Outsider Status, and Racialised Habitus: The Experiences of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Students in Higher Education

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the university experiences of 13 students from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) communities in England and Scotland. Using conceptual tools, informed by the work of Bourdieu, such as racialised habitus and racialised cultural capital, as well as Elias's work on established-outsider figurations we show that GRT students are 'racialised' outsiders in university established white habitus, with students experiencing the devaluing of their cultural capital including anti-Gypsy and anti-Roma rhetoric within university settings. Moreover, a destabilised habitus was evident, for some, who experienced 'cultural dissonance' between community and university expectations as well as feelings of 'not being good enough'. This was compounded by the racialised controlling images they encountered, resulting in hyper-vigilance about the sharing of their ethnic identity. For some, this led to painfully 'fragmented selves' which was exacerbated by a lack of support from universities and invisibility within institutional established white habitus.

Introduction

Widening participation in higher education in the United Kingdom (UK) has been on the policy agenda for many years, with the higher education sector spending £248m on widening participation initiatives in 2017-18 (Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020). However, this policy and higher education sector focus has not engaged, in any meaningful way, with increasing university access and participation for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities, with these groups often remaining invisible in policy discussions as well as in university Access and Participation Plans (Atherton, 2020). This invisibility and lack of concern, in relation to outcomes and life chances, was highlighted in the 2019 report by the Women and Equalities Committee where they conclude that GRT communities have been 'comprehensively failed' by UK policy makers.

It has been estimated that, in the UK, there may be, depending on counting criteria, around 100,000 to 300,000 people who identify as Gypsy/Travellers and around 200,000 to 300,000 Roma, with around 40% being under the age of 20 years old (Women and Equalities Committee, 2019; Acton et al., 2016). Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers, who are recognised as ethnic minority groups under the UK Equality Act (2010), are under-represented in higher education in the UK (Mulcahy et al., 2017) with some estimating approximately 200 members of these diverse communities in university at any one time (Greenfields, 2019). There are numerous reasons that have been put forward for this under-representation, including a lack of policy focus and institutional responses, an emphasis on vocational work and jobs within the communities, fear of assimilation and loss of culture, poor school experiences, the incompatibility of nomadic lifestyles with education, financial worries about the cost of education, and fear of discrimination, hostility, and racism (Mulcahy et al., 2017; Forster and Gallagher, 2020). An important factor for this paper is the long history of stigmatisation, dehumanisation, marginalisation and hostility towards GRT communities both in the UK and in Europe (Powell, 2008; 2016; Bhopal & Myers, 2008). This discrimination, othering and attributed outsider status has been resistance to change (Powell, 2008; Powell and Lever, 2017) and has been called in the UK 'the last acceptable form of racism' (Traveller Movement, 2017); being insidious and infiltrating all parts of society including the public psyche (Bhopal & Myers, 2008).

There is, however, limited literature on the experiences of those students, from GRT communities, who decided that university 'was for them'. What is available highlights a lack of understanding within institutions and from staff about GRT cultures, issues in reconciling home and university life, worries about finances as well as experiences of antiGypsy and antiRoma rhetoric (Mulcahy et al., 2017; Forster and Gallagher, 2020). In this paper, we utilise Bourdieu's tools of habitus, and cultural capital, including concepts such as racialised and white habitus as well as Elias's work on established-outsider figurations to examine how students from GRT communities negotiated the field of higher education and the impact of their racialised 'outsider' status on their aspirations and experiences of 'fitting in' to the established white habitus of universities.

Established-Outsider Status, Racialised Habitus and Cultural Capital

Habitus, for Bourdieu (1977; 2002) is a product of history which influences the present and is defined as a set of internalised and embodied dispositions, both collective and individual, which are generated by a group's social class experiences and position in society organising what you do, what you think you can do and how you understand, explain, or 'misrecognise' what you do. However, Bourdieu's focus, in relation to both habitus and cultural capital, is primarily on social class and whilst this is relevant to GRT communities, it does not fully

explain the long-term group stigmatisation and outsider positioning of these communities. Elias's work on the social habitus and established-outsider figurations, however, highlights the importance of exploring relationships between groups who are established and those who are positioned as outsiders and argues that these relationships are characterised by the central role of power and power ratio differentials. This results in those who are positioned as outsiders (for example, GRT communities), in relation to the established (non GRT communities), being assigned stigmatised and inferior marginal status regardless of economic status (Cretan & Powell, 2018). Power differentials are, therefore, key and 'one group can effectively stigmatize another only as long as it is well established in positions of power from which the stigmatized group is excluded' (Elias and Scotson, 1994, p.xx). This 'power inferiority' is then conflated with 'human inferiority' (Elias and Scotson, 1994) in 'established' collective habitus resulting in disidentification processes where the dominant mainstream community views itself as superior and avoids, rejects or ignores the 'imagined' other or outsider, who is represented as 'deviant, lazy, criminal, uncivilized and inferior' (Powell, 2016, p.141). This long-term outsider status and the devaluing of GRT communities is apparent across all areas of mainstream society and often manifests itself in stigmatising group stereotypes or controlling images of inferiority that are projected upon the imagined other (Collins, 1990; Bhopal & Myers, 2008; Okely, 2014). In turn, Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers in the face of such hostility, social exclusion, and pressures to conform, may avoid the apparatus of established mainstream society, for example higher education institutions (Levinson, 2007) developing strong 'we-image' identifications of what it is to be a Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller (Powell, 2016). These processes of group stigmatisation and outsider positioning can, thus, result in collective and individual habitus formation that education is 'not for us', which is further reinforced by the lack of focus on or indifference to increasing participation and access for these groups from the established i.e. policy-makers and higher education institutions. This has potential impacts on those members of the GRT community who do attend university, which can lead to what Bourdieu calls hysteresis or conflicts between the habitus, which was generated through socialisation processes including strong 'we-image' ideas of what it is to be a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller, shared outsider positioning (they-image), shared cultural context and shared position in society, with these new university experiences.

Moreover, GRT communities are not only positioned as outsiders to the established but are positioned as 'racialised' or 'ethnicised' outsiders. Ethnicised or racialised habitus explores how durable ethno-racialised attitudes, norms and behaviours, which privilege whiteness including white cultural norms and white moral standards, uphold power structures such as racial inequality, racialised hegemonic discourses and racialised embodied cognitive schemas, constraining opportunities (Perry, 2012; Cui, 2016; Singh, 2021; Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Bonilla-Silva et al., (2006, p.249), for example, have shown how residential and social segregation between white and black communities in the USA strengthens 'white habitus', which is normalised, 'established' and taken for granted, creating a 'vigilant distance from black others'.   This is also of relevance to GRT communities in UK and Europe where residential and social segregation (Greenfields & Smith, 2010; Silver & Danielowski, 2019) is a feature of the unequal power ratio figurations between GRT and   non GRT communities. These figurative relationships, in turn, are underpinned by 'white habitus' with dominant and established constructions of whiteness, which are the 'location of structural advantage' being 'a set of practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed' (Frankenberg, 1993, p.1), marginalising and racializing both Roma, and British/Irish Travellers and Gypsies. The latter being constructed as 'outsiders' to 'established' whiteness; they are not 'white enough [nor] an acceptable shade of whiteness' (Bhopal, 2011, p.327; Bhopal & Myers, 2008; Bhopal, 2018).

Wray (2006, p.23) has called racialised and tainted white groups 'stigmatypes' who mark the boundary of acceptable, normalised, established and 'civilised' whiteness. Thus, outsider and ethno-racialised habitus in tandem with 'bodily as well as cultural markers of difference' (Holloway, 2005, p.364) mark out GRT communities as outsiders or 'strangers…who do not fit the cognitive, moral, or aesthetic map of the [established white 'civilised'] world' (Bauman, 1997, p.18; Bhopal & Myers, 2008).

The concept of 'white habitus' (Bonilla-Silva, 2003) has also been applied to university settings with universities, themselves, being structured by long term historical power relations and 'civilising processes' which maintain 'established' whiteness and the dominant or established groups position in society, privileging particular types of white middle class cultural capital whilst marginalising, stigmatising and devaluing other forms. This racialised organisational habitus (Horvat & Antonio, 1999) and 'epistemic whiteness' (Mills, 2007; Keval, 2021, Dyer, 1997) of western universities, in turn, supports white privileging 'civilising' pedagogy, policy and university spaces marking out racialised bodies as being "out of place" (Puwar 2004, p. 8). University institutional habitus (Perry, 2012; McDonough, 1997; Reay, Crozier, and Clayton, 2010; Ahmed, 2012) thus result in invisible and inherent doxas of who is an acceptable established student, what is included in the curriculum and how they are represented, whose cultural capital is valued and whose is seen as 'deficit'. How university habitus constructs 'who is an established student' and who is an outsider though 'civilising processes' (Elias, 2000) of 'concealed' and 'established' whiteness can result in the inclusion and exclusion of groups, the production and reproduction of racialised and classed established-outsider figurations, and as a result reproduce educational and societal inequities (McDonald & Wingfield, 2009; Horvat and Antonio, 1999).

Western educational institutions established 'white habitus' thus impacts on the identities and experiences of minority students and Cartwright (2022) shows how racialised cultural capital was utilised by black students in the US; being the ability to appear 'palatable' and 'non-threatening' to white admissions tutors which enabled the students to 'work their identity' (Thornhill, 2015, p.469) to fit educational institutions white habitus and expectations. Whilst other theorists in the US and UK have focused on black cultural capital and have shown that middle class black parents and students cultivate 'dominant cultural capital', which is associated with the white middle class, as a strategy to progress through higher education (Rollock et al., 2015; Barnard, 2020; Wallace, 2017). This has also been shown to be the case for many white GRT students in schools in the UK (Derrington, 2007) who 'play white' to fit into acceptable and established notions of white cultural capital and as a result downplay their own cultural traditions and identity. However, as Carter (2003, p.137) states 'cultural capital is context-specific and its currency varies across different social spaces, where struggles for legitimation and power exist'. Low-income young black people in Carter's study exhibited what she calls, non-dominant cultural capital, defined as those cultural skills, tastes and knowledge, which are prized within their particular 'we-group' social group or field. Moreover, Yosso (2005, p.75) critiques traditional views of [white] educational cultural capital which often reflect 'deficit thinking' or what Elias (1994, p.92) would term ' rejecting gossip', positioning students of colour as coming to education with 'cultural deficiencies'. She highlights how students bring with them, to the field of education, cultural wealth including cultural capital such as aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital. This type of 'non-dominant' cultural capital or cultural wealth, however, is often at

odds with the dominant established white habitus and white cultural capital 'civilising processes' and expectations of universities.

Methods and Materials

Narrative interviews were utilised to explore the higher education experiences of the participants (Allen, 2017). The interviews started with an open question of 'please tell me about your experiences of higher education'. The interviews lasted 45 minutes to 2 hours. The interviews were undertaken from May 2021 to December 2021, and all took place online through Teams because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thirteen participants from GRT communities took part in the research and it has been suggested that in cases where populations may be difficult to access, for example in the case of Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers where there are small numbers attending university, that between six and twelve interviews will reach data saturation point (Morse, 2000; Guest et al., 2006; Adler and Adler, 2012). Participants were recruited through an email flyer which was sent to all student email accounts in one university in London. These were sent out twice once in the academic year 2020-21 and again in the academic year 2021-2022 to access students who had just started university in 2021. From these emails, nine students, who met the inclusion criteria of being from GRT communities, contacted the team and five were interviewed. The other four students, after receiving the information sheet, did not respond to further emails. Contacts were then made with Roma and Gypsy/Traveller community groups in the UK and through a process of snowball sampling another eight students were interviewed across England and Scotland. Three of the students attended Russell Group universities whilst ten attended post 1992 universities: with students from nine universities taking part. Three of the students were currently PhD students or had completed their PhD, whilst ten participants were undergraduate students across all three years of study. All the participants, bar one, were the first member of their family, including their extended family, to have attended university. The participants ages, ethnicities, gender, and pseudonyms are represented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample Demographics

Pseudonym	Ethnicity as described by student	Gender as described by student	University Type	Age
Olivia	Romany Traveller	Female	Post 1992	21
Mollie	Romany Gypsy	Female	Post 1992	23
Thomas	Romany Gypsy	Male	Post 1992	57
Mia	Romany Traveller	Female	Post 1992	55
John	Romany Gypsy	Male	Post 1992	39
Ava	Romany Gypsy	Female	Russell Group	24
Viola	Roma	Female	Post 1992	23
Stefan	Roma	Male	Post 1992	25
Mala	Roma	Female	Post 1992	25
Maria	Roma	Female	Russell Group	37
Loiza	Roma	Male	Russell Group	32
Tsura	Roma	Female	Post 1992	20
Samantha	Traveller	Female	Post 1992	22

NVivo 20 was used to analyse the unstructured qualitative data as it has benefits in relation to managing data and ideas as well as visualising data (Jackson and Bazeley, 2019). First, the

interviews were read several times to get an overall feel for the narratives. Through this process it was apparent that outsider positions, discrimination and racialised identities were common themes across all interviews. Second, the texts were uploaded into NVivo, and codes generated for the themes identified in the read through as well as codes generated deductively using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, destabilised habitus, cultural capital as well as Elias' work on established-outsider figurations as over-arching structures. Third, through a process of open-coding of each line the interviews were inductively analysed again to identify patterns in the data that were outside of the theoretical framework. Lastly, these preliminary codes were then combined into four overarching themes.

Moreover, we explored documentary data from 50 university websites including Access and Participation Plans, Student Union groups and events to explore the extent to which Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers were represented. This occurred during the months of May and June 2021, as the June of each year is designated Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller history month. This was undertaken to give insight into what is seen as important or of value for institutions such as universities. Ethical approval was obtained from the primary researcher's institution (UREC/20.4.5.10).

Results

In the section below we discuss the four themes that arose from our analysis of the data with verbatim quotations to illustrate responses.

Higher Education as Personal Possibility: Racialised Outsider Habitus and Feeling 'Not Good Enough'

Experiences of exclusion, discrimination, and constrained choices in life, resulting from the participants long-term social and racialised outsider positioning in society, were apparent in many of the narratives. These experiences, which started early in life, shaped the participant's habitus, influencing and problematising higher education aspirations as a personal possibility. Maria, who was just completing her degree at a Russell Group university, stated:

> In the Czech Republic throughout my whole education, they were telling me, you are not good enough. The government tells you, society tells you, your parents tell you…. get a job, that's fine for you. This is as high as you can get. I don't think she [mother] would ever dared think that I could do things. She would never say you will be a doctor, or you can do this or that. It was not expected of us as Roma. Because it's impossible in Czech Republic, to make it as a doctor as a Roma. There's just so much in the way and I think we believe those messages without realising, unconsciously, about our ability.

Reflexivity was apparent, locating a lack of possibilities and opportunities within unequal and racialised power structures and established-outsider figurative relations within society, which positioned GRT communities as stigmatised others and which were often internalised by participants, as them 'not being good enough'. Elias (1994) highlights how stigmatisation and the corresponding 'they-image' of being associated with an outsider group or status becomes internalised as part of a person's individual personality structure (the 'I' image) with those who are positioned as outsiders being more likely to experience personal shame and view themselves as inferior and of lessor worth (Quilley & Loyal, 2004). This shame, is in turn, reinforced by 'rejecting gossip' towards outsiders who are positioned, in the case of education, as not have the 'right' cultural capital or 'not being bright enough' (Yosso, 2005). This symbolically violent internalised oppression was highlighted by Maria who stated that there is

a 'popular' saying 'where Roma people step, the grass becomes dark, it is a saying in our own community because we look at the symptoms, we are not looking at where it came from'. Other research has also found similar with Roma blaming themselves for not taking up education opportunities as opposed to locating the lack of opportunities in antiRoma racialised structures and established-outsider figurations within society (Gezgin, and Greenfields, 2017). Stefan, who was half-way through his degree at a post 1992 institution, reiterated some of these points and highlighted that there was little point in aspiring to go to university as discriminatory practices in his home country, would ensure that you would not be able to get a job because 'they find out you are Roma and that is it, no job'.

Mia, a British Romany Gypsy, stated that her lack of schooling impacted on her higher education aspirations as 'we were taken out a lot for field work from March, then we'd go back in September. I missed a hell of a lot of schoolwork'. Moreover, like Maria above, an outsider racialised habitus was evident which stigmatised GRT communities with Mia stating that 'Travellers don't think they can do education, they think that they are not clever enough to go to University'. These feelings of 'not being good enough' resulted in some students experiencing extreme distress and feeling out of their depth as they encountered a new field, the field of higher education, which privileged established white cultural capital. Ava, a Romany Gypsy, aged 22 explained:

> I think I just felt out of my depth and lacking in confidence….. I think I felt inferior to them and that they were cleverer than I was, and …..a bit of a fraud that I shouldn't be there and that come the assignments I would be chucked out because they would find out that I was not up to it.

Ava linked these feelings of 'not being good enough' to her 'lacking' previous experiences which prepare you for university including success at school and it has been suggested that for those first-generation students who transition seamlessly to the field of higher education, secondary school may be the arena where the 'established' academic dispositions needed for higher education are acquired (Lehmann, 2009). This appeared to be the case in our study and those students, who had completed schooling and thus had acquired established 'white' educational cultural capital, were less likely to experience self-doubt about their educational abilities. For example, Tsura, who attended a highly competitive college where about 95% of students went to university, stated that although she was overwhelmed by the amount of work in the first year, she felt prepared by her school to identify strategies to help her manage the workload. For many others, however, secondary school attendance may have been patchy with the curriculum being seen as irrelevant; reinforcing ideas that they 'were not [educationally] good enough' or suited. These previous experiences of education not only impacted on higher education as a personal possibility but also meant that, for many, acquisition of 'established white' higher education dispositions, skills and cultural capital had to be acquired, quickly, over the course of the first year of university contributing further to feelings of self-doubt and hysteresis in relation to habitus (Friedman, 2016).

Cultural Dissonance: University and Community Expectations

Having to negotiate family and community expectations of what it was 'to be a Gypsy or to be Roma' and trying to reconcile these with going to university was also a significant challenge for some and Derrington (2007) has previously shown that 'cultural dissonance' between these expectations were prominent features in Gypsy and Traveller experiences of school. Olivia explained that her extended family were 'not proud of me going to Uni'; with this conflict

between family expectations and university resulting in some of her extended family no longer speaking to her. This fear was described by Ava who stated that her family were worried that university would change her and that she would reject her culture and family, becoming 'different from them, like not a Gypsy anymore but a Gadjo (non-Gypsy)'. Whilst Mia highlighted that more 'traditional' Travellers may 'look at people differently if they went to university' because 'it was not something that Travellers do'. The maintenance of a strong family and community 'we-group' identity, therefore, which emphasised solidarity, what was appropriate for members of their community, the continuation of culture and feared assimilation and loss of identity, was a principal factor, for some students, influencing levels of community and family support throughout their university experiences. These reservations around engagement with the established whiteness of universities are understandable given the outsider positioning of GRT communities in the UK and Europe and their experiences of the established white habitus of policy and legislative 'civilising processes', such as the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (UK Parliament, 2022), which often aim to assimilate and 'criminalise' their communities.

Being pulled between these contrasting fields (family, individual and university expectations) led, for some students, to a destabilised habitus, which materialised in repeated verbalisations of 'wanting to leave' or 'meltdowns'. Those students who did not have the support of their family or community, in relation to university study, often stated that they would be encouraged to 'quit and get a job' if emotional support was asked for. Olivia, a 21-year-old English Traveller described how not having familial understanding and support about university meant that she often felt alone and repeatedly questioned her choices. She stated:

> Why am I doing this to myself , I'm just going to go and leave. I'm just going to go to work, you know what is expected of me. I don't want to do this anymore. Once I get a job I will leave.

However, there was contradictions within Olivia's narrative, which is indicative of a destabilised habitus, and after getting a job she was still studying. The same was the case with Mollie who discussed wanting to get pregnant and leave because of family expectations but at the same time discussed her ambitions after qualifying from her course.

Where family support was not forthcoming, participants identified the importance of understanding and support from the university. Mollie, a Romany Gypsy aged 23, stated:

> I have meltdowns every year saying I can't do it because I think I cannot do it and I think we all do. But they (the lecturers) would push me, they won't let me quit… they're like, no, we're not accepting it. I mean, they've really (lecturers) ingrained into me that I can do it and that it doesn't matter that I was like a Gypsy.

These 'meltdowns' meant that Mollie had to take a year out of university to 'find herself', 'learn self-control' and 'understand things better'.

Many students, however, did have family and community support and highlighted it as source of strength which enabled them to negotiate their university experiences more easily. These families tended to be ones whose children had accessed secondary school and where education was seen as a priority and a personal possibility. Thomas, a 55-year-old Romany Gypsy who was studying for a PhD after retiring from being a headteacher, stated 'I went to a grammar school and the expectation of the grammar school was you went to University'. Coupled with

this, Thomas's family, who were active in local authority politics, encouraged him to go to university even though they had not been themselves. This type of narrative was also common amongst many of the younger Roma students who spoke about how their families wanted them to be educated because they, themselves, had been denied that opportunity. For example, Stefan, who was 25, stated: 'It was my father's dream for me to attend University…. he wanted better for me'. Whilst Tsura, a 20-year-old Roma student explained how her parents played a big part in her applying for university and had moved to the UK so that she could attend university. She stated, 'for me not to do education they would think why did we come'. However, even amongst some of these participants, ideas of what university was like and whether it was appropriate for their children resulted in some families being fearful; with this influencing which universities some of the participants could apply to. Tsura stated:

> If a Gypsy person gets accepted to Cambridge and they live in Manchester than their family is not going to like it as they will have to move. They are scared of university; they have never been nor their parents, so they don't understand it. It's like they see it on TV….. like drinking and drugs……they think their children will do those things. I know my other family members would judge my family for letting me go that far.

Community and family expectations, therefore, influenced university choices and experiences of university for some students, as the new field of higher education often challenged group habitus of what it was to be a member of the GRT communities with education being seen as 'something we don't do' or 'something to be fearful of'. This resulted in some students experiencing 'double binds' where they struggled to 'fit in' at university and at the same time struggled with 'fitting in' at home and in their community. However, there was variation in the narratives with John stating that his brother followed a more traditional nomadic lifestyle whilst he had gone to university with his mum 'just wanting us to do whatever made us happy'. Lehmann (2014) has argued that a destabilised habitus can have several results including students distancing themselves from their family and community, dissociating themselves from the university or being able to negotiate, successfully, new fields in relation to both community/family and university demands. This was the case in our study and some students were able to negotiate the transition and the competing demands of home/community and university life well; these tended to be students who had families that supported their university aspirations and as a result had also attended school with less cultural dissonance between family and education habitus (Derrington, 2007). However, for others it was evident that they had distanced themselves from their community to fulfil their university ambitions including moving away both geographically and emotionally. Whilst, for other students a keyway to survive university and maintain family relationships was to keep away from the university other than for lectures. This meant that many of the students kept their home and university very separate, either living at home or living off campus.

Working of Identity, Outsider Racialised Status and Devalued Cultural Capital

So, what did Mollie mean above by 'understand things better', 'learn self-control', and 'that it doesn't matter that I was like a Gypsy'. Here she is referring to dominant racialised discourses and controlling images about Gypsies, Roma and Travellers within society which represent them as outsiders to established normative whiteness. This symbolically violent antiGypsism further reinforced ideas that education and university, with their established white habitus, may not be a place for them and resulted in some students not sharing their ethnicity, with the university and their fellow students, to negotiate a smoother journey. These students felt that disclosing their identity left them open to antiGypsy and antiRoma rhetoric which would mark them out as outsiders at university. This was summed up by Ava who stated, 'if I

told the University I was a Gypsy they would not have let me in'. Whilst Mia spoke about what was the point in declaring your ethnicity to the university as when you 'declare it you'll get nowhere…and people will treat you differently'. She stated further that if the university 'had known that I was a Gypsy my application would have gone in the bin'.

Moreover, antiGypsy and antiRoma discourses was evident in all the participants narratives, and they spoke about the stereotypes which they encountered on a day-to-day basis about the GRT communities, which devalued their cultural capital and marked them out as particular types of 'imaginary' deviant, aggressive and deficit people. Many of these discourses were internalised and some students spoke about 'feeling ashamed', 'not good enough' or that if they told people their ethnicity 'I would just be looked at like I was nothing'. This led to Ava denying her heritage when asked by a student after a lecture on Gypsy culture and heritage. She stated:

> [A] very smug entitled rich boy came up to me and said 'you are a Gypsy aren't you' in front of everyone. He had this nasty sneering look on his face to embarrass me and I said, 'no I am not'. There was something in the way that he asked it that was really mocking and humiliating.

Scott (1985) has previously highlighted that invisible or flexible identities are the 'weapons of the weak' and non-sharing of ethnicity or what has been called 'passing' as non-Gypsy or 'playing white' has been shown to be a response to hostile oppressive environments (Liegeois, 1998; Derrington and Kendall, 2004; Derrington, 2007) including unequal power ratios between groups. This down-playing of identity was also apparent in the way that some students dressed and represented themselves. Mollie stated:

> I was worried that everyone would find out I was a Traveller, I was not dressed like them so I changed the way I dressed at University so not take my handbags in or wear my jewellery, anything that would identify me as a Traveller. I was trying to hide it. I was also like, oh yeah, I like raving and partying just like you do trying to fit in so that they would not know.

Research on black cultural capital is helpful here in understanding how racialised controlling images and stereotypes impact on the university experiences of ethnic minority students. Rollock et al. (2011) has shown how middle-class black Caribbean students utilised strategies, which downplayed embodied cultural capital which was associated with blackness, to be accepted in schools dominated by middle-class whiteness. This 'working of identity' can be seen in the examples above where students made invisible any markers or cultural codes that would identify them as being from the GRT community. This denial, fear of being found out and playing down of ethnicity was experienced, by many, as emotionally traumatic and led to a fragmented destabilised habitus. However, this emotional work was also of note for those students who did share their identity and who had to negotiate the stereotypes imposed upon them through established white privileging discourses which positioned them as inferior outsiders. Mala, a 25-year-old Roma student, explains:

> It is exhausting telling people that you are a Gypsy they have all these pre-conceived ideas and what I find is that I am constantly having to excuse myself so yes I am Gypsy but I am not a thief or a beggar…I don't want people to think differently of me when they know that I am Gypsy – that they will believe that this is what I am and what my family are, the stereotypes, so I have a little

> speech that I say whenever I tell someone that I am a Gypsy, I am not this or
> that and most people in my community are not like that either… it is exhausting.

Whilst Loiza, a 32-year Roma student said that often when you tell someone you are Roma they will say 'you are not like them….like a typical Roma because I am at University and doing a PhD – they have this idea of what typical Roma is and it is bad'. Discriminatory stereotypes and representations of Gypsy, Roma and Travellers as well as unequal power ratios within established-outsider figurative relations, which depicted GRT communities as 'they' or 'them', thus shaped how students from these communities engaged with the university itself and the students within the university. Attempts to resist anti-Gypsy and anti-Roma racial micro-aggressions were exhausting for many and were also experienced as highly emotional and shameful, impacting their identity. This is because shame, as a key component of oppression, outsider status, and social control (hooks, 2001; 2002; Elias, 2000), can legitimatise and make invisible social injustice and power relations; impacting the development of self (I-image) with inequality being misrecognised and internalised as individual or group inferiority (Young, 1990; Elias & Scotson, 1994). Loiza spoke about how his experiences as Roma 'shapes you as an individual and causes physical pain. This influenced my personality – it caused anxiety and impacted my self-confidence'. This idea of emotional pain and identity issues was evident in many of the other narratives which manifested itself in 'fragmented selves' . Mala, a 25-year-old Roma student said:

> Denying what you are will just cause more pain, more struggle. I was ashamed
> to be who I am. Now I am two people, like the person that goes to University
> who is one person – not a Gypsy. And then when you come home, you're a
> completely different person – you are Gypsy. So, I am two people.

Institutional White Habitus: Outsiders in Established White University Spaces, Curriculum and Policies

As Puwar (2004, p.8) states 'social spaces are not blank and open for any body to occupy', with some bodies being constructed as 'out of place'. How and to what extent groups are represented within social spaces such as universities reflects the institutional established white habitus of universities including power-laden messages of what is seen as worthy, who should be there, who is of value and what is the taken for granted norm within university settings. Loiza stated that 'Roma are not visible at University, there is nothing to do with Roma. To the university, Roma don't exist'. This invisibility within the established white habitus of universities, which reinforced outsider status of GRT students, was also mentioned by Thomas who stated that in his many years of education he had never seen anything mentioned within the university space about students being from the GRT community. Previous research on GRT communities has also highlighted a lack of representation of these communities across the higher education academy including University Access and Participation plans as well as university spaces (Atherton, 2020; Forster and Gallagher, 2020). Our analysis of 50 university websites during Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller history month in June 2021 found only 3 universities mentioned this celebration. Moreover, even though the Office for Students identifies GRT students as an underrepresented group in universities, our findings replicate those of Atherton (2020) with only 15 universities specifically mentioning these groups in their University Access and Participation plans including only 5 outlining how they would

specifically improve participation and retention. These specific activities tended to be 'superficial' and did not challenge the established white habitus of universities which positions GRT communities as outsiders. As Mirza (2018, p.7) states in relation to people of colour 'by adopting a "colour-blind" and "complacent" bureaucratic approach, [universities] can claim to be doing something, while doing nothing at all to change the status quo'.

Students also highlighted a lack of specific student union societies for Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers and this was attributed to the small number of students from GRT communities in universities and hence not being able to gather enough people together to start one. However, there was a lack of support and understanding from the Student Union about this difficulty with one student describing how she had 'hit a brick wall' in her discussions with them with the 'Student Union just not being interested'. Fears were also expressed that if there was a Student Union GRT group, leading to increased visibility, this would mean that they would be 'open to attack'. Viola stated 'it is a risk, putting this kind of stuff out there you need to be brave to identify as a Roma – to put yourself out there' whilst Olivia said:

> I do feel like that if there is a society and we do a meeting in the university, you will get people like the xxxxx group who might come in to target us, because obviously we don't have that the racial protection that other groups may have.

Student Union societies such as the Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) society were also identified as not having an appreciation of GRT experiences or an understanding of who the GRT community were (Forster and Gallagher, 2020). Loiza stated that the BAME society:

> Don't know that Roma are associated under that umbrella…so we are not included. Many Roma will identify as white and some as non-white and we have a history of discrimination and oppression which still exists today, but it is not really focused upon as being part of the label BAME. I did go to the BAME groups and explained that I was Roma, to explain why I'm there. I'm not sure they know what that means.

This lack of visibility and understanding was also the case in relation to university anti-racist policies and students felt that universities did not do enough to challenge 'offensive comments and represent the community in a non-stereotypical way' contributing to universities being 'unsafe places' for GRT communities. Thomas highlighted how anti-racist policies including university policies did not explicitly state that GRT communities were included within these policies and that this exclusion gave 'permission to people to make negative comments [because]… if the university is not challenging it, it continues'. Whilst John described an incident where numerous racist comments about Gypsies occurred in lectures and 'no-one batted an eyelid none of them thought it was anything that needed to be followed up on'. This lack of response from university staff resulted in John having to complain 'because it wasn't about the boy anymore but about the way they [university} handled it, that they didn't think it was an issue'. The response from the university was ' a sudden big…reactionary…. investigation' and 'I was made to feel like I was the trouble maker' when 'all I wanted was someone to say it was not acceptable'. Similarly, Mollie stated that negative comments about GRT communities are often not seen 'as racist because they don't see us as a race'. Thus, within established white institutional habitus and doxa of universities GRT students were outsiders to university anti-racist and equality policies'; they were 'bodies out of place' (Puwar; 2004) in the construction of anti-racist policies. Bhopal (2011) found similar in her

research on GRT students in schools and showed that racist behaviour was not recognised nor taken seriously when it was directed at Gypsies and Travellers. As Loiza stated in relation to universities, 'responsible institutions would do something about this, they would see the situation of Roma and Gypsies and see that they have a responsibility to do something about the stereotypes and the inequality'. Hence institutional white habitus, in relation to the perception of who is an established student and who is not a student as well as who is valued and who is not valued, positioned GRT students as outsiders or bodies out place in the established white habitus of the university environment and was reflected (or not) in university spaces and policies reproducing inequality through university institutional norms and practices (McDonald & Wingfield, 2009).

Whilst GRT students were often invisible in university spaces and policies, this was not the case in relation to the curriculum, where GRT communities were sometimes mentioned - as an object of study and discussion. Unfortunately, this tended to reinforce the outsider and deficit position ascribed to the communities. For example, Ava explained how in her experience Gypsies are only ever spoken about in university curriculums as either romanticised exotic 'ahistorical' characters 'with no current history' or as a social problem. She described her experience in a lecture:

> Suddenly this video on Dale Farm (evictions of Gypsies and Travellers) is shown and I knew what would happen, lots of comments that were negative, also racist and that is what happened… a discussion around criminality, not paying taxes… and I was sat there having to listen to it. The lecturer didn't do anything or address the negative comments, and I was not sure what the purpose was of showing the video.

Ava attributed this situation to the lecturer being 'out of their depth' and having no real understanding of GRT communities. This was also highlighted by Stefan who explained that lecturers sometimes highlight the stereotypical negatives without a real understanding of what has caused the issue. He stated that one lecturer discussed how 'Roma are seen as beggars, thieves and dirty' and that they do not access education but gave no contextual background to why they were represented in this way. Stefan bravely resisted this narrative and put his hand up in the lecture and said, 'I am Roma, I am here'. His reasoning for challenging this controlling image was that he 'was very scared of what the lecturer was going to say next and that could be a label on my back for the rest of the two years in the University'. Thus, the epistemic and pedagogical whiteness of universities which constructed particular students as 'outsiders' and 'deficit' contributed to taken for granted negative racialised stereotypes being reproduced, which devalued GRT cultural capital and wealth, and went unchallenged within the university setting. Moreover, it was apparent from many of the narratives that lecturers did not realise that they had members of the GRT community in their midst and thus there was a feeling amongst the research participants that they were spoken about as if they were not there or in other words as if they were 'outsiders' to the 'normal' established white university body of students. These norms and practices, which reflected institutional established white habitus including pedagogy and epistemology about 'who is a student' and 'whose knowledge is heard', resulted in a hidden curriculum (Jackson 1970), which reproduced dominant societal discourses, and power relations further stigmatising and racializing GRT communities as outsiders.

Discussion

GRT communities do not feature much in discussions about ethnicity, race, and the sociology of education. Whilst there is some literature on secondary school experiences of GRT communities in the UK this has not been extended, to the same extent, to the field of higher education. This paper contributes to this discussion by exploring how the established and taken for granted white habitus and 'civilising process' of universities, with whiteness being the 'prize or goal' (Keval, 2021, p.129), impacts on the experiences of racialised GRT students marking them out as 'bodies out of place' or outsiders in established university institutional practice, norms, policy, and spaces. Bourdieu (1990, p.64) states that 'only in imaginary experience which neutralizes the sense of social realities, does the social world take the form of a universe of possible, equally possible for any possible subject'. Higher education aspirations for many of the students in this study were constrained by broader social structures including their racialised, classed, and stigmatised social group 'social realities' which not only structured their habitus and what was expected or possible for 'someone like me' but was reflected at them through established white university institutional responses. This manifested itself in how GRT communities were represented in the curriculum as well as a lack of representation in institutional policies, anti-racist work and spaces leading to policies of 'selective' inclusion, with GRT communities invisible within university policy and practice further contributing to their perceived 'outsider' positioning. Moreover, institutional university silence on the racism directed at GRT students contributed to and thus is complicit in, racialised and outsider discourses about GRT communities remaining unchallenged in higher education spaces. This symbolically violent silence amounts to what Biehl (2005), calls 'technologies of invisibilisation' which reduce GRT students to the position of 'non-persons' in university policies and actions which are 'normalized' as part of the everyday taken for granted university [established white]'status quo' (Bourdieu, 1977).

Moreover, we show how stigmatising and racialized anti-Gypsy and Anti-Roma discourses which positioned the communities as 'other' and devalued their cultural capital impacted on some student's attempts to fit in to university often leading to fragmented identities (Friedman, 2016). As a result, GRT students were often hyper vigilant about their ethnic identity and the disclosure of their ethnicity. This was compounded, for those who did not have family support and who experienced being pulled between contrasting and conflicting fields about what it was to be Gypsy and what it was to be a Gadjo. Students, thus, had to negotiate, with little support from the university, not only controlling images which were imposed upon them but also negotiate the conflict generated through and expectations of, differing fields. This conflict, for some, led to a process of 'dual marginalisation' both in the home/setting and in the higher education setting (Danvers, 2015; Mulcahy et al., 2017). As a result, high levels of emotional work, distress, internalisation of 'not being good enough; and a destabilised habitus occurred for some students.

Understanding how power works enables us to see how traditional models of widening participation are problematic with established-outsider figurations rarely changing and established whiteness remaining as the 'civilising process' to be achieved. Widening participation, focusing on the enrolment and retention of more GRT students, is unlikely to improve experiences unless fundamental changes occur within the higher education academy; including engagement with counter narratives which aim to dismantle established university whiteness which positions groups as outsiders and privileges particular bodies, knowledge,

pedagogy, cultural capital, and cultural wealth (Warikoo, 2016; Arday & Mirza, 2018; Yosso, 2005). It is important, therefore, that as part of decolonising universities, which focuses on taking a critical approach to the reproduction of power and oppression, that universities authentically and reflexively explore how their formal and hidden curricula as well as institutional responses support racialised and outsider societal controlling images and stereotypes that are directed towards GRT communities. However, whilst universities are very apt at proudly emphasising their social justice credentials this does not often translate into meaningful action. There are numerous critiques of university responses to anti-racism (Gillborn, 2006) defined by Ahmed (2012) as 'speech-acts' as well as responses to decolonisation which highlight how the 'decolonising education' agenda has been mis-recognized, by universities, diverting attention away from an analysis of power structures, which focus on de-centring whiteness, to become superficial university responses which instead uphold established whiteness (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Arday & Mizra, 2018).

Finally, we end by emphasising that GRT communities are diverse groups and thus more research is needed to understand the range of their experiences of higher education. This could be focused upon specific groups such as Irish Travellers, Roma, and British Gypsies and Travellers; GRT students who did not complete their degree and those who decided that university was 'not for them'. Although, there was some variation in the narratives of the 13 students who took part in this study, what was common was students' experiences of racism and invisibility within university spaces. Hence there is a further need to critically explore university institutional responses, anti-racist policies, pedagogy, and curriculum including their impact on promoting racial and social class equity for GRT students to understand how the white institutional habitus of universities can constrain opportunity and reproduce inequities.

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