republican centre of power (which in its latest phase pivots around Sinn Féin) to the grassroots, social media users who reproduce it. As such, whilst we cannot deny this message has overt, counter-hegemonic intent, it can also be seen to reproduce the internal hegemonic order of republican Twitter. This finding seems to corroborate insights revealed from other analyses of republican discourse which found actors to reproduce top-down narratives (Wilson and Stapleton 2007) and also correlate with those of KhosraviNik (2017a) who found such online publics to largely be echo-chambers. But most significantly, it provides empirical corroboration of the reproduction of a elite-determined republican discourse features by a dispersed public of RSM users, and points toward an indirect sense of communicative control being exerted in these *ad hoc* spaces of republican discourse.

Although more empirical evidence could further substantiate the causality of the following claim, a critical reading of these facts points toward the capacity for such political hashtags to be (mis)used by elite actors. In instigating (or engaging in) discussions where messages receive high levels of uncritical reproduction from grassroots social media users, parties and elite actors can also target the larger cohorts of lurking (but nevertheless present) Twitter users in these spaces can reasonably expected to share high levels of ideological concurrence. In this sense, they can be seen as an effective means of gaining targeted access to middling voters/stakeholders who (by virtue of their presence in the sphere of republican Twitter) have demonstrated an affective interest in the topic captured by the hashtag. In light of this and the above analysis, it must also be conceded that

persuasive messages can also be driven through digital publics, irrespective of their collective-connective genus' logic. This corroborates research which argues that digital publics can be influenced by elite actors (Bruns and Burgess 2015). Thus, such publics rarely exemplify purely bottom up/ connective flows of power, and typically embody more complex power interactions. Finally, social network analysis of #IrishUnity usage sources revealed some level of sharing and collaboration between the United Left campaign and Sinn Féin. This, again, needs to be interpreted against the backdrop of increasing demand for Irish unity and, by correlation, the increasing requirement of electoral support in this regard. Indirect association with civic nationalist or leftist organisations present Sinn Féin (and other central-elite republican actors) with alternative political networks to target. However, the picture emerging of republican Twitter from the above is one where elite actors enjoy high levels of visibility and control over tone of discourse.

It follows from all of the above that republican Twitter users aggregate their voice through both collective and connective performative action, capitalising on Twitter's aggregational communicative function. Collective action, although in the minority, proved to be easily identifiable through corpus analysis and saw Twitter users reproduce choreographed discursive patterns aggregated by the hashtag function (particularly around elections). But further cohesiveness is afforded to the public's voice due to the underlying power dynamics of republican Twitter and its propensity to reproduce formulaic, top-down republican discourses. As such, serious questions need to be asked of republican Twitter's unproven capacity to act as a fully functional, (self) critical and synoptic public. Moreover, its capacity to be abused as a channel for republican centres of power to push messages into ideologically echo-chambering, virtual spaces needs provides potential avenues for critical research into the movement's relationship to mass media.

Finally, returning to the central research question, the above seems to point toward the wholesale adoption of argumentative ‘catch-all’ republicanism, where both peripheral and central concepts are reproduced as solutions to problematised political happenings. More expansively, core aspects of republicanism—its values, objects and actions—are frequently invoked (connectively and collectively) by republican Twitter users in response to political events of pertinence to their agenda. Their invocation is underpinned by the tacit, argumentative belief that republicanism (more specifically, its programs and visions) can address or rectify the social ills, grievances and deprivations embodied, challenged and exemplified by these events. These events (or the circumstances which begot them) are negatively positioned as the product of Out-group action and republicanism is situated as the most viable (if not self-evident) program of action to counter them. As such, the central ideological components of the ideology remain unchallenged in these spaces which serve as hotbeds for affective consolidation and the production (and potential exploitation) of ideological echo-chambers.

CONCLUSION AND CRITIQUE

In keeping with the criticality of the DHA's roots in the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, this critique of republican communication is divided into three sections (which, in turn, relate to three disparate types of critical reflection): i) a discourse-immanent critique, ii) a socio-diagnostic critique and, finally, iii) a prognostic critique. Accordingly, the first section below addresses the immanent critique of republican discourse. The chapter then moves to the socio-diagnostic section of this communicative critique, where some critical reflections concerning republicanism's mainstreaming (and its discursive realization) and the centralized, communicative control exerted by elite actors in the discourse of Shinnerbots and other grassroots social media users are provided. Finally, the prognostic critique strives to communicate some of this thesis' findings through a functional communication model to mitigate against language barriers associated with paradigmatic differences in research.

Discourse-Immanent Critique:

As typically operationalized in the DHA, immanent critique (mirroring its applications by Kant, Hegel etc.) aims to unravel the internal contradictions of a text. In its application within the DHA it has typically been realized through surface form analysis (Wodak 2001). The discourse analytical chapters presented previously constituted a text-immanent critique, which elucidated internal contradictions or patterns that (re)produced republican discourse features. The discourse-immanent critique that follows can be regarded as calibration of this text-

immanent process's findings. In essence, it patches together the implicit critique within republican discourse that was revealed through analysis. In this light, the immanent critique entails a recapitulation of the norms, values and dispositions as embodied by the community under consideration (Herzog 2016). The realization of the aspects in the discursive identification and construction of ideology, then, forms the focus of this discourse-immanent critique.

Revisiting and tallying the insights unveiled through analyses in the previous chapters, a clearer picture of the discursive reproduction of ideology and identity in marginalized republican data-source sphericules can be elicited. Although specifically focused on in chapter six, in all chapters, the reproduction of Irish republicanism online was constituted by habitual discursive construction patterns that, when realized, construct a heavily critical ideological narrative and correlate social identity. Each of these is picked apart in more detail presently. In all of the analytical chapters, republican discourse participants evidenced the reproduction of inherently problematized representations of the *status quo*. Unvaryingly, then, republicanism's 'hot' ideological narrative status seems to condition its implicit critique of the existing hegemonic order (and its constituent nation-state structures). These are criticality realized in (and legitimated via) several habitual discourse frames linked to Irish republicanism's ideological genus in radical republican philosophy. That is to say, its implicit aversion to power becomes realized in a moralized and populist frame which, in turn, legitimate its assertions and claims (Calhoun 1992, van Leeuwen 2008). How this affects the discursive identification of RSM users is discussed later, yet for now, it suffices to say that republicanism is routinely constructed by data source participants as the catch-all solution to in-group grievances. The previous analytical chapters provide an empirical corroboration of theorists of republicanism who posit that the contemporary movement's legitimacy relies on a strategic re-working of the past (or what discursively can be regarded as its collective memory) toward its

overarching political aim (Alonso 2016). Despite data considered toward this end being drawn from various marginalized republican sphericules of opinion formation, there was clear evidence of a strategic historical narrative (itself conditioned by communication strategies devised by the movement from the 1980s onward) being reproduced. Two central features of the republican collective memory warrant a mention at this point: the legitimating effects of temporal (re)ordering (to realize victimhood / heteronymic discourse frames), as well as the routine historical identity narrative (and its legitimating effects), which position contemporary republicans as the torchbearers of the spirit of republicanism's previous interventions. Such discursive features formed antagonistic points for intra-republican identification and differentiation, too. Dissident or dissenting republicans self-identify as puritanical republicans, casting provisionals as less-hard-line. Contrastingly, provisionals construct dissidents as outdated and atavistic, seeing their legitimacy as being conferred by the mandate of the peace process.

The centrality of this strategic re-production of the republican imagined community's collective memory to the general discourse practices of republicans becomes evident when weighed against critical claims typically levelled at republican ideology. In particular, republicanism's alleged ideological lightness (see chapter 2) can be accounted for through a consideration of republicanism as a historically conditioned discourse, which foregrounds the perennially peripheral, counter-hegemonic position of its discourse participants. This marginalized position has ensured that republican interventions have not yet enjoyed the material realities necessary to realizing their ideological aims. More specifically, the extent to which grassroots republicans rely on nuanced interpretations of the past to inform and rationalize their recent actions became foregrounded in the analyses. The historical, political ideals espoused by previous republicans have yet to be realised (and in turn (in)validated), as such, they are perpetuated and enshrined as the over-arching visionary model of contemporary republicanism. In this sense, we

can think of republicanism as constituting a 'civic nationalist core,'⁴⁸ rationalized and mapped out as attainable through instrumental/ historic adjacent concepts (which have usually been taken from left-of-centre political programs) (O'Broin 2009). Outside of this core, however, there is ample evidence of the programmatic model of elite-level Irish republicans in its latest phase being reproduced at the grassroots level, too. This discourse's peripheral and adjacent concepts mirrored generic discourses of left of centre, counter-cultural political alternatives, in the process-level interactions.

Republicanism's civic-nationalist core was shown to inform participants' programmatic and peripheral concerns in the internet discussion fora and more peripheral discourse sites engaged in political satire or commentary. In all contexts, republicanism was reproduced as a catch-all, left-of-centre and trendy resistance discourse. Part of its legitimacy, then, relies on its perennial-peripheral positioning and its fusibility with leftist and populist discourse frames that proliferate popular contemporary political discourse, and its proto-typical cultural frames of expression, such as satire. In this light, republicanism presents itself as an unexplored alternative to the *status quo*, as an abiding hot nationalist critique that has recurred throughout Irish history. To negotiate its contemporary discursive mainstreaming, its violent past is moralized or humourized, and its contemporary actions legitimated by victimisation, provocation-framing and abstraction to populist/ egalitarian discourses. Through the diffuse reproduction of elite-determined discourse features, the surveyed marginalized republican sphericules were empirically shown to reproduce self-serving, strategic ideological models. These are again re-iterated in the below diagram:

⁴⁸ An allusion to Griffin's notion of Fascism's 'mythic core' (see Richardson (2017) for a discursive application)

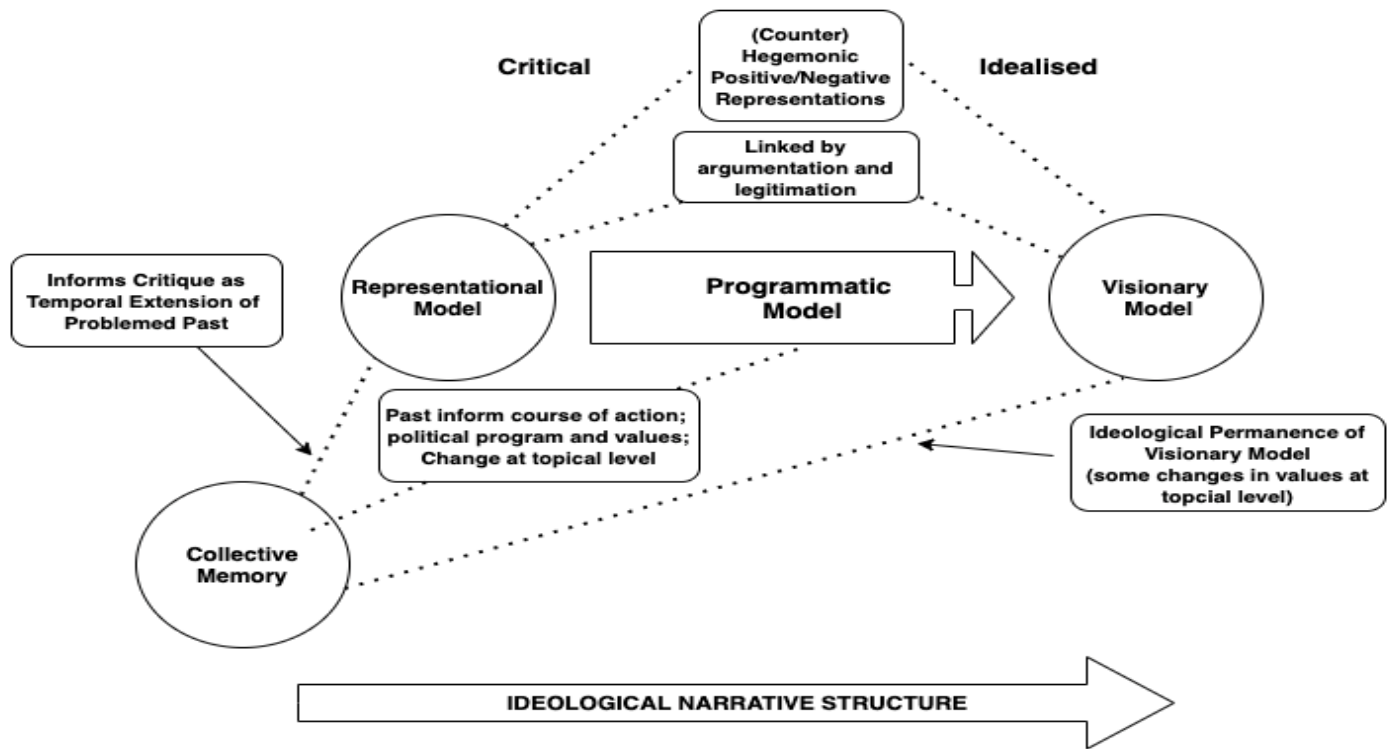


Figure 104 – Republican Ideological Narrative Structure and Models

The strategic inter-connectedness of these temporal imageries is rendered clear in the above. All imageries were shown to work toward historically unrealized ideals which broadly envision an independent Ireland, free of external rule. The ‘lightness’ of this central constellation of beliefs has over its course, seen republican discourse reproduce it diachronically in a relatively stable way (only conceptually morphing from independence to unity on the basis of partition). In its contemporary phase, (but also evidenced in the historical contextualisation) its participants were shown to employ a range of instrumental/ historic adjacent or peripheral concepts. For instance, the peripheral aim of winning a border-poll is rendered contestable through its adjacent commitment to constitutional politics. Its adjacent commitment to leftist politics was further empirically substantiated through

analysis, enjoying high levels of grassroots reproduction. Thus, the analysis seems to empirically corroborate the ideological critiques proffered by scholars such as Bourke (2002) who argue that republicans (of all historic contexts) must be interpreted as ideological actors pursuing political aims.

The discursive construction of identity tallies with this peripheral, 'hot' narrative position. The discourse practices of identity construction typically pivoted around political discourse topics and frames. Indeed, there was further evidence that republicanism's *ad hoc* publics congregated mainly around nationalist/political issues, with related socio-economic affairs constituting secondary concerns. Similarly, the topical composition of *republican.ie* (and the analysis of its discourse) suggested a predominance of political discourse topics. Within these topical domains, republican social media users' identification was negotiated through the reproduction of habitual elite/ historically conditioned frames and scripts which self-position the republican collective outside, against or peripheral to centralized, hegemonic power. Moreover, a text-immanent antagonism was evidenced between its radical surface form rhetoric (and the strategic conceptual linkages to the past that this fosters), and its centre-leftist political program: a tension that was elided in its grassroots constructions. Rather, republicanism's past was routinely employed as a conceptual site of legitimation for contemporary assertions, the in-group (and its historic antecedents) were constructed through victimhood or heteronymic frames. Furthermore, in-group identification was enacted by the codified aspects of group interaction, chiefly through the use of nuanced republican terminology (a lexicon which itself can be seen to be instrumentally conditioned by republican history/ elites). As such, in realizing nuanced surface forms of lexical items such as 'the six counties' and 'twenty-six counties', discourse participants are both enacting the script of republican social identification and simultaneously delegitimizing existing hegemonic structures.

Importantly, the breadth of the analysis of republican identification practices undertaken in this thesis provides a suitable basis to assess the internal dynamics of republicanism's group identity, as it is reproduced by peripheral discourse participants. Across all data sites, republicanism was constructed as a structured and hierarchical entity, pivoting around a centralized political power. Relatedly, participants' identification was subject to a broadly ascending notion of legitimacy, which elite republicans (predominantly Sinn Féin) rely on to self-identify as the legitimate torchbearers in the struggle toward historically unrealized republican goals. This would seem to corroborate certain assertions from the canon of literature on republicanism, specifically those related to its historic revisionism (Alonso 2001, 2016), its internal communication structure (Spencer 2006) and the antagonism between its surface radicalism and leftist-progressive practice (Whiting 2016). Mirroring the civic-core of its ideology, discourse participants' identification was rooted in political frames, with even the more traditionally ethnic categories of nationalist identity, such as language, being imbued with a predominantly political character (as a value/goal) and enjoying marginal usage (as a code). Finally in this regard, the considerations of the construction of participants' out-groups revealed a habitual pattern of imperialisation (where outgroup actors were constructed and qualified in terms of their elite status and power). This routine construct effectively constitutes an inversion of republicanism's philosophical tenets, almost as the juxtaposing embodiment of what republicanism is opposed to. As such, in imperializing and empowering their main out-groups' construction, republican discourse participants are simultaneously strategically legitimating their own evaluation of power exertion and its associated modalities of governance.

One final point which warrants consideration here in regard to identification practices relates to republican discourses identification and reproduction within the context of mainstream culture. In chapter seven the political centre of republican discourse seemed to give way to more (memetically driven, para-political) ethic

discourse frames. Whilst this can be tied to the reduction in communicative centrality/ control of republicanism in such contexts (where it is one of many topics), it provides some food for further critical reflection in relation to the extent to which externally conditioned, militant imageries still inhibit the movement (and its integration into the political mainstream) to the present day. As the above section has provided a cohesive and comprehensive visitation of the data's discourse-immanent critique, we can begin to interrogate such critical angles in the subsequent socio-diagnostic critique.

Socio-Diagnostic Critique:

Given the specified focus of this thesis on the discursive negotiation of republicanism's mainstreaming, attention is limited hereafter to two concerns (which broadly correspond to RF2 and RF 3, although in discussion there is, admittedly, some overlap). Firstly, republicanism's interaction with mainstream cultural trends and its broader ramifications for the movement's mainstreaming are evaluated in lieu of analysis, before the alleged ideological lightness of republicanism is interrogated from the discursive approach of this research.

What is of note in regards to the first of these concerns is that, in spite of forgoing centralized communicative control in contexts like the Ireland Simpsons Fans meme page, republican discourse features were employed and utilized in memetic commentary in a manner which still resulted in republican political commentary being conveyed in para-political contexts. Whilst this case study was limited to a consideration of humour, it provided a snapshot of how republican ideology is re-appropriated in such heterogeneous cultural contexts, which lie at the periphery of the influence of republican centres of power. Whilst it did reveal an increased salience of ethnic discourse frames—which contravenes republicanism's explicit, civic commitments—there was further evidence of satire and humour being used to negotiate and normalize contentious aspects of republicanism (and its history)

in the context of Irish culture. In contrast to the politicization of cultural aspects of republican social identity, we can note an ethnic-isation of republican politics in these domains, where republicanism is reproduced in externally/ historically conditioned or stereotypical frames. The decreased stigma associated with republicanism in these mediated domains of interaction can be seen to correlate to the increasing political mainstreaming of the movement in terms of its elite political representatives. Admittedly, drawing a causal link between the two is beyond the purview of this research (and probability). However, over the course of the theoretical chapters of this thesis, a suitable basis was established to suggest that such grassroots endeavours are the historical continuation of a process of bringing republicanism 'into the main', a process that can be traced back to the provisional movement's conceptual shift toward the ballot box, and the facilitative measures undertaken by external actors in the peace process to combat the negative social capital of republicanism in the broader public sphere. As such, the mainstreaming of contemporary republicanism can be seen to play out at different levels. In one sense, as captured by May Lou McDonald in an interview with the *New Statesman*, the elite-level image (via the party) has changed to adapt to the mainstream demand. Similarly, Hoey (2018) argues that the party's elite-level efforts have yielded fruit as a leftist, counter cultural alternative. Yet this process has resulted in new (from the bottom) discourses of republicanism emerging, driven through new media, and various connective, viral or memetic logics. In spite of lacking centralized control in these contexts, the ulterior strategic aim of elite republicans (that is, to change their image in the broader public sphere) is still achieved through satirical/ cultural negotiation of republicanism's place within broader Irish society.

Evidence of mainstreaming was also rendered perceptible through the corpus-assisted discourse analytical methodology adhered to throughout this project. In particular, such an approach proved expedient in illuminating the instrumental peripheral or adjacent concepts which republicans employ in constructing their

ideology. The plethora of centre-left and egalitarian political topics which populated the various corpora was indicative of their salience within contemporary political discourse. Indeed, leftist, populist and egalitarian argumentation schema were frequently shown to be employed toward rationalizing explicitly nationalist and political aims. Yet beyond merely integrating more mainstream political, leftist terminology into its lexicon, the historic contextualization of discourse features proved to be elucidatory of the instrumental, adjacent nature of such programmatic concerns. That is to say, in charting the genealogy of its discourse features, its leftist commitments are shown to fluctuate (as does its commitment to physical force). As such, the discourse historic analysis presented provides an empirical endorsement of the assertion of scholars such as Frampton (2016), Bourke (2002) and Patterson (1997) who argue that republicans are best interpreted as ideological, political actors—united and motivated not by modality, but their affinitive nationalist end-goal. In this sense, the discourse historic analyses presented provide a suitable point of departure to examine the nature of this affinitive discursive core which prevails over time and the related claims of ideological lightness that are levelled by the academy.

As noted previously, the narrative-discourse based conceptualization of ideologies, as was adhered to in the present thesis, provides an effective means of boiling ideologies down to a list of constituent claims or discourse features (cf. Calhoun 1997). Moreover, it proved effective in identifying the inherent problematizing functions of republicanism's 'hot' ideological discourse and counter-hegemonic critique. When situated in its historic context, republicanism's lightness – viz. its comparative dearth of peripheral and adjacent concepts—can be accounted for as a result of its peripheral position. Yet the discursive corollary of this ideological lightness is that republicanism's core has remained intact as a vision, untested or (in)validated by the course of history. As such, the propensity for republican discourse to re-emerge at specific, tumultuous junctures in history can further be

accounted for by understanding it as an established, alternative framework of thinking, acting and knowing which presented itself when co-ideologues grew resistive of power dynamics in specific times throughout history. This broad understanding of discourses has ramifications for how to interpret the way in which republican social media users draw from its central ideological tenets to inform their peripheral, day-to-day actions. For example, in chapter eight, there was ample evidence of the (re) contextualization of elite-determined adjacent and peripheral concepts, in spite of there being no collective logic underlying these *ad hoc* discursive events. As such, the ideological lightness of republicanism can be seen to translate to a form of genericism in its applicability. That is to say, in limiting its central ideological tenets to an aversion to nationalist power, republican discourse proves to be easily reproducible and adaptable to novel domains of interaction that are on the periphery of republican centres of power. As such, the previous chapters can be seen to provide some empirical corroboration of putative claims made by scholars such as Whiting (2016) and Spencer (2006) who argue that contemporary republicanism adheres to a top-down flow of information, as well as the diffusive reproduction of elite communication strategies which engenders the activity of Shinnerbots. This last point will be unpacked in more detail below where efforts to enhance communicative clarity around the Shinnerbot phenomenon and republicanism's internal communication structure are presented.

Prognostic Critique:

In keeping with the commitment of prognostic/ prospective critique to the improvement of communication, the findings of the present research (and its grassroots, discourse approach) provide a suitable basis to cohesive insights related to the internal communications structure of republicanism's counter-public and the fervency of its online ideologues. The theoretical and historical insights related to this, which were documented in the literature reviews of this thesis, relied on

publications and theorists that were scattered across academic disciplines such as history, political theory, discourse analysis, terrorism studies and media/communication studies. In spite of all of these works focussing on republicanism, their disparate paradigmatic origins saw them couch their arguments in nuanced terminology associated with their respective disciplines. As a result, a lack of cohesion can be identified relating to the communicative structure of republicanism and how this manifests in daily interactions of media users. Departing from the contention that a prognostic application of findings should strive to mitigate against such language barriers (Reisigl and Wodak 2001), the final measure undertaken in this thesis is the presentation of a functional communication model of Irish republicanism's (virtual) counter-public. The choice of a functional communication model was made so as to render these insights accessible through multi-modal communication (thus forgoing the necessity of familiarity with nuanced terminology) as well as its ability to effectively capture the quiescent inter-workings of republican communication and media activity in terms of its 'energy, forces and their direction, the relation between parts and the influence of one part on another' (McQuail and Windahl 1982: 3).

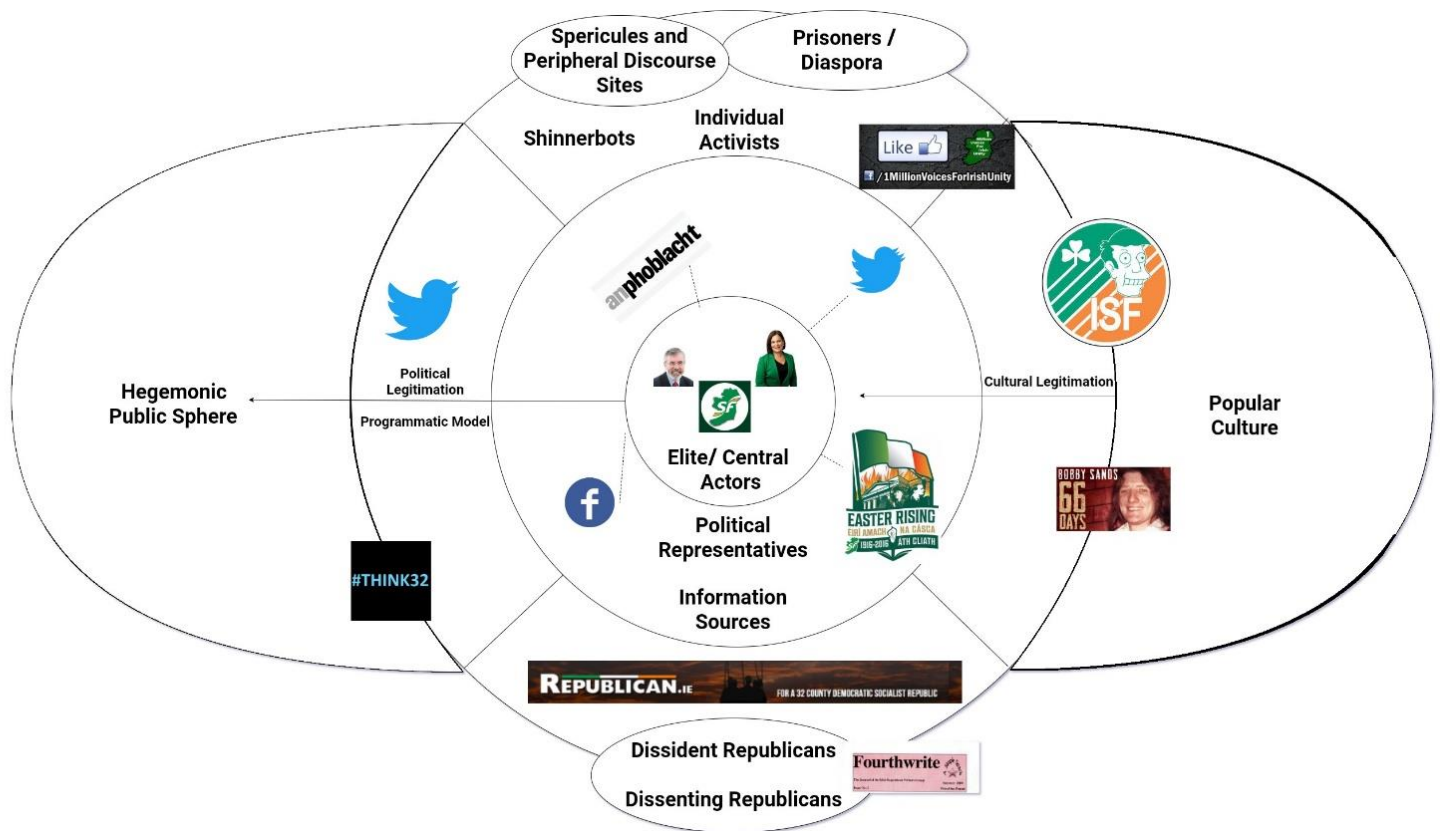


Figure 105—Functional Communication Model of Irish Republican Counter-Public

The above imitates the typical visualisation of public spheres (see Homes and Jones 2011 for example), where centrality and stats form the central node of the structure. Thus, the centre of the above correlates with centrality/ status and power within the republican counter-public. Accordingly, republicanism’s elite actors and representatives are situated in this node. Peripheral to this centralised elite are the myriad related actors, such as (the social media presences of) political representatives, key discursive events (such as the Easter Rising Commemoration)

and internal information sources (like *An Phoblacht*). Beyond this meso-layer of information sources and actors lie peripheral sphericules of republicanism (dissidents or prisoners for instance) and the myriad of crowd-sourced space in which discourses of republicanism unfold in collective or connective ways. While a dotted line denotes direct gate-keeping capacities, we can further theorise a diffuse flow of discourse from the central node outward, and also some resistance at the interface of its peripheral sphericules (see *Fourthwrite*'s positing for example). Flanking the counter-public are the domains of popular culture and the hegemonic public sphere (positioned as such to illustrate republicanism's interaction with both, as opposed to being indicative of their conceptual position). In the above, direct arrows signify the underlying strategic logic and direction of the discursive legitimisation of republicanism's mainstreaming. In one sense, popular culture afforded republicanism access to domains of interaction in which it was previously excoriated. This was shown to rely on imageries externally applied to republicanism, but in a way that legitimated republicanism from the bottom/ or outside. As such, this cultural legitimisation is identified as having an exogenous origin (and an inward trajectory in the above diagram). In contrast, the political dimensions of republicanism's mainstreaming were linked to elite-led strategic endeavours that are diffusely reproduced in a rigid manner hence this communicative discipline (as enacted reproduced in grassroots discourse) is denoted with an outward arrow. Further denoted in the above are segments of republicanism's peripheral networks that are yet to enjoy mainstream legitimisation, for instance, dissident and dissenting republicans (and their associated media outlets) as well as republican-specific sites cannot really be seen to exert an influence/ have a presence within these fringe domains. Similarly, in spite of featuring more saliently in public discourse, Shinnerbots cannot really be interpreted as having been integrated into societal norms, as of yet, nor have the more militant practices of the movement which preserve its linkages to its radical past. Tallying the above functional model with the previously discussed ideological

lightness of republican's civic core and the heavily scripted nature of republican's discursive identification we can begin to validate claims that contemporary republicanism is sustained by a top-down flow of power and information, which gives the impression of a unified, cohesive whole. The counter-hegemonic nature of republicans online has led to this media activity becoming stigmatised and stereotyped (as Shinnerbots). As such, we can begin to understand the Shinnerbot phenomenon from a discursive perspective, where the 'hot' habitual practices which constitute membership of republicanism's imagined community are derided from the outside as part of the negotiation of a much broader process of cultural and political legitimation.

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APPENDIX A

Active Frequency List Republican.ie

Lemma	Frequency	Lemma	Frequency	Lemma	Frequency	Lemma	Frequency
1 be	947,639	51 lead	9,612	101 deny	5,077	151 blame	3,500
2 have	280,192	52 let	9,557	102 expect	5,036	152 warn	3,427
3 say	194,901	53 start	9,507	103 build	4,968	153 announce	3,426
4 do	140,376	54 follow	9,466	104 defend	4,882	154 point	3,421
5 go	46,043	55 stop	9,239	105 quote	4,874	155 sit	3,414
6 get	45,562	56 carry	9,065	106 fire	4,850	156 wonder	3,414
7 think	40,046	57 send	8,695	107 state	4,767	157 capture	3,397
8 see	39,935	58 attack	8,650	108 oppose	4,490	158 threaten	3,384
9 take	39,550	59 like	8,425	109 appear	4,433	159 stay	3,382
10 know	39,508	60 run	8,117	110 receive	4,413	160 enter	3,367
11 make	39,155	61 report	8,050	111 fail	4,370	161 prevent	3,354
12 kill	35,923	62 post	7,863	112 serve	4,362	162 wish	3,325
13 come	27,612	63 talk	7,853	113 learn	4,326	163 regard	3,316
14 use	23,744	64 stand	7,738	114 accept	4,292	164 reach	3,312
15 give	23,670	65 involve	7,631	115 fall	4,290	165 forget	3,276
16 want	23,443	66 accord	7,457	116 seek	4,284	166 visit	3,259
17 call	22,686	67 write	7,303	117 decide	4,266	167 publish	3,226
18 support	20,600	68 feel	7,057	118 protect	4,263	168 demand	3,224
19 tell	20,334	69 hope	7,045	119 suggest	4,179	169 hate	3,194
20 try	19,086	70 arrest	6,876	120 launch	4,160	170 refer	3,172
21 believe	16,820	71 add	6,768	121 accuse	4,136	171 beat	3,166
22 find	16,776	72 begin	6,740	122 exist	4,130	172 suppose	3,155
23 need	15,798	73 end	6,697	123 pass	4,114	173 act	3,153
24 look	14,976	74 turn	6,624	124 dont	4,081	174 wait	3,146
25 leave	14,423	75 remember	6,616	125 raise	4,071	175 buy	3,145
26 work	13,758	76 set	6,554	126 injure	4,061	176 plan	3,072
27 happen	13,625	77 release	6,513	127 target	4,059	177 declare	3,068
28 put	13,185	78 lose	6,486	128 mention	4,048	178 close	3,030
29 hold	12,908	79 consider	6,367	129 back	4,042	179 name	3,025
30 show	12,895	80 join	6,319	130 invade	3,978	180 attempt	3,024
31 shoot	12,753	81 watch	6,298	131 confirm	3,954	181 protest	2,981
32 include	12,663	82 edit	6,293	132 vote	3,940	182 drive	2,977
33 ask	12,582	83 win	6,112	133 grow	3,865	183 cop	2,959
34 fight	12,147	84 meet	6,083	134 spend	3,813	184 bear	2,942
35 seem	11,808	85 remain	5,998	135 open	3,791	185 treat	2,941
36 read	11,705	86 move	5,959	136 remove	3,788	186 care	2,936
37 live	11,470	87 pay	5,938	137 throw	3,775	187 sell	2,935
38 break	11,335	88 destroy	5,856	138 suffer	3,775	188 deal	2,934
39 die	11,039	89 force	5,816	139 commit	3,758	189 discuss	2,884
40 hear	10,694	90 understand	5,584	140 prove	3,735	190 charge	2,881
41 mean	10,627	91 provide	5,514	141 explain	3,698	191 walk	2,877
42 continue	10,408	92 murder	5,488	142 describe	3,697	192 engage	2,854
43 claim	10,369	93 cause	5,460	143 control	3,673	193 organise	2,844
44 agree	10,003	94 create	5,457	144 return	3,642	194 cover	2,817
45 help	9,959	95 change	5,451	145 condemn	3,632	195 sign	2,816
46 speak	9,901	96 face	5,373	146 lie	3,622	196 please	2,810
47 become	9,830	97 refuse	5,137	147 attend	3,600	197 wear	2,795
48 bring	9,789	98 play	5,137	148 admit	3,588	198 offer	2,789
49 keep	9,764	99 hit	5,102	149 love	3,530	199 represent	2,788
50 allow	9,615	100 base	5,083	150 ban	3,504	200 argue	2,771

Objective Frequency List Republican

Lemma	Frequency	Lemma	Frequency	Lemma	Frequency	Lemma	Frequency
1 people	85,771	51 president	12,977	101 gaddafi	8,455	151 source	6,862
2 year	36,892	52 iraq	12,408	102 brit	8,451	152 order	6,857
3 pm	36,401	53 issue	12,390	103 lol	8,428	153 terrorist	6,760
4 time	34,752	54 place	12,310	104 belfast	8,427	154 work	6,742
5 us	32,369	55 case	12,005	105 election	8,316	155 night	6,721
6 i	32,015	56 anyone	11,896	106 community	8,286	156 drug	6,718
7 man	31,743	57 point	11,613	107 situation	8,279	157 school	6,676
8 war	31,653	58 question	11,607	108 name	8,246	158 threat	6,666
9 country	30,779	59 power	11,583	109 bomb	8,227	159 fighter	6,637
10 government	29,949	60 libya	11,568	110 anything	8,221	160 isis	6,629
11 state	29,647	61 report	11,494	111 word	8,180	161 update	6,621
12 [url]	28,506	62 russia	11,410	112 civilian	8,169	162 union	6,617
13 group	27,560	63 home	11,359	113 march	8,117	163 ground	6,576
14 attack	26,537	64 week	11,133	114 minister	8,055	164 occupation	6,547
15 israel	25,337	65 sinn	11,073	115 united	7,912	165 position	6,517
16 day	24,998	66 ira	10,958	116 side	7,863	166 struggle	6,503
17 world	22,830	67 action	10,953	117 end	7,835	167 course	6,485
18 army	22,400	68 law	10,894	118 border	7,805	168 officer	6,470
19 force	22,041	69 movement	10,826	119 land	7,769	169 story	6,462
20 prisoner	21,392	70 afghanistan	10,561	120 gun	7,745	170 event	6,434
21 police	20,768	71 number	10,552	121 u.s.	7,727	171 evidence	6,426
22 way	20,280	72 [number]	10,265	122 peace	7,722	172 bit	6,425
23 right	20,194	73 medium	10,009	123 regime	7,654	173 view	6,419
24 syria	19,814	74 post	9,990	124 chara	7,636	174 palestine	6,402
25 ireland	19,535	75 nothing	9,979	125 head	7,579	175 front	6,328
26 news	19,038	76 north	9,897	126 murder	7,557	176 site	6,294
27 republican	18,948	77 campaign	9,831	127 freedom	7,543	177 everyone	6,231
28 party	18,840	78 strike	9,812	128 official	7,526	178 book	6,212
29 member	17,361	79 video	9,708	129 class	7,508	179 opinion	6,103
30 thing	16,956	80 security	9,659	130 history	7,467	180 building	6,087
31 am	16,941	81 iran	9,643	131 hand	7,405	181 korea	6,066
32 soldier	16,497	82 obama	9,589	132 crime	7,389	182 justice	6,051
33 family	15,774	83 month	9,475	133 someone	7,382	183 worker	5,979
34 woman	15,573	84 nato	9,414	134 policy	7,371	184 hour	5,977
35 part	15,244	85 house	9,278	135 south	7,319	185 un	5,932
36 child	14,923	86 something	9,274	136 al	7,261	186 ukraine	5,868
37 life	14,861	87 maghberry	9,174	137 cael	7,232	187 line	5,861
38 pow	14,722	88 troop	9,162	138 mr	7,206	188 office	5,850
39 support	14,635	89 lot	9,145	139 operation	7,199	189 idea	5,842
40 protest	14,518	90 rebel	9,139	140 system	7,115	190 fein	5,836
41 leader	14,349	91 article	9,029	141 nation	7,080	191 conflict	5,805
42 death	14,228	92 thread	9,023	142 resistance	7,032	192 society	5,797
43 gaza	14,181	93 reason	9,016	143 comrade	6,989	193 im	5,795
44 city	14,137	94 taliban	8,978	144 money	6,982	194 air	5,770
45 prison	14,068	95 street	8,957	145 control	6,941	195 bank	5,747
46 fact	13,900	96 problem	8,574	146 new	6,924	196 violence	5,714
47 america	13,424	97 court	8,540	147 town	6,903	197 usa	5,712
48 statement	13,270	98 weapon	8,533	148 friend	6,892	198 car	5,706
49 area	13,246	99 other	8,528	149 forum	6,889	199 revolution	5,705
50 today	13,110	100 west	8,467	150 person	6,867	200 uk	5,691

APPENDIX B

