Widening Access to Higher Education: Learning from the Lived Experiences of Gypsy/Traveller and Working-Class Communities Might Enhance Inclusion Policy and Practice Outcomes

by Kelly Stewart*

This paper draws on critical theory (Fromm 1941; Freire 1974; Gray 2014), to explore educational equity and widening access policies in Scotland for two underrepresented groups: students from Gypsy/Traveller communities (Scottish Government 2017), and those from working class and poor backgrounds (Scottish Government 2016). Scotland has a devolved policy model whereby the policy landscape is forged by both national and local or institutional policy directives. This should make institutions more aware of the barriers to widening access and make policies more responsive to the needs of underrepresented groups. However, the evidence indicates that challenges to widening access persist. The paper argues that under-represented groups are sometimes viewed as problematic. Sensitisation around the lived experiences of non-traditional groups would enable national and Higher Education Institution policies to deliver better outcomes that challenge the existing status quo and interrupt social reproduction and inequity across Scotland's education system and society.

Keywords: *Equity, Higher Education policy, Gypsy/Traveller communities, social class and widening access, Widening Access*

Introduction

Widening access and delivering equity in Higher Education (HE) present persistent challenges to policy makers and institutions, both in Scotland and internationally. This paper will discuss policies and practices designed to widen access (WA) to HE for two specific groups, both of which are regarded as non-traditional and/or underrepresented within higher education environments. Data from two separate studies is drawn upon. The first study explores national widening access policies for Gypsy/Travellers, a non-homogenous ethnic group whose experiences of HE are relatively under-explored by researchers. The second study explores HE institutional policies and policy enactments around widening access for students from economically disadvantaged and working-class backgrounds. Although this group has been more extensively studied, the challenges remain in designing policy and practice approaches that successfully widen participation in HE.

Both studies took place in Scotland, which operates a devolved public policy framework in which all publicly funded bodies must contribute to 11 National Outcomes. These have been recently revised but at the time of this research, a key National Outcome was to 'Make Scotland: The best place in

**** Kelly Stewart, a Scottish Heritage Traveller, is a Doctoral Researcher funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, UK Research and Innovation based at University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. Her research focuses on equity around social class and ethnicity across Higher Education Institutions, exploring education and Widening Access policy in Scotland.***

the world to live, grow and learn' (National Improvement Hub 2022). The framework allows national government to set the direction of travel but ensures that significant parts of policy are determined in the context of implementation. The system is designed to promote integrated policy development for complex problems and make policies more accountable to local populations. To ensure accountability, every institution in receipt of government funding must use a single set of National Indicators to measure and report on their progress in delivering the National Outcomes. However, despite this system designed to be responsive to the populations that policymakers serve, the problems of widening participation and narrowing attainment gaps for disadvantaged groups remain.

Equity and inclusion are central tenets of Scottish education policy aims. The early, primary and secondary stages of education focus on closing the ''equity gap'' whereby the ''attainment of children and young people living in deprived areas'' is lower than that of children from more economically advantaged communities and equity involves ''ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed'' (Scottish Government 2022). Higher Education must widen participation and access for disadvantaged groups. Equity is ''treating people fairly, but not necessarily treating people the same'' so that ''personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background are not obstacles to achieving educational potential'' (Education Scotland 2015: 3). The policy agenda for HE inclusion identifies thirty-four recommendations for ''equal access for those from deprived backgrounds or with a care experience'' and explicitly acknowledges that ''socioeconomic inequality in higher education is a problem which spans the whole education system and beyond into wider social policy'' (Scottish Government 2016: 8).

To explore the above policy approach, this project employs critical theory analysis (Fromm 1941; Freire 1970, 1974; Gray 2014; Bolton and Delderfield 2018). Critical theory seeks to understand the political and social patterns in society. Critical analysis identifies normative assumptions and power structures which may knowingly and unknowingly determine how social phenomena are presented and investigated (Gray 2014). The power relations ensure that social interactions and institutions serve the interests of dominant groups to the detriment of marginalised groups. It is an appropriate methodology because the groups to be explored often experience marginalisation, which perpetuates unequal underlying power structures within and across society (Gray 2014). A critical theory lens allows an unpicking of structures that have traditionally been viewed as just the way the world works - the status quo - and recognises that all institutions are shaped by dominant peoples and groups and are designed to serve their interests (Gray 2014).

The aim of this paper is to explore and understand the inner workings of two policies to address educational inequality, making them visible so as to better understand what works, for whom, in which circumstances, and what does not work. First, Study One analyses national-level guidance to make education more successful for Gypsy/Travellers, who are an often over-looked and under-studied group. Then, Study Two explores how one local institution shapes a national plan to widen access in Higher Education for economically disadvantaged students. This is a well-researched and investigated group where one might expect previous research findings to inform current practice.

The studies were undertaken as part of MSc/PhD work at Strathclyde University, Scotland and conformed to the University's ethical guidelines.

The article will outline key historic and ongoing matters for each group as context for the policy investigation, analysis and discussion of the issues raised.

Context for Study One: Experiences of Gypsy/Traveller Communities

Inclusion policies for Gypsy/Traveller communities in Scotland are relatively recent and sit against a history of negative portrayals in both popular culture and government policy. McPhee (2017) documents how the earliest policies sought to alter and destroy Gypsy/Traveller communities' ways of life. The 'Anti-Gypsy Laws' of 1541 gave way to the 1571 Act, which legalised the hanging and drowning of Gypsies. An 1894 Commission to combat nomadism in Scotland targeted the children of nomadic communities using 'tribal head counts' from the 1893 census to ensure 'children are rounded up and sent to the colonies – Australia, Canada. This practice continued until World War 1, and was resumed until World War 2', (McPhee 2017: 7). Nomadism was targeted by the 1908 Children Act, (Scotland), then roadside camping was outlawed by the 1984 Roads Act (Scotland), and stoppage on private land was targeted by the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (McPhee 2017; Kabachnik and Ryder 2013; Bhopal 2004).

Negative attitudes towards Gypsy/Traveller communities remain embedded in modern media portrayals (Allan 2017). Amnesty International (2012) reports that Scottish media disproportionately represents Gypsy/Travellers, with 1.5 articles written per day, 48% containing negative depictions including links with criminality (38%) and cleanliness (32%). Few offered opportunities for communities to respond; only 6% included a community voice. A 2016 report quotes a young Gypsy/Traveller volunteer: 'The media targets us, there is never anything positive said about Travellers and they always stereotype us. It makes people judge us', (Article 12 2015: 3). In 2021 a popular comedian, Jimmy Carr made the following "joke" on Netflix:

> When people talk about the Holocaust, they talk about the tragedy and horror of 6 million Jewish lives being lost to the Nazi war machine. But they never mention the thousands of Gypsies that were killed by the Nazis. No-one ever wants to talk about that, because no one ever wants to talk about the positives.

He was condemned by many politicians and newspapers but defended by popular journalist/broadcaster Victoria Cohen-Mitchell, comic Jack Dee and Jeremy Clarkson (Stolworthy 2022). Jimmy Carr still works as a presenter to top-ranking shows.

In 2015 Scotland's social attitude survey reported 31% of respondents would be unhappy about a close relative marrying Gypsy/Travellers (a 6% drop from 37% in 2010) and 34% viewed Gypsy/Travellers as 'very' or 'fairly unsuitable' being a primary school teacher (decreased from 46% in 2010) (Scottish Government 2011, 2016).

Discrimination in the workplace prompts some community members to hide their identity to avoid racism (Lane, Spencer and Jones 2014, The Traveller

Movement 2017, Article 12 2018). Some community members fear that identity disclosure may lead to negative repercussions (Article 12 2018).

The Scottish Government concludes that 'discrimination against Gypsy/Travellers is far more accepted and normalised than that directed at other minority ethnic communities' (Scottish Government 2017: 40). Policies to promote equity have struggled to make an impact: 'Despite parliamentary inquiries and work to address their recommendations over the last 15 years, progress has been slow, and Gypsy/Travellers experience the worst outcomes on every indicator – health, life expectancy, education, and employment'. The Scottish Government (2018) stated that: "Attitudes towards Gypsy/Travellers are worse than for any other group, and the discrimination they face is described by the Equality and Human Rights Commission as: 'the last bastion of acceptable racism" (Scottish Government 2018).

Gypsy/Traveller communities are societally situated as 'strangers' (Bhopal and Myers 2008), 'others' and 'outsiders', experiencing 'White racism' (Bhopal 2011: 315; Bhopal and Myers 2008). Research conducted by Bhopal (2011: 325) suggests that schools may not treat racism faced by Gypsy/Traveller pupils seriously as they are White and 'not seen as an ethnic group'. Societal and structural racism faced is historically sustained and therefore outlined as different from that experienced by 'Black' and 'Asian' communities who 'become beacons of respectable and ordinary lives alongside their white neighbours' (Bhopal and Myers 2008: 72).

Successful school education and exam results are pre-requisites for widening access to Higher Education for Gypsy/Travellers but educational outcomes in Scotland are low. In 2013, the Scottish Government reported the three-year average (2008/9, 2010/11) for Gypsy/Traveller attainment whereby this group had the: lowest attainment scores by a large margin (an average tariff score of 88 compared to the Scotland average of 181); lowest school attendance of any ethnic group; and a high rate of school exclusions (Scottish Government 2013). This pattern persisted in 2018 (Scottish Government 2018) with performance and attendance significantly worse than pupils from lowest quintiles of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

Similarly, within England Gypsy/Travellers experience exclusion by schools to protect schools' position on league tables (Bhopal 2000 cited in Bhopal 2004: 50). The introduction of some UK-wide laws, outlined above, impacts schooling leading to a 'degree of educational disruption that is being caused for Gypsy Traveller children' (Bhopal 2004: 48). Regardless of changing attitudes of Gypsy/Traveller parent(s)/caregiver(s) and families whereby education is held positively and viewed as beneficial, the education system continues to be inflexible and ostracising (Bhopal 2004).

Experiences of discrimination and marginalisation may explain young people's low engagement in schooling (Jordan 2001; Derrington 2007; Cresswell 2006; D'Arcy 2014, 2017; Myers 2017; Article 12 2015, 2018; The Traveller Movement 2017) and why parent(s)/caregiver(s) remove their children from school, choosing to home-school (D'Arcy 2014, 2017). Misconceptions about the mobility of such communities may also mean schools do not follow-up poor attendance (D'Arcy 2014, 2017).

Understanding how Gypsy/Traveller communities, and particularly how the children navigate the institutional challenges of schools and interact with the systems, curricula, and social spaces of schooling, Derrington (2007)

suggests that young Gypsy/Travellers may learn ‘‘maladaptive coping-strategies’’. Such strategies include ‘fight (physical and verbal retaliation and non-compliance), flight (self-imposed exclusion) and, playing white (passing identity by concealing or denying one’s heritage)’ to manage school difficulties experienced (Derrington 2007: 357).

Across the UK within HE the situation shows little signs of improvement. Empirical research by Morgan, McDonagh and Acton (2023) outlined the inferiority felt by some HE students from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller backgrounds. Conceptualised as the ‘racialised outsider habitus’ students reported feeling ‘not good enough’ due to institutional preference for ‘established white cultural capital’ (Morgan et al. 2023: 490-491). Such students are left out of university/Higher Education Institution (HEI) related opportunities of acknowledgement and cultural celebrations. Student Union Societies including Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) societies lack understanding of experiences and identities (Morgan et al. 2023). Marsh and Morgan (2025: 13-15) found ‘perceived invisibility’, ‘ignorance’ and ‘unease’ exists within UK HEIs regarding staff and students from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities. Research findings suggest that HEIs reflect society and must work to understand the ‘racism, hegemonic whiteness, anti-Gypsyism and discrimination’ they embody to decolonise discourse and curriculum (Marsh and Morgan 2025: 13).

Context for Study Two: Experiences of Working-Class communities

Scotland has persistent and wide differences in the attainment of students from advantaged and less-advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The gaps are evident before school and continue to widen throughout primary and secondary schooling (Sosu and Ellis 2014). Closing this gap has been a key policy aim for the Scottish Government since 2015 when the Scottish Attainment Challenge directed funding to schools in areas of high deprivation to ‘‘raise attainment and reduce educational inequity” (Education Scotland 2025). Universities were tasked with ‘‘narrowing the participation gap in higher education’’ (Blackburn, Kadar-Satat, Riddell and Weedon 2016: 27).

The participation gap within HE associated with socio-economic disadvantage and its root causes can be understood as a ‘‘wicked’’ problem in which many factors play a part (Horst, Rittel and Webber 1973: 155). Fifty years on, Reay (2022: 425) asserts that such notions endure, outlining that politicians, policymakers and the field of education continue to embody the accepted tradition to ‘express concern about educational inequalities whilst failing both to engage with many of the main drivers of inequality, and to grasp the complex and dynamic interplay of educational structures, processes and practices’.

The above can be exemplified by some researchers and politicians' suggestion that there is an aspiration gap imbedded in low ambitions of young people and families from low socio-economic backgrounds (Scottish Parliament 2017 cited in Treanor, Jamieson, and Kelly 2017: 1). A critical analysis view proposes this ‘transfers responsibility for aspirations and achievement from governments and schools to parents and children’ (Treanor, et al. 2017: 1). Instead Treanor, et al. (2017: 5) suggest that practical issues such as inequities in the ‘know-how’ about how education systems work, how to overcome barriers in schooling, and how to support a child’s education offer an explanation for

unequal uptake or success. Schools, teachers, and politicians require better understanding of the 'risks, causes and consequences of poverty, which are often conflated and misconstrued' (Treanor, et al. 2017: 5).

The pronouncement of low aspiration is concluded as a 'myth' by Treanor, et al. (2017) echoing earlier recognition by Berrington, Roberts and Tammes (2016: 749) who detail that 'contrary to much political rhetoric, young people's aspirations for college/university participation remain high' and such portrayals ought to be 'questioned'. Abrahams (2024: 57) similarly concludes that ''contrary to policy narratives around aspirations, young people from working-class backgrounds *do* have 'high aspirations''.

Scotland has a wider HE access gap than the rest of the UK. Ironically, Scotland's policy of free, centrally funded, university education (Scottish Government 2022) may partially explain why this is so. The central funding formulae caps university places and increases competition in ways that England and Wales' system of fees paid by individual students through re-payable loans does not (Blackburn et al. 2016). Additionally, Iannelli, Smyth and Klein (2016) suggest class-based patterns of subject choice in secondary education where both the number and type of subject selections serve to disadvantage students from working class and poor backgrounds. Iannelli, et al. (2016: 577) highlight working class students require 'clear information and support in their curriculum decisions throughout their school career'.

Although Scottish student debt is generally lower than the debts of students from the other UK countries, repayable maintenance loans mean that poorer students carry more debt than their richer peers whose parents cover a greater proportion of maintenance (Blackburn et al. 2016). The policy discourse in Scotland tends to focus on protecting fee-free university education and ignores reductions in non-repayable maintenance grants and the parallel rise in repayable loans (Blackburn et al. 2016).

The Scottish Government set targets to widen access in HE and ensure the student population more closely reflects the make-up of the Scottish population by 2030. To deliver this, it established the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) and a Commissioner for Fair Access to lead, prioritise and report on efforts and progress. The CoWA developed a Scottish Framework for Fair Access and made thirty-four recommendations to achieve the HE targets. These included, for example a recommendation that universities' admissions processes embrace flexible transitions via articulation pathways to enable students on post-school courses at Further Education Colleges to easily transition to a degree course at university. Other recommendations were that universities develop contextual admissions frameworks with minimum (rather than competitive) entrance requirements for students from particular backgrounds or schools, and that Outcome Agreements are linked to public funding (Scottish Government 2016).

In line with the devolved policy model, Scottish universities determine their own admission policies and support structures for students on their courses. Some offer automatic financial support for housing in the first year of studies for students from low SIMD or those with caring responsibilities. Many set the minimum (rather than competitive) admission requirements for students from low SIMD groups, or from schools with traditionally low progression rates into HE, as well as for students who are 'care experienced' or have caring responsibilities.

However, children inherit the wealth cultural knowledge and abilities of their parents (Bourdieu 1984) and the CoWA can do nothing about this. The inequalities are particularly acute for working-class, first-generation students with no family experience of HE (Wilson, Hunter and McArthur 2018), who often also face pressure to earn money, fulfil a range of social and financial family commitments, have a low sense of entitlement and support networks that are unable to prepare them for university due to their limited knowledge. This leads to high dropout rates (Reay 2016). Roberts (2011: 189) highlights that non-traditional students are expected to 'change' whilst HEIs remain 'unchanged'. Students from non-traditional backgrounds possess different social and cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Those interviewed by Roberts (2011: 193) were aware of this, perceived as a 'deficit' whereby ''students felt they were alone in 'learning to play the game'' even after successful HE access, leading to considerations of dropping out.

Despite the efforts of Scottish Government and CoWA, Scotland's universities are not on course to achieve their widening access targets, and social reproduction and stratification continue in HE (Commissioner for Fair Access 2024). Study Two takes a Critical Analysis perspective to explore how one HE policy may be explicitly and/or implicitly biased towards certain groups. The Scottish Government's (2016) approach to ending ''inequality'' across education via the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) and an HEI's non-critical uptake of the above WA policy is problematised.

Policy Analysis: Study One Policy Approaches and Persistent Problems

The Scottish Government (2017) policy paper that was analysed in Study One '*Improving Educational Outcomes For Children And Young People From Travelling Cultures'* is a policy guidance paper for educators and policy makers which:

> [s]ets out the context for supporting all Gypsy/Traveller children and young people and their families … encourages an understanding of the challenges they face in engaging with the education system … [and] supports schools and local authorities to offer effective, inclusive approaches (Scottish Government 2017).

Study One explores how the paper, in both its creation and output, embodies the concepts of awareness, orientation, impact and balance. Specifically, it looks at evidence of the: *awareness* of group(s)' non-homogeneity; *orientation* in how public perceptions and Gypsy/Travellers' views are incorporated; *impact potential* on learning and educational outcomes, and the *balance* between Gypsy/Travellers voices and other public discourses, in terms of the policy recommendations, guidance and strategies recommended in the paper. The analysis pays particular attention to understanding how the Scottish Gypsy/Traveller community is depicted and their voices incorporated in the paper.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 1995, 2011; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999) was used to deepen understanding of the meaning-making and complex social networks, practices and events which shaped the paper. As a methodology CDA offers tools to investigate the discursive practices

that underpin how texts are produced and how they link to other texts, as well as how these discourses and texts relate to, and reflect, wider sociocultural practices. Specifically, Fairclough's CDA dialectical-relational approach was employed (Fairclough 2003, 2011). This allows analysis at various levels: Sociocultural practice; Discourse practice, and Text by using the following lenses: Dimensions of Analysis: Explanation (social analysis); Interpretation (processing analysis); and Description (Text analysis) (Locke 2004). CDA is a ''methodology and not just a method' (O'Regan and Betzel 2016: 5).

The positive aspects are that the paper exists at all, and its existence establishes a point of reference in the form of a dedicated webpage and guidance to support educators to better-understand the lived experiences of Scottish Gypsy/ Traveller communities.

However, a general criticism of the devolved, consultative policy model of Scottish Government is that, whilst it may prevent policy silos, promote co-production and a focus on cross-cutting government aims such as prevention and transitions, it can tolerate too much ambiguity, poor definition of the problem(s) and local variations in policy outcomes and it does not prioritise or account for the possible limited knowledge and co-ordination of policy actors. (Cairney, Russell and St Denny 2016).

With regards to the paper under analysis, the problems begin on the outset with its positionality. Whilst the document refers to itself as ''guidance'' (Scottish Government 2017: 4), it can be found on the Scottish Government webpage under the title "Policy: Gypsy/Travellers'' (Scottish Government 2018). This ambiguity is problematic and potentially harmful. A policy document needs to identify targets to address the impact of negative attitudes and circumstances that Gypsy/Traveller communities experience in many life outcomes and outline adequate approaches to addressing this in educational settings. A guidance document provides its readers (which include local/national education policy communities and practitioners) with direction to enact change but does not carry the same weight as a policy document.

Whether it is guidance or policy, the paper needs to define and illuminate the issues unambiguously if it is to generate the knowledge that policy and practitioner communities need to develop and implement change. Understanding of the complex histories and context of implementation and awareness of the inherent prejudice and biases that exist is key to identifying policies/guidance that offer appropriate direction and challenge. The CA for Study One identified several missed opportunities for this.

Ambiguity: Lost Histories and Lost Knowledge

One role of the Scottish Government's (2017) paper as a guidance document is to enhance the ability of the wider education community to appreciate the lived experiences and current circumstances of Gypsy/Traveller communities. The historical legacy is central to develop this understanding, although Scottish Gypsy/Travellers are Scotland's oldest indigenous minority (BEMIS 2011: 4) their history is absent and there is no distinction between this group and other Gypsy/Traveller groups. This matters because 'Traveller communities are a nonhomogeneous group … not a single group … [each] defined by its different history, culture and lifestyle' (BEMIS 2011: 6).

The historical persecution of Gypsy/Traveller communities by governments and wider society is also ignored in the document. The current lifestyles and internal social structures of many Gypsy/Traveller communities are a consequence (direct or indirect) of the laws and stigmatisation they experienced. This history impacts on Gypsy/Traveller ideas about what schools are for, what schooling is like, how schools relate to communities and requirements for school attendance. As none of this is mentioned, no space is created to recognise it or hold conversations which may create mutual understandings and dispel misconceptions of Gypsy/Traveller culture. Educators therefore miss opportunities to learn and understand the lives of young Gypsy/Travellers and consequently, the information that would develop school environments and curricula to support positive education outcomes.

The document attempts to identify particular characteristics of different Traveller communities, but its pen-portraits are so clumsy and weak that the guidance forgoes the opportunity to usefully inform readers of the variety and diversity of Gypsy/Travellers or to celebrate their various histories, cultures, creativity, abundant achievements, and resilience. In the guidance, European Roma are positioned as migrants in search of a better life (with Scotland as the provider); Scottish Gypsy/Travellers are positioned as disengaged and defiantly different and Scottish Show-People as attitudinally open-minded. Those who wrote the guidance made choices about what is omitted and stated which lead policy and practitioner readers to view certain groups in certain ways. Because of this, the guidance cannot serve to build readers' knowledge or prompt them to think more deeply about those Gypsy/Traveller communities they will meet in their own context.

Co-ordination: Myths and Misunderstandings Around Home-Schooling

A second difficulty relates to how the guidance document curtails the potential for learning across policy initiatives by not giving explicit recognition to the diverse ways of being and instead adopting dominant sociocultural assumptions. Adopting dominant sociocultural assumptions is problematic in relation to the Gypsy/Traveller community because these are overwhelmingly harmful and relentless (Amnesty International 2012; Article 12 2018).

Gypsy/Traveller communities are non-homogenous. For a variety of reasons some may travel, shifting with seasonal employment opportunities for part or all the year. Others may live permanently in bricks and mortar homes and travel during holidays, or stay on purpose-built residential council sites, self-created campsites, or other formal and informal arrangements. Each arrangement facilitates different relationships with educators and schooling. Although we know that the cultural practice of moving/shifting is viewed as a source of tension for schools (D'Arcy 2014, 2017) the document does not engage with this variation and thus contributes to enduring media-influenced misunderstandings around mobility. There is no mention, for example, of systemic ways to ensure provisions for pupils who do shift or the possibilities for providing access to the curriculum and school communities whilst travelling. This may well further existing tensions that lead to increased home-schooling as the only viable option for those communities.

In 2016/17 home-schooling increased in the UK by 'almost 100%' from 2011/12 (Myers 2017). In England researchers reveal: "…concerns about some

types of families being identified as problematic 'home educators'', who are 'putting their children at risk' and ''quite often while Muslims, Gypsies and poor families are identified as potential sources of 'risk' in terms of home education, other families such as those from middle class backgrounds seem to be portrayed in a more positive light'' (Bhopal and Myers 2015).

Scottish Government's (2017) guidance makes no positive mention of home schooling by Gypsy/Traveller communities to prompt discussion of how effective home-schooling might be supported. Choices around modes of education are stigmatised and presented as an integral part of Gypsy/Traveller culture. The issue is not seen as one of inflexible systems but is positioned as a problem of the Gypsy/Travellers' own making, and difficult to change in a manner deemed more acceptable by society.

This positioning of Gypsy/Traveller home-schooling means that the Guidance makes no links to lessons learned through the wide use of home-schooling and online curricula and support developed as (temporary) necessities during the Covid-19 pandemic. It does not encourage its readers to apply the policy lessons from one policy context and community to others and so promote learning across policies to better-support Gypsy/Traveller communities.

Barriers: Located With Gypsy/Traveller Communities, Not Society

Critical Analysis of the Scottish Government (2017) guidance also shows how it locates problems and barriers to positive education outcomes with the Gypsy/Traveller community lifestyles rather than the way existing institutional systems and actors respond. A clear example of this is that the document states 'Young people become part of the extended working families from an early age and assume adult roles and responsibilities, therefore, may not easily adapt to the stark contrast of age-specific grouping in schools' (Scottish Government 2017: 7). The lived reality in which young Gypsy/Travellers are used to being responsible and working hard, are mature, comfortable with adults and with work-related roles is presented as a negative experience likely to result in youngsters who struggle to work with peers. It ignores the positives: the practical skills they bring, their ability to communicate with adults, to organise their work, persist and focus on a task. In another world (or another community), these skills might be seen as building potential for classroom/school leadership.

The document also assumes, with little evidence, that children and young people are 'not engaging with formal education, at all' which is cited as a ''cultural practice'' and a way of 'maintaining their culture and lifestyles as different to non-travelling settled communities' (Scottish Government 2017: 7).

Co-production: Communities Voices are Absent

Although the production process for the Scottish Government (2017) guidance is unclear, a noteworthy finding is that no individuals/groups from Scottish Gypsy Traveller communities appear to have been directly involved in creating/refining the guidance or informing its roll-out. Gypsy/Travellers, as 'Experts by Experience' (Lane, Spencer and Jones 2014) have an important voice, and one that should be heard loud and clear, but both the development and consultation processes seem to have involved a small group that included

organisations who work with Gypsy/Traveller communities but maybe not the Gypsy/Travellers themselves. The guidance was reviewed by the Gypsy/Traveller Ministerial Working Group (GTMWG) which has no members from the communities. Inevitably, the perspectives, values and voice(s) are imbalanced, to the detriment of Gypsy/Traveller communities.

Only four individuals' voices appear within the entire guidance document. These are assumed to account for all Gypsy/Traveller communities' experiences. Direct quotes are referred to simply as ''Traveller'', with no specific community identified (Scottish Government 2017). It gives rise to a guidance document where those who are intended to be supported are worked upon rather than with, thus missing opportunities for meaningful collaboration. As Freire suggests 'One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding' (Freire 1970: 95 cited in Foster and Cemlyn 2012: 61).

Moving Forward: a Cognisant Collaborative Approach

The Scottish Government's (2017) guidance fails to offer a nuanced understanding of Gypsy/Travellers lived experiences, and the understanding of communities appears catch-all rather than cognisant. There is scant evidence its production involved experts by lived experience or engagement with specific communities.

The term guidance rather than policy could serve to distance central policymakers from the responsibility to act. Alternatively, it could signify that, in line with the 'less authoritative and more egalitarian' devolved Scottish policy model (Cairney, et al. 2016: 333) guidance allows local educationalists more rein to be creative in developing their practice and policy. Importantly, however, to achieve this, the guidance document must identify key issues in ways that allow sufficient open space to create the required knowledge in policy/practice communities by consulting with the Gypsy/Traveller communities themselves.

Policy Analysis: Study Two Policy Approaches and Persistent Problems

The Scottish Government (2016) policy document analysed in Study Two was '*The Blueprint for Fairer Access'*. This is the final report of the CoWA and presents a plan to improve access to full-time first-degree study for individuals from economically deprived backgrounds, or who attend schools with traditionally low progression rates to HE, are care-experienced or are young carers. Unlike the guidance document examined in Study One, this document offers a plan that details clear, tangible actions for systems-change to widen access in HE. The thirty-four recommendations in ''The Blueprint for Fairer Access'' were, accepted by all stakeholders including the Scottish Government, Commissioner for Fair Access, Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and all Scottish HE institutions. However, Scotland's devolved, integrated policy model means each institution must work out how to implement the actions in the guidance document to effect system-change in their own context.

Study Two aims to understand how even where a guidance document specifies detailed, tangible actions, the various management tiers of the HE

institution their systems, processes, and data collection/utilisation procedures shape implementation in ways that meet targets but create both positive and negative impacts on widening access.

The data reported is part of a wider empirical study of how widening access measures were implemented in one HE institution. This paper draws on purposively selected participant interviews (n=28) of university students from widening access and non-widening access backgrounds and HE staff working in WA roles: senior faculty/university staff responsible for strategic decisions, workforce planning staff, data strategy staff, student support and lecturing staff, as well as staff in WA organisations working with secondary school students.

Data was generated via semi-structured interviews alongside field notes, staff profiles, entry route profiles and reflective logs (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier 2013). It was analysed using thematic analysis (Clarke and Braun 2013) and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz and Thornberg 2021). Concepts that informed analysis included: forms of capital and habitus (Bourdieu 1984; Mishra 2020); ‘‘equity-mindedness model’’ which utilises ideas around implicit and explicit bias to examine the actions and views of leaders and practitioners (CUE 2019); and Academic Capital Formation (ACF) which highlights class reproduction in education and how student barriers can be reduced via academic, networking and financial interventions (St. John, Hu and Fisher 2011).

The Scottish Government sets targets for numbers of WA students, but universities decide how to achieve and monitor these in their own context of implementation. The target for WA is that 40% of students come from the bottom two quintiles of the Scottish index of multiple deprivation (SIMD). The university used for this case study consistently met this target.

Despite meeting the target as a university overall, interviews with staff working in WA indicated considerable variation between the various faculties and between courses within a faculty: some faculties and courses exceeded the target by a wide margin whilst others fell far short:

> [… there are] differences between the faculties in terms of each has their own sort of SIMD recruitment targets…and then some faculties are higher than others, but as a university they’ve been achieving it (Faculty A, Department A, Academic Director/WA Administrator).
>
> […] we can recruit SIMD a lot easier than other departments, so we tend to take a lot more than our targets… I'm just not sure the balance is quite right.…so when faculty get to that point, really, they know they're not gonna hit the SIMD target it’s “Can you please take some more?” Um, and we are then very quickly getting close to being like a 50/50 split, providing widening access and non-widening access (Faculty A, Department A, Operations Manager 1)

There are several possible reasons why WA targets may not be spread equally across courses or faculties. It may be that students from WA backgrounds wish to do those courses but are not being facilitated because a single, competitive entry tariff continues to be applied to everyone. Alternatively, there may be insufficient applications to the course/faculty, indicating a need for outreach programmes to raise awareness and applications from WA students. Whatever the reason, the uneven distributions result in WA students being funnelled

towards some courses and not others and it is hard to argue that they experience true equity.

To design systems that promote equity, universities need real-time data oversight across all courses to allow a central team to drill down and prompt timely strategic action. One interviewee pointed out that when each department/faculty works in a silo, reporting faculty-level data, it is harder to ensure equal access to all courses:

> But when I've come here, it seems to be: Oh, we've got a spreadsheet. I'm sorry? Um, it seems to be lots of spreadsheets. There's no student information system, so we have no knowledge of what the faculties are doing, departments are doing, nothing is held, nothing's contained (Admissions and Student Lifecycle, Data Administrator 1)

The Scottish Government determines recruitment numbers for certain professional courses (for example, medicine, nursing and teaching) to ensure that the universities produce sufficient trainees to meet demand. Professional qualifications offer good economic prospects and are a reasonably solid route to social mobility. However, the Scottish Government does not monitor or require these courses to consist of 40% students from WA backgrounds.

Support to succeed at university

Universities that recruit WA students need to ensure that they also provide the support to these students to succeed. To recruit students and not provide support may do serious harm. Research shows that WA students benefit from several kinds of support. ACF identifies six social processes overserved as ‘‘integral to academic capital formation’’ following a review of the works of Bourdieu (1972) – social reproduction, Becker (1964/1975) – human capital theory and Coleman (1988) - social capital theory (St. John, et al. 2011: 13).

The six social processes include: concerns about college [equivalent to HEI] cost (human capital), supportive networks, navigation of systems, trustworthy information (social capital) and college [HEI] knowledge and family uplift (overcoming social reproduction) (St. John, et al., 2011).

The students' union officers were aware that WA students needed support:

> The problem is, is that if those students then aren't being given the support that they need to stay at uni. or you know to be able to reach their full potential to actually succeed, then that's quite a different metric, I suppose, for us to measure that that accessibility against (Student Union Officer).

WA target related to access numbers alone presents a ‘‘problem’’ as it does not detail whether students from WA backgrounds are given ‘‘support’’ throughout to remain in HE. An attempt to understand that would lead to a ‘‘different metric’’ to then measure ‘‘accessibility against’’. As such only a portion of the story is told. The portion which is related to HEI funding and displays of success is

considered and demonstratable, whilst the students of WA backgrounds experiences of and progression through HE is not.

Some courses and faculties supported students well via early preplanned preparation. This included understanding the need to know where you are going, where important things are, and know some familiar faces before day one:

> We have…in June, May, or June a transition day…where we bring all our new cohorts together. The three colleges as it stands just now bring them all together, have a couple of days. We also arranged like the library services and [librarian's name], and the library takes some round introduces themselves, shows them, you know all of these preparation things before they actually get there so they have a familiar face. They know where they're going. We'd do a walk…they do that in freshers weeks across the university, university wide. But there's nothing better than bringing your own cohort up and you're doing it with them (Faculty B, Department B, Course Leader/Lecturer 1).

Student timetables were given to students ahead of time to aid their own planning:

> We'll get their timetable out to them in June so that they can plan. That's really important when you're dealing with students from widening access, that they have this, they know what they're doing (Faculty B, Department B, Course Leader/Lecturer 1).

Seminar groups were kept at smaller sizes and classes start and finish times were altered to match students comfort levels and needs as well as working together with feeder colleges to ensure consistency across transitions:

> […] our seminar groups are smaller, so we maybe have no more than 20 in a seminar group...and even at that so that students have that environment where they're comfortable, you know. And because don't forget they're coming from a background where they're at college, they would maybe have like 25 in a class…or maybe 100 in a lecture. So, as I say, these are the things that you got to think about, you know in terms of the environment that you're bringing them into as well as the start time. We don't start lectures until 10:00 o'clock because we know a lot of them will get their children, go to school and we finish at 3:00 o'clock because we know...these are all the things that make the difference when you're bringing students from the widening access. Because they say most of ours fit that age range, you know that either young mums or dads you know that still have parents and responsibilities, and that's going to be taken into account...we don't start till 10:00 o'clock and we asked the colleges when they're doing the HNC and their diploma, to follow that same procedure. You know that most colleges start at 9:00 o'clock...we say no, for this course you've got to start at 10 and finish it 3 (Faculty B, Department B, Course Leader/Lecturer 1).

There is a clear understanding that students should not just be left to figure everything out for themselves, nurture is necessary and impactful:

> It's about enjoying it, it shouldn't be a chore for them…supporting them through it. It's not just about bringing them on and leaving them to it, it's about nurturing them…it's absolutely amazing when you see how they came in at the beginning and when they leave at the end, the confidence, there's a marked difference (Faculty B, Department B, Course Leader/Lecturer 1).

Others were less aware of the kinds of support required:

> They [academic staff/lecturers] don't know who's who on the class list, or what their background is. Uh, so there isn't something necessarily any extra support for anybody from that sort of different background. And we have talked about, you know, should there be, you know, specific small group tutorial sessions for sort of widening access student? Uh, and some people believe, yes, it would be good to put that in place and other people believe no, we should treat all students equally once they're in the university and have no difference (Faculty A, Department A, Academic Director/WA Administrator 1).

Unsensitised approaches can lead to some students from WA backgrounds struggling:

> I found it was a big jump saying just, I did find it hard…full hated it, and then I had to catch up, but I left and then I decided to come back. But…I wasn't as brave as a lot of kids. I wasn't the same, as smart as them and I was a bit immature.
> A lot of them kids…were a lot more academically smart. I was book smart with some things, but I just felt it like going over my head some of that. I did think there was no support for help or guidance. I used to go to [previous secondary school mentor] all the time…I did struggle with it (Faculty B, Department A, Student from WA background).

The HEI created a central admissions team within each faculty to recruit all students and ensure that WA targets were met across the faculty. However, in solving one problem, it created others:

> My biggest complaint is not spending enough time with students…because of twice as many students and half the number of staff…if you were to come here 10 years ago, our 1st year intake was 120-130, its 237 at the moment with no change in staff. Ok right, so something has to give and the time with the student has to give… So, I would say the system, I don't want to call it the industrialisation of higher education, but it is. That we are… we've got a sausage machine, we're a process now. You come in, you do stuff, you get a degree, you move on. That is very much the way across the sector,

> not just [HEI name] but the sector as well. We've fallen victim to that. So, we don't get to know people as well, we can't know them, empathise with them as much because we don't get the time. That's a system issue, not a departmental one (Faculty A, Department A, Lecturer 2).

Many staff were unsure about whether it was appropriate to identify WA students and treat them as a group for support. Because the staff didn't know who the WA students were, it was hard for them to intervene, or to monitor how successful their support mechanisms might be. One course leader described how they knew many students in recent cohorts were struggling to pass an early exam. The lack of data meant that they could not analyse who was struggling, what with or why and they simply moved the exam to later in the course:

> Cause it used to be that they [all students] had say, maybe a 20-credit class all delivered in semester one. So, these students arriving to the university, you know, this is the first time they're having a university class come December with a 20-credit exam. And you know, if they didn't pass that then, then it's got implications on them proceeding into third year or they've got this fail and then they already think that - Oh, I'm not good enough and I can't do it - and so [the students] head goes down in semester two and you know – [students think] I'm not gonna do as well, I'm not gonna survive – so the department changed it such that yes, we're gonna have assessment, but they're gonna be more like a class test and I'm gonna stretch that 20-credit class over two semesters (Faculty A, Department A, Academic Director/WA Administrator 1).

Implicit bias around social class and low-income students

Implicit bias is an issue. Explicit (overt/unambiguous/conscious) and implicit (inherent/unspoken/unconscious) bias relates to beliefs, views and/or behaviours of individuals, groups and/or institutions as influenced by culture and/or context (Atewologun, Cornish and Tresh 2018). Exploring HEI biases is important as they can act in unfair ways towards students from working class and disadvantaged backgrounds via HE entry processes and education experiences. There was evidence in the interviews that staff see social class differently and were not aware of their bias:

> We know it might be more difficult to afford to go on exchange, but we do find that with a lot of our home students anyway, because they stay at home, their parents aren't having to pay for them to live... you know, in accommodation…But yeah, when they get here, we do try and treat them all equally and fairly…But again, it's difficult cause we can't treat students differently, in my opinion, in that sense. Yeah, we will give more support to who needs it, but someone who's not in one of those backgrounds might be having equally as challenging or not (Faculty D, Department A, Student Lifecycle Administrator 2).

The above quote demonstrates several biases. One is the assumption that '*home*' - Scottish students including those from widening access backgrounds, live at home with their parents therefore saving money by not living in student/private accommodation therefore there must be a surplus of money to afford the international exchange which is compulsory. Secondly, is the notion that all students are to be treated 'equally and fairly' which is equality and expected however, treating students differently as in according to their needs – equity, is viewed as difficult. Thirdly, there is an assumption that students from all backgrounds may experience situations which are 'equally as challenging'. There is no denying that students will face challenges however there are different sorts of challenges, one-off might be expected but repeated systemic challenges related to social class should not be tolerated. The solution is to have more direct conversation with, and input from WA students, as there is not a "typical" WA student.

Tackling implicit bias by heightening student voice

Similarly to Study One, the voices of those at the heart of policy, presently students from widening access backgrounds, are to be heard for the HEI to develop an understanding of students' needs and what practices are to be in place to support them. Currently there is no overarching HEI mechanism to gather such data to begin to inform the above:

> I don't really think so. Again, there might be little pockets of things going on, but I don't think we listen to students enough. I don't think we draw on their body of knowledge. I mean, I know they have student evaluations, and it goes into the system and again, it seems all quite kind of mechanised to me in a bit disjointed, but maybe we need to be listening a bit more and thinking about what we're hearing and adapting to that. Maybe it's going on, but if it is I don't know, not party to any of that (Faculty B, Department A, Lecturer 3).

Illustrated in the above quote is the recognition that the current student evaluation process does not connect students' experiences in a meaningful way. Student evaluations are for the entire student body and more generalised than a specific evaluation for students from widening access backgrounds at a more nuanced, granular level. The lecturer above highlights that the HEI needs to be *"listening"* and *"adapting*" suggesting that they currently are not.

Discussion

True equity would mean that students from low-income households had equal access to every course in Scotland's universities. It is quite clear that this does not happen; some courses take very many more WA students and others take very few. Whilst the university as a whole meets its target, the lived reality is that equity is partial at best. Ambiguity in defining and monitoring what equity in WA looks like on the ground means that the inequity continues to thrive but is under-researched, not problematised and effectively protected by a system that could function very much more effectively.

The Scottish government WA Blueprint identifies global percentages but perhaps needs to commission some further research to specify on a more granular level what equity actually looks like and encourage universities to do the same. Data analysis has a role to play in driving system change and universities need to be encouraged to provide a more detailed back-story to their headline figures. From this, Scottish Government could identify those universities that are doing WA well across all faculties, departments, and courses, and publicise how they achieve this. They could also investigate, across Scotland to see if some courses or subject departments are particularly poor or good at WA. Whilst this might not be easy to do at scale (universities do not provide directly comparable courses) it would be a simple matter to investigate the WA success of the professional courses where Scottish Government already controls admission numbers.

Similar to Study One there is ambiguity about the policy aim as well as definitions of the problem. Whilst there is a clearly defined HE entry target set by the Scottish Government to be achieved by 2030, what is less described is the impact intended. A clearer understanding of the problem: inequity around social class within HE perpetuates social reproduction across education and society, then HEIs might take steps to comprehend the lived experiences of students from working class and disadvantaged backgrounds to attend to equity across the education journey, encouraging societal shifts.

HEIs could do more to promote co-production between students and staff in the ways in which courses are designed and undertaken as with the above example where early planning and time considerations were employed. This approach could be tailored by staff across different faculties/departments according to need. Time is a limiting factor here as students from WA backgrounds often work more than middleclass students and to ensure uptake, faculty staff time must be taken into account too. As introduced in Study One, the participant voices can be treated as experts by experience, a useful concept which could be utilised by the HEI to gather the experiences of students from WA backgrounds to generate understanding and collaborate with students and staff to enact change. Use of critical theory can help to identify implicit bias around class-based assumptions in courses. Theorists who have developed toolkits to assist with the above including the ‘‘equity-mindedness’’ model (CUE 2019) and ACF (St. John, Hu and Fisher 2011) can be reviewed to assess their applicability and/or adaption for the Scottish education context.

Conclusion

The most prominent finding across both pieces of research is that of policy aimed at supporting the education outcomes of particular underrepresented groups lacks an understanding of the lived experiences of those groups. Thorough consideration of complex, nuanced experiences would lead to fewer misunderstandings and misconceptions and better outcomes. Both pieces of research show policies have been developed in the absence of individual/groups/communities' voice(s).

Promoting engagement around the lives and education experiences of individuals would help to create meaningful mechanisms to enable coherent and effective strategies for inclusion. It would sensitise policy actors to the lived

experiences including situated histories and present contexts of those individuals/groups/communities for whom the policy must work.

The ‘less authoritative and more egalitarian’ devolved Scottish policy model (Cairney, et al., 2016: 333) guidance allows local educationalists more rein to be creative in developing their practice and policy. Despite directive policy aims there remains ambiguity. The definition of the problem(s) is poor as it does not engage enough with the impacts of social class in education and related experiences. The current tolerance of local variations in policy maybe a good thing because it allows for different approaches across differing contexts. However, from the Gypsy/Traveller research we learned that poorly specified aims and implementation strategies are likely to have minor impact. Yet the more tightly specified outcomes in the widening access policy complete with specified actions and target numbers, were also not delivering an equitable admissions system. To work, tolerance of local approaches needs to be accompanied by assessment of what works and why. This requires sharing of understandings and implementation strategies across interest groups to generate grounded knowledge. Variation without reflection may lead to problems arising from limited knowledge and co-ordination of policy actors. Such issues could be overcome by seeking a greater voice and co-production with those policy should help.

References

Abrahams, J. 2024. 'Aspiration, aspiration, aspiration: “The only thing they’ve forced me to do is keep my options open”'. *Schooling Inequality: Aspirations, Opportunities and the Reproduction of Social Class.* Bristol: Policy Press Scholarship Online. https://doi-org.proxy.lib.strath.ac.uk/10.1332/policypress/9781447360278.003.0004

Allan, V. 2017. ‘Gypsy Travellers: Scotland's human rights shame’. *The Herald Scotland*, 10 December. http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/15712520.Gypsy_Travellers__Scotland_s_human_rights_shame/

Amnesty International. 2012. ‘Caught in the Headlines: Scottish media coverage of Scottish Gypsy Travellers’. https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/amnesty_international_caught_in_the_headlines_2012.pdf

Article 12. 2015. ‘I Witness: The UNCRC in the United Kingdom – Young Gypsy/Travellers’ Voices’. http://www.article12.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IWitness2015theUNCRCintheUK_YoungGypsyTravellersVoices.pdf

Article 12. 2018. ‘I Witness: Young people’s views of the UNCRC Committee’s Concluding Observations [2016] on the implementation of the UNCRC in the UK’. http://www.article12.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/I-Witness_the-Concluding-Observation_2018_web.pdf

Atewologun D., Cornish T. and Tresh F. 2018. ‘Unconscious bias training: An assessment of the evidence for effectiveness, Equality and Human Rights Commission: Research Report’ 113: 1-67. https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research report 113 unconscious bias training an assessment of the evidence for effectiveness pdf.

BEMIS. 2011. ‘Gypsy Travellers in Contemporary Scotland The 2001 ‘Inquiry into Gypsy Travellers and Public Sector Policies: Ten Years On’. http://bemis.org.uk/docs/gypsy_travellers_in_contemporary_scotland.pdf

Berrington, A., Roberts, S. and Tammes, P. 2016. ‘Educational aspirations among UK Young Teenagers: Exploring the role of gender, class and ethnicity’. *British Educational Research Journal* 42(5): 729-755.

Bhopal, K. 2004. ‘Gypsy travellers and education: Changing needs and changing perceptions’. *British Journal of Educational Studies* 52(1): 47-64.

Bhopal, K. 2011. ‘‘What about us?’ Gypsies, Travellers and ‘White racism’ in secondary schools in England’. *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 21(4): 315-329.

Bhopal, K. and Myers, M. 2008. *Insiders, outsiders and others: Gypsies and identity*. University of Hertfordshire Press.

Bhopal, K. and Myers, M. 2015. ‘Marginal groups in marginal times: Gypsy and Traveller parents and home education in England, UK’. *British Educational Research Journal* 42(1): 5-20.

Blackburn L.H., Kadar-Satat G., Riddell S. and Weedon E. 2016. 'Access in Scotland: Access to higher education for people from less advantaged backgrounds in Scotland'. The Sutton Trust and University of Edinburgh. https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Access-in-Scotland_May2016.pdf

Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.C. 1990. *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage.

Cairney, P. Russell, S. and St Denny, E. 2016. 'The 'Scottish approach' to policy and policymaking: what issues are territorial and what are universal?'. *Policy and Politics* 44(3): 333-350.

Center for Urban Education (CUE). 2019. 'Equity Mindedness. University of Southern California'. https://cue.usc.edu/about/equity/equity mindedness/

Charmaz, K. and Thornberg, R. 2021. 'The pursuit of quality in grounded theory'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 18(3): 305-327. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1780357

Chouliaraki, L. and Fairclough, N. 1999. *Discourse in late modernity: rethinking critical discourse analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Clarke, V. and Braun, V. 2013. *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners.*

Commissioner for Fair Access. 2024. 'Higher education - renewing the alliance for fair access: annual report 2024'. https://www.gov.scot/publications/renewing-alliance-fair-access-annual-report-2024/documents/

Cresswell, T. 2006. *On the move: mobility in the modern Western world*. London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1-45.

D'Arcy, K. 2014. *Travellers and Home Education: Safe Spaces and Inequality*. London: Trentham and IOE Press.

D'Arcy, K. 2017. 'Using counter-stories to challenge stock stories about Traveller families'. *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 20(5): 636-649.

Derrington, C. 2007. 'Fight, flight and playing white: An examination of coping strategies adopted by Gypsy Traveller Adolescents in English secondary schools'. *International Journal of Educational Research* 46(6): 357-367.

Education Scotland. 2015. 'How good is our school?' 4th Edition https://education.gov.scot/improvement/documents/frameworks_selfevaluation/frwk2_nihedithgios/frwk2_hgios4.pdf

Education Scotland. 2025. 'Scottish Attainment Challenge'. https://education.gov.scot/learning-in-scotland/scottish-attainment-challenge/#:~:text=The%20Scottish%20Attainment%20Challenge%20is,the%20same%20opportunity%20to%20succeed.

Fairclough, N. 1995. *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language*. London: Longman, 1-252.

Fairclough, N. 2011. 'Critical Discourse Analysis as a Method in Social Scientific Research'. In Wodak, R. and Meyer, M. (eds.). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. SAGE Publications Ltd, 121-138. http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9780857028020

Foster, B. and Cemlyn, S. 2012. 'Education, Inclusion and Government Policy'. In Richardson, J. and Ryder, A. (eds.). *Gypsies and travellers: empowerment and inclusion in British society*. Bristol: Policy, 61-81.

Freire, P. 1974. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. London: Sheed and Ward.

Fromm, E. 1941. *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Avon Books.

Gray, D.E. 2014. *Doing research in the real world*. 3rd edn. London: SAGE.

Hamilton, L. and Corbett-Whittier, C. 2013. *Using Case Study in Education Research. (BERA Research Methods).* SAGE Publications. http://www.uk.sagepub.com/books/Book237218

Horst W.J. Rittel and Webber, M.M. 1973. 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning'. *Policy sciences* 4(2): 155-169.

Iannelli C., Smyth E. and Klein M. 2016. 'Curriculum differentiation and social inequality in higher education entry in Scotland and Ireland'. *British Educational Research Journal* 42(4): 561-581. https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/filesasset/46125262/Iannelli_Smyth_Klein_BERJ2015_curriculum_differentiation_and_social_inequality_in_higher_education_entry_in_scotland_and_ireland.pdf

Jordan, E. 2001. 'Interrupted learning: The Traveller paradigm'. *Support for Learning* 16(3): 128-134.

Kabachnik, P. and Ryder, A. 2013. 'Nomadism and the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act: Constraining Gypsy and Traveller mobilities in Britain'. *Romani Studies* 23(1): 83-106.

Lane, P., Spencer, S. and Jones, A. 2014. 'Gypsy, Traveller and Roma: Experts by Experience Reviewing UK Progress on the European Union Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, Anglia Ruskin University'. http://www.article12.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Experts-by-Experience-JRTF-Report-Oct-2014-1.pdf

Locke, T. 2004. *Critical discourse analysis*. London, New York: Continuum.

Marsh, H. and Morgan, J. 2025 'Decolonising the university curriculum: an investigation into current practice regarding Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities'. *Race Ethnicity and Education*. DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2025.2474936

McPhee, S. 2017. 'Gypsy Traveller history in Scotland. The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS)'. https://www.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-06/gt-timeline-A4-web.pdf

Mishra, S. 2020. 'Social networks, social capital, social support and academic success in higher education: A systematic review with a special focus on 'underrepresented' students'. *Educational Research Review* 29: 100307.

Morgan, J., McDonagh, C. and Acton, T. 2023 'Outsider status, and racialised habitus: the experiences of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller students in higher education'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 44(3): 485-503. DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2023.2167702

Myers, M. 2017. 'Record numbers of children are now home schooled, but who's keeping an eye on the parents?' *The Conversation*, 12 December. https://theconversation.com/record-numbers-of-children-are-now-homeschooled-but-whos-keeping-an-eye-on-the-parents-88449

National Improvement Hub. 2022. 'Learning resources: Scottish Attainment Challenge'. https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/scottish-attainment-challenge/

O'Regan, J.P. and Betzel, A. 2016. 'Critical discourse analysis: a sample study of extremism'. In Zhu Hua (ed.). *Research Methods in Intercultural Communication. Blackwell Guides to Research Methods in Applied Linguistics.* London: Blackwell, 281-296.

Reay, D. 2016. *Social class in Higher Education: still an elephant in the room*.

Reay, D. 2022. 'Lessons from abroad: how can we achieve a socially just educational system?' *Irish Educational Studies* 41(3): 425-440. https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2022.2085766

Roberts, S. 2011. 'Traditional practice for non-traditional students? Examining the role of pedagogy in higher education retention'. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 35(2): 183-199.

Scottish Government. 2011. 'Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2010: Attitudes to Discrimination and Positive Action'. www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch

Scottish Government. 2013. 'Gypsies/Travellers in Scotland: Summary of the Evidence Base'. https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00430806.pdf

Scottish Government. 2015. 'Census 2011 equality results: analysis, part two: Chapter 2: Gypsy/Travellers'. https://beta.gov.scot/publications/analysis-equality-results-2011-census-part-2/pages/3/

Scottish Government. 2016. 'Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2015: Attitudes to Discrimination and Positive Action'. http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/09/3916/0

Scottish Government. 2016. 'A Blueprint for Fairness: Final Report of the Commission on Widening Access'. https://www.gov.scot/publications/blueprint-fairness-final-report-commission-widening-access/

Scottish Government. 2016. 'National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education: Evidence Report'. http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/12/9340/1

Scottish Government. 2017. 'A fairer Scotland for all: race equality action plan and highlight report 2017-2021, Section 8: Gypsy/Travellers'. https://beta.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-race-equality-action-plan-2017-2021-highlight-report/pages/10/

Scottish Government. 2017. '2018 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education: Achieving Excellence and Equity'. https://beta.gov.scot/publications/2018-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/

Scottish Government. 2017. 'Consultation on improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures Report on the responses to the consultation'. https://consult.gov.scot/support-and-wellbeing/improving-educational-outcomes-for-children/results/traveller-education---analysis-report-9.10.17.pdf

Scottish Government. 2018. ‘About the Scottish Government; What the Scottish Government does’. https://beta.gov.scot/about/what-the-government-does/
Scottish Government. 2018. ‘Policy: Gypsy/Travellers’. https://beta.gov.scot/policies/gypsy-travellers/
Scottish Government. 2018. ‘‘Role of the group’ Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers’. https://beta.gov.scot/groups/ministerial-working-group-on-gypsy-travellers/
Scottish Government. 2018. ‘Education Scotland: Support for all’. https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/Support%20for%20all
Scottish Government. 2018. ‘Equality Impact Assessment Results – The Scottish Attainment Challenge’. https://beta.gov.scot/publications/equality-impact-assessement-eqia-results-scottish-attainment-challenge/documents/00535257.pdf?inline=true
Scottish Government. 2022. ‘Student Information Scotland, Nationality and residency requirements for funding’. https://www.studentinformation.gov.scot/students/further-education/nationality-and-residency-requirements
Scottish Government. 2025. ‘A decade of care: A corporate parenting update from Scottish Ministers 2021 – 2024’. https://www.gov.scot/publications/decade-care-corporate-parenting-update-scottish-ministers-2021-2024/pages/6/
Sosu, E. and Ellis, S. 2014. ‘Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education. Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report’. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/closing-attainment-gap-scottish-education
St. John, E.P., Hu, S. and Fisher, A.S. 2010. *Breaking Through the Access Barrier: How Academic Capital Formation Can Improve Policy in Higher Education* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203849019
Stolworthy, J. 2022. ‘Victoria Coren Mitchell clarifies view on ‘racist’ Jimmy Carr joke after supporting comedian’. *The Independent*, 8 February 2022. https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/victoria-coren-mitchell-twitter-jimmy-carr-netflix-b2009196.html
The Traveller Movement. 2017. ‘The last acceptable form of racism? The pervasive discrimination and prejudice experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities’. https://wp-main.travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/The-Last-Acceptable-Form-of-Racism-2017.pdf
Treanor, M., Jamieson, L. and Kelly, L. 2017. *Can we put the ‘poverty of aspiration’ myth to bed now?* Centre for Research on Families and Relationships Research briefing 91, December 2017, 1-6. https://www.storre.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/26654/1/Can%20we%20put%20the%20poverty%20of%20aspirations%20myth%20to%20bed%20now.pdf
Wilson, A., Hunter, K. and McArthur, K. 2018. *Intergenerational Mentoring and Widening Participation in Higher Education*. University of Strathclyde.