Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers As a Community of Difference: Challenging Inclusivity As an Anti-racist Approach

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Abstract

In order to consider how white privilege functions in late modernity, this article engages with issues of identity and political economy to theorise the impact of racist discourse on Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in the United Kingdmom (UK). The article specifically problematizes the increasing aggregation of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers as one community of difference in the UK. The article expresses the author's concern that contemporary discourse and associated policy developments have racialized communities, and in doing so negated them through a failure to acknowledge the breadth of experience of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers. The article makes a theoretical argument, evidenced by a comprehensive review of literature in the social sciences and key policy documents in the UK. It also incorporates an analysis of reports produced by UK government and civil society organisations over the past 15-year period. The article argues that the categorisation of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers as one community of difference has occurred due to the embedded racism within contemporary European society that functions through and is augmented by neoliberal capitalist norms. In conclusion the paper argues that the norms of neoliberal capitalism, that are typified by individualism, competition, and the primacy of capital over human experience, allow the perpetuation of this racist discourse that is not challenged by narratives of inclusion but rather is augmented by them.

Keywords

- Data aggregation
- Neoliberal capitalism
- Racism
- Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers
- Social inclusion

Introduction

This article considers how Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in the UK have been framed as a racialized community of difference in the last 15 years and the impacts this has had on their social, economic, and political inclusion. Notwithstanding the historic subjugation and racist marginalisation of Roma that underpins their contemporary lived experience (Achim 2004; Bancroft 2005; Acton et al. 2014; Okely 2014; Alliance Against Anti-Gypsyism 2016), the article follows the work of critical scholars who have noted how Romani identity has been constructed in the contemporary period through a re-racialization (Balibar 2009) that has ultimately augmented the problematization of Romani people in its apparent endeavour to protect them (Surdu and Kovats 2015; Kóczé 2018; Yildiz and De Genova 2018). In the late modern era discussions of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller identity in the UK have oriented around those communities' historic and contemporary vilification and social exclusion, and the subsequent need to champion legislation and policy for their inclusion. Within that context policymakers, academics, activists, and civil society have lobbied for inclusive language and terminology to empower previously disparate communities of Roma. However, in creating Romani identity, and in the UK by grouping Roma with Gypsies and Travellers, a racializing process has placed them as distinctly apart from the rest of society under an umbrella of racialized difference, and this, in itself, has placed them at greater risk of harm. This article explores how that process has manifested within the specific context of the UK. It considers how the grouping of heterogeneous peoples has occurred without consideration or critique of the harmful impacts of such aggregation on those peoples' lives.

In order to develop the argument presented in this article, a range of sources were utilised through a process of qualitative desk-based research. Having recently completed a monograph on the harms of hate against Gypsies and Travellers in the UK (James 2020), it has become patently obvious to the author that identity conflation, aggregation, and negation were significant aspects of those harms, both as underpinning factors and outcomes. Therefore, to consider these issues in light of a critical whiteness perspective, an initial review of the literature in the social sciences scrutinised the key issues for Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers (Fremlova 2018). Specifically, that review focused on aggregation of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers as communities of difference, racialisation of Romani, Gypsy, and Traveller identity, the development of Romani identity as a categorical tool within the European Union, and critical theorising on Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller inclusion. Second, the research process involved a review of reports produced by and for the UK government, paying particular attention to those reports that had attained significant attention within academia, policy environments, and within civil society organisations supporting Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers. Following completion of a thematic analysis of the reports that used key issues raised within the literature review process, the article was prepared from the theoretical perspective of a critical criminologist. Thus, the paper constitutes a contribution to discussion about the contemporary nature of approaches to Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller inclusion as well as an attempt to make a theoretical point. That point is the need for academics, civil society, policymakers, and practitioners to ask how and why they find themselves in a competitive space (be that institutional, national, regional and/or global), wherein the nuances of lived experience are lost. In asking these questions, the paper argues that there is a need to look beyond the boundaries of those spaces to the globalised nature of politics, economy, and society and the forces that direct them according to the needs and requirements of neoliberal capitalism in late modernity (Fisher 2009). The aim then, in this paper, is to provide an example of how the daily practice of trying to deliver inclusive agendas fails, or at the very least falters, due to embedded neoliberal capitalist norms that are unseen and uncontested.

The article follows a critical realist framework to produce an analysis that outlines what we empirically know, what actually occurs, and how we can understand it (Bhaskar 1998). Therefore, this article outlines how Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers have been defined in the UK over recent years, how discourses of race and ethnicity have informed that definition, and what the impacts of their aggregation as a community of difference means for them. In doing so, the article takes a critical, criminological, theoretical stance that acknowledges how social harms manifest in contemporary society within a neoliberal capitalist political economy (Hall and Winlow 2015; James 2020) The imposition of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller categorisation has occurred within a culture of seeming inclusivity and spaces of progressive action. In order to elucidate the impact of this categorisation process the paper sets out the gains made from this apparently inclusive space, which allows for some recognition of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers. However, it goes on to identify the negative impacts of such categorisation, including the skewing of statistical reports on Roma, Gypsy and Traveller inclusion and the negation of some Gypsies and Travellers who do not conform to, or are not included within, racial or ethnic categorisations of identity in legislation and policy in the UK. The categorisation process, as determined by largely non-Romani, non-Gypsy and non-Traveller communities, organisations, and policy environments, will be critically considered as part of racist discourse that is facilitated by a human rights agenda that has inherently incorporated the norms of neoliberal capitalism (Kóczé 2018). Thus, it is possible through this analysis to conceptualise how white privilege functions in late modernity.

1. Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in the UK

It has been estimated that approximately 200,000 migrant Roma live in the UK, though such estimates are acknowledged as problematic due to the lack of coherent source information. (Brown et al. 2013) They provide an outline of Roma migration from mainland Europe to the UK and the difficulties they have faced since being in the UK (see also Beluschi-Fabeni et al. 2019). Further, they note that as Roma migration to the UK has increased in the twenty-first century, so their specific needs and concerns have been complex and rarely identified as bespoke comparative to indigenous Gypsies and Travellers, as will be discussed further in due course. The identities of Roma from mainland Europe are extremely diverse, including Sinti, Kale, Manus, Kalderas, Lovari, and Romanichals that Liegeois referred to as 'a rich mosaic of ethnic fragments' (1994, 12; Kostadinova 2011). Roma are protected as an ethnic group under the Equality Act 2010 in the UK.

In the UK it has been estimated that Gypsies and Travellers constitute approximately 200,000-300,000 people (Brown et al. 2013), though some estimates are much higher, suggesting that Gypsies and Travellers make up 1–1.5 per cent of the population (James 2019). Of all indigenous Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, Romany Gypsies are the largest group (Clark 2006). Romany Gypsies are often perceived by non-Gypsy/Travellers as the most legitimate group amongst Gypsies and Travellers in the UK and romantic notions of their culture, style, and ways of living are evoked through media images that are bound up with the idea that the 'real' Gypsies are Romany Gypsies. Also of Romany heritage are the Welsh Kale, a very small group of people in North Wales. Romany Gypsies were recognised as an ethnic group under the Equality Act (2010) in England and Wales, following case law in 1989 (Greenhall and Willers 2020).

Scottish Travellers or Gypsies live throughout Scotland and are linked culturally to Romany Gypsies, particularly by their language in parts of Scotland. They have been recognised as an ethnic group by the Scottish government via case law since 2008 (Greenhall and Willers, 2020). Irish, or Pavee, Traveller culture is similarly organised to Romany Gypsies. Their identities are distinct, however, and research has shown that they have rarely mixed as communities (Clark 2006). Irish Travellers gained recognition in England and Wales as an ethnic group in 2000 following case law, and previously in Northern Ireland within the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Act (1997) (Greenhall and Willers 2020).

Showpeople are commercial Travellers who move from town to town in the fair season between February and November (Clark 2006). In law, however, they are treated distinctly from other Gypsies and Travellers: Showpeople are not recognised as a racial group as they are considered 'occupational Travellers' (Greenhall and Willers 2020, 518). They are provided with some protection for their settlement in planning law that facilitates Showpeople's requirement for particular places, referred to as 'yards' to stop and stay on in the winter months, wherein they can store their fairground rides. New Travellers are the most recent people to take up a nomadic style of living in the UK, having come into being in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They are now acknowledged as a diverse group (Webster and Millar 2001), included in accommodation needs assessments for Gypsies and Travellers (Home and Greenfields 2006; James 2006), and they have been nomadic for more than a generation (Clark 1997).

2. Racialisation

Having established who the Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in the UK are, it is now possible to consider some of the issues raised by their conflation into a racialized community of difference. It is important to note here that the term 'racialisation' is used advisedly and in accordance with the writing of race scholars (Reeves 1983; Rattansi 2005; Murji 2017). The argument among these authors is that the process of racialisation occurs when discourse incorporates 'racial categorisations, racial explanations, racial evaluations and racial prescriptions' (Reeves 1983, 174). This acknowledgement of the multi-dimensional and multi-layered construction of racial identities (Rattansi 2005) upon, within and between peoples (Howard and Vajda 2017) means that it is possible to perceive the harmful material, social and psychological impacts of racialisation. Notwithstanding criticisms of the term (see Goldberg 2005) which have been useful in its refinement, the notion of racialisation is applied here with the specific intent of acknowledging the breadth and invasive nature of racism in contemporary society embedded within the social, political, and economic fabric of European and world history. Further, the focus on race within this paper does not intend to minimise the intersectional nature of Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller experiences. (McBride and James 2021) In terms of race issues, within Romani studies the focus of research and scholarship has been bifurcated by firstly, a fascination with the integrity of Romani identity that has been criticised for its essentialising outcomes, and secondly, a focus on the political economic underpinnings of Romani exclusion that fail to acknowledge the impact of racialisation and racism. The need for a nuanced approach to understanding the subjugation of Roma in contemporary society is evident, and scholars have proposed useful approaches that acknowledge the impact of political economy on Roma while also recognising their racialized experience without essentialising their identity. (see, for example, Yildiz and De Genova 2017; Kóczé 2018). This paper endeavours to contribute to that approach through an analysis of the impact of racialisation in the first instance and the framing of that process within neoliberal capitalism in the final analysis.

There is little doubt that a number of the matters to be raised here would be similarly problematic within other European states were the situation of Roma to be scrutinised to this level of specific identity and local legislation and policy (Stevens 2004; Piemontese et al. 2013). Indeed, the concept of Roma identity is problematic in itself in this regard. I have referred above to Roma migrants, as if they were a coherent community, while in reality they are diverse in their countries of origin and cultural identities (Liegeois 1994; Simon 2012). Although they may have a common heritage, the main thing that has brought Roma together in solidarity across Europe has been their experiences over centuries of exploitation, exclusion, slavery, and execution (Achim 2004; Bancroft 2005; Alliance Against Anti-Gypsyism 2016). Contemporarily, the subjugation of Roma has been sustained through processes that have criminalised, securitised, and minoritised them (Van Baar 2011; Yidiz and De Genova 2018). The problematisation of Roma throughout Europe has likewise occurred in the UK historically and contemporarily as Gypsies and Travellers have experienced significant harms because of prejudicial attitudes towards their communities (Okely 2014; Taylor 2014; James 2020). This has placed Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in precarious spaces, living in poor conditions and lacking access to appropriate support, health, and welfare services throughout Europe. Their political voices have been negated via their economic and social exclusion (as well as their spatial exclusion in many countries) and thus they have lacked power and capacity to challenge the status quo (Howard and Vajda 2017). In various European states Roma experiences of harm have been exacerbated by the rise of right-wing nationalist politics that have scapegoated Roma for the ills of contemporary life (Bancroft 2005) and are not challenged by the neoliberal capitalist norms embedded into EU-level politics (Kóczé 2018). In other states, while opposition to Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers is less virile, it is implicit (Yildiz and De Genova 2018). In the UK studies have found that general public perceptions of Gypsies and Travellers are adverse (Hutchison et al. 2017; Abrams et al. 2018) and the 2014 Global Attitudes Survey found that 50 per cent of UK respondents held negative views of Gypsies and Travellers (Pew Research Centre 2014).

The commonly poor circumstances that Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers have found themselves under in late modernity has increasingly been highlighted by organisations with a remit to improve the human rights of marginalised and excluded peoples, as noted above. In Europe this ultimately led to the various peoples with common heritage, who were previously denigrated as 'Gypsies', being united under the moniker of Roma (Council of Europe 2011). Subsequently, and in response to lobbying by civil society, the European Union created a Framework for Roma Inclusion 2020 that required member states to address the social and economic inclusion of Roma (including Gypsies and Travellers in the UK) and numerous other national initiatives for Roma inclusion proliferated at local, national and international levels. (Kóczé and Rövid 2012; Luggin 2012). Party to these initiatives and in-line with European Union support from the Fundamental Rights Agency, organisations supporting Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers have worked to challenge prejudice and discrimination against them. However, scholars have noted two key issues that have arisen that have rarely been considered (Kóczé and Rövid 2012; Surdu and Kovats 2015; Yildiz and De Genova 2018). First, the idea that Roma are one united group across nation states is questionable and fails to acknowledge the diversity of those people the Roma label represents, let alone any other intersecting aspects of their identities (Belton 2005; Howard and Vajda 2017). In this regard, the solidarity provided by that label was intended to serve as a protection against nationally derived prejudice but has actually served in many cases (alongside potential over-prediction of numbers of Roma people) to place Roma as a significant threat to domestic interests. Thus, it is arguable that they have been increasingly scapegoated within nation states and perceived as illegitimate citizens. (see also Bancroft 2005) In addition, the paternalistic approach of the European Union and associated initiatives for Roma inclusion have taken insufficient account of the actual needs of the various people represented as Roma. This is notwithstanding the potential for the promoted concept of 'community led local development' that may provide some acknowledgement of localised needs, though is likely to serve as a tool to responsibilise Roma to address their own problems. Indeed, Roma have been identified as a problem population, who are associated with poverty and welfare dependency and are increasingly considered to be vulnerable. The European Union, in turn then, can provide help and support as a pan-European organisation ideally positioned to address a pan-European problem. Evidently there is a paradox here, as Surdu and Kovats (2015, 8) note, 'Presented as a pan-European ethnic minority, Roma can symbolise the need for European governance' that simply serves to reinforce institutions and processes that perpetuate anti-Gypsyism and normalise attitudes that sustain anti-Gypsyism (Howard and Vajda 2017).

In the UK the governance of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers that previously outlawed them as vagrants, thieves, and vagabonds (Taylor 2014) has shifted in the contemporary era to protect them as vulnerable, marginalised denizens, according to the European model (EHRC 2016). The idea that Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers are vulnerable is highly problematic though, as it suggests that they lack agency and it fails to recognise their successes, their apparent resilience or their resistance. (Belton 2013; Howard and Vajda 2017) The social control, exclusion, and subjugation of people with Romani heritage throughout Europe has been facilitated by a constant overview of their lives, including registration of their communities and creation of isolated Roma settlements (Piemontese 2013), their securitisation (Van Baar 2011) and their criminalisation (Alliance Against AntiGypsyism 2016). European Union initiatives for inclusion have simply served the same purposes wherein they have delved into people's lives according to stigmatised, racialized perceptions of them that have been defined by non-Roma organisations and policy makers who do not entirely know or appreciate the actual needs of those communities, or how they would prefer to see their lives improved (Kóczé and Rövid 2012; Simon 2012; Surdu and Kovats 2015). Nor have those Roma had political power to engage with their own governance due to the intersecting nature of their social, economic and spatial exclusion (Howard and Vajda 2017). The structures from which the parameters for inclusion are set are those circumscribed by dominant ideologies of human rights that are infused with perceptions of inclusion and exclusion as defined by those white privileged people who largely wrote them and which are framed by neoliberal norms (Kóczé 2018).

In the UK, Gypsies and Travellers have been subject to social control measures that keep records of their whereabouts through annual caravan counts, assessments of their accommodation needs, and policing of them in public and private spaces through multi-agency working that have ultimately served to exclude, securitise, and criminalise them (James and Richardson 2006). Further, local policies regarding illegal encampments by Gypsies and Travellers in the UK facilitate reporting of their presence by non-Gypsy/Travellers when they arrive in areas that are perceived as illegitimate and thus where they are not welcome (Ryder 2011; James 2019). This oversight has meant that Gypsies and Travellers have been criminalised in the UK as they are over-policed as offenders and their chosen living spaces have been closed off to them via planning and public order law. Lane and Smith (2019) have noted that the complex derivation of policy in the UK, that depends on differing approaches at central, national, and local government levels, has meant that Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers are caught up in a range of different policy ideologies that either acknowledge their racial identities, are effectively post-racial and thus negate their identities, or target those who are mobile (Goldberg 2015). It is important then to consider the specific circumstances of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in the UK to appreciate how contemporary racialisation has occurred and within that discussion to acknowledge how Gypsies' and Travellers' cultural nomadism in the UK has been misinterpreted.

Acton (2010) has argued that on their arrival in Europe from the Indian subcontinent Roma responded to the economic conditions they met which led those in the East to settle to pursue their economic goals, while those that arrived in the West became commercial nomads. Despite the settlement of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe (and increasing settlement of Roma in the West), cultural nomadism remained an important aspect of many Roma peoples' identity. That nomadism has been sustained, and embraced, by Gypsies and Travellers in the UK. However, it does not necessarily mean that all Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers are mobile. Indeed, as noted by Shubin and Swanson (2010) the mobility of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers does not require them to be constantly moving, but can refer to their emotional mobility, or what has been referred to here as their cultural nomadism. Cultural nomadism refers to Roma', Gypsies', and Travellers' predisposition to think and act in a boundless fashion. Simplistic analyses of nomadism equate it to mobility, whereas studies of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers have long recognised the nuanced and variable nature of cultural nomadism that includes a range of approaches to living that are bound up with notions of freedom and autonomy (Halfacree 1996; Levinson and Sparkes 2004; Acton 2010; Shubin 2010). Indeed, the lifestyle associated with nomadism, living in close groups with strong bonds of familial attachment and strict moral codes, is what signifies Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller cultures most. Van Baar (2011) has noted how the nomadisation of Roma in Europe has had negative consequences due to the over-stating of the nomadic (most often interpreted as mobile) nature of Romani identity that has augmented the notion of Roma as the ultimate 'Europeans' as stateless peoples (Yildiz and De Genova 2017). That nomadising discourse simply feeds into racialized perceptions of Roma as a phenotypical racial group. This paper does not adhere to the idea that Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers constitute a racial group, nor a nomadic group. However, it does acknowledge that historic racialisation and contemporary re-racialisation has served to separate Roma out in European society in a way that has placed them apart from the white majority and interpreted as such by embedded perceptions of whiteness within EU policy.

The relatively recent protection provided to traditional Gypsies and Travellers in the UK within race relations legislation has provided some recognition for Gypsies and Travellers (James 2019) who have suffered centuries of racism as noted above (Taylor 2014; Cressy 2018). However, it has been argued that processes of racialisation have served to problematise Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, akin to the problematisation of Roma throughout mainland Europe (Acton 2010). Further, that contemporary racialisation process has enhanced the romantic myth of the traditional Romany Gypsy as more legitimate than other groups of Gypsies and Travellers (Kenrick and Puxon 1972; Okely 1983). Defining racial identity in law is a complex process that can be reductionist and ethnocentric (Marsh and Strand 2006), but its legal negation serves as a significant tool to exclusion (Clark 2006). The variable and slow application of legal recognition of ethnic minority status for Gypsies and Travellers in the UK has served to increase competition and suspicion between communities themselves and with non-Gypsies/Travellers. Howard and Vadja (2017) note that discrimination occurs both vertically, via the implementation of policy and practice upon Roma, and horizontally, via social relations between communities and families of Roma. Its impact is determined by the intersection of identity and inequalities. By appreciating the disruptive nature of horizontal discrimination, it is possible to acknowledge how hierarchies have emerged within and between Gypsies and Travellers in the UK alongside their experiences of vertical discrimination via the implementation of policy upon them.

3. Racialised Discourse in Legislation and Policy

The hierarchical positioning of Gypsies and Travellers in the UK has occurred via the complex application of definitions of identity within legislation and policy. Rather than there being an all-encompassing approach to Gypsy and Traveller identity in acknowledgement of their social, economic, and cultural similarities, there are conflicting approaches to their identities in law. There has been a historical tendency for legislators in the UK to define Gypsies and Travellers according to their economic purpose associated with their apparent nomadism that is actually their mobility, rather than their racial identity (Willers and Johnson 2020). As noted above, it is only people of Romany decent and Irish Travellers who have been recently recognised in equality legislation as ethnic groups. In UK planning law and policy a disjuncture occurs as economic purpose and its associated mobility have been used as the defining features of Gypsy and Traveller identity. In the specific context of the UK this turns the situation for Gypsies and Travellers on its head as the failure of legislators and policymakers to understand both nomadism and Gypsy and Traveller cultures results in a paradox. Gypsies and Travellers in the UK often prefer to live in vehicles or on Gypsy and Traveller sites rather than in housing, which is perceived as a cultural anathema to many. The cultural nomadism of Gypsies and Travellers, whether living on sites or in housing does not equate to mobility, but planning policy has reduced it to such, particularly since that policy was redefined in 2015 (DCLG 2015). Hence, for Gypsies and Travellers to live on sites they are required by policy to be mobile to some extent, and their ethnicity is not considered in site provision. Planning policy in the UK in this regard imposes a sedentarist binary approach to nomadism that fails to acknowledge the culturally nomadic cultures of all Gypsies and Travellers (James and Southern 2018). Because of this approach, ethnicity is negated and those Romany Gypsies or Irish Travellers who are not mobile, often as a consequence of their age or infirmity, may not be provided with culturally appropriate accommodation; therein lies the paradox. The lack of culturally appropriate accommodation provision for Gypsies and Travellers in the UK has been acknowledged as highly problematic and underpinning significant poor health and welfare outcomes within those communities (Cemlyn et al. 2009).

Interestingly, in the past provision of culturally appropriate accommodation has largely been delivered to Romany Gypsies due to their perceived ethnic authenticity within racialized discourses of Gypsy and Traveller identity in the UK, alongside the history of Romany Gypsy mobility. However, since the legislative closure of traditional Gypsy and Traveller stopping places in the 1960s their mobility has reduced somewhat and Romany Gypsies have often settled on sites, though they are no less culturally nomadic. Irish Travellers, however, are far less likely to have attained sites to live on as they have been perceived historically as a less legitimate group than Romany Gypsies and have experienced anti-Irish prejudice alongside anti-Gypsy/Traveller attitudes (Howard 2006). They have likewise been impacted by the loss of traditional stopping grounds and have been consequently more mobile, often having to stop and stay in places proscribed by local settled communities. Within planning legislation in the UK, in accordance with the above, Showpeople and New Travellers are recognised as Gypsy and Traveller communities, despite their non-Gypsy/Traveller ethnicity in equalities legislation. This has been assured by the explicit requirement for mobility outlined by the re-defined planning policy in 2015. Showpeople are occupationally mobile due to their running of fairs around the UK, and New Travellers have been the least likely to attain appropriate accommodation on sites due to perceptions of their racial inauthenticity, so they are more likely to be mobile.

Due to their inclusion within planning law and policy, New Travellers have been incorporated into official assessments of accommodation need for Gypsies and Travellers, as well as associated planning processes and provision (or lack thereof). Their position in the hierarchy of legitimacy of Gypsies and Travellers is, however, at the bottom, due to their lack of racial authenticity. Indeed, many academics, policymakers, and researchers do not consider New Travellers at all within their discussions of Gypsy and Traveller inclusion, or they simply negate them despite their presence in local, regional, and national reports (see, for example, Cemlyn et al. 2009; Cromarty 2019). Historically Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers have perceived New Travellers as interlopers, who should bear responsibility for the introduction of draconian legislation in the late twentieth century that served to criminalise trespass and consequently their communities (James 2006). This tension between traditional Gypsies and Travellers and New Travellers identifies how protective those communities have had to be of the limited resources and spaces available to them in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as neoliberal capitalist agendas have increasingly informed the socio-political environment. Interestingly, New Travellers often conform to notions of the 'true Gypsy' stereotype as they tend to live low-impact lifestyles, including living in horse-drawn vehicles. The use of a horse-drawn vehicle, the 'vardo', is strongly associated with traditional Gypsy and Traveller cultures in the UK. Hence, the stigmatisation of New Travellers as 'fake Gypsies' (Murdoch and Johnson 2020) is confused by their alignment to ways of living that are perceived as legitimate by those who romanticise Romany Gypsy lifestyles.

Showpeople are likewise not legally recognised as an ethnic group in the UK. Because of their specific occupational accommodation needs, and subsequent local planning delivery of those needs over time, discussions of provision also often leave out Showpeople (EHRC 2016). Throughout the fair season Showpeople can generally reside on land set out for their fairgrounds. However, the Showmen's Guild has expressed concern that Showmen, similar to other Gypsies and Travellers, have suffered a crisis of space provision in recent years for their winter yards. In addition, it has been noted that changing patterns for fairs has impacted on Showpeople's need of space, meaning that they are likely to travel less far and are more likely to need their yards for accommodation throughout the year (Cemlyn et al. 2009). Interestingly, the exclusion of Showpeople from much research and discourse on Gypsy and Traveller issues may be impacted by their relative economic security, access to education, and welfare outcomes (Cemlyn et al. 2009). Acknowledgement of their positive outcomes may not serve the purpose of othering discourses, either those that purport to want inclusion or those that exclude.

Brown et al. (2013) note that migrant Roma have specific needs and wants in their lives that are not effectively met by provision in the UK. This lack of consideration of the particularities of Romani experience and needs is due to the application by the UK government of EU policies on Romani inclusion that have incorporated indigenous Gypsies and Travellers with migrant Roma. Interestingly, whereas it has been argued that within EU policy the specific needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the UK (as well as others in Western Europe) have not been met due to their lack of coherence with Romani needs (Kóczé and Rövid 2012), the needs of migrant Roma in the UK have been eclipsed by local Gypsies' and Travellers' needs. So, Gypsies' and Travellers' requirements for culturally appropriate accommodation as detailed above, and the tensions therein that are embedded in different definitions of their identity in legislation are not relevant to migrant Roma. Migrant Roma alternatively have needed settled accommodation in housing, and while nomadism may have played a part in defining some aspects of Romani identity over time, for migrant Roma accessing accommodation has not been related to an aversion to 'bricks and mortar' that is bound up with Gypsies' and Travellers' identity in the UK as cultural nomads (Kabachnik 2009). Thus, we begin to see the incongruity of conflating Roma with Gypsies and Travellers in the UK. Their needs and wants are different and rarely met because of racializing discourses that simply place them in competition with each other for resources that do not necessarily meet their requirements.

4. Reporting of Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller Identities

In the previous section of the article it was made clear that UK legislation and policy are contradictory in nature and have played out within a racialized discourse that has created a hierarchy of legitimacy of Gypsies and Travellers. Further, inclusion of Roma within that discourse has failed to address their specific needs.[1] It is necessary now to consider how Roma have been increasingly aggregated with Gypsies and Travellers as part of that re-racializing environment. As noted above, the key contemporary issue raised by civil society in support of Gypsies and Travellers in the UK has been their exclusion via failures to provide culturally appropriate accommodation to them. A seminal report completed for the Commission for Racial Equality in 2009 set out the breadth of inequalities faced by Gypsies and Travellers in the UK (Celmyn et al. 2009). This report provided a baseline for subsequent reports and discussion of Gypsy and Traveller inclusion as it carefully noted the various communities impacted, how their exclusion had played out via discrimination in all aspects of their lives, and how the lack of secure appropriate accommodation had largely underpinned those experiences. Subsequently, however, reports on Gypsies' and Travellers' experiences of discrimination have variably included Roma within their analysis, with little consideration of the relevance of their incorporation in such reports.

A case in point is the Equality and Human Rights Commission report (EHRC 2019), *Is Britain Fairer?*, and its associated reports, including a Spotlight Report on inequalities faced by Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in England (EHRC 2016) that acknowledged and challenged the discrimination faced by Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers and their associated poor outcomes in terms of health and welfare. Written within the discourse of racial prejudice, the EHRC reports, in 2016 and 2019 specifically, distinguish between the white majority and Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers as a racialized other. In doing so they compare their research findings to the previous Commission for Racial Equality report (Cemlyn et al. 2009) to make their point that Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller exclusion has been unremittent. However, the 2009 report did not include Roma, and thus the inherent comparison between the reports that occurs in the 2016 and 2019 studies is problematic, notwithstanding occasional references to differences between outcomes for Roma and those for Gypsies and Travellers. Indeed, the reports do not identify who the Gypsies and Travellers referred to in the reports are, and given their focus on race, they may well have excluded some Gypsies and Travellers who were included in the 2009 Commission for Racial Equality report, making comparisons erroneous. Given that migrant Roma face a breadth of issues that have not been addressed within the UK (Brown et al. 2013), it is likely that their experiences of discrimination and exclusion have distorted the statistics presented in the EHRC reports, or at the least distorted perceptions of those statistics. Critical analysis of research that aggregates minority communities' data have highlighted the capacity of such research, particularly those that use surveys, to skew the statistics (Simon 2012). It is possible that any gains made by indigenous Gypsies and Travellers in the intervening years between the 2009 and the 2016/2019 reports may have been lost through the inclusion of Roma in the latter studies. This would be because of the likelihood of Romani exclusion as economic migrants to the UK which may have placed them in a worse societal position than indigenous Gypsies and Travellers due to the vagaries of racism and prejudice against such migrants (McGinnity and Gijsberts 2016; Howard and Vajda 2017). Similarly, it could be that Roma have better outcomes than indigenous Gypsies and Travellers due their greater security of accommodation in housing that could have masked losses experienced by indigenous Gypsies and Travellers over that period. Ultimately, we do not comprehensively know the situation of either Roma or Gypsies and Travellers because their accretion has occurred without sufficient consideration of the variability of their circumstances or experiences.

The aggregation of Roma with Gypsies and Travellers has occurred in multiple reports (for example, Lammy 2017) over the last 15 years, with limited thought or consideration of whom these monikers represent or how their aggregation simply serves to augment racialisation processes and essentialise Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller identity. Further, the categorisation of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers as one community has increased the existing tendency of policymakers and practitioners in the UK to conflate the identities of Romany Gypsies with Irish Travellers that has enhanced the myth of the legitimate Romany Gypsy (Clark 2006). Research on hate harms experienced by Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in the UK offers another working example of how the conflation of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers has had direct impacts (James 2020). Such research has evidenced the high rates of hate crimes, speech, and incidents that Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers have experienced throughout their lifetimes. However, the tendency to place discussion of these experiences within a simplistic racialised paradigm has meant that many Gypsies' and Travellers' voices have not been heard, particularly the voices of Showpeople and New Travellers. In addition, the impact of a sedentarist binary approach to nomadism has not been considered as impacting those experiences, nor has the effect of hierarchies of racial authenticity been considered as influencing the variable experiences of hate for Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers. The increased tendency to approach the issues faced by such diverse communities from a paternalistic perspective augments the framing of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers as racialized vulnerable communities in need of help and support. Two outcomes follow from this. First, it is argued that Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers are not acknowledged as resilient communities that have implicit strengths and capacity to evolve, as well as resist discrimination (Belton 2013; Yildiz and De Genova 2017). Second, Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers have been aggregated to the degree that some indigenous Gypsies and Travellers are not included in discussions for their own inclusion, and indeed they are often purposely excluded as not conforming to specific notions of racial identity that are biologically determinist. The article will now go on to address how this situation can be best understood via an appreciation of the neoliberal capitalist context within which it occurs.

5. Racist Ideology in the Twenty-first Century

Thus far, this article has set out who the Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in the UK are, how their experiences have been racialized, how racialisation processes have impacted legislation and policy, and aggregated their diverse identities. The paper will now turn to considering what this really means for Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in the twenty-first century and how these circumstances can be best understood. As noted above, Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers have been increasingly aggregated as one community of difference in the UK, and the argument here is that a process of re-racialisation has served to negate the unique experiences of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers and thus failed to expose racism and prejudice against those communities. In order to highlight the racism and prejudice experienced by Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers, it is necessary to identify the social forces in place in contemporary society that have exacerbated their exclusion and placed them in precarious social spaces.

A critical criminological approach, informed by ultra-realist theory, allows for a consideration of harms experienced in contemporary society that acknowledges the role of neoliberal capitalism in engendering them (Hall and Winlow 2015). Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers have experienced racism over centuries, as noted above, that has largely occurred as a consequence of biologically determinist attitudes towards them. Those attitudes remain in contemporary society and are embedded in social policy and practice as evidenced through various examples provided here of the ways in which Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers have been socially controlled, excluded, and marginalised over time via structures of paternalistic governance that have variably criminalised them and/or protected them. In the postwar era, as the neoliberal capitalist project (Harvey 2005) has progressed, so it is possible to see how the interests of the market and liberal notions of freedom have encapsulated existing racisms and exploited them through a re-racialisation process that has occurred via both visible and invisible mechanisms (Howard and Vajda 2017).

Neoliberal capitalism has been identified by theorists as a culture of individualism, competitiveness, meritocracy, and relative deprivation (Harvey 2005; Davies 2017). In this environment, resources are distributed upwards in the social hierarchy under the false premise that everyone, including marginalised communities such as Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers, will benefit from the trickle down of the wealth created. Aligned with this, neoliberal capitalist *responsibilisation*, teamed with deregulation and withdrawal of the state, has resulted in an environment in which judgement and regulation of others is encouraged (Harvey 2005; 2011; Dardot and Laval 2017; and Davies 2017) Traditional notions of structured power have been distorted in this context as power is diffused by liberalism that provides the conditions within which capital can burgeon. As such, the structures of race, class, and gender that facilitated the rampant growth of industrial capitalism, in significant part via imperialist colonialism (see, for example, Phillips and Bowling 2012; Warmington 2020), continue to order our perceptions of everyday experience, even though they do not necessarily represent our contemporary identities (Appiah 2018). Those structures of power are used to retain and perpetuate elite positions and are rallied against by progressive liberal thinkers. However, by focusing on those structures of power instead of acknowledging how neoliberal capitalism has framed and channelled that power according to the needs of the market, neoliberal capitalism has been nullified as a point of real concern, and alternately been considered only as an aspect of that power dynamic (Meyer 2014). This serves the interests of neoliberal capitalism well as processes of pacification have been inherent in its success; diverting attention from the generative mechanisms of problems in society means that the flow of capital has not been interrupted (Fisher 2009; Hall and Winlow 2015).

To consider the lives of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers without due regard for the impact of neoliberal capitalism on the society within which they live fails to appreciate how whiteness is embedded into neoliberal capitalist discourse, as well as how racialisation has served the needs of neoliberal capitalist goals (Kóczé 2018). A discourse of anti-racism has attained significant primacy in late modernity as excluded peoples have correctly challenged their experiences of exclusion, marginalisation, discrimination, and subjugation over time. However, neoliberal capitalism is nothing if not flexible, and by acknowledging aspects of racism within its structures it has been able to quash any comprehensive scrutiny of its systems that would expose how racism continues to serve its specific purpose, that is, to ensure the primacy of profit over people. European Union policies on Romani inclusion exemplify this point. By highlighting the issue of racism against Roma throughout the European Union and expressly targeting countries that do not address Romani inclusion, the needs of Roma are apparently met, or at least the European Union's system of governance has fulfilled its purpose to protect human rights. However, as already established, that system of governance has been defined by perceptions of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers that are paternalistic and framed by notions of race and racism dictated by white privilege. The principles of equality and fairness that have defined human rights in the context of individual freedoms in contemporary liberal democracy are 'saturated with capitalist powers and values' that do not acknowledge what anti-racism really means (Brown 2015, 205). An anti-racist stance acknowledges that processes of racialisation have occurred and impacted groups of people differentially (Brah 1996; Virdee 2015). Only in recognising the impact of racialisation can challenges to its outcomes be identified and met by those communities effected and others in solidarity with them (Howard and Vajda 2017). The human rights agenda therefore has limited capacity due to its intrinsic incorporation of capitalist neoliberal norms that aim to deliver equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcome for all. Further, the framing of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers as having a right not to suffer ill-treatment (akin to other excluded peoples) does not acknowledge or embrace the human right to flourish, but instead places them in the context of negative rights that simply reiterates their apparent vulnerability and need for protection (Badiou 2001; Raymen 2019). Further, it arguably requires them to show adaptability and individual drive through resilience in their abject circumstances, which in itself simply requires Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers to conform to the neoliberal capitalist responsibilisation of people for their own ills.

The dominance of the human rights agenda within the European Union has meant that an uncritical acceptance of its approach to racism has been embraced by national policies for Roma', Gypsies', and

Travellers' inclusion (Kóczé 2018; Yildiz and De Genova 2018). This has meant that support for those communities within nation-states has increasingly been framed by this context, and hence the language of research, reports, and policy has pursued the aggregation of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers, relying on an uncritical perspective that has failed to acknowledge the variable experiences of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers or what their equality within the European Union would look like (Howard and Vajda, 2017). Within neoliberal capitalism this makes sense for governments looking to reduce costs to public services and the multiple agencies whom social services are outsourced to (Schwarcz 2012). The apparently inclusive approach of late modern social policy in the UK that purports to aim for universal human rights, as to date informed by EU policy (though not post-Brexit), does not operate in a vacuum but rather also functions within the parameters of market ideology. Those outside public services, such as civil society organisations, must bid and lobby for resources, in competition with private companies, to support the most marginalised in society. Public authorities likewise must bid for resources and account for them based on fiscal capacities, rather than human need. Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers lack the fiscal or social capital to compete in this environment, as do their representative organisations (Kóczé and Rövid 2012).

The hyper-competitive nature of bidding for resources from the public sector and private companies pitches Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller support organisations against each other to access the funds they need to exist and thrive. They therefore draw on any social capital available to them to retain their organisational advantage. Unfortunately, this means vying for position, lobbying interested parties, and engaging with socially powerful issues that attract attention and funding. This has meant the inclusion of Roma within the remit of Gypsy and Traveller support organisations and the use of ethnicity as the defining feature of Gypsy and Traveller identity in order to access funds to tackle racism in alignment with the European Union model. This myopic approach to Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller identity augments the hierarchy of Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller legitimacy. Further, Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller support organisations find themselves having to accede to neoliberal capitalist norms of competitive individualism. The complex quagmire of public service delivery in the UK that employs managerialist notions and language of multi-agency, streamlined, 'joined up' approaches to justify providing minimal resources has resulted in a heady mix of private, civil society, and public agencies competing for position to act as the voice of the marginalised (Simmonds 2019). The pursuit to the bottom that ensues, as Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller support organisations attempt to gain funds to help their communities, means that they must engage in the racialised discourse of vulnerability to represent Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers. In order to access funding, they need to evidence that Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers are the most hard-done-by of the marginalised. This dreadful competition, notwithstanding its capacity to give voice to the marginalisation that Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers do experience, legitimises the focus of agencies on Roma', Gypsies', and Travellers' trials rather than their triumphs.

The accretion of identities of Gypsies, Travellers, and Roma has failed to recognise or acknowledge Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller diversity and specifically their racialized identities. Here, it is important to acknowledge the fight that Roma and many Gypsies and Travellers in the UK have had for recognition of their ethnicity in law. However, despite this Roma', Gypsies', and Travellers' inclusion within public policy and practice has largely been presentational rather than reality, as evidenced in the reports and papers written about them and discussed above. Further, caution should be exerted, and racism scrutinised as

Cunneen notes (2019, 13), ‘race itself becomes solidified as a category in which people, in many cases, from heterogeneous backgrounds, can be captured and named’ for the purposes of control agencies (see also van Baar 2011).

Conclusion

In this article I have endeavoured to consider the specific contemporary circumstances of Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in the UK in order to elucidate how racializing processes have impacted their social exclusion. Specifically, I have drawn out the ways in which Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers have been framed by legislation and policy in the UK, and subsequently in reports on their inclusion. Despite the differences between the variable groups of people brought together under the moniker of ‘Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers’, they have increasingly been drawn as one community of difference within a racialized discourse that is specifically problematic in two ways. First, it implies homogeneity of cultures, experiences, and needs amongst those people and associates them with vulnerability. Statistical devices used to argue for Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller inclusion in the UK therefore actually fail to acknowledge their unique particularities and consequently augment a dialogue of difference that problematizes all Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers. Second, some Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, who are not recognised legislatively as ethnic groups, are excluded from inclusionary practice, policy, and discussion. They consequently lose legitimacy and the existing hierarchy of authenticity applied to, and between, Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers in the UK is exacerbated.

The article has argued that a critical criminological approach to research in this area is useful as it allows for an appreciation of the role of neoliberal capitalism in creating the contemporary conditions within which racism and prejudice are manipulated in contemporary society to re-racialise Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers. By examining how neoliberal capitalist norms have played out for Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers, it is possible to see how apparently inclusive policy and reporting has simply re-played existing racist assumptions about those communities. As such, neoliberal capitalist needs have been met that require cost reductions in delivery of public services and responsibilisation of marginalised communities. The assumption that neoliberal capitalism provides the only effective mechanism for delivery of an equal society is embedded within European Union notions of human rights and delivery of services to marginalised peoples. Few studies consider or critique this perspective as to do so implies a lack of recognition of the need for identity politics. However, this article would suggest that alternately a critical appraisal of political economy is essential to address issues of identity, and particularly racism. Roma, Gypsies, and Travellers have been grouped together as one community of difference in a way that neither meets their needs, nor represents them in contemporary society. The racism embedded within this process is hidden by notions of inclusivity and solidarity that have been framed and delivered via white privilege within the context of neoliberal capitalism. Only Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History month, supported by UK governments since 2008, may be the exception to the rule here, by effectively providing space for solidarity between all Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller communities.

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