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Education and Gypsies/Travellers: 'contradictions and significant silences'[1]

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For centuries there have been strong tensions between Gypsy/Traveller communities and their nation states. Today, discrimination against Gypsies/Travellers in the UK is still so widespread that it has been described as the last 'respectable' form of racism. The paper argues that the experiences of Gypsies/Travellers, as they come into contact with the structures of education, reveal a continuing discrimination against one of the most disadvantaged minority ethnic groups in the UK; a discrimination that, at the same time, points to continuing 'contradictions and significant silences' within the UK government, and Scottish Executive, policy drive to reduce social exclusion.

Introduction

Gypsies/Travellers are now widely recognized officially as one of the most disadvantaged minority ethnic groups in the UK (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), a publicly funded, independent organization in the UK that exists to tackle racial discrimination and promote racial equality, argued at the launch of the consultation leading to the Strategy for Gypsies and Travellers[2] that discrimination against Gypsies and Travellers appears to be the last 'respectable' form of racism (Phillips, 2004). He noted that it is still considered acceptable for shops and pubs to erect 'No Traveller' signs and for the media to derogate and vilify the culture and traditional lifestyle of Gypsies and Travellers (CRE, 2004). At the same time, he apologized for the CRE's own failure in the past to consider adequately the situation of Gypsies and Travellers.

The present paper discusses some key research findings about Gypsies/Travellers and schooling in Scotland and in England. The authors identify some of the complex and challenging issues facing Gypsies/Travellers in their decisions about schooling

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and education and which also face those who work with them. We locate these findings in the context of current educational policy developments in the UK and argue that the situation of Gypsies/Travellers highlights key tensions within New Labour's approach to social inclusion and exclusion. We discuss both Scottish and English policy contexts—there is a complex policy and political relationship between the Westminster Parliament/government, responsible for equal opportunities and social security across the whole of the UK, and the Scottish Parliament/executive with devolved responsibility for education, health, housing, social welfare and criminal justice. We argue that, in both contexts, policy formulation and delivery in relation to Gypsies/Travellers do indicate increased 'recognition' of social justice claims, but also that research in education identifies continuing 'tensions, contradictions and silences' (Thrupp & Tomlinson, 2005, p. 555).

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Who are the Gypsies/Travellers?

In a UK Parliamentary debate, Andrew Mackay, Member of Parliament, discussing some problems with Gypsies/Travellers' unauthorized camping in car parks, said:

> Ordinary, innocent people—hard-working, normal, straightforward people who live around Bracknell—want to get on with their lives in peace, but they want protection under the law when they are invaded by this scum. They are scum, and I use the word advisedly. People who do what these people have done do not deserve the same human rights as my decent constituents going about their everyday lives.
>
> (Hansard, 15 July 2002)

A previous English Home Secretary spoke in an interview in about 'true Gypsies' and the unacceptable behaviour of people who were not 'real Gypsies':

> There are relatively few real Romany Gypsies left, who seem to mind their own business and don't cause trouble to other people, and then there are a lot more people who masquerade as Travellers or Gypsies, who trade on the sentiment of people, but who seem to think because they label themselves as Travellers that therefore they've got a license to commit crimes and act in an unlawful way that other people don't have.
>
> (Straw, 1999)

This (unsubstantiable) distinction is longstanding in the UK. Fraser (1992) states that during Tudor times, laws that persecuted or controlled Gypsies sought to distinguish between counterfeit and real 'Egyptians', i.e. Gypsies.

The above representations offer a offer an inaccurate, though still common, reflection of a complex reality—Gypsies/Travellers are either criminal 'scum', or 'real' Gypsies, conforming to a romantic stereotype, an 'unforeign' exotic imagining with bowtop wagons on country lanes, with stories and songs and fortune telling (Okely, 1996). Of course, even this 'exotic' is also associated in much of European popular folk culture with dangerousness and threat to the settled communities:

> Novels, poems, plays, films and songs over the past several centuries have portrayed 'gypsies' as free-spirited, promiscuous, indigent criminals who dance around campfires

> and are fortunetellers, thieves and liars. 'Gypsies' are carefree and enjoy an almost child-like innocence and release from duty. 'Gypsies' practice witchcraft, steal babies in the dead of night and are filthy and unkempt.
>
> (Hancock, 2006, p. 1)

Gypsies/Travellers in the UK are diverse minority communities. There are different groups including English Gypsies/Romanichal, Irish Travellers, Scottish Gypsies/Travellers, Welsh Kale, and European Roma; some of the latter are long-established residents of Britain such as Hungarian Coppersmiths and others are more recently arrived such as Roma from Eastern Europe where there has been widespread violence against them. Although it is clear that Gypsies/Travellers in the UK represent dynamic and fluid communities, they also share many cultural features and distinctive forms of language, often derived from or including Romani words, as well as linguistic features common to English or Scots and Irish English and also Scottish or Irish Gaelic. They share cultural features with other European Roma/Gypsy groups such as pollution taboos, and a strong belief in the importance of the cohesion of the family and family descent, a strong valuing and involvement with wide extended family and family events, as well as a respect for family-based learning, a preference for self-employment and the expression of a strong commitment to a nomadic lifestyle even when living in a house (Fraser, 1992; Kenrick & Clark, 1999; Bancroft, 2001).

Some Gypsies/Travellers (now a minority) travel all the time, living in caravans or trailers on sites or by the roadside. Others may live on the same site for all or most of the time. Others may travel part of the year for work or other cultural reasons. Many, however, live in houses for all or part of the year, but still identify themselves as part of Gypsy/Traveller communities and express a strong commitment to maintaining their culture.

Many groups of Gypsies/Travellers have a strong oral tradition based around storytelling and songs. Some, particularly English Gypsies (Romanichals), wish to be seen as part of the international Gypsy movement; some speak Romani and therefore wish to describe themselves as Gypsies or Roma; others, for example, many in Scotland, reject this idea and prefer to call themselves Travellers or Travelling people. Irish travellers (Minceir) historically used a language known Shelta, Gammon or Cant; and Scottish Travellers (Nawkens) describe their private vocabulary as Cant. Our use of the term 'Gypsies/Travellers' is intended to respect and encompass this complexity of shared and different cultural features.

English Gypsies and Irish Travellers have been legally recognized in Britain in terms of the Race Relations Act as ethnic minorities since 1976, although settled Gypsies/Travellers may lose this status unless they also travel seasonally (Kenrick & Clark, 1999). This caveat regarding the potential loss of ethnic minority status is applied to no other ethnic group and reveals a concerning inconsistency and damaging lack of understanding, which we will argue structures many of the contradictions within present policy. The prejudices of Sedentarism are paradoxically applied in this ruling. Nomadism is not valued, yet is essential for recognition as an ethnic minority—another version of the 'real' Gypsy idea.

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Scottish Gypsies/Travellers, although clearly culturally an ethnic minority, and sharing many cultural characteristics with other Gypsy/Traveller groups, have yet to be recognized as such in law. The Scottish Executive, however, has accepted the recommendations of Reports from the Equal Opportunities Commission of the Scottish Parliament that their status as an ethnic minority community (both housed and settled) should be acknowledged. The Scottish Commission for Racial Equality is currently pursuing this to establish a precedent (Scottish Parliament, 2001, p. 2005).

There are widely varying views over the origins of the different Gypsy/Traveller communities. 'Gypsies Travellers comprise a mosaic of groups with a variety of cultural profiles, with shifting internal boundaries of varying force' (Liegeois, 1994, p. 61). Reid, a Scottish Traveller, wrote that arguments about the nature and characteristics of the 'true' Gypsy/Traveller were tiresome, outdated and misdirected, and that although Scottish Gypsies/Travellers had a strong identity that they defend fiercely, they were nevertheless just as confused as others about their origins (Reid, 1997). Okely (1996) argued, indeed, that all cultures are provisional.

As with other communities, their multiple identities reflect diverse aspects of geography, gender, age and religious belief. It is important, therefore, to acknowledge the cultural distinctiveness and coherence of Gypsy/Traveller communities without assuming a false sense of homogeneity (Abajo & Carrasco, 2005) and to recognize that Gypsies/Travellers in the UK also often share opinions and experiences with many in settled communities. We reject, then, the notion that cultural identity depends on essentialist notions of 'traditional' cultures rooted in the past, and urge particular caution in ascribing such characteristics to Gypsies/Travellers. We view ethnic boundaries as permeable: self-ascribed and other-ascribed identities as interactive. Gypsies/Travellers have lived on the margins of settled society and both mobile and sedentary cultures have been, and continue to be, influenced reciprocally.

However, in seeking to understand the tensions between Gypsy/Traveller communities and educational policy, it is necessary to confront the ways in which the framing of identity can be an act of exclusion and of power. As Hall (1996) reminds us:

> identities … emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and are thus … the product of the marking of difference and exclusion … the constitution of a social identity is an act of power.
>
> (p. 4)

Benjamin (2002) has argued that policy initiatives that emphasize 'valuing diversity' have the potential to 'become the new orthodoxy through which the politics of difference continues to be concealed' and that difference 'has to be understood in terms of social relations of domination and subordination' (p. 321).

The present paper explores how the 'difference' of Gypsies/Travellers is constructed in the context of schooling; and how the power of schools and teachers to understand and construct difference impacts on the educational experience of Travellers. Piper and Garrett (2005) argued that difference can be problematized in positive ways that do not create 'them and us'. They describe this as a:

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> fine (and admittedly elusive) balancing point where differences can be considered in complex but more useful ways which recognise that romanticising and/or hating (for example) are not that (if at all) far apart.
>
> (p. 3)

Issues of marginalization and education

The complexity of the marginalization of Gypsies/Travellers has often been misconstrued, even in recent times. McKinney (2003) and Reynolds *et al.* (2003) have explored the notion that where Gypsy/Travellers cultural characteristics are acknowledged to exist, they have been seen too often as either problematic barriers toward the provision of public services or an 'excuse' to allow Gypsy/Travellers to exclude themselves from service provision of education. Official responses to these issues have rarely questioned accepted stereotypes, and, for example, even in the late 1990s, the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Scotland's Travelling People (1998) stated: 'The nature of Traveller life with its variable patterns of mobility has long been recognised as a major barrier to effective education' (p. 26).

Research and statistics in England and Scotland identify major issues for many, though not all, Gypsy/Traveller pupils. Clearly, some difficulties are more acute for mobile, or partly mobile, families than for those who are settled, although much research, including our own, has included settled families who still identify problems of participation and racism (Lloyd & Stead, 2001a). Where there are strong Traveller Education services, their support is often valued by parents and children; however, the level and availability of such support varies substantially (Bhopal, 2004; Padfield, 2005).

Issues identified in the research in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland include: low educational participation/attendance, particularly at the secondary stages, low attainment, disproportionate disciplinary exclusion, racist harassment and bullying, a lack of continuity of work, interrupted learning, inconsistent/often inadequate support, problems with multiple registration, the failure of schools to pass on records/evidence of attainment; and children identified inappropriately with special educational needs (Lloyd & Stead, 2001a; Lloyd *et al.*, 1999; Department for Education and Skills, 2003; Derrington & Kendall, 2003; Reynolds *et al.*, 2003; Bhopal, 2004; Padfield & Jordan, 2004; Scottish Executive, 2004; Derrington, 2005; Scottish Parliament, 2005).

Statistics on school exclusion in Scotland show Gypsy/Traveller pupils to be excluded, temporarily or permanently, at the rate of 120 per 1000, second only to the exclusion rate for Black-Caribbean pupils. The rate of exclusion for 'white-UK' pupils was 52 per 1000 in the same period (Scottish Executive, 2006). Although this figure confirms the evidence from earlier research (Lloyd *et al.*, 1999) of disproportionate disciplinary exclusion, the numbers recorded as Gypsies/Travellers are very small.

Reluctance to self-identify means that formal Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and SEED statistics are very likely to underestimate considerably both

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the numbers of Gypsy/Traveller children participating in school and also those who do not attend. 'Counting' Gypsies/Travellers is a highly sensitive issue in itself for communities who have no long tradition of written communication and often fragile relations with local authorities. Families who do not wish to self-identify will not be counted. Some children may feel safer in school both with fellow pupils and teachers if they conceal their identity. However, Save the Children have estimated that 10,000 Gypsy/Traveller children in England do not attend school (Save the Children, 2001, cited in Bhopal, 2004), while Derrington & Kendall (2003) note official estimates that only one in five Traveller children aged 11–16 are enrolled in secondary schools in England. Where Gypsy/Traveller families live in houses there is still evidence of a lack of participation in secondary education—indeed, they may often be housed in socially and economically deprived neighbourhoods where other families and young people resist the notion of regular school attendance. An overall picture emerges, therefore, of a lack of participation and of problems of participation for many children.

Accounts of the educational experiences of Gypsies/Travellers in education and explanations of educational failure have often emphasized the reluctance of Gypsies/Travellers to participate in education and this is represented as a feature of Gypsy/Traveller culture (Piper & Garrett, 2005). However, we would argue the need for a more multilayered understanding that locates this educational failure within the social and economic context of Gypsy/Traveller lives and in the institutional racism of schooling, while still acknowledging those fears and reservations expressed by many Gypsies/Travellers about wider participation in schooling and of the impact of education on their lives.

Views of Gypsies/Travellers about education unveil an intensely complex and challenging set of relationships. In terms of education, our own and other research (Lloyd & Stead, 2001a; Derrington, 2005) indicates that different Gypsy/Traveller families have very different experiences of education and may have very different views about the relevance of schooling; Padfield and Jordan (2004) found that even within families parents may have different views. Some families value their children's school experience, some are highly critical, while others see it as irrelevant to their needs and wish to educate their children outwith the school system (Lloyd & Stead, 2001a; Derrington & Kendall, 2003; Padfield & Jordan, 2004). Recent research in Scotland (Padfield, 2006a, b) shows evidence of many Travellers' increasing interest in formal education, but for most as partly as a means of supporting the continuity of their identities, cultures and lifestyles.

Concerns about the preservation of cultural and family values, and well-founded fears of bullying and assault in school, however, mean that many Gypsies/Travellers in Britain wish, but still do not feel able to, participate fully in state education, particularly at secondary school level. The reports of racist name-calling and physical bullying of Gypsy/Traveller children and young people dominate research that seeks their views and experiences. Much of this name-calling takes place in the playground and seems to occur regardless of gender, age or area of the country. In a peer-led research project by Lloyd and Carrick (2000), for example, high

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numbers of young Gypsy/Travellers noted not only harassment by fellow pupils when they did attend school, but also the often tacit and sometimes open support for such harassment by some teachers. McKinney's research quotes one young person saying:

> I had one teacher who used to pick up my homework between her thumb and her finger as if it was dirty. As if to say, that's the dirty Tink's homework. At the school, I was pals wi' this group of girls from the toon, until they found out I was a Traveller. Then everybody started saying I was a Gyppo and they dinnae speak to me anymore.
>
> (young Traveller, cited in McKinney, 2001)

Many express concern about the clear disadvantages for them in a society that places such value on literacy and qualifications (Derrington and Kendall, 2003; Padfield & Jordan, 2004). Many parents and children express strong support for basic numeracy and literacy skills offered by primary schools (Lloyd *et al.*, 1999; Lloyd & Stead, 2001a; Bhopal, 2004), while remaining sceptical about the relevance of much else that is on offer particularly for older children and young people. Many parents also express the fear that wholesale integration into regular schooling from 5 to 16 years of age may lead to their children increasingly adopting the values and mores of the wider peer group with a consequent lessening in valuing their own Gypsy/Traveller culture (Derrington & Kendall, 2003); 'We are not like you, we do not let our girls go to discos, parties and have boyfriends' (Gypsy/Traveller mother to a researcher, cited in Lloyd & Stead, 2001a). Such worries about cultural dilution are associated with the loss to extended family of educated young people.

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Gypsies/Travellers and the priorities of education policy

Thrupp and Tomlinson (2005) offer a useful framework within which to explore the educational marginalization of Gypsies/Travellers in the UK. They argue that:

> the problem with New Labour education policy … is not that it lacks a stated commitment to social justice, nor that it lacks policies. Rather, there is a problem with the depth and authenticity of its commitment because there are so many contradictions within it as well as significant silences.
>
> (p. 551)

Although their argument is a general one, it has a particular resonance for Gypsies/Travellers. Thrupp and Tomlinson recognize the existence of a government commitment and that this is translated into policy, but they offer a powerful challenge to the idea that these policies connect with authentic and positive change.

There is clearly a growing impetus for such change, towards recognition of the issues for a minority grouping still only partially acknowledged as an ethnic minority in the UK and only now emerging as an issue for educational policy. In recent evidence to the Scottish Parliament, the Commission for Racial Equality reiterated their view that:

> our observations in relation to Gypsy Travellers in Scotland lead us to believe that there is no other section of the community that is as consistently vilified and about which negative stereotypes are so overwhelmingly held.
>
> (Scottish Parliament, 2005)

There has been a range of government-led initiatives and strategies in recent years designed to support the educational inclusion of Gypsies/Travellers. The increased monitoring of achievement, attainment and disciplinary exclusion at a national level has, for the first time, disclosed the extent of the educational exclusion of children and young people from Gypsy/Travellers communities (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). Recently, Gypsies/Traveller groups were included in school censuses (Pupil Level Annual School Census) data in England for the first time, although, as we have argued, research and data collected by Traveller support services suggests that the census statistics gathered so far are a considerable underestimate. Recent research coupled with the national monitoring of schools has influenced the development of a range of long over-due but welcome initiatives in both England and Scotland seeking to improve support for Gypsies/Travellers in school and also to develop flexible out of school provision, based on new and developing technologies (Padfield & Jordan, 2003). Good practice guidelines such as *Aiming High; Raising the Attainment of Gypsy Traveller Pupils* (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) and national Guidance on *Inclusive Educational Approaches for Gypsies and Travellers in Education* (LTScotland, 2003) as well as the new HMIE Scotland quality evaluation guide *Taking a Closer Look At: Inclusion and Equality—Meeting the Needs of Gypsies and Travellers. How Good is Our School?* (HMIE, 2005) have all contributed to an increased visibility at policy and strategic levels.

The entitlement of Gypsies/Travellers to flexible, supportive education provision is now asserted at national policy level in both England and Scotland. The new Additional Support for Learning Act in Scotland (2005) reconceptualizes additional needs in a way that focuses on circumstances and contexts rather than on individual deficit, and outlines a requirement for the views of young people and their parents to be taken into account in decisions directly affecting them. This should increase available support to Gypsies/Travellers and within a framework which also recognizes that changing circumstances are part of life, rather than a merely an irritant to those responsible for offering support.

The introduction of initiatives such as those outlined above suggest that the experience of Gypsies/Travellers in education should be changing for the better, and that tensions in their relations with non-Travellers should also be improving. However, it seems that this may be slow progress. We know that present provision is patchy across councils, with well-funded Traveller support services in some areas and little or nothing in others. Padfield and Jordan (2004) argue that exclusionary processes within school systems, including the fragmented character of support projects, mean that an integrated approach has not generally been achieved. While national guidance documents advocate 'joined up approaches', their focus continues to be on discrete groups supported by central funding mechanisms that produce short-term,

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piecemeal developments (Jordan & Padfield, 2003; Padfield, 2005). The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 imposes general duties on many public authorities to promote actively racial equality in employment, training, housing, education, and the provision of goods, facilities and services. There has been widespread staff development to promote understanding and stronger policies reissues of discrimination and diversity in schools. However, many local authority staff may still not realize that this applies to Gypsies/Travellers.

Stories of racist name-calling, harassment, bullying, and disciplinary exclusion permeate the research findings and suggest the need for a closer examination of the ways in which education policy and a quest for social justice are enacted on a day-to-day basis in mainstream schools. A growing realization of the extent of such widespread under-achievement, the reluctance to attend school regularly, and the national monitoring which has pointed up for the first time the full extent of racist bullying and harassment of Gypsies/Travellers in schools together offer a serious challenge to the success of the inclusion agenda. The concerning inconsistency and damaging lack of understanding referred to earlier in the context of recognition of minority ethnic status are also apparent in educational policy. While there will always be Gypsy/Traveller parents who, for a range of reasons, choose not to become involved with the formal education system, there are clearly many others who *wish* to do so but who are frustrated in their attempts to exercise their rights and carry out their responsibilities. How then can we understand this continuing and perhaps even increasing marginalization in the context of current educational policies which aim to prioritize inclusion, celebrate diversity and acknowledge a range of pupil achievements?

The introduction in the 1990s of a quasi-market in education in the UK, with competition between schools as a way to improve standards, accompanied by notions of parental choice, specialization, target setting, 'league tables' and the new managerialism have been seen by some as acting to extend further the reach of a different set of values into the experience of schooling (Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995; Parsons, 1999). It has been argued that these have all become part of a concern with public image and marketability that requires a school to maintain a high profile in the educational marketplace (Ball *et al.*, 1997; Brown *et al.*, 1997; Hayden, 1997). Brown *et al.* (1997) talk about 'individual motivation, micro-economic change, the virtues of competition, and fiscal restraint' (p. 21) as the main themes of these market-based reforms. Within schools this has been interpreted as 'value for money, improvements in educational standards, greater responsiveness to consumer preferences, and equity' (Levacic, 1994, p. 29). In this context there are legitimate concerns for those already marginalized and vulnerable. Heightened awareness of public image in schools, across the UK, has been cited as a having a far-reaching effect on how a school responds to and records their response to a pupil with difficulties or additional needs (Osler & Osler, 2002).

Silencing the issue

Our research suggests that central to the negative educational experiences of so many Gypsy/Travellers is a denial of difference; a denial of the complexity of identity. Many

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teachers are confused about what constitutes Gypsy/Traveller cultures and may sometimes either deny that difference is a factor or construct difference as deviance (Lloyd & Norris, 1998). Abajo and Carrasco (2005), in their extensive research with Spanish Gypsy/Roma children, talk about the importance of recognizing that this ethnic invisibility is both 'a structural and individual strategy' (p. 4). Assertions such as that 'they are no different' or 'they are never treated differently from anyone else' suggest a lack of recognition of cultural features or an implication that successful integration requires anonymous assimilation, passing as 'not different' like the Gypsy/Traveller girls in our Scottish research who were described by their teacher as 'very acceptable … didn't make themselves out to be tinkers' (Lloyd & Stead, 2001a, p. 22). Denial of difference may sustain the continuing ignorance of individual teachers and of official bodies (Lloyd & Norris, 1998; Padfield & Jordan, 2004):

> I've never, never thought of him as any of the Travelling people, he was difficult because he could flare up very easily. My impression was that was part of his background and he had a sort of defence mechanism…maybe the language is the one thing we've noticed more…he's not scared to say what he wanted. I wouldn't say that was typical of Travelling people but he maybe, that might have been that they accepted it more on the site. We've never had any situation where the Travelling people have been different from anybody.
>
> (Depute Head Teacher, quoted in Lloyd *et al.*, 1999, p. 7)

The suggestion that a child could 'flare up very easily'; that he was 'not scared to say what he wanted', is found in a number of teacher accounts of Gypsy/Traveller pupils. The denial of difference serves here to individualize and 'privatize' (Troyna & Vincent, 1996) experience, a process noted elsewhere (Slee, 1995; Gillborn & Youdell, 2000) and one that denies pupils and families their right to challenge injustice. The notion that Gypsy/Traveller pupils are overly sensitive about issues of justice reveals a lack of awareness by some school staff that 'a strong response to injustice reflects a life where injustice is routine' (Lloyd & Stead, 2001a, p. 371).

Similarly, in seeking to understand the disproportionately high levels of disciplinary exclusion from school among Gypsy/Travellers, this denial of difference and the importance of identity are, we suggest, fundamental. Listening to Gypsy/Traveller pupils, it is clear that such exclusions often arise out of incidents of bullying and fighting associated with racist name-calling (Lloyd & Stead, 2001a; Derrington & Kendall, 2003):

> See if I came back and said 'Mam somebody's been calling me a name at school' and my Mam knowed that I hadn't called them back, she'd absolutely kill me. She'd go 'what's the point of telling a teacher, when they won't do nothing about it!' You should learn to stick up for yourself—that's what my Mam says, if someone hits me I've been told to hit back—not go and tell me Mam like a fool.
>
> (Christine & June, cited in Lloyd & Stead, 2001a)

The small number of Gypsies/Travellers in any one local area may lead schools to underestimate the damage of such exclusions to communities of Gypsies/Travellers, and their relations with formal education. The valuing of extended family ties and commitment to come together for family events referred to earlier ensures that such

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news is rapidly shared and can be dispersed over a relatively wide geographical area. One family's experience may influence broader community perceptions quite markedly. The research findings mentioned above indicate a complex mixture of external pressures, institutional factors within schooling and the views and fears of Gypsies/Travellers. These views and fears represent not only attitudes to education that may be particular to the cultures of Gypsies/Travellers, but also some, for example, about racism and school exclusion that may be common to other Black and minority ethnic parents and children in the UK (Wright *et al.*, 2000).

This section has used the idea of difference to indicate that school staff may deny the validity/existence of Gypsy/Traveller cultures. By doing this they *silence* the issue for schools. Equally, they may exoticize them; our research indicated an interest sometimes in the historical aspects of Scottish Gypsy/Traveller life, often without evident understanding of contemporary challenges such as the difficulties of doing homework in a shared trailer or without the support of literate parents (Lloyd *et al.*, 1999). So difference may be romanticized, denied, simplified; identities silenced or constructed as deviant.

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Educational inclusion and social exclusion

It is important to acknowledge that there are enormous and competing pressures on schools. Despite these pressures, many schools have made significant improvements in the service they offer to a diverse range of pupils. They have become more flexible and inclusive of pupils they traditionally felt were the responsibility of more specialist staff, for example, those pupils with physical, sensory or learning disabilities. However, the inclusion agenda has arguably been only partially successful, with much less support for the inclusion, for example, of those pupils with labelled with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Lloyd & Padfield, 1996; Farrell & Tsakalidou, 1999; Munn *et al.*, 2000), and those pupils from families of low socio-economic status (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002), or with little social and cultural capital (Ball *et al.*, 1997). The place of Gypsies/Travellers in this hierarchy of inclusion/exclusion is complex, but it is clear that any consideration of the Gypsy/Traveller relationship with schools today must take account of these factors and the ways in which they are undoubtedly interrelated. Thrupp and Tomlinson (2005, p. 550) talk of 'the problem of giving recognition to minority cultures in particular, without accentuating social divisions'.

The particular role of parents within educational discourse is worth closer consideration here. Araujo's (2005) helpful analysis of Labour discourse in recent English educational policy documents helps us further interrogate the contradictions. She notes Gamarknikow and Green's (1999) suggestion that New Labour discourse tends to equate problematic families with particular groups; single parents, working-class families and, significantly, families from ethnic minorities As discussed earlier, Gypsy/Traveller parents are often very concerned about the appropriateness of the kinds of learning that schools offer. Although they may have differing views on many subjects, they often share a commitment to experiential, family-based learning, the

passing on of skills from generation to generation alongside an openness to the need to be able to 'turn your hand' to any work on offer. Within this context, discipline and respect for older members of the group is highly valued. Paradoxically, it may often be these very values that set them most apart. Commitment to the family as the prime source of education for young people, particularly in relation to morality and to work skills, creates for many a tension with an education system which removes such responsibilities from parents and vests them in the State. Significantly, their cultural capital may be understood to be in the 'wrong currency' (Bourdieu, 1994; Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995; Reay, 1998) in the UK education system.

It seems, then, that their very self-reliance is at odds with an education system which on the one hand blames parents for school indiscipline (Araujo, 2005) while, on the other hand, seems to deny the rights of (some) parents to be closely involved in the education of their children. Gypsies/Travellers have valued what is now known as the 'enterprise culture' long before the term was first coined, and have espoused self-employment over waged labour in ways that should sit easily with the 'cult of action and success' (Calinescu, 1987) from which many current educational priorities derive. However, the rejection or suspicion with which their entrepreneurship is often viewed, we suggest, reveals that government policy may be actually more focused on economic growth than personal or local enterprise.

Matthews (2005, p. 195), discussing whether policy on crime has become more punitive, argues that a range of English government policy initiatives are characterized by 'diversity and ambiguities'. We have argued that policy developments addressing issues for Gypsies/Travellers may be understood as being, at best, part of an approach that both improves and creates difficulties. We suggest that the reasons for this are linked with a reluctance to examine the complex and shifting boundaries of class and race in education. The values and attitudes of Gypsies/Travellers challenge these boundaries and threaten notions of what constitutes 'community', in a context in which the existence of these factors as barriers at different levels has often been denied. New Labour policy imperatives, while seeking inclusion, have also been rooted in notions of deservingness and genuine need: 'Social justice here is partial, exclusionary and tied to particular ways of behaving and particular attitudes' (Vincent, 2003, p. 3).

The patchiness and variability of implementation of good practice indicate a strategic avoidance of wider public scrutiny that could significantly challenge the public stereotypes identified by the CRE that promote and sustain the level of racism and harassment experienced by Gypsies/Travellers. Concern with the votes of 'middle' England (and Scotland) underpins an unwillingness to assert vigorously and publicly the need for a new equity and thus progressive policies are introduced alongside a populist public rhetoric that sounds punitive. The relationship between the settled population and Gypsies/Travellers in the UK has been characterized for centuries by fear and mistrust, and by the efforts of the State to control and assimilate. Current policy and practice in education reflect the 'complexity and contestedness of achieving social justice in education' (Thrupp & Tomlinson, 2005 p. 549). We have identified significant progress both in policy and practice, but nonetheless recognize a

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range of continuing obstructions to educational participation for Gypsies/Travellers that can be understood only within a wider understanding of how their difference is constructed both in the social relations of schooling and in the social and economic context of Gypsy/Traveller lives in the UK today.

Notes

1. Thrupp and Tomlinson (2005) refer to 'contradictions' and 'significant silences'.
2. The CRE uses the term 'Gypsies and Travellers'. However, the present paper uses the term 'Gypsies/Travellers' to refer particularly to those groups that have shared common cultural features distinctive from much of settled society. The wider term 'Gypsies and Travellers' is now more often used to include mobile communities such as Occupational, e.g. circus or showground, Travellers and 'New Travellers', who do not see themselves as minority ethnic groups.

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