ESRC Seminar Series
Seminar Three

The impact of political and media discourse: control and conflict.

Dr Jo Richardson
jrichardson@dmu.ac.uk and @socialhousing
13th June 2013
The House of Lords, Westminster, London, UK
“The examination that places individuals in a field of surveillance also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them.”
(Foucault, 1977: 189)
Discourse in conflict

- Laclau and Mouffe (2001: 135) “Hegemonic articulations” based on:
  - Articulatory moments
  - Confrontational antagonistic practices
- Social construction of identity
- Identity is not fixed – differences are constructed and reconstructed.
Discourse: articulation of ‘Gypsies and Travellers’ within antagonistic practices.
More Than Words...

- Manifestation of negative discourse seen in lack of sites to meet accommodation need.
- Challenges in accessing health, education and other public services.
- Bullying, physical violence and murder (Johnny Delaney, 2003).
Resolving conflict


• Fisher, R and Ury, W: ‘Getting To Yes’ (with thanks to William Ury for kindly donating the books).

• Negotiation, governance and leadership (JRF report outlined the need for strong political leadership and 3 cases for saying ‘yes’ to site provision – business, legal, social/moral).
A confused construction of Gypsies and Travellers...

These Travellers camped in the town - they're not even real Gypsies anymore, are they?!

You're right, move them on, I say - they don't belong here. Real Gypsies, in their painted wagons, roam the countryside. The Travellers in town aren't traditional, they should move on. Actually, they should be part of the community and settle like the rest of us, we can't just go off as we please...

Um, you want them to be settled and nomadic all at the same time?! Yes: settle and travel, but not round here - confusing isn't it?!
We need to change the story...

- Already so much good work on lobbying, responding to media and consulting on policy and law (for example in response to the TV programme Big Fat Gypsy Weddings).
- Continued need to work with media professionals, politicians and society in general to ‘fill in the details’ in order to stop mythical construction of identity and to change the story.