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Chapter Eight: Disadvantaged, discriminated against and ignored: the experiences of Gypsy Travellers.

Teresa Crew

Introduction

A key focus of the discipline of Social Policy is the economic and social inequalities that people face. A recent report by the House of Commons, Women's Equality Committee (2019) found that Gypsy Roma Travellers experience "the worst outcomes of any ethnic group across a huge range of areas, including education, health, employment, criminal justice and hate crime" (p.3). Their report concluded that successive governments had comprehensively failed GRT communities (ibid). This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the inequalities experienced by this community - from difficulties accessing their preferred mode of housing to employment and health disparities, as well as their experience of the Covid-19 pandemic. It will also discuss the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 – a dense piece of legislation with worrying consequences for Gypsy Travellers. The chapter then focuses on welfare, as in wellness – two concepts that focus on one's standard of living in material ways. The section highlights the hate crime, racism and discrimination faced by this community, The chapter ends with two broad recommendations for tackling the inequalities faced by GRT.

Definition.

The number of GRT willing to disclose their ethnicity in the decennial UK census has risen by 111,069; from 57,680 in 2011 to 168,749 in 2021 (The Traveller Movement, 2022). Although the UK Government estimates that the true size of the UK's Gypsy Traveller population may be as high as 300,000 (HM Government, 2022a) and independent research from the University of Salford estimates this may be as high over 500,000 (Brown, Martin and Scullion, 2014). GRT is a collective term that encompasses a range of groups, with different histories, cultures and beliefs, that include: Romany Gypsies, Welsh Kale Gypsies, Scottish Gypsy Travellers and Irish Travellers. There are also Traveller groups which are generally regarded as 'cultural' rather than 'ethnic' Travellers. These include 'New' (Age) Travellers and occupational travellers, such as showmen and waterway travellers (Cromarty, et al., 2019). No umbrella term can satisfactorily describe the complexities of GRT as their multiple identities reflect diverse aspects of geography, age, gender, and religious belief. These groups do however, have two characteristics in common: one is a cultural tradition of nomadism, even if they no longer travel; the other is experiences of stigma, discrimination and social exclusion (McFadden et al., 2018: 76)

There are several legal definitions of GRT. Section 225 of the Housing Act 2004 defines Gypsies and Travellers as being: (a) *persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan; and (b) all other persons of a nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, including— (i) such persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependant's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently; and (ii) members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people (whether or not travelling together as such).* They are also protected under the Equality Act as an ethnic group, although it is only

Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers who are referred to in the act. Finally, in the Government's planning policy document, *Planning policy For Traveller Sites* (PPTS), GRT are defined as *persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently* (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015). Crucially this definition of GRT was modified so that those who had ceased to travel for any reason would not be counted as needing a Traveller pitch in the assessment of accommodation need, although those who have lived in a caravan all their life but cannot travel any more due to illness, disability, caring responsibilities or old age are no longer assessed as having a need for a Traveller pitch (Friends, Families and Travellers, 2023). This is problematic as successive draconian government policies have "legislatively eradicated a nomadic way of life" (Smith, 2021). This chapter will draw upon research in relation to GRT, but it should be noted that many studies do not distinguish between the experiences of an Irish, a Welsh Traveller or a Roma Traveller. Thus, when research does refer to 'Gypsy Travellers', for example, it is not always clear if they are referencing the different groups outlined above, or other specific groups that are not indicated.

The English term 'gypsy' originates from *gypcian,* named as it was incorrectly presumed that they originated from Egypt despite linguistic, anthropological and genetic evidence demonstrating that they originated from the Indian subcontinent (Clark and Greenfields, 2006). There is DNA evidence from the mid-11th century that places some Romani's arriving in the UK via a Viking enslavement from the eastern Mediterranean (Pitts, 2006). Others date the first arrival of Romani's in Britain

between 1427 and 1508 (Foster and Norton, 2012). Cultural differences, language barriers and stereotypes meant that throughout Europe, from as far back as the 1600s, "Gypsies" have been seen as dangerous foreigners (Cheal, 2012), viewed with suspicion and hostility. Romanichal Travellers in Britain tend to live in England with smaller communities in South Wales, Northeast Wales, and the Scottish Borders (Brown et al., 2013). The Romani are unique because they do not identify themselves with a specific country, nor do they claim national sovereignty in any of the lands where they reside. Instead their identity is expressed within the ideal of freedom and in terms of having no ties to a homeland (Appelbaum, 2011).

Irish Travellers, also known as Pavees or Mincéirs (Joyce, 2018), have their own language and traditions and live predominantly in Ireland, Great Britain and the United States of America (Casey, 1994). Irish Travellers have been referred to as the descendants of the dispossessed from the Anglo-Norman conquests (1169 to 1240) (Gilbert et al., 2017: 1), Research confirms an ancestral Irish origin for the Irish Traveller population although its estimated there was a divergence from the settled Irish of at least 8 generations ago (ibid).

The Gypsy Traveller 'umbrella' also includes Highland Gypsy Travellers, who have a recorded history going back to the 12th century (Smith, 2009). The Welsh Kale entered came to Britain during the 15th-17th centuries from Spain, through France onto Cornwall then Wales. They tend to reside exclusively in Northwest Wales, specifically the Welsh-speaking areas (Romani Cymru, undated). The term Traveller is also used to encompass other mobile communities such as Boaters, Bargees and Showpeople. People have lived on barges and narrowboats transporting raw

materials and goods across Britain since the 1700s (Worrall, 2019). Showpeople run amusement shows at events and festivals, and like Boaters and Bargees. These groups are cultural, as opposed to an ethnic group.

Inequalities across the Social Policy spectrum

The 2011 Census found that the majority (76 per cent) of Gypsies and Irish Travellers in England and Wales lived in bricks-and-mortar accommodation, with only one quarter (24 per cent) living in a caravan (Cromarty 2019). Most 'choose' to live in bricks and mortar accommodation as there is a chronic, national, shortage of both permanent and temporary accommodation sites. Many of those who have 'opted' to live in a permanent home, lament the loss of their nomadic lifestyle (Office of National Statistics, 2022). While living in settled accommodation provides greater access to schools and health services, there are negative impacts such as isolation, claustrophobia and depression (Smith and Greenfields, 2014). Two-thirds of respondents in Gidley and Rooke's 2008 study estimated that their living standards had worsened since moving into housing due to higher living costs. While Gypsy Travellers are often private about their identity, Greenfields and Smith (2011) talked of how some used it as a source of strength in a hostile environment and as a way of maintaining a boundary from mainstream society" (p.147). Of those not in housing, one quarter of live on unauthorised sites (most often be their own land, but without planning permission, or by the roadside (Richardson and Codona, 2016: 9). Sites varied in size and quality, and many are often not fit for human habitation. When authorised sites are available, they are often situated in poor quality environments which promote poor health (busy roads, beside heavy industry etc) (Greenfields and Brindley 2016). While there is a strong legal case (The Housing Act (2014); business

case (the cost of non-provision) and a moral case (inequality concerns) for building new sites, media coverage serves only to reinforce negative stereotypes, so the legislative approach of successive governments has been to assimilate Romani and Gypsy Travellers into bricks and mortar housing (Joyce, 2018).

In recent years, the controversial Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022 which explicitly targets GRT who are nomadic. The PCSC Act came into force in June 2022, and introduced the offence of "intentionally or recklessly causing public nuisance". For GRT communities, 'part 4' of this Act means that 'trespass' will change from a civil to a criminal offence. Police will have additional powers to deal with roadside camps. The criminalisation of trespass will mean that people who live on roadside camps may now face time in prison, a £2500 fine or their home being taken from them. Opponents of the measures outlined in the PCSC Act argued that the state are effectively pursuing a policy of 'crack-down or criminalise'. The policing of this community is already one of surveillance, thus an enforcement not engagement approach to policing will only further damage an already fraught relationship. The PCSC Act may further compound the inequalities already experienced by GRT, needlessly pushing people into the criminal justice system, ignoring the issue of the lack of site provision and potentially leaving them homeless. In 2021 Leeds GATE proposed a possible solution to managing unauthorised encampments, 'negotiated stopping places'. Negotiated stopping is an alternative solution to make space for GRT to stop safely and legally. All parties come to a common agreement for GRT to use an unused piece of land as a temporary stopping place. Terms are agreed, such as how long they will stay, as well as the land and services to be provided by the local

council i.e. water, rubbish disposal and sanitation. Stopping can be for up to a couple of weeks or months, but most are for around 28 days.

Levels of both temporary and permanent exclusions from mainstream schooling are high among Gypsy Traveller children (House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, 2019). In the 2021/22 spring school term, Gypsy/Roma pupils had the highest suspension rate at 8.93, while Irish Traveller pupils had the highest rate of permanent exclusions at 0.12 (HM Government, 2023). From early years up until the age of eleven Gypsy Traveller pupils have the lowest attainment levels (HM Government, 2021). Although as Gypsy and Travellers report experiences of bullying and ostracization from both students and teachers while in schooling, this may explain low attainment levels, and why some parents remain reluctant for their children to participate in mainstream education (HM Government, 2022b). Gypsy Traveller children typically leave formal education well before the school leaving age, and are home schooled (Atherton, 2022). Low attainment continues onto university as the regulator Office for Students, (OfS) recorded that in 2020/21, there were only approximately 660 Gypsy or Traveller students registered in higher education (HE). When such students do decide to enter HE, they are often not catered for. In 2019, all HE providers were required by the OFS to submit an Access and Participation Plan (APP) for the period 2021–2025. Atherton (2022) analysed the content of over 100 of APPs and found that less than 30% of APPs mentioned Gypsy Traveller learners. Few visible role models; social and economic disadvantages, discriminatory and stigmatising attitudes by universities within the education system are additional factors that impact on possible HE enrolment (Mulcahy et al., 2017).

Taking employment as another example of the inequalities faced by GRT, the most recent census data found that 47% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller people aged 16 and over were economically active in England and Wales (compared to 63% of the rest of the population). Of those who were economically active people, 51% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller people were employees and 26% were self employed. Gypsy Travellers experience various barriers to employment. Some may lack skills, education or formal qualifications and also experience difficulties in re-skilling from traditional occupations to new types of employment. Some report a perception of discrimination from employers, colleagues, and the settled community, as well as negative employer attitudes towards Gypsies and Travellers (HM Government, 2022b).. As such, many feel that they had to hide their identity to gain or retain a job (Smith and Greenfields, 2014). Data from the 2011 Census revealed that Elementary occupations (e.g., farm workers, cleaners, or service staff such as bar or cleaning staff) and Skilled Trades (HM Government, 2022a). Considering there are reported high levels of self employment, there is a surprising lack of business support and guidance for Gypsy Travellers (Ryder and Greenfields, 2010). In comparison to an average of 7% for all other ethnic groups, 20% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller people were unemployed. Of note was that 31.2% of people in the Gypsy or Irish Traveller group had 'never worked or long-term unemployed'. This was the highest percentage of all ethnic groups (HM Government, 2022a). A Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT) report (2022a) highlighted that Gypsy Travellers experience significantly higher prevalence of long-term illness, health problems or disabilities, which can limit both daily activities employment.

As noted in the previous section, GRT are reported to have poorer health outcomes in comparison to the general population For instance, on average, their life expectancy is said to be 10-25 years shorter than the general population (FFT, 2022a). and they may live around 6 less years in good health (FFT, 2020a). In comparison to all other ethnic groups, GRT are twice as likely to experience depression, three times as likely to experience anxiety and six more likely to die by suicide than the general population. They are significantly more likely to have a long term illness, health problem or disability and more likely to experience chest pain, arthritis and respiratory problems (FFT, 2020b).The reasons for these health inequalities are wide, complex and cultural and include health service issues, discrimination and attitudes of health service personnel, cultural and language barriers, health literacy, service-user attributes and economic barriers (McFadden et al., 2018)

The COVID-19 pandemic

As a result of historic issues relating to accommodation issues Gypsy Travellers are at a higher risk of being infected by COVID-19 (FFT, 2020c). Gypsy Travellers are also more likely to have pre-existing health conditions and be at increased risk of poverty, fuel poverty and food insecurity etc (Scottish Government, 2022). Gypsy Travellers face additional risks from COVID-19 as it is primarily a respiratory disease, and various studies have found that Gypsy Travellers are more prevalent to respiratory issues in comparison to the settled community. For instance, they are three times more likely to have chronic cough or bronchitis (Greenfields and Brindley, 2016), while one in five (22 per cent) reported having asthma and one third (34 per cent) reported chest pain compared to the general population (5% and 22% respectively) (ibid). Cultural barriers also mean they are less likely to engage with

preventive healthcare services such as vaccinations (McFadden et al., 2018). Although it should be acknowledged that vaccine hesitancy is often due to historic experiences of direct or indirect discrimination from public services (Mytton, et al., 2021), and such discrimination continues to the present day. For instance, a mystery shopping exercise carried out by FFT (2021a) during the global pandemic found 74 out of 100 GP surgeries refused to register a nomadic patient in March and April 2021. This is significantly worse since their last study in 2019, where 24 out of 50 GP practices that they contacted in England would not register their mystery shopper (Sweeney and Worrall, 2019). The most common reason for refused registration was because the mystery shopper was unable to provide proof of identity, proof of fixed address or register online. This meant that all 74 GP practices who refused registrations on those grounds failed to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and NHS guidelines. Evidence from health studies on uptake of immunisations broadly suggested that for GRT communities, access, rather than vaccine refusal, has been the most significant barrier to vaccine uptake (Mytton, et al., 2021). One successful way of combatting this has been to set up mobile immunisation units at the rescheduled Appleby Horse Fair (NorthEast and North Cumbria NHS, 2021). Those living on these sites during the pandemic experienced practical difficulties such as obtaining fresh water and gas bottles (FFT, 2023). During the first wave of the pandemic, the then Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, alongside Public Health England called upon local authorities to ensure that GRT communities continued to have access to basic facilities. However, in the summer of 2020, some groups, including The Romani Cultural and Arts Company, said that support provided during the first wave had not gone far enough and that access to information and essential services continued to be challenging (House of Lords Library, 2021).

External support from local authorities was difficult to access and, in some locations, COVID-19 resources and public health messages were disseminated through Traveller community health workers using social media and mobile phone technology (Villani et al., 2021: 50). For those living on permanent sites, the sharing of toilets and kitchen facilities on sites presented risks, while the need to social isolate was made difficult as gas canisters needed to cook and to heat trailers were not included in the basic supplies for those who are shielding (Scottish Government, 2020).

Welfare as Wellbeing

The concepts of 'welfare' and 'wellbeing' feature prominently in the social policy literature with multi-dimensional definitions. The most common usage of the term 'welfare' is linked with the notion of the 'welfare state', which typically refers to an ideal model of provision, where the state accepts responsibility for the provision of comprehensive and universal welfare for its citizens (Spicker 2023). Due to prominent media discourses where welfare is typically become associated with 'welfare dependency' and the 'underclass' (Tyler 2008), the word is somewhat tainted. However, as earlier work by Bryson (1992), reminds us 'at its most basic level, the word welfare merely means well-being' (p.30). The World Health Organization (2021) defined wellbeing as "a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose". While wellbeing and welfare are separate, distinct concepts, Taylor (2011) sees them as being "mutually constitutive" (p.777), while Heins and Deeming (2015) observes

they are inextricably linked**.** And as Taylor (2011) further observes "[w]ellbeing is increasingly supplanting welfare as a central political goal for social and public policy". Wellbeing is often understood in three main ways – material, relational and subjective (White, 2010). Material wellbeing refers to the range of services which are provided to protect people from childhood to old age and includes subsidized social services which include education, healthcare, housing, etc. Thirty five Gypsy Travellers were interviewed for a 2014 FFT research project regarding their wellbeing. Almost one third of respondents (n.10) had been linked with local mental health / wellbeing service, n.12 had been medicated for stress or anxiety and n.11 had had a mental health crisis. When asked what would help with their poor wellbeing, the majority, more than half (n.18 people) suggested that living on a secure site with their family would help.

Relational wellbeing is how people are portrayed and their perceptions of themselves. As GRT have mainly operated on the fringes of mainstream society, there is a persistence stigma in relation to nomadism. One very recent example is the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSCO) Act 2022 which explicitly targets Gypsies and Travellers who are nomadic. In the first chapter of his book, Goffman (1963) identifies three types of stigma: stigma of character traits, physical stigma, and stigma of group identity. The GRT community have been associated with all three at different points in their history. From a historical perspective they've collectively been subjected to extermination and expulsion, most notably in WW2, with 'gypsies' being seen as an inferior race (Mayall, 1988). Media representations today are laden with stigmatising stereotypes of menacing invaders, vagabonds and thieves, or quaint people with horse drawn carriages (Crew, 2018). A study by Amnesty International (2012) evaluated all newspaper coverage relating to Scottish Travellers over a four-month period.

Specific physical stereotypes featured strongly: 38 percent of the articles made some connection to criminality while 32 percent referred to dirt and hygiene. Rowe and Goodman (2014) conducted a discourse analysis of UK discussion forums. The analysis identified the following strategies that were commonly used to express hatred towards Gypsy Travellers including: referring to Gypsies as the 'other'; constructing criminality as a key characteristic of Gypsies and 4. presenting Gypsies as being outside of the law. Tremlett (2014) drew upon debates about reality TV and analysed the *Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (Firecracker Films, Channel 4, 2010–2013), finding that Gypsy Travellers are portrayed as "spectacular, extraordinary and above all, negatively different" (p.316).

Studies on the self-identity of GRT is sparse, and research to date, focuses on the experiences of female Travellers. For instance, Piazza, (2015) conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with female Irish Travellers in the South of England. They strongly identified with their role as providers of decent living standards for their families. They felt they had a strong work ethic and disciplined domestic routine, with cleanness, tidiness and good behaviour being at the heart of their characters. They were proud of their cultural identity but were critical of the community's propensity to marry and have children young (p32-34). Casey (2014) carried out 23 in-depth interviews with female Travellers and 18 in-depth stakeholder interviews with welfare professionals. The research challenged the homogeny of the Gypsy Traveller 'community' as she observed that there are discernible differences between and within individual families and communities. The study also disputed the typical view of GRT women as "passive and docile subjects of male subordination" (p.812). Instead, the women expressed their pride in being a member of the Traveller community, especially

with regard how they care for their families and community. Despite these examples of positive self-image, research has found that GRT are six times more likely to die by suicide than non-Travellers with 11 percent of Traveller deaths due to suicide. This likelihood increases to seven times when focused on Traveller men (FFT, 2020a). Research conducted by Greenfields and Rogers for FFT (2022) on tackling suicide inequalities in Gypsy and Traveller Communities noted the historic failure to include Gypsy Traveller groups in the NHS data dictionary (which means that data is often not collected within health and care services). FFT (2022) also referred to the failure to historically record GRT ethnicity upon death, resulting in there being no official records on suicide as a cause of death among GRT communities (pg. 20)

An understanding of welfare also includes a social perspective, aspects that include relations with the state. (White, 2010). Research shows us that there has been a public order approach to the policing of Gypsy Travellers to date as opposed to the policing by consent of other communities. Richardson (2005) talks of the direct forms of surveillance noted at various sites (and by residents) e.g. being monitored by CCTV cameras (a practice not seen in relation to other housed tenancies). A 2018 survey and freedom of information investigation by the Traveller Movement found that while the majority of police and Traveller respondents surveyed believed relations between them were improving, almost three quarters of police officers surveyed identified unconscious bias and/or racist behaviour towards GRT. It is against this backdrop, that the aforementioned Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) 2022 Act is now officially law.

Tackling inequalities

This chapter has starkly underlined that Britain is a profoundly unequal country for GRT. As such it is vital that we should be bold and open to having uncomfortable conversations on how we step up to tackle these inequalities. This chapter presents two broad suggestions to be taken forward by policy makers. These suggestions are not necessarily new or unique to the author. Many of the cited authors and organisations have recommended and campaigned for these changes, but they would benefit from being repeated here.

Inclusive policies and practices

Inclusion is the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse people should be able to fully participate in all aspects of society. Being 'included' is not just about participation but also refers to empowerment and belonging. Various authors cited in this chapter have consistently said that the provision of accommodation for GRT is the foundation on which measures to tackle all other inequalities can be built. Richardson and Codona (2016) note that critical for permanent site development is clear leadership and buy-in from the local authority, elected members and the local media. The aim being that there is clear and open communication of proposals for new sites. As with any other form of housing, it is important that sites are not located in areas close to local amenities and transport links. Greenfields and Brindley (2016) note that these sites should not be situated near hazardous places such as refuse sites or industrial processes or near dangerous locations such as busy main roads. As previous stated, negotiated stopping, as proposed by Leeds Gate, could be a way of navigating the PCSC Act, and to formalise GRT and "settled" people have been doing

for centuries (Leeds Gate, 2021). At present negotiated stopping only exists in Leeds, this clearly needs to be a UK wide policy.

Examples of inclusive health practices include simplifying GP and dentist registration by allowing the use of c/o addresses or having flexible requirements for proof of address (McFadden et al., 2018). Working within an inclusive framework in health also means challenging 'top down' notions of power by ensuring GRT are engaged in the design and delivery of services. The costs of community engagement, for instance including local community partners such as local GATE's ('Gypsy and Traveller Exchanges'), should be factored into all budgets.

While the Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for any education provider to discriminate between pupils on grounds of protected characteristics[1], problems in accessing services, as well as racism and discrimination have been a feature of GRT experience of education. A survey by the Traveller Movement (2017) found that 91 per cent experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity, while 70 per cent experienced discrimination in some aspect of education. Racism and discrimination was also experienced by Gypsy Travellers across the social policy spectrum e.g 49 per cent experienced discrimination in some aspect of employment; 30 per cent experienced discrimination in relation to accessing health care and 77 per cent experienced hate speech or a hate crime. Hiding their ethnicity was a typical coping mechanism for 76 per cent of those surveyed (p.7). Organisations such as FFT and The Traveller Movement have at various times noted that educational inclusion starts with ensuring staff (and curricula), whether it be schools, colleges or universities have an awareness of, and positively promote Gypsy and Traveller culture, history, and

traditions. A further recommendation would be for institutions to undertake community led cultural awareness training. In an ideal world, there would be greater representation of GRT among teaching staff and management. One way forward would be to sign the Gypsy Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater (GTRSB) into Higher Education Pledge, set up by Buckinghamshire New University in 2021. The pledge consists of a firm commitment by a University, College or educational Institution to undertake certain steps to support GTRSB students into and within higher education. Some of the minimum commitments include outreach activities with local GTRSB communities; data monitoring of GTRSB student and staff numbers; building a supportive and welcoming culture for GTRSB students as well as inclusion, Celebration and Commemoration of GTRSB cultures and communities.

Inclusivity is also needed in relation to self-employment. Research by Ryder and Greenfields (2010) noted that GRT find it difficult to access the necessary business guidance for their self-employment activities. At times this can be due to literacy issues, but often it is because support agencies can indirectly discriminate against some communities. It would have been good practice to have advertised the funding and support that was available, in a wider range of publications, including the Travellers' Times which focuses on things that matter to GRT people. While some GRT had enough economic capital to see them through the pandemic, others reported that they did not have savings, and therefore struggled financially as their typical income sources such as construction, gardening and tree felling were hugely affected. Although GRT communities were able to access a £3.2 million targeted funding scheme to protect rough sleepers and a £500 million Hardship Fund that aim to support vulnerable communities (Public Policy Exchange, 2022). The pandemic also

effected other areas of trade that come under the GRT umbrella. In 2020 the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and MP's asking them not to overlook the funfair trade during the coronavirus crisis (Travellers Times, 2020). In a 2021 report for the Scottish Parliament, Equalities and Human Rights Committee (2021), Fair Scotland (an organisation which raises awareness of Scotland's Travelling Showpeople) highlighted the losses that most fairground enterprises had occurred during COVID-19 due to their bookings being cancelled. This left many with no income throughout the pandemic, while still having to maintain their equipment and other operating or overhead expenses. Showpeople were also indirectly excluded from key COVID-19 funding as they did not have fixed premises.

Representation

Evidence has shown that GRT, particularly women, encounter a range of barriers and prejudices that severely impede their ability to participate in public and political life, leaving them largely absent from the local or national decision-making processes. To date there are no MPs or Councillors in England and Wales who identify as a Roma Gypsy or Traveller (Swirsky, 2020), although in Ireland, in June 2020, Eileen Flynn, an Irish Independent politician, became the first Traveller to serve in the Oireachtas (legislature) (BBC News, 2020). The picture regarding public appointments (a ministerial appointment to the board of a public body or advisory committee) is unclear due to poor quality statistical data. For instance, while 11% of public appointees and 8% of those who were Chair or Chair equivalent roles were from an ethnic minority background in 2020/21 (a rise of 2 and 4% from the previous year) (Cabinet Office, 2021), these figures refer to individuals from all groups other than white ethnic minority groups e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, African,

Caribbean, other and mixed ethnic groups. There is no statistical breakdown that includes GRT.

The Lammy Review (2017), established to reduce the proportion of BAME offenders in the criminal justice system, found that not only does the criminal justice system (CJS) discriminate against many ethnic minorities, but there is an 'us and them' culture represented by the lack of diversity among those making important decisions. Looking at the data on representation and the public sector workforce, GRT are included under the broad category of 'White', while in Northern Ireland, the "Irish Traveller" group are recorded separately from the "White" group but are added to "White" figures for UK-level reporting (Lammy, 2017). While GRT are not included in NHS categories, the P-NOMIS prison record system was introduced in 2011 – although it has only been possible to record ethnicity as "Gypsy or Irish Traveller" - Travellers in prison prior to 2011 will not have their ethnicity correctly recorded. There are further weaknesses with this dataset as Roma are not yet recorded, despite the 2021 census including this 'group'. While GRT are the smallest ethnic minority in the UK, they are over-represented in the criminal justice system, as according to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons' (HMIP) prisoner survey, in 2019/20 6% of men and 7% of women of the prison population in England and Wales identified as Gypsy/Irish Traveller (The Traveller Movement, 2020).

Visible role models are key to tackling representation. Eileen Flynn, the aforementioned Irish senator, who grew up on a Travellers' site, said she would use her role to support Travellers and other marginalised groups. One recommendation from the Lammy review proposed that there should be support for Romani Gypsy and

Travellers to become magistrates, and that the government should set a clear, national target to achieve a representative judiciary and magistracy by 2025. Further recommendations included that the prison service should set public targets for more ethnic minority staff into leadership positions over the next five years (Lammy, 2017). Under the Equality Act 2020, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), requires that public bodies, including councils, consider how policies and decisions might impact people with protected characteristics (House of Commons, 2020). Lammy argues that such increased representation would only be successful if positive action policies such as the PSED were enacted more widely.

While traditional gender roles are prevalent in Gypsy and Travellers families (although there are discernible differences between and within individual families), there has been a changing dynamic. There is an increasing number of Traveller women in paid employment, voluntary work, and education. A noticeable difference I found from when I first started conducting research with Gypsy Roma Travellers, was that women are increasingly taking on leadership roles, for instance, acting as spokespersons for their communities and leading the charge in challenging discrimination and inequality in their community. As already mentioned engagement with the community should start with Gypsy and Traveller Exchanges, (GATE's) who are often led by women. For instance, one of the recommendations from a Traveller Movement (2022) research report with young GRT was that the youth work sector should work more closely with GRT sector organisations to identify GRT Traveller-specific funding opportunities.

Concluding remarks.

This chapter has discussed the negative experiences of GRT across social policy spectrum and has presented two broad approaches that should be taken forward by policy makers if we are to challenge the discriminatory behaviour and attitudes towards Gypsies and Travellers: inclusive policies and practice and representation. A linking strand throughout this chapter has been the stigmatisation Roma Gypsy Travellers experience. Stigma is a harmful attribute that conveys stereotypes that devalue its bearer. A recent poster and social media campaign aimed to dissolve the stigma faced by members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. The tagline 'We are all so many things' was devised by the charity London Gypsies and Travellers in the hope of challenging public perceptions and media stereotypes by urging people to look beyond ethnicity. Taking a critical view of the way in which GRT are presented in the media could be an individual method of tackling stigma, for instance does the article portray them fairly and respectfully or does it resort to stereotypes? I conclude this chapter with some key suggestions from Chelsea McDonagh, an Irish Traveller and MA Student from Kings College London:

> *"You will have anti-GRT prejudices and biases. You aren't to be blamed for it but acknowledge your biases and do the work to unpick them. Engage with GRT organisations. Read widely to actively combat anti GRT media and stereotypes" (Gypsy Roma and Traveller Social Work Association, 2021)*

Endnotes

[1] age, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race and religion or belief.

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