

Negotiating empathy in the French and Cypriot-Greek press: Christian values or social justice in migration discourse?

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Abstract: Both news media and politicians, taking advantage of their cultural authority through spoken and written texts, contribute to forming public opinion, in particular with the use of discursive means, to shape the way people understand migration. Research has so far pointed to negative representations of the Other and argumentation against migrants and refugees revolves around the topoi of burden, illegality, insecurity, violence and threat, which are known to trigger emotions such as resentment, anger and fear. However, media coverage of refugees' arrivals can also contribute to a positive construction of migrants' identities: this is what has been called 'counter-narrative', i.e. a set of narratives aimed at changing the mainstream discourse, which is overwhelmingly negative. This study focuses on the thematic, lexical and syntactic choices in Greek Cypriot and French communist newspapers (*Haravgi* and *L'Humanité* respectively) and the choices used to construct an argumentation which fosters the inclusion of migrants. Focusing mainly on headlines, the study adopts critical discourse approaches (Wodak 2001, *inter alia*; van Dijk 2001, *inter alia*) and uses tools from corpus linguistics methodologies (Bednarek 2008; Baker *et al.* 2008; van Dijk 1995, *inter alia*) to extract and analyze salient lexical items. The results show similarities in the way stance is constructed, for instance an anti EU stance is common to both newspapers, however the Greek Cypriot newspaper appeals to Christian values to foster charity and empathy, and the French newspaper appeal to the legal rights of migrants and the French citizen's duty to foster solidarity.

Key words: migration, critical discourse analysis, empathy, solidarity communist French and Cypriot Greek newspapers, stance taking.