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Access, Agency, Assimilation:

**Exploring literacy among adult Gypsies and Travellers
in three authorities in Southern England**

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Dedication

To my brother Gerald Coubro' b. 1947 – d. 2010

And

To Michael Gavin, Irish Traveller, b. 1962 – d. 2010

Summary

This thesis explored Gypsies' and Travellers' perceptions of the value and importance of literacy to themselves and their communities. It examined the political and social factors that affected the extent and availability of literacy provision for adult Gypsies and Travellers and their level of participation. It focused on how Gypsies' and Travellers' levels of literacy impacted on their ability to engage effectively with authority. The research focused on two rural and one urban authority in the South of England but also drew on information from neighbouring authorities and Ireland.

A qualitative constructivist epistemology was adopted in which ethnography was the main research tool. The data were collected through in-depth interviews and informal conversations with Gypsies and Travellers, public officials and local politicians, a survey of adult education providers, observation of sundry national and local meetings, participant observation and analysis of the discourse and dialogue of two official forums and data from a variety of sources including television programmes and press reports.

The research found that Gypsies and Travellers attached little value to textual literacy, did not view literacy as important to economic success and did not perceive the ability to read and write as contributing to their status or self esteem. Other skills were valued more highly. These attitudes challenge dominant education and development discourses which perceive textual literacy as essential to economic achievement, self esteem and status.

The research also highlighted a vacuum in literacy and education policy and provision for adult Gypsies and Travellers who were largely invisible in post-school policy documents, even in those purporting to address equality issues. There was no targeted provision in the three authorities, only a few short term projects elsewhere and little interest among providers. Although mainstream provision was available to Gypsy and Travellers as to all adults, those who wished to learn preferred to teach themselves or be taught by friends and family.

The research drew on current theories of discourse, power and control. Primary and secondary Discourses impacted on two areas, the absence of educational opportunities for adult Gypsies and Travellers and on their communicative practices and agency. The lack of targeted literacy provision for Gypsies and Travellers was not accidental but a result of deep seated negative attitudes constructed and maintained through the secondary Discourses of dominant groups and bureaucratic institutions.

Interviews and observations revealed that language and discourse was more important to Gypsies and Travellers than the ability to read and write, particularly when communicating privately or publicly with authorities. In these contexts, their own primary discourses, learned through home and community practices, were insufficient. The Gypsies and Travellers who were formally educated and were bi-discoursal were able to operate within secondary institutional Discourses. Though others had life experiences which gave them some understanding of the Discourses of power and bureaucracy, they were not able to communicate or challenge as effectively.

The research critiques current models of literacy provision for adults. Though aspects of the models can address specific literacy requirements in specific situations, none of the models including New Literacy Studies and critical literacies, sufficiently address the need to become bi-discoursal or develop the agency to affect decisions controlling their lives. Gypsies and Travellers fear formal education will lead to loss of identity, acculturation and assimilation, but without it they may lose what they seek to preserve.

Different communities have different aspirations and face different tensions in different circumstances and each will make decisions accordingly. This research on Gypsies' and Travellers' perceptions and uses of literacy provides new insights into complex tensions and contradictions at both an empirical and theoretical level.

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I thank my supervisor Dr. John Pryor for his patience and assistance throughout the process and also for his thoughtful and insightful comments which enabled me to take my thinking one stage further.

I am deeply indebted to Michael Gavin, an Irish Traveller, to whom I have dedicated this thesis. He impressed me with his courage, his intelligence, his knowledge and his ability to reflect with generosity on a difficult and extraordinary life. Without him this thesis would not have been written.

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Acronyms

ACERT	Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and Other Travellers
AGIT	Association of Gypsies and Irish Travellers
ALBSU	Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit
ANA	Accommodation Needs Assessment
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BSA	Basic Skills Agency
CJPOA	Criminal Justice and Public Order Act
CLRAE	Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity
CSA	Caravan Sites Act
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DES	Department of Education (Ireland)
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department of Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Science
DfID	Department for International Development

DIUS	Department of Industry Universities and Skills
EFA	Education for All
EHE	Elective Home Education
EUMC	European Union Monitoring Centre
EWLP	Experimental World Literacy Programme
FGT	Friends Gypsies and Travellers
GCSE	General Certificate of Education
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GTLRC	Gypsy Traveller Law Reform Coalition
GRTHM	Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month
GTSG	Gypsy Traveller Support Group
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
HRA	Human Rights Act
IAG	Independent Advisory Group
ITM	Irish Traveller Movement
LEA	Local Education Authority
LINKs	Local Involvement Networks
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
NAEP	National Adult Education Programme
NALA	National Adult Literacy Association (Ireland)
NATT	National Association of Teachers of Travellers
NFER	National Foundation for Education Research
NIACE	National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education
NGEC	National Gypsy Education Council
NLS	New Literacy Studies
ODP	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OPM	Office for Public Management
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PGTG	Police Gypsy Traveller Group

PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
REFLECT	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
RRA	Race Relations Act
SEN	Special Educational Needs
STEP	Scottish Traveller Education Programme
TEALS	Traveller Education and Additional Language Support
TES	Traveller Education Service
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WNTF	Westborough Northshire Traveller Forum

Chapter 1. Introduction

Literacy can be a liberating process in a pluralistic, diverse and multi-dimensional post-modern society in which different values, lifestyles, religious and cultural practices are respected and welcomed but can also be perceived as an oppressive part of globalisation, the construction of normative national identity and the imposition of dominant values. My study sought to explore Gypsies' and Travellers' perceptions of the value and importance of literacy to their lives, and to assess whether available literacy provision served their needs and aspirations.

My study is based on the premise that literacy is a social practice: historically, contextually and culturally situated and framed by ideological positions. These concepts are frequently referred to as New Literacy Studies. They challenge the traditional view of literacy as a set of abstract cognitive transferable skills and argue that literacy and education are not neutral practices. Through language and literacy the social world is interpreted, constructed and reflected. Language and literacy play important roles in processes of control and domination, or change and liberation. From this perspective, the education provided for Gypsies and Travellers can be perceived as a process of acculturation and absorption into the dominant society, or as contributing to empowerment, agency and self determination. The education of Gypsies and Travellers presents complex and difficult questions as to the purpose and aims of education and the uses and meanings of literacy.

1.1. The study

My study sought to explore Gypsies' and Travellers' perceptions of the value and importance of literacy, to themselves and their communities, and to assess the quality and relevance of literacy provision available to them. I was not testing a hypothesis. My research questions gradually became focused through an iterative process as I learned more about the communities and their situation.

This research, whilst located within a general interest in education, focused on adult literacy. It explored Gypsies' and Travellers' perceptions and use of literacy, and how their level of literacy impacted on their ability to engage with authority individually and

collectively in the context of a predominantly text-based, industrialised society. It examined the political and social factors that affected the extent and availability of literacy provision for adult Gypsies and Travellers, their level of participation and whether they perceived literacy and education as contributing to agency and lifestyle choice, or to assimilation.

The study found that Gypsies and Travellers had very low levels of literacy but did not perceive the ability to read and write as important for everyday life; they distinguished between literacy as the ability to read and write and broader concepts inherent in formal education which they feared as a process of assimilation and acculturation. There was no targeted literacy or education provision for adult Gypsies and Travellers in the three authorities in which my research was conducted and minimal interest among providers. The few Gypsies and Travellers who wished to learn preferred to teach themselves fearing they would face prejudice in mainstream provision. Gypsies and Travellers were virtually absent in national and local post-school education policy and their construction and framing in private and public discourse negatively affected policy development and practice. The main impact of low levels of literacy and very limited experience of formal education was difficulty in utilising the discourses of bureaucracy to achieve meaningful engagement with authorities at both personal and collective levels which resulted in limited agency in the decision making processes affecting their lives.

1.1.1. Research site

I focused the research on two rural authorities in Southern England - Northshire and Southshire and one urban authority, Westborough¹. These authorities were chosen for practical reasons of geographical accessibility rather than pre-identified features. The data are drawn predominantly from these three authorities, though interviews undertaken with Gypsies and Travellers from neighbouring authorities and with Travellers and officers in the Republic of Ireland provide some comparative material (Appendix 2).

¹These are pseudonyms.

1.1.2. Descriptors

Though the terms are contested, I have chosen to use the descriptors "Gypsies" and "Travellers" throughout the thesis as these are the most commonly understood terms. When used alone "Gypsies" refers to English Gypsies / Romani Gypsies or Romanichals, and "Travellers" refers to Irish Travellers. As Gypsies and Irish Travellers are defined as ethnic groups, the words "Gypsy" and "Traveller" are capitalised. Failure to capitalise denotes a lack of understanding of their history and culture and is considered insulting by the people to whom it refers. However, when quoting documents I have retained the form used in the document. I am not using the term Gypsy/Traveller as this to me implies travelling and many English Gypsies and Irish Travellers no longer travel. The terminology they prefer changes and is a sensitive and complex issue. Some Gypsies prefer to be called "Travellers" viewing the term "Gypsy" as insulting; others wish to emphasise their Romani heritage and to disassociate themselves from Travellers. Some English Gypsies refer to themselves as Romani Travellers. The term "Gypsy, Roma, Traveller" or "GRT" is also increasingly used. The term "Gypsy" is not used by the Roma people in Europe as they consider the term derogatory.

1.2. Origins of the study

My interest in the education of marginalised communities began in 1998 when I worked as the Chief Technical Adviser to the adult literacy component of the Department for International Development (DfID) funded, British Council managed, Nigeria Community Education Project (1997 - 2002), which operated in four states and with Fulani pastoral nomadic and semi-nomadic clans in Adamawa. The project manager in Adamawa was a settled Fulani. When showing me around and discussing educational issues for both children and adults, he pointed to a school built specifically for the pastoralist nomadic clans which they had rejected, and as he said, "*disappeared into the bush*". The school lay empty and unused. The rejection interested me. Enquiries suggested that the education to be offered was irrelevant to their lives; that the skills taught were not those the pastoralists considered relevant to their lives or culture. There were also indications that the education system and the teaching within it were unsympathetic to both pastoralists individually and to their culture. Few of the teachers were Fulani or spoke Fulfulde and none had had any experience of nomadism. The British Council project trained young

Fulfude speakers as teachers and the adult literacy programme began by identifying the communicative practices of the Fulani pastoralists. This experience led me to consider:

What knowledge is important, whose knowledge is important, what and whose interests such knowledge serves, and how the curriculum and pedagogy serve or do not serve differing interests (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:13).

In the UK, my election as a local councillor in 1997 gave me a different perspective on travelling communities and I became interested in the development of a transit site for Gypsies and Travellers. I was surprised by the statements made by members of the public, officials and elected councillors who echoed comments about pastoralists made by their Nigerian counterparts. The comments made in the UK were largely critical and in the context of officially accepted cultural pluralism and political correctness, surprising. In addition, initial research suggested that the reasons for non-participation in formal education might also be for cultural reasons.

I also drew on work I undertook in Ireland developing a national curriculum framework for adult literacy in which one of the target groups was Travellers. In many of the classes I visited the material used was contextually situated and culturally appropriate. Neither the classes in Ireland nor the project in Nigeria were referred to as New Literacy Studies, but, in both, the literacy related to communal needs and aspirations.

Working in different countries and different contexts has helped illuminate the particular situation of Gypsies and Travellers in England.

1.3. Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers

Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers are considered and self-identify as members of the Roma Diaspora who left India over a thousand years ago. Available statistics show that literacy among the Roma population of Europe is significantly below that of the majority populations (UNESCO, 2005:177). In the UK, one of the richest countries of the world, it is estimated that between 70% and 90% of Gypsies and Travellers over the age of fifteen are not literate (OFSTED, 2003, 2006; Levinson, 2007). Some cannot read at all, others have very poor reading skills and very limited writing skills. Few attend tertiary education.

The disparity in literacy levels between non-indigenous populations, indigenous² populations, and nomadic peoples is noted in the EFA Global Monitoring Report *Literacy for Life 2006* (UNESCO, 2005:177). Gypsies and Travellers in the UK do not fit neatly into any of these categories but have aspects of each. They arrived after the Celts, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans, but several hundred years before many subsequent Europeans and before those from Britain's ex-colonies in Asia and Africa. They do not correspond to the image of nomadic pastoralists or to the stereotype of an ethnic minority as they are white and are largely indistinguishable from British people of European descent. They are culturally and ethnically part of the Roma diaspora across the world, many of whom are now settled. They are a group with particular problems which reflect those of different peoples with whom they share similarities.

1.4. Travelling communities and education

Gypsies and Travellers who continue to travel face the greatest difficulties which are similar to those of travelling communities elsewhere. Among these are the Fulani pastoralists in Nigeria, Rabaris in India, Dinka in Sudan, San in Namibia and Botswana, nomadic communities in the Horn of Africa, Native Americans, Native Canadians, Inuit of North America and Aborigines of Australia. The educational statistics, when available, are alarming. In Namibia for example the adult literacy rate of the San population was approximately 20% compared to 95% among the Afrikaans population (UNDP, 2004). In Ethiopia the literacy rate among nomads in the rural pastoralist area was 8% but 25% for adults generally (Carr-Hill, 2006). The Nomadic Commission for Education estimated that in 1990 the average literacy rate for nomadic pastoralists was 0.02% while the average literacy rate for the country was 66.8% (UNESCO, 2005:398, Table 13). These communities have different patterns of permanent or semi-permanent travel undertaken primarily for seasonal and economic reasons.

² EFA GMR (2005) defines indigenous as "descendants of the original inhabitants of a region prior to colonisation who have maintained some or all of their linguistic, cultural and organisational characteristics". (Page 177, footnote 38).

Education has been seen as a fundamental human right since its inclusion in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right to a nomadic lifestyle is implicitly recognised and nomadic people are entitled to receive the same rights to family life, security and services as the sedentary population. Gypsies and Travellers in the UK are also covered by the Race Relations Act of 2002. Yet, until very recently, Gypsies and Travellers remained largely outside the education system and the level of achievement in formal education is significantly below the national average. As stated, education can be liberating and empowering, and contribute to individual and communal advancement. It is also a strategy for nation building, inculcating morals, values, rights and responsibilities. Gypsies and Travellers, along with other travelling communities, challenge these views in several ways and present some of the most complex and difficult questions as to the purpose and aims of educational provision and processes (Kratli and Dyer, 2006:9). Kratli and Dyer state that "earlier policy was linked often explicitly, to the perceived need to encourage nomads to sedentarise" (2006:11). This was the case in Nigeria (1987)³ and Botswana (Le Roux, 1999). The cost of providing schooling for travelling children is considerably higher than for settled children. The children's attendance, classroom performance, behaviour and achievement often differ from the norm and are perceived to be unsatisfactory. As many have argued, education is not a neutral practice; it is ideological and embedded in particular cultures, values and concepts of development. Dyer (2006:9) notes:

How rarely the rationales and ideologies underpinning the actions of service providers (particularly governments) and those of the users of the service (nomads) converge, particularly in perceptions of 'development' and the role of education in its pursuit.

These tensions relate as much to Gypsies and Travellers as to nomadic cultures in the "developing world". Dyer's analysis of the cultural tensions embedded in education and a Gypsy's assertion that theirs is not a "development" context is one that challenges the concept of literacy as integral to "development", which in the discourse of donor agencies and the World Bank, refers primarily to economic development and increased productivity.

³ Government of Nigeria, (1987) *Blueprint on Nomadic Education*

1.5. Developing the study

My work in Ireland had enabled me to visit literacy classes for Travellers, talk to those attending, assess the importance of literacy to them and consider whether the literacy they were learning met their aspirations and needs. My intention was to follow the same procedure in the three authorities. I formulated several questions to guide my research. The first question was:

1. What is the extent of adult education and literacy provision provided for and accessed by Gypsies,
 - i. What social and political factors influence this?
 - ii. What factors impede or support Gypsies and Travellers engaging in literacy and adult education provision?

Assessing the extent of adult education and literacy provision entailed examining policy documents, collecting available statistics, conducting local surveys, interviewing Gypsies and Travellers, education and council officers, engaging in informal discussions and observing a variety of situations. My original intention had been to compare the perceptions of Gypsies and Travellers attending literacy classes with the perceptions of those providing them. This had seemed a reasonably straightforward undertaking, but, in the event, proved impossible due to an absence of adult literacy provision for Gypsies and Travellers in the three authorities in which my research was conducted. Given my experiences in Nigeria and Ireland, I had assumed there would be literacy classes which Gypsies and Travellers attended, though possibly not necessarily targeted provision. Further enquiries revealed very little specific provision anywhere in England and very little knowledge of whether Gypsies and Travellers attended mainstream provision. This raised important questions of policy and practice in adult education. The absence of classes also meant my access to Gypsies and Travellers would be significantly more difficult than anticipated.

Access to the community was essential and this became the priority. As detailed in Chapter 4, accessing marginalised communities can be difficult and entails building up trust over a considerable period of time. This was a slow and painstaking but ultimately

extremely rewarding process. I now feel privileged to have met and spoken with over fifty Gypsies and Travellers, many of whom now greet me and some of whom I know reasonably well. I met and interacted with Gypsies and Travellers at national conferences, at regional and local forums, on sites and in trailers and in their houses or flats.

These meetings and ensuing interviews and discussions began to lead in new directions and altered the focus of my research. As a result the second question moved from a focus on adult literacy classes to a focus on the role of literacy and language in interaction and engagement with mainstream society, particularly in relation to authorities:

2. How does literacy impact on Gypsies' and Travellers' ability to engage individually and collectively with authorities?

A third question followed from this:

3. Do literacy and education lead to greater agency in relation to determining their future or to a potential loss of Gypsy or Traveller identity and assimilation into the dominant mainstream culture?

My overarching methodology was interpretive and constructivist, but addressing the three questions required a range of data gathering methods including some analysis of documentation, some statistical analysis as well as ethnographic methods of observation and unstructured interviews. The area of enquiry, the methods and date of collection, and the data sets which resulted, are stated below. Further information, including the date of each interview and meeting, and whether local or national, is provided in Appendix 2.

Table 1.1: Gathering the data

	Areas of enquiry	Methods of data collection	Time of data collection	Data Sets
1	What is the extent of adult education and literacy provided for and accessed by Gypsies and Travellers? What social and political factors affect this? What factors impede or support Gypsies and Travellers engaging in literacy provision?	a) Policy documents.	Jan. – Mar. 2008.	Policy analysis.
		b) Interviews with Irish local, regional and national officials and tutors.	Ireland Nov. 2006-April 2007.	Eight interviews.
		c) Interviews with English local, regional and national officers TES, LSC. and councillors.	July. 2005 Nov. 2008–June 2009.	Fourteen interviews.
		d).Survey of adult education organisations.	March – May 2009.	Twenty responses.
		e). Observation, in private and public spheres, analysis of documentation and media.	Throughout the research from 2002-2005 and from 2007-2009.	
		f).Gypsy and Traveller individual interviews.	July 2004. Aug 2007 –Oct. 2009.	Thirty-six interviews.
2	How does literacy impact on Gypsies and Travellers' ability to engage individually and collectively with authorities?	a). Observation at national and local meetings.	Throughout research.	Twenty-two meetings including seven Gypsy and Traveller national meetings and five "events".
		b) Westborough and Northshire Traveller Forum and Police Gypsy and Traveller Group.	Specific focus on the forums 2004 – 2009.	Thirty-two WNTFs and seven PGTGs.
		c) English Gypsy and Irish Traveller interviews	July 2004/ Aug.2007. – Oct. 2009.	Thirty-six interviews.
3	Do literacy and education lead to greater agency or to potential loss of Gypsy and Traveller identity and assimilation into mainstream society?	a) Gypsy and Traveller interviews	July 2004/ Aug.2007 – Oct. 2009.	Thirty-six interviews.
		b) Irish Traveller focus groups – Ireland.	Nov 2005 –April 2006. Aug 2007 –Oct. 2009.	Three focus groups.
		c) Specific focus on the forums.	2004 – 2009.	Thirty- six forums as above.
		d) Interviews of English and Irish organisers and tutors	July 2005 – June 2009.	Twenty-one interviews.

There is important research by linguists into the origin of the Roma language and dialects (Acton and Dalphinis, 2000; Matras, 2000) and though this relates to literacy, it is outside the scope of this research. I researched the history of formal schooling for Gypsies and Travellers, but not classroom interactions or curriculum relevance. I sought to find reasons for the low levels of literacy and educational achievement and the lack of compensatory provision. Early in the research an unanticipated element surfaced – the level of hostility towards Gypsies and Travellers at all levels of society which dominates all aspects of Gypsy and Traveller life, including education.

I had had experience of previously working with minorities in different situations, yet I was surprised at the hostility and prejudice at every level expressed and directed at the Traveller and Gypsy community which was rarely contested at the social, institutional, or political level. As Bhopal and Myers (2008) state, the opposite was often the case. There is a significant body of literature on the hostility towards Gypsies and Travellers. I summarise the theories on the hostility towards Gypsies and Travellers in Chapter 3. For Gaujos (non-Gypsies)⁴ working with the community, the prejudice merges into the background of the work; to the Gypsies and Travellers it is the reality of everyday life.

Academic research into Gypsies and Travellers in England and into the worldwide Roma Diaspora is comparatively limited. Romani Studies is a small and focused field and there seems to be little-interdisciplinary cross fertilisation. I hope that my study will not only augment knowledge in the literacy field but will also inform those in Romani Studies and help in a small way to bridge the two areas.

1.6. Structure of the thesis

The introduction has drawn attention to the low levels of literacy in other nomadic and travelling communities in both the industrialised and non-industrialised world, and how Gypsies and Travellers, along with other travelling communities, raise some of the most

⁴ A Non Gypsy is a Gauje or Gorgio, or Gadje – the spelling varies. I am using the spelling Gaujo.

complex and difficult questions in relation to the purpose of education and the emphasis on becoming literate (Kratli and Dyer, 2006:9).

In Chapter 2, I outline the origins of the Roma people, the Roma diaspora, the five different groups of travelling people in the British Isles and the laws relating to travelling. In order to set the context of the adults' literacy, I present a brief history of Gypsy and Traveller education in England.

Chapter 3 summarises theories of literacy and language, the social practice view of literacy referred to as New Literacy Studies, which challenged theories of a cognitive divide between literacy and illiteracy. I consider theories of language and discourse (Bereiter and Englemann, 1966; Bernstein, 1971; Labov, 1988; Honey, 1988; Bourdieu, 1991) and Gee's (1996) theories of primary and secondary Discourses; the construction of identity and impact on effective communication and engagement (Sen, 1999). In Chapter 4, I present the methodology and research methods and discuss the difficulties of accessing marginalised communities, consider issues of ethics, accountability and reflexivity. In Chapter 5, I describe the sites of my research - the geographic, economic, political and social situation in the three authorities, the accommodation, health and education of the Gypsies and Travellers, the councils' management and Gypsy and Traveller support structures.

In Chapter 6, I analyse policy documents on Lifelong Learning and describe provision for adult Gypsies and Travellers. The following two chapters, Chapters 7 and 8, present the empirical data from thirty-six interviews of which four are described in detail. This is followed by the observational data and analysis of interaction between public officials and Gypsies and Travellers in two consultative forums.

I conclude the thesis by presenting the findings of my research on Gypsies' and Travellers' perception of the importance of literacy and the impact of primary and secondary Discourses on the lives. I reflect on the extent to which Gypsies and Travellers perceive literacy and education as leading to improving their agency or to a potential loss of identity and assimilation into the dominant sedentary culture and challenge the relevance

of different models of adult literacy provision. I show how my research contributes to knowledge of literacy and discourse and suggest areas for further research.

Chapter 2. Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers

Essential to any exploration of education and literacy among adult Gypsies and Travellers is an understanding of their history, culture and identity.

Gypsies and Travellers, like many nomadic and travelling communities, are marginalised. They can be described as an excluded group, "shut out" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1990) of the mainstream, excluded from meaningful participation in mainstream society due to dominant Discourses within the structures of society (Young, 2000; Mullaly, 2007). They can also be considered self-marginalising, placing themselves "on the edge" of society, living apart from and choosing not to interact with the mainstream. In this chapter I describe the different groups of travelling people in the British Isles, the origins of the Roma and the Roma diaspora, the lack of sites, the difficulties of those who have no legal stopping places and the tension this causes with the settled community. I also summarise how and when the education sector began to address the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

2.1. Roma origins

Gypsies and Travellers in the British Isles comprise six groups: Romani Gypsies, Welsh Gypsies, Scottish Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Roma, and New Age Travellers, each with different histories, cultural traditions and languages. Of the six, four are of Romani origin; though Irish Travellers may also be Romanies, their origins are more obscure. Theories on the origins, history and language have been developed by non Gypsy historians, but these are now being challenged by "the emergence of a Gypsy/Roma/Traveller academic community"(Hancock, 2010:4). The broad narrative is that Romanies moved westwards from northern India over a thousand years ago. Aspects of this are now contested. The different theories summarised below are largely drawn from Hancock (2008, 2010).

The traditional view is that Romanies left India around a thousand years ago in family groups travelling by three main routes, northwards towards Scandinavia, west through central Europe and south by way of Egypt and North Africa, hence the name Gypsies, and then north through Spain. "Gypsies" is a derivative of "Little Egyptians". However the first issue of the Gypsy Lore Society in July 1888 acknowledged several possibilities - that

Romanies may have been part of European society for 2000 years or that the first Romanies were a group of several thousand musicians presented by the King of Sindh to the Shah of Persia in the fifth century AD (Matras, 2000; Hancock, 2008). Hancock argues that there is evidence for a single migration as a "composite military entourage" in the 11th century (Hancock 2008:42). Many posit a strong linear connection with India, though the Indian origins are challenged by several academics who argue that:

Gypsies are thoroughly European; a majority of their ancestors probably came from old European stock" (Cohn 1973:65 cited in Hancock 2008).

Okely (1984:56) noted that:

Their visibility emerged with the collapse of feudalism, when a multiplicity of persons was thrown into the marketplace.

This is supported by Evans who argues that, whatever their origins, Gypsies and Travellers were one of many groups of people who travelled around Europe (Evans, 2004). Whatever the exact origins as propounded by different writers (Okely, 1984; Kenrick, 1998; Hancock, 2008; Clark and Greenfields, 2006) there is general agreement that common characteristics of the Romanies are a shared culture and a dialect of north Indian origin (Okely, 1983; Acton, 1997; Hancock, 2002, 2008; Kenrick, 1998; Bhopal and Myers, 2008). According to Hancock (2008) the worldwide Romani population is around 12 million though other writers have estimated as many as 30 million⁵.

The history of the Roma people is fascinating, depressing, and complex. The summary presented here is drawn from a variety of sources (Okely, 1983; Action, 1997; Hancock, 2002, 2008; Kenrick, 1998; UNESCO, 2005, 2010). In brief, it is largely one of persecution and enslavement in many countries in Europe. In Romania the slavery lasted for five centuries until it was abolished in 1864. Roma reached the Balkans by the 14th century, Germany by the 15th, and England and Scotland in the early 16th. Today Roma are the largest minority in Europe and live in over forty countries.

⁵ A series of articles in *Roma, Memorial Issue 2008*, Chandigarh: India: Rom publications.

The migration routes led to the formation of different groupings or tribes, the Kalderash, traditionally smiths who migrated through the Balkans to central Europe and North America; the Gitanos, or Kale, traditionally entertainers to Iberia, North Africa and Southern France; the Manush, or Sinti often travelling showman or circus people went mostly to Alsace, France and Germany; the Romanichals, mainly to Britain and North America; the Romanisael to Sweden and Norway, and the Erlides, or Yerlii settled in South-Eastern Europe and Turkey. The Roma went from Poland to Russia in the 18th century as horse traders and singers. They supported Russia in the Napoleonic Wars and, as in other countries, suffered heavy casualties in World War Two. Roma are also in Egypt, North Africa and Afghanistan as well as the United States and Canada to where they first emigrated in colonial times. There are now more than half a million in the United States; others were taken or emigrated to Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Argentina, Australia and South Africa.

A number of countries have over half a million Roma – France, Romania, Spain, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Turkey and Russia. Countries with significant Roma populations are Croatia, Serbia, Hungary, Germany, Greece, Italy, Moldavia, Poland, Portugal, and Slovakia. Educational experience and achievements in the different countries vary, but where known, the literacy rates are very low – Albania 12%, Romania 17%, Macedonia 19% and Bulgaria 12% - and education achievement is minimal⁶. In Sweden, until recently, the state forcibly took children into foster care. The Roma population generally has low levels of education, is socially excluded and many live in degraded ghettos (European Union Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2006). However, since 2000 their language has been officially recognised. A Romani Folk High school was opened in Goteborg⁷. In Portugal, Roma are settled in urban centres and in the late 1990s, the Portuguese government initiated policies to improve the situation (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2006).

⁶ Accessed from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romani_people_by_country_on.
Sept. 2 2008

⁷ Goteburg's-Posten, 21 Sept. 2007

Persecution and discrimination of the Roma culminated in Europe with the Holocaust when between 500,000 and 800,000 were killed in Nazi concentration camps. This attempted genocide is known as the Porrajamos.

2.2. UK: identities and culture

Estimates of the population of Gypsies and Travellers in England, Wales and Scotland vary enormously and are contested. Current guestimates are between 300,000 and 400,000, of whom approximately two thirds live in houses (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2006).

2.2.1. Romani Gypsies

English Romani Gypsies are the largest group in the UK. Romani Gypsies are referred to as Romani (spelt with an "i" or "y"), Romanies or Romanichals, (Romani Chals), and are of Romani origin. Romani Gypsies were at one time called Travellers but since the late 80's and 90s many prefer to be called Gypsies or English Romanies to distinguish them from New Age Travellers. Though they speak Romanes, English Romanes is very different from the dialects spoken in Europe as the syntax is English and much of the vocabulary Romani⁸.

2.2.2. Welsh Gypsies

The Welsh group, the Kale, is very much the smallest. Around a thousand Gypsies in Wales are the descendants of families, including the Woods family, who migrated from the west of England and until recently continued to speak with inflected Romani.

2.2.3. Irish Travellers

According to the 2003 census, there were 24,000 Travellers in Ireland, an estimated 1,500 Irish Travellers in England, Scotland and Wales and around 2,000 Travellers in Northern Ireland (Kenrick and Clark, 1999). The latter may also have been part of the western migration out of north India. However there is historical and linguistic evidence for placing their origin as a separate ethnic group much earlier, even before the coming of the Celts as their language, Cant / Gammon, has little resemblance to Romanes and has some

⁸ The Romani Project at the University of Manchester, co-ordinator Yaron Matras, has included Romani in the list of most endangered languages. Accessed from www.llc.manchest.ac.uk/Research/Projects/romani on July 15 2010.

Gaelic connection though others suggest it is pre-Celtic (Okely, 1983; Kenrick, 1998; Worrall, 1979; Ni Shuinear, 1994; Binchy, 2000). Some writers suggest they can be traced as far back as 600 AD when metal workers travelled the country. In the seventeenth century, the early Travellers in Ireland may have been joined by people dispossessed of land who became itinerant traders after Cromwell's invasion and later by others after the famine in the nineteenth century. Thus some people claim, "*That they are not really Gypsies at all*", but "*failed settled people*"⁹ so denying ethnic identity and therefore charges of racism. Irish Travellers joined other Irish workers in England in the nineteenth century, and also after World War Two (Kenrick and Clark, 1999). Those born in England frequently retain strong Irish accents. Travellers living in Ireland also regularly come over to England to find work. "Pikeys" is a pejorative term applied to any Irish Traveller and is considered insulting.

2.2.4. Scottish Travellers

Scottish Travellers live on both sides of the border and are the descendants of intermarriage and social integration between local nomadic craftsmen and immigrant Romanies, in particular from France and Spain (Kenrick, 1998; Clark, 2006).

2.2.5. Roma

The fifth group, the Roma, numbering around 2,000 came from Europe in the 1930s, from Hungary after 1956 and more recently from the new member states of the European Union. They identify with Gypsies and Travellers in the UK as being of Roma origin and involve themselves in some of the activities. Several attend meetings of the national Gypsy Council; a music group performed at a cultural festival in August 2008 and a small group came to a meeting in January 2009 to support Irish Travellers facing eviction at Dale Farm in Essex. On arrival an interesting "cross-cultural" incident took place when they were offered beer as a gesture of welcome and friendship. They politely declined as "*We do not drink alcohol*". They were Muslim as are many Roma in South East Europe as they adopted the religion of the country in which they stayed. Roma are supportive of Gypsies and Travellers in the UK but also comment on how much worse the situation is in the countries they left. One woman living in Westborough described how her husband had

⁹ Literacy organiser's personal communication on Dec11 2005, Dublin.

been killed by racists in front of her¹⁰. The recent violence towards a group of new arrivals in Belfast and the decision of the majority to return to Romania may deter others from coming to the UK (Guardian, June 27 2009).

2.2.6. New Age Travellers

"New Age Travellers" are the sixth group and a comparatively new phenomenon. They are not accepted by the traditional groups even though some have travelled for twenty years, have children born on the road and face similar prejudice. My research did not include New Age Travellers, but as they impact on the current situation a brief description is provided in Appendix 1.

Many Gypsies and Travellers regard New Travellers as dirty and drug addicts. The antagonism is partly due to the introduction of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994, but also because New Age Travellers are considered to have chosen their lifestyle and are free to leave it, while Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers cannot change their ethnic identity. A few ex-New Age Travellers have become key advocates for Gypsies and Travellers, some of whom acknowledge and appreciate this. In Westborough, one of three cities in England with a large number of New Age travellers, they are sometimes referred to as "Van Dwellers".

Other groups not included in my study are travelling Show People and a much smaller group of Boat People who travel round the coast.

2.3. Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers: culture and education

Whatever their origins, Gypsies and Travellers have retained very strong cultural traditions which differ from those of the sedentary population. Romanies have a tradition of extreme "internal cleanliness" – internal to the dwelling place and internal in relation to the body. Mochadi laws on cleanliness dictate that cooking and washing utensils are kept separate. Hands cannot be washed in the same bowl as crockery. Lavatories and baths cannot be shared with Gaujos¹¹. Trailers are spotless and must be kept clean like the inner body.

¹⁰ Gypsy's personal communication on Oct. 4 2009.

¹¹ Highlighted on *Kilroy-Silke: A Week with the Gypsies*, ITV April 4 2005.

Neither death nor childbirth, which are considered polluting, should take place inside a trailer, but preferably in hospital. In the past the trailers of those who died were burnt to ensure the spirit of the dead person did not linger to haunt the living. Animals are judged clean or unclean by the way they wash or eat (Okely, 1983; Hancock, 2008).

2.3.1. Patriarchal society

Gypsy and Traveller society is patriarchal. Greenfields states:

Within traditional Travelling communities, men and women occupy distinct roles. A couple do not regard themselves as being in competition, but part of a mutually complementary relationship, with the men being primarily responsible for supporting the family financially and practically – and women taking overall responsibility for the home and children (Greenfields, 2006:40).

As a Traveller stated, "*In my culture the woman is the heart of the family, the man is at the head – what he says goes,*" (Guardian, Aug. 14 2009). Siobhan, an Irish Traveller I interviewed in February 2009, said that women are strictly supervised and traditionally do not meet men unaccompanied, that it was inappropriate for a woman to be seen with a group of males and they may be embarrassed in the presence of Gaujo men. Unmarried women are often chaperoned by other women and at social events and gatherings are frequently informally segregated¹².

Women should dress modestly and abstain from sex until marriage¹³. Early marriage is the norm. A Gypsy or Traveller can take a Gaujo spouse but, though accepted, they remain Gaujo. The children of such marriages are considered Gypsies or Travellers (Okely, 1983).

There are some indications that, as in other patriarchal societies, the power relationship between husband and wife is unbalanced and this can on occasion lead to domestic violence. "*He'd just flip out, slapping me, kicking me. I just accepted it as normal*" (Kay, Guardian, Aug. 14 2009). The first ever conferences on domestic violence in the community were held in 2009. Solas Anois (Comfort Now), is the UK's only refuge for

¹² Observations at Lewes Crown Court, June 2 2008 and Horsmonden Horse Fair on Sept. 12 2009.

¹³ Gypsy's personal communication at Singleton Museum, West Sussex on Aug 4 2004

Gypsy and Traveller women but support groups are developing and *"Women feel more empowered: change is coming"* (Guardian, Aug 14 2009).

2.3.2. English / Irish differences

As well as origins, religion and traditions among the groups are different. Evangelical and Baptist missionaries, such as "Gypsies for Christ", have been active among English Romanies and Roma in Europe. Irish Travellers are predominantly Catholic. This can cause tension. When an English Gypsy played evangelical songs instead of traditional music at a conference, a senior Catholic Traveller walked out¹⁴.

During my research, several English Gypsies to whom I spoke in Northshire, Southshire and Westborough indicated feelings of resentment towards Irish Travellers. English Gypsies prefer to live and travel in small family units whereas Irish Travellers tend to travel in large convoys. The large convoys cause greater antagonism with the mainstream settled population and the Romani Gypsies feel this makes their own acceptance by the settled community harder (Northshire, TES officer: July 29 2005).

The two groups tend to avoid sharing sites. If, in one area of Northshire, local Gypsies see Irish Travellers looking around for somewhere to stop, *"an old man who is a very traditional Gypsy will see them off"* (Northshire, TES officer: July 29 2005). The dislike of the Irish by the English Gypsies does not appear to be reciprocated. Evidence from families stopping temporarily in Westborough suggests this antagonism may be changing and there is some intermixing and intermarriage.

Key principles of nomadism are self-employment, adaptability, flexibility and knowledge of a multitude of trades (Okely, 1983; Kenrick and Clark, 1999). Traditionally the family is the economic unit, which rarely employs others. Gypsies and Travellers also avoid being employees, though poverty or wealth can bring exceptions. Interviewing Gypsies in Cambridgeshire, Bowers (2004) found that aspirations tended to be for material wealth rather than social status. Nearly half those he interviewed wanted to be self-employed.

¹⁴ Traveller Law Reform Coalition Conference, Birmingham 2004.

Romani English Gypsy girls were more likely to think in vocational terms than Irish Traveller girls who anticipated a life caring for family and children. Diversity and a multiplicity of occupations have been Gypsy and Traveller strengths, but the economic advantages of mobility and employment are counter balanced by political and legal constraints on travelling (Okely, 1983; Kenrick and Bakewell, 1995). The increased tension over the last few decades has, in part, been the result of increased industrialisation. Fruit picking and seasonal farm work has declined, necessitating moving into urban areas to find work. Current trades are tarmacking, scrap metal collecting, tree cutting and "calling" – door to door selling. "Calling" is now threatened due to new legislation requiring callers to register. Until recently Gypsies and Travellers rarely fell back on the state preferring to "look after their own"; however many of those on official sites now draw benefit (Interview, Forrest: 2004).

Belton (2010:39) maintains that Gypsy identity is not a "one dimensional social or ethnic type" but complex and "ever changing as ideas and people themselves adapt to, develop and incorporate and their environment over time." Most settled people assume all Gypsies and Travellers travel. For many Gypsies and Travellers travelling is deeply embedded as a way of life and an emotional, psychological and cultural imperative (OPM, 2010) and if they have an authorised pitch many park up in the winter months and travel in the summer, but Gypsies and Travellers cannot be identified solely by their travelling status. While some adapt to housing, others find living in houses claustrophobic and, for some, sedentarism is associated with assimilation (Levinson, 2004:712-714). Others who move into housing maintain their distinctive cultural beliefs and practices and continue to identify as Gypsies or Travellers. Though they may have travelled, many have long standing links to particular geographical areas and they refer to each other as from particular counties. A family from Australia returned recently to the area in Northshire where they had previously lived and had local connections. An ex-policeman remarked that there were 200 Gypsy families in Southshire. A family of Irish Traveller heritage named their private site after their place of birth in Ireland.

An issue of major importance is health. Gypsies and Travellers have the lowest health and education indices of **any** group in the UK. They have a higher incidence of long term

illness, a higher number of miscarriages and greater child mortality. The mortality rate of Gypsy and Traveller children under one is twice that of children in the mainstream settled community (Johnson and Willers, 2004). Lack of proper site provision, overcrowding and lack of basic hygiene lead to poor health; yet statistics show higher rates of ill health among housed Gypsies and Travellers than those on sites. In Ireland, the life expectancy of women is 11.9 years less than the average and 9.9 years less for men (Parry, 2004). The statistics are supported by anecdotal evidence. In the few years I have been involved, three Gypsies I knew died and another has a sister of thirty-five dying of septicaemia. There was a still birth on one of the permanent sites. Close relatives of two people I know committed suicide and the son of one was killed.

2.4. Definitions

The issue of both identity and legal definition is hotly contested. To some extent Traveller groups have been considered as much a social construction as a genetic and biological identity. Hancock, a Romani born in England asserts:

If groups of individuals identify themselves as Romanies and assert their ethnicity, to ally themselves with other such groups similarly motivated, then this is entirely their own business (Hancock, 2008:43).

However ethnicity confers legal status and this, like their origins, is contested.

While not a separate race, after forty years contestation, they are recognised in law as an ethnic group and are covered by the Race Relations Act 1976 and Human Rights Act 1998. The 1960 Caravan Act defined Gypsies as a "social group with a nomadic way of life". The 1968 Caravan Sites Act changed this to "Gypsy" defined as someone of a nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin." Under the 1976 Race Relations Act, Romanies are defined as an ethnic group within the Gypsy community.

The question of identity has not only social and psychological importance but has daily consequences. A family living in Kent were evicted after losing their appeal for retrospective planning permission on land they had bought on the grounds that they no

longer travelled and were therefore not Gypsies and not entitled to special consideration under the planning laws¹⁵.

In 2006 Circular 1/2006 Planning for Gypsy and Caravan Sites issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) widened the legal definition to include former nomads:

Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such (Circular 1/2006, Para. 15, p. 4.).

In 2006, in response to high profile community tensions over unauthorised encampments in England, the government placed a duty on councils to identify land for sites. This has again raised the question of identity – for who has land to be found? The definition implies the inclusion of “New Age Travellers” who travel for economic reasons, though,

There should be some recognisable connection between the wandering or travelling and the means whereby the persons concerned make or seek their livelihood (Johnson and Willers, 2004:16).

2.5. Somewhere to Stop

A nomadic lifestyle has been the hallmark of Gypsies and Travellers in the British Isles for centuries and, as previously noted, has been intimately connected to their identity. The movement from place to place and temporary encampments have more than anything else marked them out from the settled community. The traditional and romantic picture of a horse-drawn wagon stopping in the by-ways has changed to a trailer/caravan hitched to a modern vehicle, often a four-wheel drive, frequently encamped in places considered unsuitable by local authority officials and resented by the public, generating ill feeling and considerable tension. The introduction of legal restrictions on travelling resulted in many Gypsies and Travellers in Southshire and Northshire settling on local authority and private sites and in houses and flats.

¹⁵ In 2004 the ODPM advised that the Human Rights Act should be carefully considered in relation to parity between settled and travelling communities.

2.5.1. Travelling outlawed

The 1959 Highways Act stated that living on or hawking goods on the roadside was an offence. In 1968, the Caravan Sites Act placed a duty on councils to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers, but many local authorities simply ignored the directive. Others complied with the duty and 75% of Gypsies and Travellers are on local authority or private sites (CRE, 2006). Gypsies and Travellers on sites currently do not have the same legal protection from eviction as social housing tenants who cannot be evicted without a court order and then only if the owner can cite specific grounds set out in the Act.

In 1994 the 1968 Caravan Sites Act was repealed and replaced by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJPOA) which made unauthorised encampments illegal. Gypsies and Travellers were recommended to make their own provision and many did so. However their land purchases were not always preceded by legal searches. Many found themselves on land for which planning permission would be, and was, refused¹⁶. Appeals frequently failed. In March 2005, a leading Gypsy campaigner and his extended family were evicted after losing an eight year legal battle to remain on land he owned¹⁷. Some families did receive permission to erect structures, but many were evicted and had to camp on verges, on waste ground and sometimes on parks or playing fields. Some local authorities provided a period of toleration of thirty days if there were no serious complaints and some collected rubbish and provided toilets; but many did not¹⁸.

Current government guidance states that Gypsies and Travellers can be moved on by the police using Section 61 of the CJPOA 1994 if more than six vehicles have stopped "for the purpose of residing", (a vehicle plus a trailer counts as two vehicles), are trespassing or if there is disturbance, criminal damage or the location is considered unsuitable. The police can also issue a Section 61a (CJPOA, 1994), though the legal position lacks clarity if they cannot be directed to an alternative stopping place. If the police decline to act, the owner of the land, frequently the Council, can reclaim their land using Section 55 (CJPOA, 1994)

¹⁶ In 1991 the European Court of Human Rights (Chapman v the United Kingdom) showed that whereas 80% of planning applications by settled people succeeded, 90% made by Gypsies were refused.

¹⁷ This eviction was highlighted in Kilroy-Silke's "*Week with the Gypsies*" Channel 4, April 2005.

¹⁸ On one occasion I was approached by a woman Traveller who requested a toilet as she was unwell. I forwarded the request to the council, but it was refused.

by obtaining a court order (Johnson and Willers, 2004:113-170). To obtain a court order, health and welfare checks have to be carried out prior to eviction. As this can take time, council officers "take the precaution" of instituting a Section 55, soon after a group arrives¹⁹. It is estimated that nationally 25,000 Gypsies and Travellers have nowhere legal to stop.

This shortage of sites has caused extreme tension between the settled and the travelling communities. This combined with unpleasant incidents and high profile evictions, led the government to require all local authorities to undertake an Accommodation Needs Assessment for Gypsies and Travellers in 2006. Previously referred to as a Housing Needs Assessment, this was appropriately changed to Accommodation Needs Assessment (ANA) to take into account the differing accommodation required by Gypsies, Travellers and Show People. New Age Travellers were not included in the survey. Though there has been controversy over the findings and the number of pitches required, it has provided a benchmark and, at the time of writing, authorities were required to identify suitable land for local authority, private, or "social landlord" sites.

2.5.2. Policies for assimilation and integration

Independence from England led to political and social changes in Ireland, re-examination of Irish identity and the development of strategies to create a modern Ireland. Travellers, as the largest minority, became a focus of attention and policies were developed to reduce the perceived disadvantages of an itinerant life and absorb them into the general community. In 1963 the government established *The Commission on Itinerancy*, the purpose of which was "the solution of the itinerant problem" (Ni Shuinear, 1997:40). The policy was reinforced by a thesis on *Itinerancy and Poverty* (McCarthy 1971). The commission became The National Council for Travelling People and settlement policies were instituted. Nearly a decade later, the *Report of the Travelling People Review Body* (EUMC, 1983:46) suggested that "The concept of absorption is unacceptable.....it is better to think in terms of integration". When Ireland joined the European Union, the rise in industrialisation and the mechanisation of agriculture increased the pressure on traditional ways of life. Stopping on the roadside became illegal. In 1993 a Task Force on Travelling

¹⁹ Interview with senior officers: Sept. 2009.

People was established and in 1996 a *National Strategy for Traveller Accommodation* was planned. The 2002 National Census showed that 90% of Travellers in the Irish Republic had lived in the same accommodation for a year.

In the three authorities in which I undertook my research, the issue of accommodation dominated all discussions and meetings, almost eclipsing other issues.

2.6. Educational context

To contextualise the current position of the adults' literacy, I have briefly summarised the history of Gypsy and Traveller education.

2.6.1. Review of Literature on schooling

There is comparatively little literature on the education of Gypsies and Travellers. The most important books and articles include those by Reiss (1975), Worrall (1979), Kenrick and Clark (1999), Kiddle (1999), Jordan (2001), O'Hanlon and Holmes (2004), Derrington and Kendall (2004) and Bhopal and Myers (2008). Many books, which analyse Gypsy and Traveller experience in Britain and Europe, contain chapters on education (Acton 2004, 1997; Clark and Greenfields, 2006). Much of the information on schooling is contained in government reports. This dearth of systematic academic and intellectual analysis suggests that the education of Gypsies and Travellers is still a new field of enquiry not yet in the mainstream of research (Worrall, 1979) and "has been under theorised in the past" (Levinson, 2007:19). There is no analysis of Gypsies' and Travellers' experience of adult education.

One early example of schooling is the account by Francis Hindes-Groome in "Gypsy Tents", (1880) in which he suggested a census of settled Gypsies should be carried out by clergymen to persuade the children to attend school and that "ladies and literate Gypsies" should visit the camps and teach the children who were still mobile (Worrall, 1979:68). While some children needed persuading to attend, others were refused entry. Even earlier, Hoyland (1816) described how Trinity Cooper applied to attend a Sunday school in Acre Lane, Clapham, and was consistently refused. Eventually she obtained admission and the Sunday school teacher, Thomas Howard, commented that:

There were not any more attentive and affectionate than these: and when the Gypsies broke up house in the spring to make their usual excursions, the children expressed much regret at leaving the school (Hoyland, 1816:69).

Hoyland goes on to describe a family whose father paid sixpence a week for his children to attend for four winters during which they learned to read and write (Hoyland, 1816:72).

From the information available and from research into government reports, the experiences of those I interviewed, as recounted in Chapter 7, were not unusual. The English Education Act of 1902 extended compulsory schooling to the whole population of England and Wales. In 1908, the Children's Act required children of nomadic parents to attend for only 200 half-day sessions instead of the normal 380 (Kenrick and Clark, 1999:167). This remains in place today and might suggest to educators that the education of Gypsy and Traveller children is of less importance than that of sedentary children.

Sincemost councils put their efforts into moving Gypsy families out of their area, there was little enthusiasm for organising education for them (Kenrick and Clark, 1999:167).

Not until the 1960s was any serious attempt made to include Gypsy and Traveller children in the education system. This summary of the development of Gypsy and Traveller education is drawn from Acton and Kenrick (1991), Waterson (1997), Kenrick and Clark (1999), Acton (2004), and Clark and Greenfields (2006), government policy papers, OFSTED reports and also European Union policy papers. The most detailed history of the education of Gypsies and Travellers is provided by Waterson (1997).

Since the 1960s, several stages in the development of education of Gypsies and Travellers can be identified and I outline these below.

2.6.2. The first schools

The first serious attempts to include Gypsy and Traveller children in the education system were made in the 1960s. In 1963, Gratton Paxon was instrumental in establishing a school on an unofficial encampment in Dublin. Within a week, Dublin Corporation employees burnt it down. A second school, St Christopher's, built the following year, survived and

was later taken over by the Catholic Church (Kenrick, 1998). Separate schools for Travellers continued until 2006 when the last one was closed.

In England, in the summer of 1967, the first Gypsy Caravan School was established by volunteers when Gypsies, evicted from Romford, moved on to the disused Hornchurch aerodrome. This initiative and the setting up of other schools for Gypsies and Travellers led to a number of developments in both the voluntary and statutory sectors (Kenrick and Clark, 1999:167).

In 1967 the Ministry of Education published the Plowden Report *Children and their Primary Schools* which became a key impetus for the development of education provision for Gypsy and Traveller children. The report described the children as:

The most deprived in the country because of living conditions, relentless harassment and because almost everywhere the school system ignored their existence, (cited in Waterson, 1997:30).

The following year, the National Gypsy Education Council (NGEC) was established and led by Lady Plowden.

In 1968, George Marriot, an Irish Traveller of Spanish extraction, and Harry Smith established and ran schools on Gypsy Council caravan sites in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. Eventually, Bedfordshire took a caravan and teacher into the grounds of Kensworth village school and used it as a special Traveller unit for several years. This approach was duplicated by other LEAs. Different groups continued to set up schools in different places, for example the Toc H Summer School in Birmingham (Worrall, 1979). Despite this, the education of Gypsy and Traveller children was considered of little importance. There was no attempt to encourage the children to attend, and many schools simply refused to take them.

2.6.3. Developing Provision

During the 1970s, the voluntary sector continued to lead on developing educational provision, but the decade saw the gradual acceptance by Local Authorities of the need to

provide education for Gypsy and Traveller children. Waterson (1997:129-151) provides a detailed account of the gradual development of this provision in the West Midlands and Hertfordshire.

In 1968, the Caravan Sites Act placed a duty on local authorities to provide sites and the government began to take a greater interest in the children's education. In 1970, HMI Norman Thomas was given 'a watching brief' in relation to Traveller education (Waterson, 1997:132). In 1973, the Department of Education and Science ran the first official course on the 'Education of Travelling Children'; these continued until 1976. In 1978, the Cambridge Institute of Education set up a 'Regional Consultative Group for Traveller Education' (Waterson, 1997:132).

Also in 1973, the National Gypsy Education Council (NGEC) split and a new body, the Advisory Council for the Education of Romani and Other Travellers (ACERT) was established to focus on education, while the former NGEC took on a wider brief which included culture, welfare and civil rights as well as education and was known as the Gypsy Council.

In 1977, the NGEC and ACERT threatened to take Croydon Education Committee to the European Court for refusing to admit Mary Delaney on the grounds she was resident on an illegal caravan site. The London Borough of Enfield made a similar decision over another pupil (Kenrick and Clark 1999:167). The Crown Court ruled for Mary Delaney. The government responded by inserting a new clause into the 1980 Education Act:

The reference to children 'in the area' of the authority means the authority's duty extends to all children residing in their area, whether permanently or temporarily. The duty thus embraces in particular, travelling children, including gypsies.

This was the first clear directive to be issued by the Department. In 1981, it came into force as Circular 1/81 (Waterson, 1997:135).

Support for the education of Traveller children continued to develop. In the 1970s, the government believed local authorities best placed to establish provision according to local circumstances and reimbursed 75% of the cost. Nevertheless, according to Waterson

(1997:133) councillors "did not wish to be seen to agree to any outlay benefiting members of communities so unpopular with their constituents."

A 'No Area Pool' from which Councils could claim reimbursement for an additional 25% was established to support provision for pupils who did not belong to one local authority. This continued until the Education Reform Act of 1988 (Kenrick and Clark, 1999:167; Waterson, 1997:133).

2.6.4. Moving to mainstream

In 1983, Her Majesty's Inspectors published the first government paper to focus entirely on Traveller children entitled *The Education of Travellers' Children*. In 1985, the Swann report on the education of children from ethnic minority groups, which had originated as a result of pressure from the Caribbean Community, included Traveller children,

Whose needs have often previously been almost entirely passed over in any consideration of ethnic minority communities.....their needs were if anything even more deserving of attention than other groups (quoted by Waterson, 1997:138).

The report was followed by Circulars 10/90 and 11/92, which encouraged LEAs to make provision. Circular 10/90 included a part B, which indicated a model of good practice. In 1998, the grant was amended in the Education Act and became known as Section 488.

Despite this, progress was slow and as the Swann report (1985) had stated:

Many LEAs might not be fulfilling their responsibilities in seeking to ensure travellers' children attended school and that travellers' children are being intentionally deprived of their right to education. The travelling community take the view that authorities are unwilling to run the risk of provoking hostility from the settled community by allowing travellers' children into schools (Swann, 1985:746).

Only thirty-nine of one hundred and five education authorities responded to a questionnaire. The paper produced by ACERT and the National Association of Teachers of Travellers (NATT) following a DES short course, 'Post Chester Proposals: Planning and Providing Education for Gypsy, Fairground and Circus Children' in 1986, supported Swann's assertion. In 1988 Croydon LEA again refused children places in school.

Central government funding had a significant impact on the development of the Traveller Education Service (TES) which employed peripatetic teachers to encourage parents to send their children to school, support children in school and to provide advice to schools. In some classrooms, support teachers and welfare officers were also employed (Kenrick and Clark, 1999:122). Section 488 provided 65% of the costs, which in 1999/2000 were over £13 million. In the same financial year, 130 LEAs had Traveller Education Services (TES). 17,000 children received direct support and 3,500 schools were supported by TES peripatetic staff. Although twenty-four authorities did not apply for the funding, education for Gypsy and Traveller children was firmly on the agenda and the OFSTED report of 1996 *The Education of Travelling Children* found that funding was "efficient and effective".

However these reports also noted that politicians gained little by making education truly accessible to Travellers, that the provision of education was, and is, linked to provision of accommodation (Waterson, 1997:138–142), and that the situation illustrates "to an extreme degree the experience of prejudice and alienation" (Swann Report, 1985:740)

The funding mechanisms changed. Provision is now managed through the Vulnerable Children Grant introduced in 2003. In 2006 this was worth £85 million (Clark and Greenfields, 2006:219). In 2003, OFSTED estimated that there were at least 70,000 - 80,000 Gypsy and Traveller children in schools, but participation was comparatively low, with attendance at 84% at Key Stage 1 and 2, and 47% at key Stage 4.

2.6.5. European Initiatives

In Europe the education of Gypsy and Traveller children was beginning to receive attention. In 1975 the Committee of Ministers published *Resolution 75(13) on the social situation of nomads in Europe* and in 1981 the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe published *Resolution 125 on the role and responsibility of local and regional authorities in regard to the cultural and social problems of populations of nomadic origin* (Waterson, 1997:144-146). In 1989, the Council of Ministers published *Resolutions on School Provision for Children of Occupational Travellers and School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children* (1989). This also established an Ad Hoc Group and proposed the

publication of national reports and an exchange of information on Traveller education between European States.

The Council of Europe developed a number of activities in relation to Gypsies and Travellers including seminars, publications, reports, and recommendations. In 1991, the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) expressed its regrets "that texts already adopted had been so little followed by concrete efforts" (p.68. para. 262) and prepared a new text adopted as Resolution 249 (1993) on the role and responsibility of local and regional authorities

Finally, a composite report, *School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children* on the implementation of the measures in the 1989 Resolution, was published by the European Commission in 1996 in which it was noted that over 700,000 child citizens in the Community were getting little or no schooling, that in the late 1980s only 30-40% of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children were "attending school with any degree of regularity" (EC 1996: 7. para. 10) and that "action to remedy the situation was urgently required", that "mobility gives rise to certain difficulties in connection with schooling, notably frequent transfers from one school to another" (p. 26 para. 67) and that:

Gypsies' and Travellers' age old adaptability is currently being tried to the limits and established strategies for adapting to their environment are becoming inadequate (EC 1996:7, para.11)²⁰.

The report had very limited circulation.

Two Europe wide publications were produced. '*Interface*', published by the Centre for Gypsy Research, Paris, launched in 1991 and '*Newsline*', the newsletter of the European Federation for the Education of Children of Occupational Travellers, also first published in 1991.

2.7. Levels of educational achievement

Since the mid 1990s, the government, with the support of ACERT and NATT, has sought to support Gypsies and Travellers in mainstream schools and endeavoured to raise their levels of achievement, but with limited success. A number of documents designed to raise achievement have been published by the DCSF and OFSTED, including:

- The Education of Travelling Children (OFSTED, 1996),
- Provision and Support for Traveller Pupils (OFSTED, 2003),
- The Inclusion of Gypsy Roma and Traveller Children and Young People (DCSF, 2008),
- The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme' (DCSF, 2008),
- Improving the Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils – Literature Review'. (DCSF/NFER, 2009).

The first four indicated additional funding for which authorities could bid and the documents, if accessed via the web, guided professionals to other resources. Despite this level of support, Gypsies and Travellers were not fully integrated into the mainstream school system. Many schools sought to evade their responsibilities; many Gypsies and Travellers shunned the idea of Gypsy schooling preferring to educate their children themselves to prepare them for their particular life style. Waterson, 1997:130) states that:

Many Traveller families considered school a potential danger. Some considered that allowing those in authority to know you had children was to run the risk of their being taken away....some who were whisked off suffered greatly from the separation: some would say they would never have learned to read and write if that had not happened.

Waterson raises the need for greater research into the numbers of Gypsy and Traveller children separated from their families and the long term affect of this. She also wonders if the memories of separation and fear of removal affect parents' attitude to their children's schooling today.

2.7.1. Limited statistics

In England, despite the DCSF directive in 2003 that schools should record Gypsy/Roma and Irish Traveller ethnicity in the Annual School Census, information on the enrolment and achievement of Gypsy and Traveller children of school age is still limited. In England information is collated by the DCSF but the department specifically stated that because of the lack of data their analysis is incomplete and the statistics for 2007-8 should be treated with caution (DCSF, 2008).

Pupils in the Traveller of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Romany ethnic groups are known to be underrepresented in the Annual School Census and also have a high proportion of absence during the tests/exams. Additionally, numbers appear to decline with each Key Stage; only a third of the number of Gypsy/Romany pupils are recorded at GCSE and equivalent compared to Key Stage 1; and less than a half of Travellers of Irish Heritage are recorded at GCSE and equivalent compared to Key Stage 1. Thus, attainment by these groups is distorted.

Even where the information is known by the Traveller Education Service the numbers are often too small to be included in annual reports to school governors or local authority education committees²¹. The difficulty of gaining accurate information is not limited to England. The European Union identifies a significant lack of statistical data on the education of Gypsies and Travellers at all levels of the European education system. Although member states provide detailed educational statistics for the general population, there is a marked absence of ethnically differentiated data on Roma and Travellers on basic indicators such as school enrolment and attendance, as well as on school performance and achievement (EUMC, 2006:6).

2.7.2. National achievement levels

In England, data from one Local Authority in 2001 showed only 33% of Gypsies and Travellers gained National Curriculum Level 2²² or above in reading (OFSTED, 2003:14). Though educational provision is gradually improving, GCSE results in 2007 showed that

²¹ Westborough Annual Report to Children Family and Schools did not include the detail on achievement at Level 4 of Gypsies and Travellers, despite a request that this be included.

²² This is the norm for 7 year olds.

only 14% of Gypsy/Roma and 16% of Irish Travellers pupils achieved 5 A-C grades. This was over 40% below the average for all pupils in maintained schools and well below the average for Black Caribbean pupils who were the nearest underperforming minority. The gap is similar at Key Stage 2 Level 4 and Key Stage Level 5 (DCSF, 2008). In 2008, the latest figures of those eligible showed a 2% drop in the results – with 14% of Irish Travellers and 12% of Gypsy/Roma children gaining 5 A-Cs. If Maths and English are included in the 5 A-Cs, the results are 4.7% and 5.3% respectively, though 62% of Irish Traveller pupils achieved at least one pass, as did 83.3% of Gypsy/Roma pupils. The tables also show a high number of Gypsy/Roma and Irish Traveller children in the SEN categories, in School Action Plus, and attending Special Schools (DfES, 2007). These results are despite the national programme to raise achievement launched in 2006.

This low level of attendance and achievement at school parallels the situation in many low income countries where literacy rates are very low.

In the context of their work overseas, CREATE (Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity) developed a conceptual framework of an '*Expanded Vision of Access*' (2008) to analyse educational experience in low income countries. Though the analysis uncritically assumes the dominant development discourse of the desirability of education in terms of social and economic benefits, the components in the table assist analysis of Gypsy and Traveller experience of school education in England.

Table 2.1 CREATE framework for analysing access

	CREATE access Components	Gypsies and Travellers access in England
1	Access to preschool at appropriate level.	Very little access to preschool provision.
2	Local access to safe schools with acceptable levels of staffing, learning materials, and other facilities.	Access varies dependent on accommodation arrangements and school attitudes. Schools not necessarily perceived as safe and learning materials not reflecting the culture.
3	Admission to and progression through primary school or its equivalent within a year of the nominal age-in-grade.	Admission is to age appropriate class, irrespective of educational level.
4	Consistent attendance throughout the school year.	Inconsistent attendance throughout the year due to a variety of factors.
5	Reasonable access to post primary education and training in a related context.	Access to secondary school varies dependent on post puberty cultural

		mores, and work expectations, accommodation arrangements, attitudes of school and Local Authorities.
6	Learning outcomes that meet national norms for successful completion of an educational cycle.	Learning outcomes very significantly below national standards.
7	Equitable access to publicly funded educational services.	Unequal access to publicly funded educational services.

The table shows Gypsies and Travellers, like children in some other parts of the world, have difficulty in accessing school provision, that attendance is inconsistent and varies with the accommodation situation, that school is sometimes considered as a dangerous place in which their culture is not reflected and traditional expectations of work and social mores often take precedence over secondary education.

The above analysis does not address cultural issues, in particular communities' perception of the relevance of the curriculum to their values and lifestyles, or whether the discourse of the school is familiar to the children. These issues affect the success and achievement of children in many different cultural contexts. The same issues impact on provision for adults, including literacy provision. The next chapter focuses on theories and concepts of literacy, language, and communicative practices, the resulting models of adult literacy provision and the impact of different discourses.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Frameworks:

In this chapter I summarise theories of text mediated literacy and communicative practices as these framed my analysis of Gypsy and Traveller literacy practices. I describe models of literacy and outline theories of language and Discourse, how these effect interaction and communication between communities and how they construct and frame Gypsies and Travellers.

Literacy is a highly contested term (Papen, 2005:8). "Literacy" may refer specifically to the ability to read and write or include both oral and written communication - reading, writing, speaking and listening. In the Merriam-Webster dictionary below, literacy is also equated with intelligence and illiteracy with ignorance.

Literate" is derived from the Latin "literatus"

1a: EDUCATED, CULTURED b: able to read and write,
 2 a: versed in literature or creative writing, LITERARY b; LUCID. POLISHED,
 ...c: having knowledge or competence.

and "illiterate" from the Latin "illiteratus"

1: having little or no education; especially unable to read and write,
 2a: showing or marked by a lack of familiarity with language and literature b:
 violating approved patterns of speaking or writing 3: showing a marked lack of
 acquaintance with the fundamentals of a particular field of knowledge.

Accessed from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/> on Oct. 2 2009

These definitions indicate very different concepts of literacy and illiteracy – the technical ability or inability to read and write, the concept of literacy as education as knowing, speaking "correctly", or having basic knowledge.

These different definitions lead to different perceptions of what it is to be "literate" or "illiterate" and to different theories of education and different models for teaching reading. The association of the ability to read with knowledge, education and culture has important implications for Gypsies and Travellers. In exploring their perceptions and uses of literacy, I draw on the theory of "situated literacies" as developed by scholars in the 1970s and 1980s (Scribner and Cole, 1981; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984).

As Gee (1996:39) states they,

Began seriously to question traditional views of literacy.....by asking "What is literacy?" and "What is literacy good for?" started a new interdisciplinary field of study, one that is sometimes called 'the new literacy studies'.

Subsequent contributors to New Literacy Studies included Street (1988, 1993, 1995), Barton and Hamilton (1998, 2010), Maddox (2001), Robinson-Pant (2004), Papen (2005) and others. New Literacy Studies focuses on the culture and context of literacy practices and I include the concept of literacy as "having knowledge" in its broader educational meaning rather than having basic knowledge of a particular field such as "computer literacy" or "emotional literacy".

Theories develop in historically situated circumstances. New Literacy Studies developed as a challenge to earlier theories of literacy in low income countries (Scribner and Cole, 1968; Goody, 1977; Olson, 1977; Graff, 1979), and was paralleled by development in theories of literacy in industrialised countries (Adult Basic Skills Unit, 1979; Mace, 1979; Stock, 1982). These theories also frame my analysis and I draw on the experience and analyses in the developing and the industrialised world as both are pertinent to the situation of Gypsies and Travellers. In considering these issues, I summarise models of literacy provision linked to these theories.

The dictionary definition of literacy, quoted above, goes beyond the ability to inscribe and interpret text to include concepts of knowledge and erudition. I consider these in relation to Gypsies and Travellers but do not enter the wider educational debates as they are

beyond the scope of this study. I draw on theories of language use (Bernstein, 1971; Labov, 1973; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984) and habitus (Bourdieu, 1991) in relation to language and intellectual development and underachievement in formal education, and on the concepts of primary and secondary Discourse (Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1997) in order to identify and understand Gypsies' and Travellers' perceptions of the importance of text based literacy, their discourse and communicative practices.

Gee's (1996) theories of discourse include the ways of speaking, thinking, feeling and acting of dominant groups, as well as those of marginal groups. The secondary Discourses of the dominant play a key role in structuring society's attitudes and values. The causes of underachievement and the consequent low levels of literacy among adult Gypsies and Travellers may also be due to the social and political factors referred to in Chapter 2. These influence education policy and provision and this chapter explores the sedentary communities' discourses and how these reflect attitudes towards Gypsies and Travellers (Monbiot, 2003; McVeigh, 1997; Sen, 1999; Ni Shuinear, 1997; Coxhead, 2004; Bhopal and Myers, 2008), as these impact on national and local policies in education and on adult Gypsies and Travellers access to, and participation in, education and literacy provision. Sen (1999:156) regards literacy and education as essential for participation in the political process asserting that, "In a democracy people tend to get what they demand and more crucially do not get what they do not demand." To what extent is the participation by Gypsies and Travellers in the democratic process affected by literacy, discourse and education?

3.1. Literacy / illiteracy: historically situated binary divisions.

Theories of literacy as a situated social practice are sometimes viewed as oppositional to theories of literacy as a technical skill and an individual cognitive process. The historical and social context, in which both theories developed, is outlined below.

3.1.1. The Great Divide

Until the nineteenth century and the introduction of universal education in western countries, the ability to read and write was the province of those who could afford education, and those in government, administration and the church. For the majority of

the population reading and writing was useful, but not essential, and communication continued to be predominantly oral. The introduction of universal schooling in England in the nineteenth century led to an unrealised expectation of universal literacy and a number of important debates around the significance of literacy acquisition. At the same time, the increased emphasis on the ability to read and write in the industrialised countries combined with the expansion of European powers into Africa, South America and Asia, where many societies were not literate, contributed to a binary literate/ non-literate division. Literate peoples were seen as educated and knowledgeable, non-literate peoples as uneducated, illiterate and ignorant.

A significant body of literature has linked the acquisition of textual literacy - the ability to read and write - to the development of cognitive functioning, particularly conceptual and abstract functioning, and the inability to read and write became equated with a lack of cognitive skills (Scribner, 1968; Greenfield, 1972; Olson, 1977; Goody, 1977; Hildeyard and Olson, 1978). Goody (1977) argued that there is a dichotomy between literate and non-literate societies. Greenfield (1972) suggested that her research among Wolof children in West Africa showed that written language as taught in school was the basis for development of context-independent abstract thought. Referring to Olson (1977) Scribner and Cole (1988:242) suggested that the use of written text,

May lead to a mode of thinking which derives generalisations about reality from purely linguistic, as contrasted to, empirical observations.

Thus illiterate communities and individuals were seen to relate to the concrete and the practical, unable to reflect on abstract ideas and concepts and unable to develop the same level of cognitive thought as those who were literate. The comment by a South American official that those who cannot read and write are like animals is perhaps an extreme, but not isolated, example (Archer and Costello, 1990). Theories correlating literate individuals and communities with intelligence, and "illiterate" individuals and communities with ignorance were not confined to "developing" countries.

Vytgosky (1962) believed that language development played an important role in developing cognitive thought, intellectual activity and meta-cognition and that writing and speech involved a different set of psychological functions.

3.1.2. Challenges to the "Great Divide"

Though influential, these theories linking the acquisition of literacy to cognitive development were not universal. Labov (1973), Stubbs (1980), Finnegan (1981) and Levi-Strauss (1996) all challenged the concepts. Evans-Pritchard (1937) asserted that the Azande's belief in witchcraft in West Africa was based on the same thought processes as scientific thinking. Finnegan (1981:6) argued that,

Different cultures lay different emphasis on ...written learning and that the specific uses and purposes of oral media vary at different times and places.

Street (1988) argued that these deficit concepts derived from ethnocentric thinking and a lack of understanding on the part of the observer. He argued that the concept of a fundamental division between the intellectual ability of literate and non-literate individuals and communities sustained the nineteenth century concept of civilised and not-civilised; the argument, he states, is not that,

....A culture has acquired technological skills such as literacy because it is intellectually superiorRather it is claimed that a culture is intellectually superior because it has acquired that technology (Street, 1988:238).

These challenges to the theory of a "Great Divide" between oral and literate culture led to the reappraisal of "illiterate" cultures and to a critique of the Eurocentric "interchange between the scholarly and the imaginative construction of ideas about the Orient" (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2001:2). Extensive research into the utilisation of literacy in daily life led to an increasing recognition of different values and different communicative practices. These different theories and conceptions of literacy frame the concepts and content of many adult literacy programmes.

3.2. Theories of adult literacy

In this section I describe the development of theories of literacy and education, and the division between the concept of literacy as a neutral individual cognitive skill and the concept of socially and culturally situated literacies. These theories relate to four main models of adult literacy provision, identified by Lytle and Wolfe (1989), and expanded by Papen (2005) and McCaffery et al., (2007). - literacy as skills, literacy as tasks, literacy as a situated social practice and literacy as transformation or "critical literacies". The first two models, literacy as a cognitive skill and literacy for tasks, view literacy as reading and writing, as a neutral skill serving functional purposes; literacy as situated social practice relates to humanist views of personal and communal development and cultural communicative practices, and the fourth, literacy for social transformation, views literacy as a tool for conscientisation, critiquing the existing social order and instituting action for change. These models frame the delivery of adult literacy provision, the curriculum, and the teaching. Each has its advocates. I conclude this section by outlining the different domains in which literacy is required.

3.2.1. Literacy as a technical skill

This model of literacy, predominant in school education, focuses on reading and writing and conceptualises it as a set of transferable skills. Street (1984) called this the "autonomous" model, in the sense that literacy was seen as independent, universal skills 'autonomous' of specific social contexts. Theories of adult learning inevitably draw on, and are influenced by theories of children's learning; the skills model of adult literacy is closely associated with the concept of reading as a taught skill and Barton (1994) notes that literacy is often regarded as the first step in the education process. The traditional concept of reading is of transferring thoughts to paper or other media and extrapolating meaning from inscribed symbols. In alphabetic writing systems such as English, written words are composed of letters - individual letters and groups of letters represent sounds, individual words composed of groups of letters are units of meaning, and combinations of words are encoded utterances or speech acts. Comprehension is the active process of constructing and extracting meaning from the text.

Though discredited as a teaching method in the 1960s and 1970s, this focus on the phoneme/grapheme relationship, developing phoneme awareness, hearing the different sounds, and phonics - associating the sound and the symbol- has again become the preferred method of teaching in schools. Reading, according to the UK National Literacy Strategy, is to be taught either through synthetic phonics which teaches learners to convert letters into sounds and then blend the sounds together to form words, or analytic phonics in which the learner starts with a whole word or sentence and then analyses the sounds to determine the meaning (Beard, 1993). Proponents of both synthetic and analytical phonics stress the importance of learning the technical aspects of reading (Adams, 1994; Brooks, 2003). Some critiques of adult literacy programmes argue that many of those teaching do not have a sufficient understanding of phonemes or phonics (Brooks et al., 2007).

A focus on teaching literacy as a technical skill has tended to dominate large literacy programmes in both developed and low income countries. In countries such as Nigeria, India, Egypt and Yemen where resources are limited, a common approach is the development of a national primer for adults to guide both teacher and learner through the learning process. There is little scope for flexibility. Primers are often centrally produced and used in all areas of the country, often in very different cultural and social contexts with little attention given to the specific learning needs and purposes of participants (Street, 1984; Rogers, 2000; Robinson-Pant, 2001).

At the beginning of the UK literacy campaign in the 1970s, provision was student-centered and responsive to individual requirements and aspirations. This changed in the late 1980s to a greater emphasis on employment-related skills and an increasing concern for national standards. Following the Moser report in 1999, a core national curriculum and national tests were introduced and Skills for Life was launched in 2001. This linked poverty with low literacy skills and improved literacy with employability, vocational skills and income. Low literacy skills were in part blamed for low productivity (Papen, 2005:119-120). The Adult Literacy Core Curriculum follows the same principles as the National Curriculum for schools, and details the competencies and skills required for speaking, listening, reading and writing at each of five levels - Entry Levels 1, 2 and 3, Level 1 and Level 2 (BSA

2001:4). The levels correspond to both the National Qualifications Framework and the National Curriculum for Schools and the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum quotes from the latter:

The ...Curriculum secures...for all, irrespective of social background, culture, race, gender, differences in ability and disabilities, an entitlement to a number of areas of learning and to develop knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes necessary for their self- fulfilment and development as active and responsible citizens (DfEE, 1999 quoted in BSA, 2001:2).

Teaching methods are not prescribed. The teacher is able to determine the most effective teaching methods and materials to achieve the competencies required at each level.

3.2.2. Literacy as tasks

This model focuses on the reading and writing skills required for everyday domestic or work-related tasks. This concept of literacy as functionality was first described by UNESCO in 1962, adopted in 1978, and used as its working definition in UNESCO, (2005) *Literacy for Life 2006*.

A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his (sic) group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the communities development (UNESCO, 2005:30).

As the definition states, the tasks can be required by an individual or a community. The first large scale Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) from 1965 to 1975 was linked to economic productivity and economic growth and carried out in areas undergoing rapid economic expansion (UNESCO, 1965). Materials used in the EWLP related to particular tasks such as using pesticides and spraying crops (UNESCO, 1976). Evaluations of the programme varied. Some organisations including the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) reported considerable success²³; other reports published by UNESCO (1968) were mixed²⁴.

Functional literacy programmes varied considerably in different countries. In South Africa a primer-based adult literacy course was designed to teach black domestic servants the literacy

²³ Accessed from <http://www.sil.org/literacy/lit90/litedeve.htm> on 29.Nov. 2010.

²⁴ Accessed from http://www.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?catno=160196&set=4CF42953_2_193&gp=1&lin=1&ll=1 on 29.Nov. 2010.

required to work in white households²⁵. A national functional literacy programme in the Philippines included the skills and competencies – cognitive, affective and behavioural – required at a series of levels for active citizenship (McCaffery et al., 2007:62). A successful and popular programme combining literacy and health was mounted by World Education, a health NGO, in Luxor, Egypt in 2002. Family literacy programmes such as the World Family Literacy Programme in Mali which combined child rearing, support for school education and literacy for adults can also be categorised as functional (McCaffery et al., 2007:67).

In the UK, the central literacy unit, the Adult Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU), produced a guide for tutors entitled *An Approach to Functional Literacy* (1987), which addressed the specific tasks people needed in everyday situations. Among examples of this approach were the book *Read your Way to Bake a Cake* (1976) and a pack of worksheets entitled *Benefits* (1980) produced at the peak of unemployment in the 1980s. Specific activities could be selected for particular participants from among the contents. Another method of situated teaching was to use task-related materials, sometimes termed “everyday materials”. In the 1970s this was common practice in the UK, partly due to the lack of published materials, but also to a focus on the reading required for particular tasks.

In countries where women were discouraged from working outside the home, women’s health, child nutrition, family hygiene and support for children in school were common topics for functional literacy programmes. Such programmes, which incorporate the necessary literacy into the particular skills or work a person undertakes, have features in common with “embedded literacy” – literacy as a component of work-related courses. Rogers (2000) gives an example of different interpretations of functional literacy. The first involves programmes for fisher folk to enable them to learn to read and write through material relating to fishing. The second relates to programmes in which potential participants are required to achieve a level of literacy before being accepted on a fishing improvement programme. In some cases the two activities may be taught separately by different people with very little cross-referencing.

²⁵ *A Practical Course for Housewives and Domestic* (1983).

Work-based literacy and work-based learning are often delivered on employer's premises and generally associated with the particular tasks required by the employer. Unions, as well as management were instrumental in establishing programmes for their members as in Brighton for waste collection operatives in 2005 and railway workers in 2007²⁶.

3.2.3. Literacy and social transformation

The concept of literacy as social transformation is to encourage critical reflection at the societal, communal and individual level, whereas the concept of situated literacies is to explore and address literacies in particular contexts. There are similarities in the two concepts as both embed literacy in social and cultural issues but transformational literacy involves people:

Deciding for themselves what is 'really useful literacy' and using it to act individually and collectively on their circumstances to take greater control over them (Crowther et al., 2001:4).

Literacy for social transformation is sometimes also referred to as "critical literacy" or "critical literacies". These descriptors view literacy as an "agent for change".

It involves learning to be critical readers and writers in order to detect and handle the inherently ideological dimension of literacy and the role of literacy in the enactment and production of power (Crowther et al., 2001:4).

In the post-revolution campaign in Russia, in the Cuban Literacy Campaign and in the Sandinista Nicaraguan Campaign, "Adult education and community participation were key elements in strategies for transformation" (Mayo, 1997:69). The Sandinista programme was based on the theories of Paulo Freire (1974), possibly the greatest exponent of literacy for social transformation. Freire spoke of "reading the world", analysing the social situation and power dynamics in order to take action for change (Freire and Macedo, 1987:25). Father Cardinal, the Director of the National Coordinating Office stated that:

The Revolution and Literacy Crusade are one in purpose and mission...to transform the nation.....We believe that in order to create a new nation we have to begin with an education that liberates people (Father Cardinal, 1985 quoted by Mayo, 1997:69).

²⁶ May 2006: Personal visits to the programmes for railway workers and waste collection operatives.

In contrast the ambitious National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) launched in India in 1978 with a high level of professionalism and commitment, had limited success. Duke (1985) considered it a 'top down' programme which did not relate sufficiently to local conditions and needs. He suggested that the low level of success was, in part,

A failure of nerve: mobilization of the poor seemed too dangerous.....
It was easier to adopt purely literacy objectives (Duke, 1985:69-79).

All societies have their own particular communicative practices, many of which do not involve reading and writing, but which serve their communicative purposes, yet until the introduction of communication technology, information beyond the boundaries of the immediate society was acquired through direct contact, or through reading. A lack of reading and writing ability reduced opportunities for individuals and communities to acquire and disseminate new information. Technological developments in the last twenty years, such as the worldwide web and communication sites like Facebook, in which images dominate and often replace text, have significantly enhanced possibilities for wider communication, yet these are not always welcomed by those who seek control. Governments in some countries, for example in China, limit this access to wider knowledge, as did rulers and religious bodies in previous centuries.

In Europe translating the Bible from Latin to enable people to read the word of God successfully challenged the power of the Catholic Church. In the eighteenth century, a few months before the French Revolution, the Attorney General of France said, "They are pursuing a fatal policy, they are teaching people to read and write" (quoted by Oxenham, 1980:11). A more literate and more vocal population in predominantly Islamic northern Nigeria in the late 90s may not have been in the best interest of those in power. Two very different literacy schemes in the mid 80s in South Africa during the apartheid era provide very clear examples of the contrast between literacy for liberation and literacy for

domestication. Their reading materials clearly demonstrate this²⁷. The contrast between these two examples is perhaps extreme, but the underlying principles apply widely. As Lankshear states, becoming literate can involve,

Learning to be critical readers and writers in order to detect and handle the inherently ideological dimension of literacy and the role of literacy in the enactment and production of power (Lankshear et al., 1997).

Experience in the UK also suggested literacy can be seen as threatening. During the Thatcher government, the local MP complained of radical teaching at the Friends Centre in Brighton. The grant for the national student newspaper *Write First Time* was withdrawn by the central literacy unit two years after an MP complained that a piece of student writing criticised the government (Mace, 1979; Hamilton and Hillier, 2006). In the Gypsy and Traveller context, Hancock (2010), one of the few successful Romani academics, entitled his book *Danger! Educated Gypsy*.

A classic example of the transformational approach in the international context can be found in the ActionAid REFLECT programme developed in the 1990s. Merging the research techniques of participatory rural appraisal developed by Robert Chambers (1997) and the concepts of Paolo Freire (1974), with some reference to NLS, REFLECT aimed to create local contextually relevant literacy programmes with the additional potential of changing immediate circumstances. A "Mother Manual" explained these techniques in detail and gave the literacy facilitators clear instructions. Some smaller programmes²⁸ have been reasonably successful in relating content to context but without a teacher's guide to follow, many tutors and facilitators found it difficult (McCaffery, 2005). The practical instruction provided by the REFLECT manual gave programme organisers greater ability to develop training programmes and materials based on analysis of the local situation.

²⁷ *A Practical Course for Housewives and Domestic* (1983) and the *Story of Nokukhanya Luthulie* (Learn and Teach. Volume 9 1983:9).

²⁸ Nigeria Community Education Project, 1997 – 2002 and Capacity Enhancement for Lifelong Learning, Egypt, 2001 -2004.

3.2.4. Situated literacies (NLS).

In contrast to the concept of literacy as skills and tasks, literacy as situated social practice, situated literacies and the socio-cultural or the socio-linguistics model, emanate from New Literacy Studies as they all refer to literacy as culturally and contextually situated. These concepts have similarities with literacy for transformation but, though ideological, are less focused on changing the social order.

The theories of situated literacies developed in different contexts at different times in the industrialised and the developing world. These theories have led to detailed analyses of how people in different communities use literacy for the different purposes required by their social and cultural situation. Literacy conceptualised as social practice includes different aspects – social literacies, community literacies and literacy for livelihoods.

In South Carolina Shirley Bryce-Heath analysed literacy practices in three communities in her seminal work *What no Bedtime Story Means?* (Heath, 1983). She described the cultural nature of parents' literacy practices as they introduced books to their preschool children. This work informed Street whose important book *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (1984) challenged the theory of literacy as a set of abstract and transferable skills. Based on fieldwork in an Iranian community termed illiterate by the authorities, he noted a wide variety of literacy uses. He argued that communicative practices involving reading and writing are deeply embedded in social, cultural, economic and political contexts and literacy should not be regarded as a neutral technical process, an "independent variable" transferable to all contexts (Street, 1984:2). He termed this neutral technical process the "autonomous" model of literacy and argued in contrast that all literacy is "ideological", implicated in power relations and embedded in specific cultural meanings and practices. Literacy programmes must therefore be contextually and culturally situated if they are to be successful.

Heath (1983:80) first developed the concept of literacy events stating that a "literacy event" is:

An occasion in which a piece of writing or reading is integral to the nature of the participant interactions and their interpretive processes.

The concept of “events” assists in identifying the specific literacy tasks people engage in. Street expanded this to develop the theory of literacy “events” and “practices”. Literacy “events” can be described as specific literacy “happenings”. Street (1995:2) stated that

“Literacy practices” refers to both behaviour and the social and cultural conceptualisations that give meaning to the uses of reading and writing. Literacy practices incorporate not only ‘literacy events’, as empirical occasions to which literacy is integral, but also folk models of those events and the ideological preconceptions underpinning them.

A key feature of New Literacy Studies was the use of ethnographic methods to identify communities’ literacy events and practices. This distinction between specific activities which involved reading or writing increased interest among researchers who undertook important ethnographic studies on the use of literacies in different communities. These studies included literacy in the northern town of Lancaster, England (Barton and Hamilton, 1998), literacy usage in the household and in the public sphere in China (Stites, 2001), economic uses of literacy among peasants in Bangladesh (Maddox, 2001), literacy in Peru (Aikman, 2001) and in Cameroon (Cheffy, 2008). Literature on adult literacy among nomadic and travelling communities included literacy among the Fulani (Ezeomah, 2006), the Rabari (Dyer and Choksi, 2001; Dyer, 2006) as well as on the education of children (Bosch, 2006; Carr-Hill, 2006; Le Roux, 1999). These studies focused on local text mediated social and cultural interactions, literacy usage and practice and led to the concept of “literacies” – no single literacy but many literacies. The majority of studies were undertaken to increase understanding of literacy in the “development” context of low income countries and they problematise the dominant discourse of literacy as important for increasing economic production.

The concepts of socially conscious and learner-centered programmes practiced in UK in the 1970’s are also relevant to Gypsies and Travellers. Whether these literacy programmes can be categorised under the NLS approach is open to discussion. Formal ethnographic studies were not carried out, but the practical literacy demanded in the environment was researched and the difficult and emotional issues of the time such as unemployment were addressed. While there are difficulties in operationalising NLS in the development context,

the availability of reprographic resources in the UK made possible the instant production of materials according to a student's immediate need (Stock, 1982).

The programmes also incorporated elements from the then current "worker writer" movement, which challenged "the master narrative" and published writing by previously unheard voices. Literacy students were encouraged to construct their own reality and a sense of themselves, their culture and community through the practice of recording their memories and experiences. A contributing factor was the lack of suitable reading materials for adult learners. As the material they produced was relevant to the lives of other learners it was highly motivating, became very popular and, where resources were available, the stories were published and circulated including two stories by Gypsies living in Westborough²⁹. Some of these voices were critical of the existing social order but this was an outcome rather than the purpose and I would refer to these programmes as 'situated' rather than 'transformational'.

Advocates of literacy as a social practice embedded in institutional and cultural relationships recognise, but place less emphasis, on the cognitive process of reading and writing or the technical skills required. Meaning is seen as a sociological process not a private internal cognitive state or event (Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1997). The concept of literacy as an internal psychoanalytical process is minimised. There is little in the NLS literature on how children or adults master the technical processes of reading and writing as outlined above (cf. 3.2.1.) and no consideration of the merits of synthetic or analytical phonics (Brooks' et. al., 2007). The focus of NLS is on the context and the situated text, not the learning process.

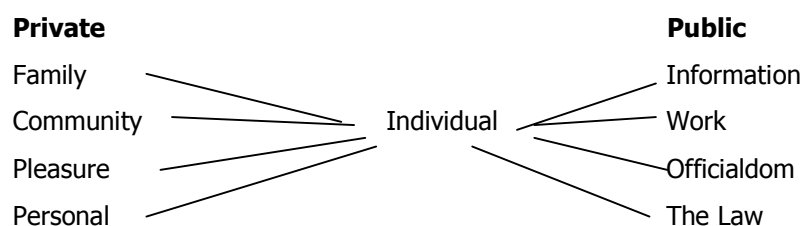
3.2.5. Literacy in the personal and public domains

The ethnographic studies of literacy usage, cited above, identified multiple uses of literacy and multiple literacies which can be categorised into different domains. Fig 3.1 below shows the broad domains of public and private usage. Private usage refers to the textual

²⁹ *Bender Tents* by Eddie Ayres (1976) and *Ferretting* by Dave Ives (1976) Basingstoke: MacMillan.

literacy used within the family and for personal communication; the public domain refers to textual literacy used or required outside the family.

Fig. 3.1 Multi uses of textual literacy in the private and public domains



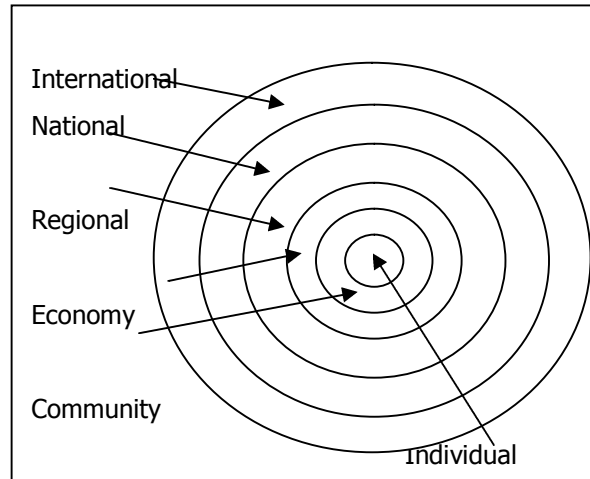
The categories in both domains can be subdivided. In the family for example, literacy is required for many purposes - reading medical directions, making and keeping inoculation appointments, reading stories to children, supporting children in school, writing and receiving notes from the teacher and for domestic tasks such as shopping and cooking. Family tasks involving literacy also require interacting with bureaucracy. Marriages, births and deaths have to be registered. Bank accounts, payment of rent or mortgage, property rights, and payment of local and national taxes all require reading and writing. All these areas normally require forms to be completed. The same analysis of usage can be made for the other private and public areas.

A programme of learning based on an individual's requirements in any of these areas would be exemplary, but translating the different domains into programmes of learning has, as stated above, proved difficult. Moreover, though literacy may be a requirement in all these situations, many people with poor literacy skills in both the industrialised world and the developing world effectively negotiate their way through the tasks by co-operating with others or seeking assistance inside or outside the family. Some Gypsies and Travellers will have sufficient literacy skills to handle all the domains, others will be able to handle some and others may have no reading and writing abilities and like other people with very poor literacy skills, either ignore or negotiate the public domain.

All the domains cited above are framed by the wider political and social context as

demonstrated in Fig.3.2. These wider contexts impact on the literacy required, for example, for new work processes demanded by the global economy which require particular practices and particular discourses and vocabularies.

Fig. 3.2 Situated Contexts



These contexts all have particular literacy practices, both textual and oral which have to be negotiated.

The content of women's literacy programmes is largely determined by the context, whether patriarchal or gender sensitive. The impact on women of becoming literate has also been an important theme (Bown 1991; Robinson-Pant 2004; Zubair, 2004; Chopra, 2004), and the important work of Rockhill (1987) encapsulated in the title of her book, *"Literacy as threat/desire: longing to be SOMEBODY"*.

3.3. Language and discourse

So far this chapter has focused on the definition of literacy as "able to read and write" and the practical tasks for which textual literacy is required, not on the wider uses or meanings of literacy in the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* - "educated" or "cultured" or having "knowledge or competence" or its antonyms "ignorance, illiteracy, illiterateness"³⁰. I now

³⁰ Accessed from <http://Merriam-webster.com> on Nov 24 2010

consider some of these meanings in the light of theories of education, cognitive development and discourse as these are relevant to Gypsies and Travellers perceptions.

The literacy tasks identified in the public domain in Fig 3.1., demand knowledge and the ability to communicate in different situations – at work, with officials, to gain information and with the legal aspects governing our lives. These domains are situated in social and political contexts and each has a particular language and a particular way of presenting information - a particular discourse or as Gee (1996) states, “Discourses”, as I explain below. Though referred to by Fairclough (2003:3), and Papen (2005), the impact of early language acquisition and the development of different discourses on intellectual and cognitive development and on educational achievement are not generally highlighted by NLS literacy theorists.

3.3.1. Language and cognitive development

As indicated above, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary links literacy to knowledge and competence, and illiteracy to ignorance. This definition when applied in educational contexts has important consequences for individuals and communities. In most societies people who have had little schooling perceive themselves as uneducated and learning to read and write enhances their self confidence and their relationship with others (Kassam, 1979; McCaffery et al., 2000; Eldred, 2005; Cheffy, 2008). This applies to communities as well as individuals. At the completion of the literacy project in Nigeria a Fulani clan leader stated that one result was that, “People talk to each other now,” (British Council, 2002:10).

The equation of literacy with intelligence and knowledge is not confined to societies in the global South. The Gypsies and Travellers, I interviewed and observed, though aware of these generalisations, did not equate literacy with intelligence, as I shall evidence.

Theories of differential intellectual ability in literate and non-literate societies developed in different contexts. In England and the USA, concern at the apparent underachievement in formal education of minorities and children from “disadvantaged” communities was theorised as the result of insufficiently developed language. In the US these theories were developed through research on the underachievement of black children. Bereiter and

Englemann (1966:113) argued that Non Standard English (NSE) was "basically a non-logical mode of expressive behaviour". They developed a programme of language development for black pre-school children which was widely used on the Head Start Programme in the 1960s to compensate for their supposedly linguistically deprived backgrounds³¹.

In England, Bernstein (1971) explored the low academic achievement of working class children, and developed his theory of "elaborated" and "restricted" codes. He theorised that young children learn communication structures and ways of expressing themselves from their family environment and that "working class" children learn a "restricted" code which is context-dependent, particularistic and local:

The speech is played out against a background of communal, self consciously held interests which removes the need to verbalise subjective intent and make it explicit. The meanings will be condensed (Bernstein 1971:92).

In contrast, middle class children learn an "elaborated" code in their family setting. The language is complex and structured and does not rely on subconscious understanding of meaning or context. It also has many aspects in common with the language and discourse used in formal education from the moment the child enters school. The middle class child therefore has the language and communicative structures of the school which the "disadvantaged" child does not. As a result, speakers of "restricted" codes have to:

Translate and mediate through the logically simpler language structure of [their] own class to make it personally meaningful. Where he cannot make this translation he fails to understand and is left puzzled (Bernstein 1971:47).

Honey (1988:176) believed that a lack of ability to handle Standard English put the speaker at an "unfair disadvantage not only in schooling but in any crucial encounter outside his own speech community".

These "deficit" theories were challenged by those who argued that all languages and dialects are of equal value and the development of abstract thought is not dependent on

³¹ Language Lift was a similar language development programme for high school students in 1966-68.

the acquisition of textual literacy (Labov, 1973, 1988; Stubbs, 1980; Street, 1984; Gee, 1990, 1996; Lankshear, 1997). Labov's challenge was his analysis of Afro-American slang in New York which demonstrated that abstract reasoning was very much present in the linguistic exchanges. Street (1984) supported this theory arguing that linguistic exchange, whether oral or textual, is a situated activity dependent on the participants who are operating within a particular cultural context at a particular time and place. Different communities develop different communicative practices and so there is no single literacy, but multiple "literacies" (Street, 1984, 1993; Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1997). Non-standard English, dialects and "restricted" codes may all have their own coherent structure and all may be capable of expressing abstract ideas and concepts, but these are expressed differently. Heath (1983) suggested that the "elaborated" code is linguistically no more complex than the "restricted" code. The advantage of the "elaborated" code is that it has affinity with the codes used in school and by the powerful. "Restricted" is a pejorative term. Bourdieu (1991), as is explained below, linked these different ways of speaking to the power dynamics of society.

3.3.2. Primary and secondary discourses

In his book *Social Linguistics and Literacies*, first printed in 1990 and expanded in 1996, Gee took the impact of early language learning and socialisation a stage further by expanding the concept of different ways of speaking in different communities. He stated that:

A discourse is any stretch of language (spoken, written, signed) which 'hangs' together' to make sense to some community of people who use this language (Gee, 1990:101).

He continued by saying "sense making is embedded in society and social institutions (such as families and schools" (Gee, 1990:103).

He quoted Dracula's memorable statement, "I know the grammar and the words, but yet I know not how to speak them". Dracula is afraid that his "way of speaking" will draw uninvited attention to him (Ibid 1990:90). Gee analyses speech and lists five systems that make up discourses - prosody, cohesion, discourse organisation, contextualisation and

thematic organisation -which together communicate more than the literal message (Gee 1996:94-106).

He argued that language is learnt in the family and the community at an early age and termed this the primary discourse. In primary discourses, language, vocabulary and structure are used within the context of familiarity of family and community and involve shared values, beliefs and understanding the world.

Gee argued that other ways of speaking, feeling and thinking, are not acquired in the domestic and community setting, but are learned in different contexts and different institutional settings included educational contexts. These he termed secondary Discourses, with a capital 'D'.

A *Discourse* is a socially accepted association among ways of using language,....of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a socially meaningful group, or 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role' (Gee, 1996:131).

He maintains these Discourse are learnt outside the home and the immediate community. Different institutions develop different secondary Discourses, which those who enter them are required to learn in order to communicate effectively. The Discourses, for example in medicine, the law and education, differ, but analysing language patterns among different groups, Gee (1996), like Bernstein (1971), found that those whose primary discourse and language patterns were similar to those of secondary Discourses were advantaged, and in order to achieve educationally those with different primary discourses were required to acquire or learn the secondary Discourse of educational institutions. He asserted that becoming fluent in the secondary Discourse of education necessitated absorbing the culture of the Discourse, the feelings, values and beliefs, social practices and ways of knowledge that often conflicted with their own. Formal education consists of "conceptually organised rule bound belief systems about what exists, about how to get goals, about what is to be valued (Bruner, 1998:96).

What the school does, its ritual, its ceremonies, authority relationshipsits very image of conduct, character and manner can modify or change pupils' role as it has initially been shaped by the family (Bernstein, 1971:258)

As we shall see, this tension and conflict between the values and attitudes of their primary discourse and those of the secondary Discourse of the school is clearly recognised by Gypsies and Travellers.

One of the differences between primary discourses and secondary Discourses is that primary discourses are immediate and assume communal shared understandings, whereas the secondary and institutional Discourses of bureaucracy are detached from the immediate situation and appear more neutral and objective. Those who advocate the importance of secondary Discourses claim that it enables people with no shared cultural or communal understanding to communicate.

3. 3. 3. Language and power

The issue of primary discourse and secondary Discourses relates directly to structures of power and control of the kind I will be discussing throughout this thesis. Those whose primary discourses and culture have a correspondence with the education system have established their culture and discourse as the route to power, wealth and status. Acquisition of "Standard English" as the dominant language through education, asserts the hegemony of the ruling class (Dale et al., 1976; Graff, 1979; Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1997). Bourdieu's (1991) concept of power through language and discourse provided a further theoretical framework for analysing the linguistic exchanges between Gypsies and Travellers and the officials of the sedentary community.

Bourdieu (1991:5-6) states that:

A particular set of linguistic practices has emerged as the dominant and legitimate language and other languages or dialects have been subordinated to it..... [This] would favour those who already possessed the official language as part of their linguistic competence, while those who knew only a local dialect would become part of a political and linguistic unit in which their traditional competence was subordinated and devalued.

Grammar books, dictionaries and texts and the development of formal education with its standards of achievements provide the possibility of access to some of the instruments of power. Marginalised communities without this formal education, either because it was denied to them, or because they were unable to utilise it, are, according to Bourdieu, on the receiving end of this hierarchy of power conferred through language which he describes as 'symbolic power' or 'symbolic violence' and they are without the competence to address it:

Everyday linguistic exchanges [are] situated encounters between agents endowed with socially constructed resources and competencies in such a way that every linguistic interaction, however personal and insignificant it may seem bears the traces of the social structure that it both expresses and helps to reproduce (Bourdieu, 1991:2).

The concept of 'habitus' is similar to Gee's concept of the formation of primary discourse and concerns how language is formed through a series of experiences and dispositions related to our development as children and adults, which inculcate people into their community culture, modes of education, communicative practices and survival mechanisms. Habitus is also a disposition which generates practices, perceptions and attitudes (Bourdieu 1991:12) and a "feel for the game" - a sense of what is appropriate in certain circumstances and what is not, (Bourdieu 1991:13). This interacts with "field", the wider setting and social context, so that the language in any given situation is a socially constructed phenomenon.

Bourdieu called this a 'structured space' in which positions and interactions are determined by different kinds of resources or 'capital' - economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. He refers to the ability to enter a different discourse as symbolic capital – similar to the ability to change currencies, when crossing national boundaries. The prestige, in which the speaker is held, transposes into his speech (Bourdieu, 1991:5; Gee, 1996:124). This does not imply that the subordinated language and form of expression is inadequate or inferior, or that it is 'cognitively deprived', only that it does not carry the same social and cultural weight as the discourse that has been recognised as "official" in the particular field – it does not have the same exchange value.

Gee (1996) and Lankshear (1997) argue that people can move beyond acculturation in their primary discourse into a knowledge and understanding of two or more secondary Discourses to become bi-discoursal; to have meta-linguistic knowledge and the ability to engage and challenge secondary Discourse speakers. To what extent do Gypsies and Travellers take on such Discourses and how far does the use of their own community discourse disadvantage them in contexts where secondary Discourses are required?

3.4. Construction and control

The language of discourses both reflects and constructs our world. Foucault (1972) argues that power operates through language and discourse and can be subtle and unrecognised; operating through a variety of mechanisms that are not easily identifiable including the rules and regulations of bureaucratic structures dispensed by apparently neutral public officials who may be unaware of their role in the process. Fairclough (2003:50) following Foucault, places discourse and language at the heart of social practices and processes:

Language does not simply communicate meaning; it controls, constructs, positions; it is political and ideological establishing, maintaining and changing power relations and as such is a site of struggle (Fairclough, 2003:67).

An example of this control is Kathryn Jones' (2000) insightful account of how a part-time worker at a cow auction in Wales assisted farmers to complete the forms on movements of cattle as required by the European Union. Jones argued that the part-time worker was acting as the intermediary between the farmers and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:

[He] was positioned as a MAFF delegate who undertakes the face-work commitment of MAFF's bureaucratic system, mediating literacy practices that incorporated farmers within its abstract bureaucratic order (Jones, 2000:78).

She argued that bureaucracy is a "mechanism for exerting power and control over a population" (Jones, 2000:73). She asserted that, for most people, bureaucracies are large faceless organisations within which,

Employees take on the position of institution delegates administering a bureaucratic system which, ultimately they have no responsibility for and have no control over (Jones 2000:75).

The discourses (in Gee's terms, Discourses) required in such contexts are, according to Foucault, heavily power laden even if the participants are not consciously aware of this: a feature that is often the case in the way UK institutions relate to Gypsies and Travellers.

3.4.1. Social construction

"Discourse" is also used in social theory and analysis to refer to "different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice" (Fairclough, 2003:3):

Discursive practice is constitutive in both conventional and creative ways: it contributes to reproducing society (social identities, social relationships, systems of knowledge and belief) in a dialectical relationship (Fairclough, 2003:65).

As I pursued the research, I noted how both primary discourse and secondary Discourses in the sedentary community perceived and structured Gypsies and Travellers.

Language is itself the construction of reality.... Discourses are sets of statements, which together form a consistent position about something....discourses give expression to an opinion, and this opinion is based on shared beliefs, assumptions and valuesand are an important medium through which certain positions are being spread (Papen, 2005:13).

Gypsies and Travellers' identity has largely been constructed and framed in the discourses of the sedentary community in private, in public, and among officials and politicians and historians (Hancock, 2010). These frequently expressed considerable hostility towards Gypsies and Travellers. Certain beliefs and attitudes, often denied as prejudicial, appeared normalised and were accepted as true statements legitimising a range of actions. These discourses framed Gypsies' and Travellers' access to, and participation in, formal schooling and adult literacy.

Analysing these d/Discourses enables us to identify the process and means by which Gypsy and Traveller identities are constructed by the sedentary community. Some analysts hold the media primarily responsible for these constructions and positionings. Morris

(2006) analysed the media campaign following the announcement by John Prescott, then Deputy Prime Minister, that local authorities should include Gypsies and Travellers in their accommodation policies. She quoted the now infamous headlines to front pages articles such as "*Stamp on the Camps*"³² and "*Sun War for Gypsy Free-for-All*" and numerous others including "*And they steal babies*"³³ and argued that the media is responsible for popular perception. Though Fairclough (1992:110) suggested that "The news media can be regarded as affecting the ideological work of transmitting the voices of power in a disguised and covert form", he also argued that the media represents and reflects public perceptions which are formed, developed and transmitted through society's complex structures of power and domination. The media reports and repeats "givens" or presuppositions which correspond to general opinion or "what people tend to say" (Fairclough, 1999:120-121).

Analysis of these headlines demonstrates virulent attitudes. To "stamp" suggests harming, squashing underfoot, destroying; the use of "war" suggests total hostility and victory or defeat and correlates with the frequently used "invasion", creating images of hostile forces coming from "outside".

The attitudes expressed in these discourses have a direct influence on policy and practice in education and help establish the context for the present study. In Chapter 5, I give specific examples of the discourses of the sedentary community in the three research authorities and the attitudes towards Gypsies and Travellers these reveal and in Chapter 8 I give examples of the secondary Discourse of the police and the attitudes this reflects. Here I present some of the theories writers and academics have put forward to explain these attitudes.

An example of the normalisation of beliefs and attitudes is to be found in common statements about Gypsies and Travellers which frequently go unchallenged is the word "gypsy" which conjures up popular images of the dark haired "romantic gypsy" or alternatively the "dirty thieving gyppo" or "dirty thieving pikey". Additionally the

³² Sun Newspaper: April 9 2004

³³ Bristol Evening Post: March 28 1998

stereotypical image of the dark haired Gypsy equates with male sexual fantasies of colonial imagination and the tempting exoticism of the female "other" (De Groot, 1991). The same attention to physical characteristics can be used to mark deviance and difference within European society (Hallam and Street, 2000). The descriptors "dirty" and "thieving" carry the associations of dirt and illegality and are historically persistent abuses of Gypsy character. Both stereotypes place Gypsies outside the wider culture (Bhopal and Myers, 2008:95). Several writers have sought to explore the reason for these negative constructions through discourse and their theories are summarised below.

3.4.2. Sedentarism

McVeigh (1997) theorised the deep-rooted antagonism to Gypsies and Travellers as anti-nomadism and termed it sedentarism to distinguish it from racism though he considered they overlap. He suggested this is based on fear on one hand and resentment for an apparent freedom on the other. While some nomadic people may feel antagonistic towards settled people, the power relations are asymmetric, and McVeigh noted "the incapacity of the nomad to operationalise any anti-sedentary prejudice he or she may hold". He also suggested that one of the bases of fear is historical memory that nomadic people might again pose a threat to sedentary society (McVeigh, 1997:12)³⁴. The denial of ethnic identity to Gypsies and Travellers, as sometimes expressed in "not being a true Romani", changes the Discourse by constructing a different negative identity, that of "work shy, feckless and possibly dangerous" people which serves to negate any potential charge of racism.

George Monbiot (2003)³⁵ suggested that what he terms "acceptable hatred" lies in "an ancient envy of nomadic life" and, like McVeigh, thought that at all levels of society there is a deep and underlying fear of those who do not appear to have become "civilised" and who may yet again pose a threat to sedentary society.

³⁴ E.g. The sack of Rome by "barbarian hordes" and the armies of Genghis Khan.

3.4.3. Us and them

Ni Shuinear (1997) suggested that the change in political circumstances when Ireland became independent in 1922, and likewise the Republic of Ireland in 1948, made a significant difference to Irish attitudes towards Travellers. Previously the common enemy had been the English and there was a feeling of "us" against "them", but after independence the differences between "us" appeared greater and Travellers were constructed as backward, dirty and poor and even genetically inferior (Ni Shuinear, 1997).

Linked to theories of "us" and "them" are concepts of "in groups" and "out groups", the psychological need to "belong" and the fear of rejection through not conforming. Coxhead (2004:29), a former Gypsy and Traveller Police Liaison Officer, referring to Allport (1979), suggested that the powerful cultural desire for conformity might have more sinister overtones and theorised that the rejection of the ethnic status of Gypsies and Travellers might be an extension of the desire to exterminate rather than socially exclude.

While this could be considered extreme, the images of the bonfire at Firlie in East Sussex in 2003, when a cardboard

caravan, with images of women and children inside, was led in procession by a local councillor and thrown on the Guy Fawkes bonfire, suggests otherwise³⁶.

Despite a police investigation no charges were brought. The event is an indication of the power and



pervasiveness of the sedentary community's attitudes towards Gypsies and Travellers.

The bonfire is a harsh reminder of the half million Gypsies who died in the Holocaust, the "Porrajamos, the Great Devouring" as the Gypsies refer to it, and whose relatives received no compensation and were largely forgotten until comparatively recently though "it was the biggest proportionate loss of any race during the Nazi period" (Coxhead, 2004:25).

³⁶ Picture: local newspaper: Nov 6 2003.

Continuing Coxhead's (2004) concept of the need for a group identity, Bhopal and Myers (2008:98-103) present more complex explanations, stating that belonging requires an opposite – a not-belonging or an "other", an "outsider". They argue that Gypsies and Travellers are constructed by society to fulfil this role. They draw on Bauman's (1991) concept of the stranger, the figure that is outside both friends and enemies, who is near and yet far, who comes from nowhere, but is a strong physical and illegitimate presence in the neighbourhood. Morley (2000) equates this space with the concept of home which extends into the immediate neighbourhood as a place of safety and security. Thus a group of Travellers encamped in the park disrupts the use of the park bench³⁷, the outdoor "private" space. Those interviewed saw the proximity of Gypsies or Travellers to their space as threatening and justified their views as they "contribute nothing to society" (cf. 5.1). The concept of occupying space has been developed by Kendall (1997) who argues that unauthorised sites can be seen by both Gypsies and Travellers and by the sedentary community, as a direct challenge to authority.

3.4.4. White "other"

Bhopal and Myers (2008) suggest analogies with the "poor white trash" of America living outside the bounds of "decent" society. This "otherness" and the fear this generates was well portrayed in the film *"Deliverance"* (1967) which gave a disturbing portrayal of poor white people living in the Appalachians, an image far removed from that of suburban middle class Americans.

Bhopal and Myers (2008) also suggest a connection with aspects of poor white communities in Britain, which are sometimes portrayed as, "welfare-reliant, uneducated loudmouths with big families and bigger dogs" (Bhopal and Myers, 2008:193). They point out that "chav", an abbreviation of the Romani "chavvy" or child, used derogatorily to describe the white working class, can be, and is, used interchangeably with "pikey". They argued that this linking to a white working class performs a complex form of cultural racism – a white "other". The concept of association is reinforced by some commonalities – that of occupying the same urban spaces and a common resentment to asylum seekers

³⁷ Personal communication, Brighton: 2009.

and immigrants linked to a sense among Gypsies and Travellers that they have been abandoned.

*They come here and they get what they want, houses and jobs and everything.
We've been here 500 years and what do we get? (Will: PGTG. July.2009)*

Another association with "white otherness" is with rich criminal gangsters. The description of the funeral of Fred Barras, the 16 year old Gypsy shot dead when he broke into a house, echoed the lavish and expensive East End gangster funerals with "seven limousines and lorries loaded with wreaths and bouquets" (Daily Mail, Sept. 1999). The report informed readers of his father's criminal record, portrayed the family as operating "outside society" and therefore not deserving of sympathy (Bhopal and Myers, 2008:212).

These associations with other white groups may be linked to the need to form boundaries between an imagined "normal and decent" society and an "other" perceived as operating outside the nation state, though more recent, more visibly different groups are accepted to a greater extent and at least, partly, seen as belonging within the nation state.

3.4.5. Cultural alienation

Sen (1999) suggested the concept of "cultural alienation" when describing the famine of the 1840s in Ireland which killed a higher proportion of the population than any other famine in recorded history. Alienation may be responsible for the lack of knowledge or interest in the history of Gypsies and Travellers – in the Diaspora from India, the death penalty, slavery in Europe and transportation to the colonies and, until very recently, the Holocaust, and therefore no understanding of this history of oppression unlike that which informs perceptions of Jews and black minorities. Cultural alienation and these past events lend support to the theories of writers such as Bauman (1991), Bhopal and Myers (2008) and Coxhead (2004).

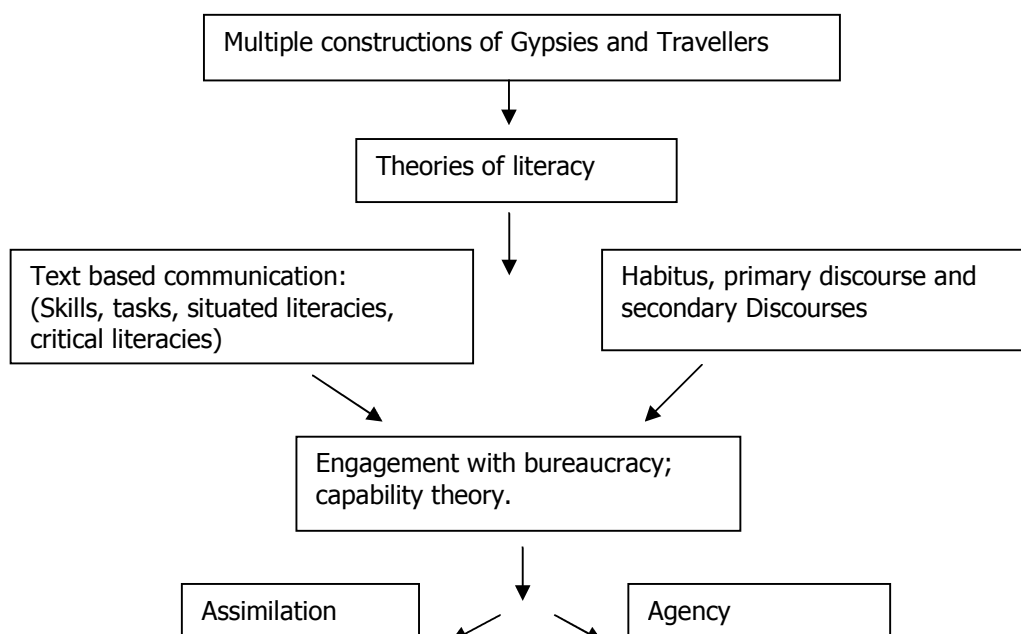
3.4.6. Challenging the dominant Discourses

Sen (1999) argued that illiteracy, the inability to read and write was an "unfreedom" which limited people's capabilities and their capacity for action. Challenging the discourses of the sedentary community and the attitudes these reveal in order to alter or even mediate this

balance of power requires considerable knowledge and good textual and oral literacy skills. Without these, the ability to engage in the democratic process and to make life choices is limited (Sen, 1999). Sen identified literacy with “freedom” and saw it as essential to development and democratic processes. However Sen has not defined his concept of education and his critics have assumed he was referring to formal schooling in an institutional setting, whereas there are a number of well-documented informal alternatives which include programmes of situated and critical literacy for both children and adults that might provide scope for ‘non literate’ groups, as with many Gypsies and Travellers, to acquire the literacy and language skills necessary to operate in contemporary British society (Mace, 1992; Archer and Cottingham, 1996; Nirantur, 1997; Rogers, 2000; Maddox, 2005; NALA, 2005; Newell-Jones and McCaffery, 2007).

3.5. Summary of Theoretical Frameworks

In analysing the use and perception of literacy, textual and oral, among Gypsies and Travellers, I draw on the theories of literacy and d/Discourse discussed above that challenge concepts of communal or individual deficit. New Literacy Studies (NLS) challenge the idea of a “single” literacy and focus on the different uses and purposes for literacy in the culture and context of daily life (Fig. 3.1), which are located in the wider social and political contexts (3.2), themselves embedded in different discourses of power and control. These multiple approaches to literacy combined with the different constructions of Gypsy and Traveller history and identity (Hancock, 2008, 2010; Belton 2010) as outlined in Chapter 1, suggest that there is no certainty only a multitude of ever changing approaches in different times and places. Fig. 3.3 below models the way that I, as a researcher in this historical time and place, try to construct connections between literacy theories, d/Discourse theories and assimilation and agency in the hope that this might provide at least partial understanding of the place of literacy in the current situations of Gypsies and Travellers.

Fig 3.3 Theoretical framework

Theories on textual literacy, language and d/Discourse and habitus provide a framework for considering the communicative practices of Gypsies and Travellers. The ideological, social and political contexts and discourses in which the Gypsies and Travellers are situated, impact on the availability of, and their access to, adult literacy provision. Theories of text-based communication and oral communication, of the kind we have discussed above, relate to theories of capability and provide a complementary framework for describing and analysing Gypsies' and Travellers' situation regarding agency or assimilation. Finally, Sen's concept of education as integral to development and his assertion that a lack of education denies involvement in the political process and constitutes an "unfreedom" is relevant to the situation of Gypsies and Travellers. As we shall see below, Sen's ideas provide an additional perspective for considering the value of literacy, oral and textual, to Gypsies' and Travellers' individual and collective agency.

In analysing the data, I draw upon these various theoretical frameworks in order to address the research questions posed at the outset. Before describing the data in these terms, I will explain the methodological framework within which I conducted the actual research.

Chapter 4. Methodology

The multiple approaches to literacy reviewed in the previous chapter combined with the different constructions of Gypsy and Traveller history and identity outlined in Chapter 2 suggest the adoption of a postmodernist perspective. This chapter presents my epistemological and methodological framework for this research. Adopting a constructivist perspective, it outlines the ethnographic methodology, the challenges of accessing the community and my reflexive stance. It describes the methodology and methods and details the process of gaining access to the community, reflects upon the power relations between researchers and researched and the ethical considerations involved in researching a marginalised community. The processes of recording, transcribing and analysing the data are detailed in the appropriate sections in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8.

4.1. Qualitative Research

My research aimed to explore and understand Gypsies' and Travellers' perceptions of the importance of literacy in their lives and apply the theories on literacy and language outlined in the last chapter to the situation of Gypsies and Travellers in three authorities in Southern England. The nature of the research and of the Gypsy and Traveller community suggested that a qualitative constructivist epistemology was appropriate and I will explain what I mean by these terms with reference to the ethnographic perspective that I have adopted for the study. The focus, then, was an exploration to seek greater understanding of the place of literacy in the community.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003:4-5) provide a generic definition of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visibleThey turn the world into a set of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, recordings and memos to self.

They also state that the decisions on actual research methods, such as observation, interviewing, filming and tape recording need not necessarily be decided in advance as what is asked depends on the context. Initially it was recommended that my research data

should be gathered through a series of semi-formal interviews, but the process of gaining access to the community and an understanding of the culture soon suggested a more flexible approach was required involving less structured questioning and more informal social interactions. Before addressing the issue of methods, I will unpack further the methodological perspective that I adopted that underpinned such choices. 'Constructivism' underlies much of the research described here and I will explain why I adopted this perspective.

4.1.1 Constructivism

Denzin and Lincoln (2003:35) provide a helpful definition of constructivism:

The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures.

In this thesis, constructivist epistemology involves a subjectivist epistemology and highlights knowledge as a human production rather than an abstract theory claiming neutrality. Applying this to the Gypsy and Traveller community involves recognising that there are multiple experiences, multiple perceptions and multiple realities which differ and sometimes conflict with those of the outsider. It is my view that Gypsies and Travellers have acted, and are acting on the world, in particular ways but our understanding and knowledge of these is dependent on our cultural and political perspective, experience and the space the analyst occupies. The perspective of Hancock, the Romani academic, is different from that of Paxton, an earlier English activist, which is different again from a Gaujo support worker and also different from a member of the sedentary community who has never interacted with Gypsies and Travellers and whose knowledge is constructed by others.

In constructivist research the researcher and researched jointly construct partial and contestable interpretations of the situation, emic insider and etic outsider perspectives. Interaction and dialogue with Gypsies and Travellers constructed my understanding of their world. An emphasis on practice in context has brought participatory methods,

practitioner research and other action-oriented approaches to the fore (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005:128).

The constructivist perspective, then, led me to use interviews with Gypsies and Travellers as a key method, rather than questionnaires, as questionnaires are even more influenced by the researchers' theoretical and social position - the etic perspective - and the predetermined questions which allow little room for dissent (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005:47), allowing less space for an emic perspective (Agar, 1996; Headland et. al., 1990). Interviews enable both interviewer and interviewee to bring their subjective experience to the discussion.

I was aware that my observations as a researcher, an outsider, did not always accord with others' perceptions of the same situation, event or meeting. On several occasions our understanding of the consequences of an event, or the actions of a particular individual differed. For example, I was impressed by the actions of a local Gypsy and believed he had the capacity to develop a representative Gypsy forum, but my Traveller colleague dismissed him as a "puffball" and predicted his proposals would collapse within six months³⁸. My colleague brought his past experiences and his knowledge of individuals, their family histories and their communities to the situation. I brought very different experiences, some of which helped me to see consequences he did not foresee and some of which made me oblivious to aspects of the situation. My purpose was to "elicit understandings of the interviewees' perspective" (May, 2002:73). The longer I spent in the company of members of the community, the more I understood. Yet, as an outsider, my conceptual framework was different from theirs and my interpretation of my observations located within my previous experience and knowledge. In this account, then, I have attempted to represent what Gypsies and Travellers themselves said, but at the same time to draw attention to my own perspectives (Agar, 1996) and frequent misconceptions as in the example above. In this way, the reader sees how the researcher and researched jointly construct partial and contestable interpretations of the situation.

³⁸ Field notes: Police Gypsy Traveller Group: Oct. 2009

A further constructivist tenet is that epistemology, the production and representation of knowledge, is always situated in the cultural and historical realities that determine its form and meaning. Its validity is accepted within the time and place of its production. The researcher's past history and past experiences are brought to the research situation and their perceptions and understandings are also formed at a particular point in time.

We can take for granted the nature of the social as real, stable and partially independent while the construction of our knowledge of this reality is tempered by our position in time and space and by the cultural milieu we inhabit (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005:20).

My knowledge of Gypsies and Travellers was "tempered" by my own position as a local councillor and my prior knowledge of some of the political constraints, as well as previous experience of working with minority groups who experienced hostility from the dominant population.

4.1.2. Ethnography

In the light of this broader epistemological framework, ethnography became my main research tool and I adopted a predominantly ethnographic perspective and used ethnographic tools, though I was not in a position to immerse myself in the life of the community as did Okely (1984) in her ethnography of Gypsy life in the 1980s. In undertaking the research I applied ethnographic processes which I explain below.

4.1.2.1. An iterative process

In keeping with the constructivist perspective outlined above, ethnographers construct, test and amplify theoretical perspectives through systematic observation, recording and analysing human behaviour in particular places and situations. According to Heath and Street (2008:5):

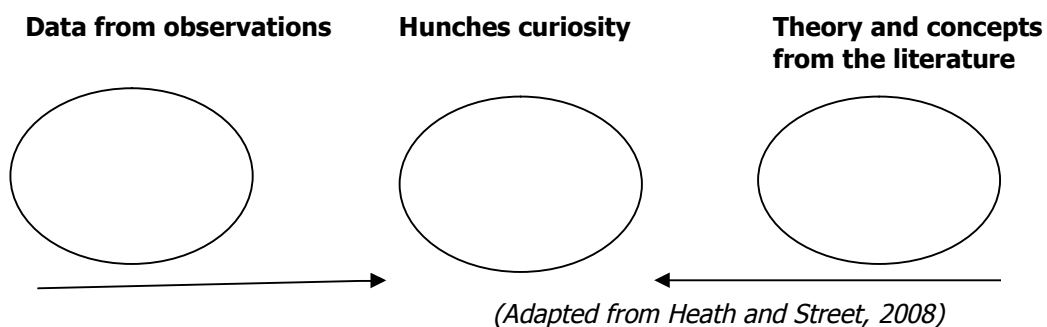
Ethnographers do not begin their research with a clearly defined research question or hypothesis.....they have field sites and areas of core interest in front of them as they begin their research, but they do not enter their work with a single fixed question.

As stated in Chapter 1, my questions gradually emerged through an iterative process.

I was able to answer four of the six decisions rules advocated by Heath and Street (2008:46) - what made me curious, my relationship with the researched, explanations for what I was doing and my ability to protect the identities and interests of those with whom I conversed, but the time and space required to collect reliable data were more difficult to identify. After analysing some of the data collected through observation and interviews, the central focus became the use of literacy/language in Gypsies' and Travellers' engagement with authority. Heath and Street (2008:24) note that this movement back and forth:

Observing, noting, reading, thinking, observing and noting... may well be a set of practices distinguishing ethnography from other forms of qualitative research.

Fig. 4.1 The Recursive Practice in doing Ethnography: theory and practice



My analysis shifted and changed as the research progressed. Perhaps because of the nature of my enquiry, very little remained static and as Dunne, Pryor and Yates (2005) suggest, what started as minor themes, such as different discourses, became more important as the research progressed and "accumulating data engendered a sharper focus as the study proceeded" (Levinson, 2007:16).

4.1.2.2. Ethnographic tools

Hamersley and Atkinson (1995:1) provide a useful description of ethnographers' work:

In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what

happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact collecting whatever data is available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.

Ethnographic methods of data collection are used in a range of disciplines such as education (Lacey, 1970), health and medicine, the army, the Northern Ireland police force and commercial organisations as well as “deviant” and sub-cultural groups (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), literacy practices in Iran (Street, 1984) and in Lancaster, England (Barton and Hamilton, 1998) as well as in-depth studies of Gypsies and Travellers (Okely, 1983; Levinson, 2007). Green and Bloome (1997) helpfully distinguish between three levels of such research; ‘doing an ethnography’, in the sense of anthropologists living ‘in the field’ for a number of years as Okely did for her study of English Gypsies; ‘adopting an ethnographic perspective’, which allows for many of the principles outlined above to be brought to bear, but in perhaps a shorter time span and with less emphasis on the anthropological dimension; and finally ‘using ethnographic tools’, in which the various methods available to anthropologists and other disciplines are adapted to particular situations, where again the time span and theoretical underpinning may be less comprehensive than in anthropological studies. In the present research, it is probably more accurate to state that I adopted an ‘ethnographic perspective’ and made use of a range of ‘ethnographic tools’, as we will see below.

My focus was an exploration of literacy perceptions and needs and for this I used a range of ethnographic tools. “Collecting whatever data are available”, (Hammersley and Atkinson, (1995:1), sums up the situation in researching this group as a lone researcher. The data included a range of material in the public domain – minutes of meetings, notes of conferences and seminars, publications, newspaper articles, news reports, videos, films and television programmes. I attended thirty-two local forums, six national conferences, four meetings of a national council and seven meetings of a police advisory group (Appendix 2). In England I conducted thirty-two “open ended” interviews and twenty-two semi-structured interviews and drew on information from three face-to-face surveys on Gypsies’ and Travellers’ use of statutory and voluntary services including post-school education and training services. In Ireland, I visited three literacy classes for Travellers and interviewed four Travellers individually. These are detailed in Chapter 7.

4.1.2.3. Identifying themes

In accordance with constructivist methodology and the ethnographic perspective outlined above, the themes were constructed as a result of the interactions with participants, notably the interview process and the dialogue this generated. I analysed and coded the data from the interviews, observations, conversations, formal and informal meetings. The analysis was not quantitative but “open coding” which gradually built up a picture of five areas – culture and identity, society and policies, literacy and learning, discourse and communicative practice, and political agency. As the analysis of the data progressed, the key theme emerged as the ability of Gypsies and Travellers to contribute effectively to formal and semi-formal discussions with authorities, and how literacy and formal education, or a lack of either, affected these interactions.

4.1.2.4. Narrative

Narrative and biography, also used in ethnography, would have provided me with considerable insight into respondents’ life experiences but I was not in a position to ask those who contributed to my research to share their lives with me in this way. We discussed particular issues, on which some then expanded at a personal level but others did not. There were two people whose life histories would illuminate both the positive and negative aspects of “life on the road” but these went beyond issues of literacy and education, the focus of the study. Though some of my interviews were very rich, they were not life histories.

4.1.2.5. Interviews

As stated above, interviews and observations were my main ethnographic tools. Interviews on permanent official sites took a significant amount of time to arrange and interviewing people on unauthorised encampments was even more difficult. However, I visited six unauthorised encampments and had discussions with people living there.

While all interviews contributed to the construction of knowledge and understanding, four interviews were particularly revealing and insightful and added richness and depth to the study. An account and analysis of these is detailed in Chapter 7. They represented the different life patterns currently available to Gypsies and Travellers and almost

coincidentally were from different authorities. They reacted to me in a specific context at a specific time, but their experiences, their views and reflections were echoed by other interviewees which “provided credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:35).

While the study could not be described as a partnership with the respondents, the interviews, to some extent, enabled their voices to be heard and provided “opportunities for ...dialogic processes in the development of interpretations, as the observeds’ views interact with those of the researcher” (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005:82). In this way, then, I could claim to be building a constructivist account of the situation, from an ethnographic perspective, recognising “multiple realities and a subjectivist epistemology in which knower and respondent create understandings” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:35).

4.1.2.6. Quantitative data

Quantitative data is not a prime tool of ethnographic research but can provide useful additional information. Sending short questionnaires was a practical way of determining the extent of adult education provision in the three authorities with which I was concerned. I also constructed questionnaires for a series of structured and semi-structured interviews on authorised sites for the Gypsy Traveller Support Group as part of a project to survey Gypsies’ and Travellers’ use of statutory and voluntary services including access and involvement in post-school education (Appendix 4). The survey provided useful additional information which reinforced the findings of the qualitative research.

4.1.3. Research and action

In the introduction to the thesis, I described how my interest in the perceptions of literacy among Travelling communities grew out of my work in Nigeria and Ireland. My research on the perceptions of literacy among Gypsies and Travellers in England was not designed as applied or action research; it did not seek to influence policy nor was it carried out in collaboration with individuals or community groups in order to effect change, but as Denzin and Lincoln state, studying and recording the perceptions of a community can assist in isolating,

The constraints that operate against policy changes.....and can create spaces for those who are studied (the other) to speak "The researcher "can become the conduit through which such voices can be heard (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:38).

As the research progressed, the social and political context and "the historical problems of domination, alienation and social struggles" assumed increased importance in my analysis and began to generate "a critiquing of society and the envisioning of new possibilities" (Cresswell, 1998:80)³⁹, particularly in relation to how the construction of Gypsy and Traveller identity through the discourse of the sedentary community, as described in Chapter 5, negatively affected Gypsies' and Travellers' interactions with authority.

I became increasingly aware of the place of literacy within aspects of domination, alienation and social struggle and the absence of social justice. If political decision making is conceived of as a process, rather than an event (Rist, 2003:622), it is possible that my research may contribute to the policy making process and new possibilities for Gypsies and Travellers.

4.2. Challenges to access

Accessing the community in order to undertake research was a major challenge. Neither I, nor my original supervisors, had identified the difficulties in accessing the community or anticipated the degree of Gypsies' and Travellers' hostility to researchers, although Okely's (1984) account of her experience offers insight into this possibility. My experience as a professional worker in Nigeria and Ireland had given me both a status and the opportunity to visit literacy classes and access to those I wished to interview. The challenge of researching marginalised communities and the impact this has on research design is well documented, but the research was often exploring and documenting "the other" in distant places (Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Malinowski, 1961; Shostak, 1981). Gypsies and Travellers are not distant but nearby and often not easily distinguishable as "other", so gaining access was of a different nature. Gaining access to marginalised groups within the

researchers' geographical environment has also been documented by researchers (Whyte, 1955; Whitehead, 1976). Levinson (2008) gives a graphic account of his difficulties researching Gypsies and Travellers and even suggests that Okely (1983), for her seminal work *The Traveller Gypsies* concealed her research role and "The establishment of trust was achieved through pretence and evasion" (Levinson, 2008:16). Levinson (2010) also discusses issues of ethics and accountability to research participants. Yet, however honourable the researcher's intentions may be, the challenge of accessing the community should not be underestimated.

There were a number reasons for Gypsies' and Travellers' hostility to researchers – traditional cultural reluctance to reveal information to non-Gypsies, perception of researchers as self-seeking, fear that inaccurate information would be published with possible damaging effects to the community and a more generalised concern over representation and the desire to control their own agenda. These issues are addressed below.

4.2.1. Revealing information

The Gypsy and Traveller community has kept itself apart for many years; many fear outsiders will use the information they provide to their own advantage and possibly to the detriment and exploitation of the community. Much research is conducted by the powerful on the less powerful possibly not only to understand, but also sometimes to "contain" the perceived social problems and potential threats that these groups are felt to pose, so the researcher must therefore think carefully about how the findings could be used (Cameron et al., 1999). Lee (1993:126) notes that some minority communities who felt they had been exploited by researchers were subsequently unwilling to allow research without evidence that the results would benefit them. Tuhiwai Smith (2001) explains how centuries of colonisation and imperialism made Maori communities suspicious of researchers.

Levinson (2007) provides a detailed account of the barriers he had to overcome to gain access to Gypsies and Travellers. He, (Levinson, 2007:18), noted Gypsies and Travellers were reluctant to discuss their home life, which indicated boundaries that could not be

crossed by outsiders. It is possible that secrecy and suspicion of researchers, coupled with a conspiracy of silence (Whyte, 1981), may be a factor in the persistence of Romani Gypsy and Irish Traveller culture.

4.2.2. Building careers

Lee (1993:157) also draws attention to the fact that researchers are sometimes seen as self-seeking, "Some take what they can get out of a community, and they or the results of their research are never seen again"⁴⁰.

By the late 1970s in the United States and later in Britain, resentment began to close deprived or minority communities to outside researchers. Lee (1993) cites examples of researchers seen as predators and research as providing status, income or professional advancement, unavailable to those studied. As a Gypsy commented "*They come, ask us questions and then go away and build a career on the answers*"⁴¹. Lee (1974) describes the fear of Spanish villagers when researchers took notes and the villagers had no knowledge of what was written down. When I observed a meeting at an Irish Traveller site in London a member of the group asked, "*What is she doing here taking notes?*" I ceased writing and relied on recall⁴². I have since learnt that the hostility to note-taking is also linked to experience of police taking notes when questioning Gypsies and Travellers, many of whom cannot check what has been written. My own experience thirty years ago of feeling exploited remains, and a reluctance to risk exploitation constrained my research for a considerable period.

4.2.3. Inaccuracies

Some Gypsies and Travellers also felt that the information reproduced by academics was inaccurate and not a true reflection of their situation. At a national conference in London, soon after I began my research, a Gypsy commented that "*An academic makes up a myth, which is then reproduced by all the others.*" (GTLR Conference: Oct 2004)⁴³.

⁴⁰ In the early 1970s a women's organisation, in which I was involved, facilitated research by the Tavistock Institute. We never heard from them once the questionnaires had been returned.

⁴¹ Friends Meeting House: London: Oct. 2004.

⁴² Permanent site London: Nov. 2007.

⁴³ Friends Meeting House, London: October 2004.

Hostility felt by some Gypsies and Traveller communities is compounded by feelings resulting from the previous government's Accommodation Needs Assessment. Frustration was frequently expressed at the WNTF as documented in Chapter 8. While the government anticipated the assessment would have positive outcomes in the provision of more sites, it was likely to be four years before there would be any visible results and in the autumn of 2007 Gypsies expressed considerable frustration at "*talk and more talk, while we have been waiting forty years*,"⁴⁴. At least the Gypsies and Travellers were able to express their frustration; frequently those affected by research have no forum in which to express their feelings.

4.2.4. "Speaking for ourselves"

Gypsies' and Travellers' suspicion of researchers was one component of the desire to be in control of how they were represented and by whom. The desire to lead and control the "political" agenda themselves was expressed in different ways on several occasions. One example of this was at an Annual General Meeting of a leading national organisation when only Gypsies or Travellers were elected to the committee in contrast to previous practice. The principle of excluding Gaujos divided the meeting. The same organisation only allowed Gypsy or Traveller led organisations to affiliate. One particular Gypsy was frequently very rude to Gaujos and at the same AGM said "*And what is that arse hole doing here?*" to a key supporter who had for years been active and instrumental in moving the situation forward. No-one has ever been rude to me, but on several occasions I have been asked why I was there. Ideally I would have liked the research to be "in partnership" but did not know the community well enough at the time, nor did I have sufficient institutional support to suggest this. Thus, this research is my reflections as an observer and participant, again a key issue in the constructivist perspective.

Cameron et al. (1999) state three principles that research has to observe in order to empower the subjects:

⁴⁴ WNTF: Jan. 28 2009.

1. Persons are not objects and should not be treated as objects. Research should be conducted as far as possible with them and not "on" them and their active co-operation should be sought.
 2. Subjects have their own agendas and research should try and address them.
 3. If knowledge is worth having, it is worth sharing.
- (Cameron et al., 1999:154-155).

As a researcher I endeavoured to adhere to these principles. During the research I was aware of their agendas and provided support whenever possible, for example in agreeing to assist Martin to survey sites, as detailed in Chapter 7. Sharing the research was more complex. During the debates and discussions I shared some of my findings and reinterpreted events in the light of their comments and I gave a copy of my published paper on literacy to a Gypsy, but no Gypsies or Travellers have read the whole thesis.

4.2.5. Gaining Access

Gaining access is not just an initial entry to the research setting, but an on-going process in which "the researcher's right to be present is continually negotiated" (Lee, 1993:121). throughout the research process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2006). This was certainly my experience. Much of the literature discusses these issues in depth and provides accounts of how ethnographers "gained entry", though these accounts are inevitably one-sided (A. Lareau and Schultz, J., 1996).

My research was focused on three authorities but there was no single location. Interactions, dialogue, discussions, greetings, commiserations and observations took place in town and village halls, leisure facilities, conference venues, in cars and even at a bonfire. Sites, both authorised and unauthorised, are the most easily distinguishable locations. I gradually became known and seen in spaces where dialogue and discourse took place, virtual as well as real, which enabled "people in the field to place and locate me within their experience" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:83). It was known that I was doing research into education, but I was primarily known as a supporter, someone who would speak up for Gypsies and Travellers when few would. I was seen as a participant in what is perceived as a struggle and have some credibility. I knew my first three in-depth interviewees two years before I even asked them if I could discuss education. I was sometimes asked to assist – to help complete a questionnaire, to help

with an e mail, to write a letter, to contact officials over a site difficulty, to give a lift to a meeting, to advise on the purchase of a piece of land and to support a planning application. These requests did not occur until I was known and trusted. However, providing the support took a considerable amount of time and carried responsibilities as I had to participate – to be there, to observe the High Court enquiry on the high profile issue of the threatened eviction of a thousand Travellers from Dale Farm in Essex, at the consultation on site provision, at the trial of a local Gypsy for aggressive behaviour at which he was found not guilty, or as a witness at a planning appeal.

4.3. Accessing the community

Despite the challenges identified above, over a period of time, I was successful in accessing the Gypsy and Traveller community and through dialogue and observation was able to construct an understanding of their perceptions of literacy.

4.3.1. Gatekeepers

In much ethnographic research “gate keepers” were instrumental in enabling the research to be undertaken as they provided the entry point to the community. Many of the ethnographers cited above speak of individuals they gradually came to know and on whom they relied to negotiate entry points and smooth the path. In some instances in an overseas context the “gate keepers” were translators, people who knew both the community and the language (Cheffy, 2008).

I was fortunate to meet Martin, a Traveller of Irish Heritage from Westborough, who to some extent played a similar role. I met him through an interviewee when the research had progressed beyond the initial stages. Over a period of two years we met and conversed many times and, in accordance with the constructivist approach, these discussions, detailed in Chapter 7, jointly constructed our knowledge and understanding of the situation at a particular point in time.

Martin also provided me with considerable understanding of how the communities worked, how they organised and where their sensitivities lay. From him I learned of the community’s pride, of their frustration, of their preference to *“keep themselves to*

themselves". He also reinforced my instinct to approach Gypsies and Travellers slowly and sensitively and I noticed he did this himself. If he wanted support or assistance I always agreed. I think Martin and I formed a positive relationship, in part, because I genuinely found him an interesting person. In case this sounds too perfect a picture, he controlled the situation. Contact was when he wanted to contact me, rather than the other way round.

Though I formed good relationships with other Gypsies and Travellers like Bernie and Jamie, who opened different doors, without Martin many of the gates which opened would have remained closed.

I would have liked Martin to have full knowledge of this thesis, but his reading skills were not sufficient. Sadly during the two years I knew him he developed very serious health problems and in December 2009 he was diagnosed with a terminal illness and died in June 2010.

4.3.2. Access through projects

A second important point of access was through my work in a small voluntary organisation. My work as a councillor had provided me with some insight into the difficulties Gypsies and Travellers were facing, but despite being a councillor the responses to my queries to local authorities often proved unsatisfactory. Occasional contact with a few other people, who were also querying the policies and the absence of any local support organisation, led me to co-found a small support organisation in 2002 shortly before I began my research. The organisation, the Gypsy Traveller Support Group (GTSG) and the surveys of statutory and voluntary service delivery to the Gypsy and Traveller community, which the organisation undertook, assisted my access to permanent sites in Southshire. The organisation and the projects are described in the next chapter and this places the methodological perspective outlined here into the concrete research context.

4.3.3. Access through forums

One of the advantages of having several roles in relation to Gypsies and Travellers was the access this provided to different forums and meetings. As a councillor I had access to

officers and meetings in Westborough and as a representative of GTSG, I had access to the Westborough and Northshire Traveller Forum (WNTF) and to the Police Gypsy and Traveller Group (PGTG) to which Martin introduced me. As a representative of GTSG I was able to attend many meetings held in the South and South East of England and in London over a period of six years. These were large conferences, local and regional forums, various formal, semi-formal and informal meetings. Though attending as a member of GTSG, I always informed those present that I was also undertaking research into literacy and education. I now have ten notebooks of field work observations on which I draw. This data include my observations, the agendas and minutes of meetings in the public domain, the interaction and dialogue between the Gypsies and Travellers and those attending from the statutory and voluntary sectors of mainstream society.

I attended meetings of a national Gypsy organisation, a meeting at the Government Offices of the South East, national conferences organised by the Gypsy Traveller Law Reform Coalition and by the Irish Traveller Movement. All meetings are detailed in Appendix 2. The GTLRC and the ITM were particularly valuable as at least fifty percent of those attending were Gypsies and Travellers who led the discussions. Unfortunately neither organisation had the capacity to produce conference reports. In 2004, I attended a conference organised by ACERT, but as only a few Gypsies or Travellers attended and the conference was very expensive, I did not attend these in future. Even after I started my research I was uncertain what the meetings or conferences would reveal as they were not focused on education and adult literacy was very rarely mentioned, if at all.

However, as is the nature of constructivist research, these meetings and conferences gradually built up and developed my understanding of the community and the place of literacy within it and led me to formulate my second research question, "How does literacy impact on Gypsies and Travellers' ability to engage individually and collectively with authorities?"

To explore this question I focused primarily on two forums in the authorities I was researching - the Northshire and Westborough Traveller Forum (WNTF) originally established by Westborough in 1997 and a police advisory group covering the three

authorities - the Police Gypsy Traveller Group (PGTG) which I attended for the first time in January 2009. I also attended meetings organised by these forums such as a consultation on the new tenancy agreement, on the Accommodation Needs Assessment and on the Northshire Traveller Strategy, and meetings to discuss specific planning issues. I informed forum members of my research into education and particularly adult literacy. I met many of the Gypsies and Travellers I came to know at these meetings and gradually built up a relationship with particular individuals.

4.4. Reflexivity

Researching the Gypsy and Traveller community involved understanding myself reflexively, enquiring into my own experience of diversity and difference and acknowledging how this affected my attitudes and interactions with the community. Reflecting on my role as a researcher, the validity of my interpretations of my experience and the relationship of that interpretation to those I spoke to and observed and with whom I constructed my understandings, caused me considerable concern. As demonstrated above, gaining entry to the community was a major hurdle and my concern that I might be exploiting the community initially created a degree of ambivalence regarding the research. The literature is sparse on the benefits those researched gain from giving up time, money and sharing sometimes deep seated or traumatic experiences. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) suggest that a researcher can provide medical or legal advice. Lee (1993) suggests political advocacy, with which Whitehead concurs⁴⁵. I gradually realised that providing assistance when requested and advocating at both political and personal levels there was a level of reciprocation between me as researcher and those I was researching.

4.4.1. Conflict of interest

Initially it was suggested that undertaking this research as a councillor would be a conflict of interest, but I found having three roles was advantageous. As a local councillor I had the authority to ask questions and receive answers – not necessarily detailed or full answers, but answers. As a representative of a support organisation I had the opportunity to attend and speak at meetings. As I was researching education, my presence at forums was not threatening as education was one step removed from the very pressing issues of

⁴⁵ Personal communication: June 2005.

accommodation that were being debated. As a researcher, I was able to interview education officers who were wary of revealing their policy and practice and generally did not report to council committees on Gypsy and Traveller education. However, I was able to build up good relations with several officers who were most helpful.

Therefore the data I used in this thesis is not as uniform or narrow as a single research focus would have engendered. From the perspective of constructivist research epistemology, these varied entries into the field made explicit the complex nature of the knowledge base being constructed and, in particular, my own role in constructing the narrative at the same time as attempting to give voice to my respondents.

4.4.2. Attitudes and ignorance

My feelings of being exploitative gradually began to wane as I started to note and document attitudes towards Gypsies and Travellers. I also began to realise that most people know very little about the communities. I was not surprised people had never met a Gypsy or a Traveller, but I was surprised they were almost unaware of their existence except as the mythical romantic Gypsy or the group of caravan dwellers on the edge of the towns.

When writing this chapter I referred back to my research diaries and noted that almost all the passing comments I received were negative. The extent to which one can be drawn into these misrepresentations is disturbing. When I read or hear people express comments which demonstrate a fear of Gypsies, I am reminded of my own anxiety of initially going on sites, of going somewhere “unknown”, and this can be compounded when I learn that in Southshire “*there are some areas which the police won’t touch*”⁴⁶, and in Northshire some sites have “red flags” as a signal to ambulances not to enter the site unless escorted by the police”⁴⁷. Then I have to remember that there are inner city locations totally unrelated to Gypsies and Travellers where similar circumstances prevail.

⁴⁶ Personal communication from an ex-policeman: Nov. 2007.

⁴⁷ Police Advisory Committee: July 2009.

The generally negative attitude towards the subjects of my research began to reduce my fears of being exploitive. As the people I knew appeared to know little about the communities and had almost no understanding of the difficulties they face, I began to feel that providing information was a worthwhile exercise and could perhaps be my contribution to improving the situation. If people are aware that many Gypsies and Travellers have nowhere legal to stop, it is possible they might be a little more sympathetic when they stop nearby. If they know that at least 500,000 died in the Holocaust in the Second World War, some people might realise that their prejudicial statements are unacceptable and can lead to horrific events. However, I have been pleased at the interest those in the literacy field have shown in my research and feel a considerable responsibility for how I portray the communities.

4.4.3. Academic gatekeepers

Only a small number of Gypsies, Travellers or Roma have had university education and the community is only at the very beginning stages of being able to research its own history and culture; the majority of research until now has been left to Gaujo researchers. There is also a lack of academic literature on the education of Gypsies and Travellers. The most influential researchers, none of whom are educationalists, are Thomas Acton (1974, 1991, 1997, 2004), Judith Okely whose seminal work is *'The Traveller Gypsies'* (1983), Kenrick and Clark (1999) and Levinson (2007, 2008, 2010). Though the Roma are sometimes included in literature on race and identity particularly in relation to Europe, Gypsies and Travellers seem largely invisible.

Bhopal and Myers (2008:42) suggest that researchers have to negotiate not only with the Gypsy and Traveller communities but also with a close knit group of professionals and academics. They state that:

Amongst the biases this group exhibits there can be antagonism towards new researchers who are not already known in the network and who have not demonstrated their commitment towards a pro-Gypsy body of work...[They] made it very clear that any work with Gypsies was rightfully theirs (Bhopal and Myers, 2008:43).

They note that many other academics have specific knowledge that “could be harnessed to improve understanding of Gypsy lives” (Bhopal and Myers, 2008:50), but that instead:

There is a tendency...for a small number of academics who identify themselves as the experts in Gypsy work to close ranks to protect the subject matter for themselves (Bhopal and Myers, 2008:50).

I cannot judge the situation, but the fact that the statements are made in print suggests they strongly believe this to be the case. As my study is literacy I have attended more conferences on literacy than on Roma history and culture but I have met several of the Romani Studies’ academics personally and, though I felt they had a daunting depth of knowledge, I have found them helpful. I hope that my experience and my interpretation of that experience will contribute knowledge to both literacy and Romani Studies and encourage those involved in both disciplines to reflect on their interpretations and understandings of the place of literacy in Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Bhopal and Myers (2008) also suggest that among the reasons for this “closed circle” is the desire to counteract negative images towards Gypsies and Travellers to ensure that research places Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in a positive light. This links with aspects of the equalities debate and a multi-cultural approach which may sometimes prefer to ignore the less positive aspects of a community’s culture.

I have some sympathy with this as I do not wish to contribute to the negative images. In Ireland, the research by McCarthy (1971) provided support for a policy of assimilation. I admit to having some concern about the growing debate on the issue of domestic violence among the Gypsy and Traveller communities. Those I know acknowledge that some members of their community disobey the law, some deal in drugs and some leave rubbish behind, but as they point out “*there are good and bad in every community*”⁴⁸. This honesty has a powerful positive effect when addressed to Gaujo audiences. No-one ever suggests that all Jamaicans are Yardies, all Chinese belong to the Triads and all Italians belong to the Mafia. Nevertheless the way communities are presented is a sensitive issue that needs to be carefully considered and negotiated.

⁴⁸ E.g. Police Advisory Committee: Oct 2009 and Singleton Museum: Aug. 2004

An area rarely mentioned by academics, but which causes supporters concern, is the attitude of some Gypsies and Travellers towards other minority groups. Perhaps I am fortunate in having worked in situations where I have been in the minority. On one occasion when working as one of five white staff in a Black High School in the Southern United States, the black head teacher observing my lesson on Native Americans commented, "*The Indians are not like us. We work hard, they are lazy and just like to do nothing all day*"⁴⁹. My youthful naivety was shocked but it was a valuable lesson. Those who are discriminated against are often no less prone to discriminate against others. Thus, when I hear racial comments from English Gypsies towards immigrants from Africa or Asia or towards Irish Travellers I am concerned but not surprised. However, in the last few years, a few Gypsy and Traveller leaders have expressed the view that interaction and alliances with other "racial" and "marginal" groups would be beneficial.

I agree with Bhopal and Myers (2008) that if the situation is to improve different perspectives should be presented and if necessary challenged. Honesty and openness will ultimately serve the community best.

4.4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the epistemological and methodological frame which enabled me to work with and observe Gypsies and Travellers and with them, construct an understanding of the place of literacy in the community. Adapting a constructivist perspective, I have outlined the ethnographic methodology, the challenges of accessing the community and issues of reflexivity.

The next chapter describes the sites of my research, the physical space, the actors and discourse within it. The observations, field notes, interviews, recordings and memos, conversations and interactions with the different actors in the statutory and the voluntary sectors, the sedentary population and their political representatives all provided an etic perspective alongside the emic perspective of community members, thus constructing a complex and multifaceted image of literacy perceptions and usage among the Gypsy and

⁴⁹ Personal communication, Albermarle County, Virginia, USA: 1967.

Traveller population in the three authorities. Ensuing chapters detail how this knowledge was constructed through the interviews reported in Chapter 7 and observation of the discourse in the forums in Chapter 8.

Chapter 5. Research Sites: Social and Political Context

This chapter sets out the context in which I conducted my research. Drawing on the wider reading in Chapters 2 and 3, I first describe the general situation of Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers in the three authorities. I then describe the physical environment, the demography and the economy of the three authorities before detailing the situation of Gypsies and Travellers in relation to their accommodation, the authorities' management structures, Gypsy and Traveller support organisations, the attitude of the sedentary population and their elected representatives, and finally Gypsies' and Travellers' health, well being and access and achievement in formal schooling.

Gypsies and Travellers are a very small percentage of the inhabitants of all three authorities. The Traveller Liaison Manager estimated around 3,000 Gypsies and Travellers live in Northshire, slightly less than in Southshire where the estimate is 3,000 - 3,500 (OPM, 2010), approximately 0.4% of the Southshire population. In line with national statistics it is estimated that 75% live in housing and 25% in caravans on authorised and unauthorised sites, the majority of which are managed by the Council, but some are privately owned. As Westborough has no permanent Traveller site, the number of Gypsies and Travellers in the area is constantly fluctuating; a number live in bricks and mortar, but rarely self-identity.

As stated in Chapter 2, Gypsies and Travellers prefer to be self employed. Those encountered during the research undertook tarmacking, clearing driveways, gardening, small nurseries, tree cutting, horse dealing and "cold calling". Some worked alone, others had small firms and employed staff including accountants. Some travelled for work throughout the year, others travelled in the summer months or when the work was available. None interviewed were employed in the formal sector and I did not meet any women living on sites who worked outside the home.

5.1 Environment, demography and economy

The three research authorities are adjacent to each other. Though separate authorities, Northshire and Westborough are often bracketed together, as Westborough was part of Northshire until 1997, when Westborough became a unitary authority.

5.1.1. Northshire

Northshire is a medium sized county covering over 1,725 square kilometres divided into five district councils. The county is predominantly rural with an attractive and historic county town, two urban centres, dependent mainly on tourism, and a number of market towns.

Northshire has a population of over 700,000 of which 26% are over pensionable age and 43% are of working age. In April 2009 the unemployment rate was 3.7% compared to a national average of 3.0%. The majority of the population lives in the main urban centres. The largest employment sectors are education, health, the service industries and a thriving tourist sector. Manufacturing is below 10% (Annual Business Enquiry April 2008: 1998 - 2006)⁵⁰. There are a number of large estates, some belonging to old established county families and others more recently acquired by successful business people and financiers who commute daily to London.

The area used to be predominantly agricultural, and Gypsies and Travellers found seasonal work travelling annually across the county; the decline in agricultural employment, currently below one percent, has adversely affected them.

Over 75% of the county is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and environmentally and archeologically sensitive. This restricts development which is likely to be further restricted when the boundaries of the forthcoming national park are determined. These attractive and important features impact negatively on those who

⁵⁰ Accessed from Council website on Oct. 10 2009.

travel, as it reduces the amount of land available for temporary stopping places and permanent sites.

The Gypsy and Traveller population is composed mainly of English Gypsies though some Irish Travellers also live in the authority. A number of English Gypsy families strongly identify with the area and have purchased land, though a number have lost appeals for installing mobile homes on land they had bought in the AONB. There are concentrations of settled Gypsies in one of the market towns and at the eastern end of the county.

In 2006 the BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) population was below 5%, significantly lower than the regional total of 7.4%. Gypsies and Travellers are not identified in these figures. Inclusion strategies targeted at the BME community are in place and the council was rated at Level 2, the national average, for equalities and inclusion.

There is a published Traveller Strategy, a dedicated fulltime Traveller Liaison Officer and two supporting officers. Northshire hosts the Traveller Forum serving it and Westborough.

5.1.2. Southshire

Southshire is also a predominantly rural county of large country estates, small market towns and villages with a population of slightly over 800,000. The county is divided into seven districts, the largest has a population of 150,000. The countryside is attractive and a third is characterised as AONB, which the inhabitants protect fiercely against new development. A large percentage of this area will become part of the proposed national park, which will further restrict development. The county town, where the county offices are located, is an attractive cathedral city, which contrasts with a "new town" in the east of the county dominated by housing developments, a range of light industries and a significant number of travel related enterprises. The county used to be predominantly agricultural and Gypsies traditionally found work following the annual harvest across the county. This has ceased. The largest employment sectors are similar to those in Northshire - education, health and public administration, tourism, banking and finance and a small manufacturing sector. Light industries and a significant number of travel enterprises are located in the north of the county.

The small ethnic minority population at 3%, of which over half are from South Asia, is half the level of the regional total and resides mainly in the east of the county and is largely invisible in the rural areas. In the last five years Eastern Europeans have come to work in the south of the county, often in agricultural work previously undertaken by Gypsies. The council does not prioritise equalities and inclusion and Southshire has sometimes been referred to as the “white highlands”.

Interrelated families of English Gypsies are spread across the county on private and permanent sites; a numbers live in housing in the central and western market towns. Irish Travellers visit the county and some have obtained pitches on permanent sites.

5.1.3. Westborough

Westborough is an urban sprawl which developed over the last hundred and fifty years, gradually spreading outwards from the centre to incorporate the surrounding older villages. It is a lively tourist centre and views itself as at the forefront of ideas and new developments.

There are three large areas of social housing with high levels of intergenerational unemployment. The economy of the city was badly affected by the downturn in the 1980s when much of the manufacturing ceased. The public sector and two large businesses are the largest employers. The financial sector has developed over the last twenty years and a strong media sector has grown more recently. The population has a higher level of education than in many cities due to ex-students remaining after completing their studies. This adversely affects employment opportunities for those with limited education and few skills.

The BME population is 5.7% of the total and has grown gradually over the last twenty years as established former immigrant families have moved out of London. The City Council prides itself on its equalities’ and inclusion policies, but these liberal attitudes are focused in the city centre and not always to be found in the outer areas, nor do they extend to Gypsies and Travellers who are largely resented.

There is a transit site on the edge of the city but no permanent Traveller site in Westborough. A few families revolve continuously between unauthorised encampments and the transit site. Though a number of Gypsies and Travellers live in bricks and mortar, their numbers are not known. Training for the parks department on Gypsy and Traveller issues revealed a number of "housed" Gypsies and Travellers among the staff, and a number of council staff known to me are of Gypsy or Traveller heritage.

In all three authorities opportunities for education, training and improving literacy are provided by the adult education service and colleges of further education.

5.2. Gypsy and Traveller accommodation

It is difficult to accurately identify the number of Gypsies and Travellers living in, or travelling through, the three authorities. Though Gypsy and Roma people have been recognised as a racial group since 1988 and Travellers of Irish Heritage since 2000, they have never been identified as an ethnic minority in the census. Estimates of the Gypsy and Traveller population provided by the bi-annual caravan count and the Accommodation Needs Assessment do not correspond. There are several reasons for this: Gypsies and Travellers were not included as an ethnic minority in the 2001 census; those in housing frequently do not self-identify; the bi-annual caravan count has on occasion not identified all caravans on the specified dates; the Accommodation Needs Assessment omitted to count a number of caravans and the number of private pitches on authorised and unauthorised sites constantly varies due to planning applications being granted, granted temporarily, refused and appealed. The figures therefore have to be treated with caution.

5.2.1. Permanent sites

The 1968 the Caravan Sites Act (CSA) placed a duty on local authorities to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers and both Northshire (which then included Westborough) and Southshire complied, though many local authorities did not. The first Traveller site in Southshire opened the same year and two more followed in the next two years. At the present time, Southshire has ten Traveller sites and Northshire has five and a transit site.



A permanent site in Southshire showing mobile homes and caravans, fencing around each pitch and the wrought iron gates at the entrance of the first pitch. (Photo: McCaffery)

In Southshire, six resident wardens manage the ten sites. The sites are generally very clean and tidy and some of the accommodation on the individual pitches resembles small bungalows, as brick facades have been constructed round the base. Many also have fences around the individual pitches and imposing ornate iron gates at the entrance. Pitches on all sites except two, have small brick utility units comprising a kitchen, shower and toilet. Apart from the private fencing around individual pitches, there are no safe play spaces for young children and no communal facilities on any of the sites.

The state of one "semi-permanent" site was causing concern. The owner had hoped to develop the site for housing, but when his application was refused he leased the land to the council. Despite considerable negotiations, he has refused to allow significant improvements. The site is close to a waste collection facility and large trucks continuously travel along the slip road which has no pavement, thus posing a threat to pedestrians, particularly school children.

Most of the permanent sites in both authorities are sited a few miles from the nearest small town, away from other residential properties and screened from the road by hedges or trees, as in the picture above. One site in Southshire, though adjacent to a residential estate, is divided from it by a high brick wall. The separation of sites from other dwellings does not assist positive dialogue between the Gypsy and Traveller and settled communities. On the sites there is a sense of both physical and mental separation.

5.2.2 Transit sites

In Northshire, a successful application to the government under their site building and site renovation programme enabled a nine pitch transit site to be refurbished and opened in 2009. It is intended for those passing through or stopping temporarily in the city; the length of stay is limited and costs £40 per week plus electricity. Westborough was also successful in applying for a refurbishment grant for a twenty-three pitch transit site with toilets and a communal shower block. Periods of residence are thirty days in summer and three months in winter, after which residents have to leave. Initially the Westborough site had no resident manager, but following considerable damage to the site and the resulting six month closure, it was deemed cost effective to employ a manager and install CCTV. Residents pay an inclusive £60 a week rent.

Westborough received funding from the government to develop a fourteen pitch permanent site. After an extensive search, a site often used as a tolerated “stopping place”, was located and passed by the Planning Committee in 2008 despite local residents’ opposition. However, tests showed that the soil was seriously contaminated and after eighteen months the council decided that development could lead to health problems. The location of a permanent site is still unresolved.

There are a number of privately owned sites in both authorities⁵¹; in Southshire they are mainly in the south and middle of the county and in Northshire mainly in the east. The structures are very varied; some are well furnished houses or bungalows indistinguishable from nearby dwellings, others are bricked up mobile homes which resemble chalets, others comprise an enclosed area for a large caravan or several caravans occupied by three generations of the same family. Some also have wooden buildings in addition to the dwellings. Some are occupied throughout the year and some provide a base from which to travel in the summer months. Records show that in January 2006 there were 243 pitches across the three authorities.

⁵¹ Partial Review of the Draft South East Plan (2008) Guildford: South East England Regional Assembly. Accessed from www.southeast-ra.gov.uk on Dec. 4 2008.

The bi-annual caravan counts are carried out by local authorities on behalf of the department in January and July each year. The counts, as the name implies, are of the caravans, not of the people living in them.

Table 5.1 Site provision 2006

County	Residential sites(pitches)		Transit sites (pitches)		Total pitches
	Council	Private	Council sites	Private sites	County total
Westborough	-	-	23		23
Northshire	27	7	10	0	44
Southshire	121	52	0	3	176
Total	148	59	33	3	243

Council records GTAA's and Caravan count⁵²

The caravan counts for the following three years showed that the number of pitches on authorised and private sites increased slightly.

Table 5.2 Caravan count: Northshire

Count of Gypsy and Traveller Caravans January and July 2007 and 2008, and January 2009							
	No of caravans socially rented	No of caravans private	No of caravans on sites on Gypsies own land		No of caravans on sites not owned by Gypsies		Total
			"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	
Jan. 2007	32	14	0	13	16	3	70
July 2007	32	16	13	11	5	31	119
Jan. 2008	30	20	4	10	3	8	75
July 2008	39	21	32	15	7	6	109
Jan. 2009	32	21	1	11	6	2	75
			50	60	37	50	

Communities and Local Government 2010⁵³

⁵² Partial Review of the Draft South East Plan (2008). Guildford: South East England Regional Assembly
Accessed from www.southeast-ra.gov.uk on Dec. 4 2008.

⁵³ Accessed from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/1598403.xls> on Feb. 10 2010.

Table 5.3 Caravan count: Southshire

Count of Gypsy and Traveller Caravans January and July 2007 and 2008, and January 2009							
	No of caravans socially rented	No of caravans private	No of caravans on sites on Gypsies own land		No of caravans on sites not owned by Gypsies		Total
			"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	
Jan. 2007	118	47	20	6	0	1	192
July 2007	131	77	31	11	20	4	274
Jan. 2008	129	74	24	12	0	9	248
July 2008	132	69	23	21	1	5	251
Jan. 2009	129	72	33	16	1	1	252
			111	66	22	20	

Communities and Local Government 2010⁵⁴

The tables show that Southshire had four times as many socially rented sites as Northshire and approximately three times as many private sites. In both counties, the number of private sites increased as did the council sites in Southshire. In Southshire, there was an overall increase of approximately a third between January and July 2007 and the number of "tolerated" sites rose from nought to twenty. In Northshire, the "not tolerated" sites rose from three to thirty-one in the same period. The number of "tolerated" and not "tolerated" sites showed the greatest variation. "Tolerated" refers to locations where, though the encampment is illegal, it is not considered by the police or the local authority to be causing undue problems, and unless the situation changes, the caravans are allowed to stay for a limited time.



Unauthorised encampment in a park in Westborough: July 2010, (Photo McCaffery).

⁵⁴ Accessed from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/1598403.xls> on Feb. 10 2010.

"Not tolerated" refers to locations considered unsuitable, either because they disrupt the normal use of the land – such as in parks, and playgrounds and car parks, or because there are a considerable number of verified complaints of unruly behaviour or harassment of local people.

Table 5.4 Caravan count: Westborough

Count of Gypsy and Traveller Caravans January and July 2007 and 2008, and January 2009							
	No of caravans socially rented	No of caravans private	No of caravans on sites on Gypsies own land		No of caravans on sites not owned by Gypsies		Total
			"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	
Jan. 2007	0	0	0	0	6	14	20
July 2007	0	0	0	0	0	65	65
Jan. 2008	8	0	0	0	8	29	45
July 2008	4	0	0	0	17	9	30
Jan. 2009	0	0	0	0	0	30	30
	4		0	0	31	147	

Communities and Local Government 2010⁵⁵

As there were no permanent socially rented or private sites in Westborough, the level of unauthorised encampments was higher than in the other two authorities. As in the two other authorities, there were a high number of Gypsies and Travellers in the city in July 2007, which by January 2008 had reduced to almost half.

5.2.3. Unauthorised encampments

Figures of unauthorised sites for two years January 2007 to January 2009 extrapolated from the Table 5 4, show 594 illegal unauthorised encampments; of these 351 private sites and unauthorised encampments were to some extent tolerated.

⁵⁵ Accessed from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/1598403.xls> on Feb. 10 2010.

Table 5.5 Caravans on unauthorised sites: January 2007 and January 2009

Authority	No. of caravans on sites Gypsies own		No of caravans on sites not owned by Gypsies		Total
	"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	
Northshire	50	60	37	50	197
Southshire	111	66	22	20	219
Westborough	0	0	31	147	178
	287		307		594

Communities and Local Government 2010⁵⁶

Some of the private tolerated sites have been established for many years and removal would cause considerable distress to the occupants. Small businesses, such as small nurseries, are run from several private sites. 343 illegal encampments were not tolerated over the same period and the caravans and their occupants were moved on by the police either immediately, after a few days, or occasionally after several weeks. Before any groups can be moved on, health and welfare checks have to be carried out by law. Thus, on occasion, a family will be allowed to stay until the end of a school term, while being treated for illness or after the birth of a child, though in Westborough a family with a ten day old baby was moved on in 2010⁵⁷.

In 2003 it was estimated that, at any time, around thirty out of the 141 families resident in or travelling through Southshire were unable to access permanent or transit sites⁵⁸. In the same year a large encampment of New Age Travellers living in a field in Westborough for six months was eventually evicted but then moved to another location, was evicted again and again moved elsewhere in the city. There is no duty on authorities to provide for New Age Travellers or Van Dwellers.

620 vehicles and tourers/caravans were "moved on" in Westborough between January 19 and July 27 2009. Statistics issued to the PGTG in 2009 showed that one group of forty vehicles and another of fifty were moved twice. Some family groups circled round the area

⁵⁶ Accessed from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/1598403.xls> on Feb. 10 2010.

⁵⁷ Westborough Council communication: Aug. 2010.

⁵⁸ A Strategy for Gypsies and Travellers: Jan. 2003 Table 2, page 1.

as they had family connections and were hoping for a permanent pitch but the statistics do not show how many times these smaller groups were moved on either by the police or by the council. When the police felt there were insufficient grounds to evict, council officers frequently gained a court order *"in case there is trouble in the future"*⁵⁹. The local press quoted the same official as saying *"We always try to move them on as soon as possible"*.

An additional pressure has been created by the "bundling" of common land, parks and roadside verges, - creating a mound or a ditch which a modern trailer cannot drive over. In 2006 Westborough Council Environment Department carried out "bundling" in a large park on the outskirts of the city despite having been made aware of the Human Rights Act and the council's inclusion policy. The continual round of evictions costs the councils and the police considerable sums. Though not all councils detail the costs of eviction in the same way, Morris and Clements (2002:48) estimated the annual cost of evictions averaged around £6,000,000 nationally.

There is also a considerable financial cost to the police. However, statistics presented to the PGTG showed a decrease in police evictions in the three authorities between 2009 -10. The police became increasingly reluctant to evict the encampments without anywhere legal to direct them unless there were very serious, well substantiated complaints. When the unauthorised encampments were in their wards, local councillors became very concerned and criticised the police for failing to act (PGTG: 2009 -10).

5.2.4. Accommodation Needs Assessment

All three authorities participated in the Accommodation Needs Assessment ordered by the government in 2006. Originally named the Housing Needs Assessment, this was appropriately changed to Accommodation Needs Assessment (ANA) to take account of the different accommodation requirements of Gypsies, Travellers and Show People. The number of pitches proposed was as in Table 5.6.

⁵⁹ Senior official: Sept. 2009.

The figures were strongly criticised by Gypsies and Travellers as being a significant under-assessment which did not allow for natural family growth and the cultural pattern of extended families co-locating. Examples of the difficulties this caused were the cases of two young women I interviewed. They both had very young children and desperately wanted pitches in Southshire. There was no pitch to allocate to either. One said, *"I don't feel safe on the road with two very young children and Johnny needs to go to a playgroup"*⁶⁰, but despite the right to security, safety and a family life guaranteed by Article 8 of the Convention on Human Rights, she was evicted. The other secured a pitch after a long negotiation.

Table 5.6 Accommodation Needs Assessment

	2006 Baseline	Additional permanent pitches required	Transit sites required
Westborough	0	13	2
Northshire	43	55	
Southshire	173	177	25

Partial Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East 2009.

The lack of a legal place to stop and uncertainty over planning applications and potential eviction causes considerable stress and contributes to the high levels of poor mental health, low health indices and low educational attainment. If given the choice, many would prefer to continue to travel but one commented at a WNTF meeting in Northshire *"That way of life is gone now"* (Archie: Dec. 8 2009). An increasing pattern appears to be a preference for a secure site during the winter months and travelling during the summer months.

5.3. Management Structures

The three authorities had different structures for managing Gypsies and Travellers. In Southshire responsibility lay with an officer in the Law Department who had two additional areas of responsibility but was supported by a deputy and five site managers. In Northshire the Traveller liaison manager was based in the Chief Executive's office and supported by two officers. In Westborough overall management of Travellers was one of

⁶⁰ Interview: Carol, May 2009.

the many responsibilities of a senior officer in the Environment Department, supported by an enforcement officer and two support officers. Westborough Council has a well developed equalities policy, but responsibilities are split between the Policy Department and the Environment Department. Responsibility for Gypsies and Travellers falls predominantly under Community Safety in the Environment Department.

5.3.1 Site management

In Southshire, council permanent sites are the direct responsibility of the council, though some accommodation on site is contracted to independent landlords. The sites are managed by six site managers who have small offices on the site and live on one of the sites they manage. A survey conducted at the behest of by the Customer Insight Team by the Gypsy Traveller Support Group found that key issues were recording rent collection, high cost of heating, poor public transport to schools and shops, poor maintenance of dwellings and site infrastructure. Site residents were unclear as to the wardens' exact responsibilities or the extent of their authority regarding site maintenance. Most residents appreciated the wardens' ability to provide advice and support, though some site wardens were mistrusted (OPM, 2010; Williams, 2010).

For many years Northshire contracted out the upkeep and maintenance of its sites to a voluntary organisation whose headquarters were in London. There were no resident site managers. In 2006 the management and maintenance was brought in-house. The transit site, which was extended and refurbished with a grant from the government, has a resident site manager, as does the refurbished transit site in Westborough.

5.4. The Voluntary Sector

Three voluntary organisations work in the three authorities – Friends, Gypsies and Travellers (FGT), the Gypsy Traveller Support Group (GTSG) and the Association of Gypsy and Irish Travellers (AGIT).

FGT and GTSG are led by Gaujos and have employed both traditional Gypsies and Travellers and New Age Travellers. AGIT is led by an Irish Traveller. All three have had difficulties raising finance, but AGIT has never applied for or received funding, possibly

through lack of experience and the need for assistance with applications. The organisations are always vulnerable to changes in funding policy and continually need to develop new projects to raise funds. The organisations and their work are described briefly below.

5.4.1. Friends, Gypsies and Travellers (FGT)

This, the largest and most established organisation, is a national organisation with a remit to take up national issues. As its website states:

[It] was established in response to the 1994 Criminal Justice & Public Order Act and is one of a number of leading organisations which have emerged seeking to address the problems facing the Traveller and Gypsy community. Over a small number of years, [it] grew from an informal support group and network helping to deal with crises ...to a formal advice, information and training organisation providing a wide range of services to all Travellers nationwide⁶¹.

At the time of this research, it employed thirteen people, half or them Gypsies, Travellers or New Travellers. It was well represented in national discussions at government level and was a member of the All-Parliamentary Group. It provided an advice service and was proactive in gaining funding to support the health and wellbeing of Travellers, particularly issues around childbirth. It also had a mental health and advice remit and advised Gypsies and Travellers on individual cases. It has not to date addressed educational issues. It generally enjoyed a good reputation among the Gypsies and Travellers who used its services.

5.4.2. Association of Gypsy and Irish Travellers (AGIT)

This organisation was very small. It was led by an experienced Traveller of Irish heritage, who undertook specific work with individuals and was an influential participant in the WNTF and in PGTG. He also undertook diversity training for the police.

⁶¹ Accessed from <http://gypsy-traveller.org/about> on Dec. 12 2010.

5.4.3. Gypsy Traveller Support Group (GTSG)

GTSG is a local organisation and as mentioned above, membership of this group and the projects undertaken, facilitated my access to the communities and consultative forums. Though not part of my research, the projects provided the background to my engagement with Gypsies and Travellers in Southshire, facilitated access and provided additional information. I describe the projects below.

5.4.3.1. The Change-Up Programme

Funding from the national "Change Up" programme was obtained in 2006 to undertake work in Westborough and Southshire in collaboration with three other organisations who worked respectively with black and ethnic minorities, faith groups, refugees and asylum seekers.

The programme was designed to address issues of inclusion. In Southshire, a survey of Gypsies and Travellers was undertaken to assess their use of statutory and voluntary services. A written questionnaire was not feasible due to the low level of literacy among the Gypsy and Traveller community though written questionnaires were used by statutory bodies on a number of issues including health and site provision. "Face to face" structured interviews in which the interviewer recorded the answers were designed. Access was negotiated through the Senior Traveller Liaison Officer responsible for site management, and a Romani Gypsy, who had sufficient literacy skills to record the answers, was employed to undertake the interviews. There were advantages and disadvantages to using a quantitative survey method. With hindsight, qualitative and unstructured interviews would have provided richer and more detailed information. As Dunne, Pryor and Yates observed (2005:47), "The values and position of the researcher are captured, solidified and concealed within the questionnaire." On the other hand, as a Gypsy, she was able to access the community relatively easily and interview ninety-eight people in Southshire.

When the first survey had been completed, the results analysed and the report written, there were sufficient funds remaining for the same Romani Gypsy to undertake a further twenty-eight interviews the following year.

5.4.3.2. Red Bus Project

Following the second series of interviews a small project was developed in conjunction with the lead organisation. A community bus was hired from the Youth Service and visited three sites on two occasions each. Relevant organisations were invited to accompany the bus on to the sites and explain the services they offered to residents. These visits enabled me to familiarise myself with the sites and meet many of the residents, note how many children of school age were on site during the school day, and explore with them and their mothers the reasons for their absence from school.

5.4.3.3. Connecting Communities

In 2009 funding was obtained from the Department of Communities and Local Government under the "Connecting Communities Programme". Twenty-two semi-structured face-to-face interviews were carried out on six different sites to gain greater in-depth information on their use of statutory and voluntary services. I carried out eight of the interviews, which were not directly connected to my research on literacy, but gave me the opportunity to observe their literacy usage and note if their level of literacy hindered or facilitated their use of services. I met Gary, one of my four key interviewees, through this project. When he raised the issue of his literacy difficulties I explained my research and he was happy to elaborate, as is detailed in Chapter 7. On several occasions I had the opportunity to chat informally to family members or people around the site. This provided valuable additional information on perceptions of literacy and education.

5.4.3.4. Developing a Traveller-led forum

In 2010 GTSG received funding for three years from the National Lottery to engage with site residents to establish a Traveller-led forum in Southshire to facilitate their contribution to decision making processes affecting them. The Gypsy and Traveller cultural tradition of representing only your family makes this a challenging project.

5.4.3.5. Statutory / voluntary cooperation

Cooperation between the three voluntary organisations and the Traveller Liaison officers in all three authorities was generally positive, though relations with officials and councillors

were occasionally a little strained when they were questioned on their policies, the shortage of permanent and transit sites and the consequent evictions.

5.5. Social and political context

The provision of sufficient accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, as well as their health and well being, and the location of the sites, is determined by the social and political context and the attitudes of the sedentary communities.

In all three authorities, any discussion, event or action around Gypsies and Travellers revealed negative attitudes. Increasingly it became evident that this was a major factor in all the difficulties they experienced - insufficient sites, limited statistical data, poor health, low achievement in school, lack of adult education. It was also a significant barrier to implementing policies to improve their situation. The examples below demonstrate the prevalent discourse around Gypsies and Travellers referred to in Chapter 3 and how Gypsies and Travellers were socially constructed in primary discourses and secondary Discourses within the three authorities. A few members of the public, officers and politicians occasionally challenged the dominant discourse by expressing positive and supportive attitudes. I present some of these comments below to provide the social and political context prevalent in the three authorities at the time of the research.

5.5.1. The General Public

I quickly became attuned to passing comments on Gypsies and Travellers which were not very significant in themselves but suggestive of a level of, at best disinterest, and, at worst, a strong dislike. The attitudes of the general public affect policy development, the behaviour of elected representatives and their officers. I began to note down the comments of public officials and elected representatives. I kept newspaper articles, letters and records of public meetings.

A fairly typical attitude was displayed by a group of liberal minded people when, in the course of general conversation, I remarked that I had been concerned at a leaflet opposing a Traveller site produced by a councillor (March 2009). The group was silent. Then someone said, "*Well they do have a bad reputation*". I pointed out that a leaflet

would not make a similar statement about people from Pakistan or Africa. There was another pause and the conversation moved on to something else. Casual comments made about dogs being stolen by Gypsies, or sheep "*having to watch their backsides*" when Gypsies or Travellers camped nearby were common⁶².

At other times comments such as "*Well they leave rubbish everywhere*", "*They don't contribute to society*" were frequent. More virulent were comments like, "*Well Pkeys are dirty and thieving.*" On one occasion I showed a photograph of a very attractive bungalow owned by Gypsies. The photograph showed a garden full of flowers, a small field and a stable occupied by a fine horse. I had expected a positive response. Instead my colleague said, "*I wouldn't mind being able to buy a field like that and build a house on it.*" Was the speaker implying a Gypsy shouldn't own such a pleasant property or that he had acquired inappropriately?

Another example is of an occasion when three caravans, presumed to belong to Gypsies, were parked in a University car park and some members of the academic staff sent emails advising colleagues to shut their doors and lock their windows. Some recipients objected to the tone, but were told it was up to them if they risked theft (June 2008).

As a local councillor, I have a folder of letters from residents asking me "*to do something about*" Traveller vans parked in the road beside a local park. One letter stated:

Some travellers in this area appear simply to be moving from one illegal encampment to another, causing a nuisance to local residents by using nearby bushes as lavatories, leaving other waste around their caravans, vans and cars, burning rubbish, living "al fresco" and playing loud music. Their dogs when not shut in their vans for hours are left to roam without check, barking and fouling the grass where children play (Aug. 13 2001).

The generic description of the lifestyle in this letter was frequently used as an argument against encampments whether or not any of these activities took place. In fact 90% of those particular vans were registered to local residents⁶³.

⁶² Personal communication: May 2010.

⁶³ Police survey: Aug. 2008

I have only received one supportive letter in twelve years. The excerpt below is taken from a letter received after Travellers were evicted from a transit site following a disturbance.

Everyone living on the site is being scapegoated for the actions of a few who don't even live there, and this would never happen to people living in houses – you wouldn't evict a whole street because a few **temporary** residents caused a nuisanceI have not seen any evidence that either the Police or the Council have investigated the matter in order to identify those responsible; instead it appears that they are simply assuming guilt by association (June 21 1997), (*The original emphasis is retained*).

Few residents or councillors are aware of the different groups and do not distinguish between Romani Gypsies, Irish Travellers and New Age Travellers, but appear to have a generalised dislike. When Irish Travellers were encamped in the grounds of a large park, a witness stated that temporary short stay encampments interfered with the business of letting the house for functions. The owner of the house was quoted as stating that the occupants "*leave faeces and other unlawful debris*" and the head of a much respected educational institution referred to "*the awful looking vehicles camped around the park*".

A more extreme example of generic stereotypical views was in the minutes of a residents' meeting in Westborough in which faeces was again mentioned. The meeting had been attended by council officers, the police, ten local residents and four residents from elsewhere. It demonstrated the apparent freedom with which people expressed their feelings. No Gypsies or Travellers or members of support organisations were present. A Gypsy family, who had recently experienced a tragic death, had been allowed by the Council to move onto a nearby field. Despite one of the opening comments that "*[the family] are quite nice people*", excerpts from seven pages of minutes of the meeting, held on Aug. 26 2001, show an overwhelming hostility, as is demonstrated below.

The minutes refer to faeces in a totally different location, a noisy party held several miles away a few years previously, fear at seeing a Gypsy walking up the lane, fear of intimidation when a resident's photo was published in the local paper, a friend too frightened to stay the night as, "*She would have to drive past the Gypsies*" and references

to *"funny people round here,"* and *"It's intimidating to have these sorts of people round here"*. None of these fears appear to have been realised and the residents themselves while making the allegations were saying, *"Mrs. Smith (the Gypsy) was very polite"*.

When a WPC asked the residents if they would like the Gypsy family provided with a toilet, she was unable to be heard over residents shouting, *"NO, we want them moved on."* The vicar of the local parish church who chaired the meeting tried to calm the situation several times but the response was *"They are spongers, as they don't pay anything"*.

This meeting could be thought an extreme example but probably was not. The generalised antagonism to the Gypsies and Travellers overrode any feelings of sympathy for this particular family. The minutes show an overriding feeling of fear, fear of what might happen and resentment against what was perceived as freeloading. Nine years later in Northshire similar resentments were expressed by residents opposing a Gypsy planning application and a neighbour cut off the Gypsy family's water supply, (Planning Appeal Northshire: March 2010).

The residents' meeting quoted above demonstrates the hostility and the determination to "move them on". Coincidentally a group of Travellers was encamped on a large vacant lot in Westborough which was awaiting redevelopment. A member of GTSG requested that they be allowed to remain there temporarily, pointing out that one Traveller required a heart operation, a young boy required two abdominal operations, one woman was pregnant and another Traveller was partially blind. The response from the council was that:

Economic Development (a council department) is negotiating a lease to occupy a hall on the site on a temporary basis prior to the development of the site. If the Travellers' encampment goes on, this would discourage this negotiation. In the long term the electronics company would be creating jobs (Nov. 26 2002).

Those with severe health problems were tolerated temporarily elsewhere, as was legally required but the others were evicted. Nine years later, the site had still not been developed.

5.5.2. Officialdom

Officials appeared wary of raising the profile of their work; only five reports on Gypsies and Travellers, went to any committee of Westborough Council from 1997 to 2010. Two of these were strategic documents on “managing” Gypsies and Travellers; one was the Traveller Strategy, another the possible location of a new Traveller site in response to the Government’s directive and two went to a Scrutiny Committee following a councillor’s request. The lack of reports may have been due to officer prejudice but possibly more to a concern for the councillors’ reaction if the issues were raised.

Officers working directly with Gypsies and Travellers were generally sympathetic and expressed concern over the predicament of those who had nowhere legal to stop. Individual officers made a significant difference both in developing policy and in ensuring policy implementation. In the late 1990s, a senior officer was effective in moving forward a policy of toleration, in securing the establishment of the transit site and setting up the first Traveller forum in the area. When the department was restructured during efficiency savings, his post was deleted. An officer in Northshire was primarily responsible for the continuation of the forum, for developing a Traveller strategy in Northshire and in securing money from central government to increase the number of pitches as required by the outcome of the Accommodation Needs Assessment.

Officers have a complex and difficult task. They receive little support from elected members and on the whole are regarded with suspicion by Gypsies and Travellers. They also have to respond to the general public:

You should hear what John has to deal with on the phone. The public can be really rude and unpleasant, but he handles it very well (Officer interview: Sept. 22 2009).

This was particularly difficult in authorities where there were high levels of unauthorised encampments. The positions of liaison officer and eviction officer were often combined making trust difficult to establish and diminishing the possibilities of constructive dialogue with the Gypsies and Travellers.

5.5.3. Councillors

The reaction by council officers, councillors and other public officials to the complaints made by the public, were of almost more concern. Councillors of all political parties could be unsympathetic or hostile. An example of a Westborough councillor's attitude was his response to complaints by several residents. He raised the issue at a meeting with his fellow councillors and it became apparent that he was not aware that Travellers were covered by the Race Relations Act or indeed that he was saying anything untoward. In a subsequent letter to me he asked in what way the Race Relations Act was relevant to anything he had said, repeated the points made at the meeting and then continued:

We are in a pre-election period and Travellers are a vote loser for us.....rightly or wrongly it is clear that ... [Westborough] is a soft touch. Too often our parks and streets are littered with Travellers' vansIf a way could be found to charge these people for services provided, that would be something. But meanwhile they are simply a drain on our resources, not to mention their disgusting dogs and the delight some of them take in shitting in the bushes (Written communication: Nov. 13 2002).

The two families in question had very severe and on-going health problems – a burst fallopian tube and a child with very severe dental decay. The "*drain on resources*" is an issue frequently mentioned by both residents and councillors.

In Northshire, on the day before officers were to recommend a location for a Traveller site to a District Planning Committee a call for people to join a demonstration was posted on the web.

Thursday - Gypsy demo be there!

TONIGHT is your LAST chance to protest against plans for a travellers' site...The borough council is expecting so many hundreds of people, it has hired the Theatre. It will be a meeting of the full council - the last such meeting before Cabinet decides a number of controversial issues.

(Feb. 2007)

The call was successful and 250 people demonstrated outside the meeting with anti-Traveller placards and slogans. The Conservative councillor, who was the Lead Cabinet Member, attracted boos and jeers from the angry audience when he said it was absolutely vital that a transit site was located somewhere in the town⁶⁴. Faced with this pressure, councillors refused the planning application.

In one of the urban centres in Southshire officers put forward a proposal for two Traveller sites. The committee papers stated:

The objective is to provide well-regulated Travellers sites, no different from the vast majority of Travellers sites in the County and across the Country, which do not cause problems for the settled community.providing for Travellers sites is an essential part of addressing the question of Travellers, and this must assume that any site which the Council provides is well managed (Committee papers: 14 Dec. 2005).

The objections from residents were so strong that the councillors on the Planning Committee rejected the application and it was widely thought that the suggestion to build two Travellers sites contributed to the defeat of the Labour administration at the local elections two years later.

An interesting example of subconscious, even unconscious racism, were the actions of a Labour councillor in Westborough who opposed the recommendation to provide a permanent site in his ward. A Party leaflet informed voters that "Councillor Mills led the challenge against the council's decision to build a Traveller site on Adelaide Avenue"⁶⁵.

The statement was entirely accurate and could not be challenged under the Race Relations Act, but it might have appeared supportive of the electors' anti-Traveller views and in line with the more extremist sentiments in some newspapers. It could also possibly encourage demonstrations like those seen elsewhere. When this was pointed out to Councillor Mills, he was extremely angry at any possibility that he might be encouraging anti-Traveller or racist views. However, a leaflet he produced a few weeks later proclaimed

⁶⁴ Report in the local paper: Friday March 2 2007.

⁶⁵ Party Literature: April 2009.

"Victory" for residents. When challenged he was again furious. However the leaflet had been posted through the door of a Traveller activist who phoned the Leader of the Party, a supportive councillor, the support organisations and also emailed the Police and the DCLG. As a result, Councillor Mills and the two other ward councillors apologised. In both cases it seems the councillor did not recognise the potential racism. The incidents could be considered similar to those described by Coxhead in *The Last Bastion of Racism* (2007:29) and relevant to Van Dijk's (1999) theories when he states that:

It is the social discourse of denial [that]...is most influential... also most damaging.....that persuasively helps construct the dominant consensus (Van Dijk, 1999:543).

Councillors representing wards where Traveller sites are located are in a difficult position if they wish to retain their seats at subsequent elections. Those in whose wards there are no unauthorised encampments might take a broader view. Though the majority of councillors in the three authorities were openly hostile, there were at least two in each authority in different political parties who were prepared to publicly support Gypsies and Travellers.

A Conservative councillor in Southshire, appointed to the Cabinet in 2009, challenged his colleagues on their lack of progress regarding action towards increasing the number of pitches identified in the Accommodation Needs Assessment. In Northshire a Liberal Democrat councillor on the forum is known to be passionate about equalities and leads the debate on Traveller sites, in Westborough a Labour councillor challenges evictions. In other authorities, where proposals to develop sites have been put to Council Planning Committees and have been rejected by a large majority, there has been at least one councillor who has spoken in support of the recommendations.

In Westborough a senior Conservative councillor, I interviewed in July 2009, had an impressive and detailed knowledge of Gypsies and Travellers. She said:

They need to be able to continue their lifestyle. When they're born, that's how they live. They live differently to us, very clean. If you took a present of some biscuits, they wouldn't accept them as it's not clean. If you go into a caravan it's spotless, but they do leave rubbish.

There are different groups; they're not all the same. There are the real ones. And then in Southern Ireland they call some of them "hedge crawlers", also "Tinkers". I've heard "hedge crawlers" in Kent too.

She explained that the decline in the traditional annual fruit picking in Kent had caused problems:

[You] get groups who tend to stay around sites – whereas others would travel through. They now stay longer. [They] used to go across Hampshire to Kent for the fruit picking and stop on the way and the majority would be down in Kent.

She also pointed out that in Ireland they have beautiful homes and then go travelling in the summer. She did not however have a "rose tinted" image of Gypsies and Travellers. When a large group of Irish Travellers were evicted from their unauthorised encampment she and a colleague followed them. They drove into a park and when they started circling a father and his son playing cricket, she phoned the police whose reaction surprised her:

It was quite frightening I phoned the police and they were really rude – "Oh someone else is dealing with this. We don't need you to phone us." I phoned a senior officer and complained that he was rude and said you ask the public to cooperate and then they get this response.

She also expressed concern about the way the issue was sometimes handled by council officers:

Officers don't always get it right – don't mean to be rude. Officers don't know the culture. I don't want planners to get hold of it yet. I am aware of what officers would like to do. You know they just get a large piece of paper (she demonstrated) and say we'll have this here and this here.

She had visited permanent sites in other authorities and was advised that Gypsies and Travellers prefer small sites:

We could get it right if we listen, we could solve two problems – their life style and lessen problems for our residents. We must look at the location with regard to the lifestyle and what you put there.

5.5.4. Members of Parliament

As with councillors, knowledge, understanding and commitment to equalities seemed to influence the attitudes of Members of Parliament more than political allegiances and a number of MPs from all political parties were committed to improving the situation of Gypsies and Travellers and to increasing the number of sites.

However in each of the three authorities at least one Member of Parliament is on record as being less than supportive. In Westborough, one of the local MPs stated openly that he disliked Travellers. As I did not wish to misrepresent him, I re-checked his statement and he repeated it⁶⁶. In 2005 he had been present at several meetings of local residents concerned with "open spaces" during which they discussed unauthorised encampments. A resident attending for the first time complained of racist comments which neither he nor anyone else had challenged. The rules of the meeting were changed and such comments subsequently disallowed. This forum was disbanded soon after as the residents ceased attending, believing it no longer fulfilled the purpose for which it had been established.

In Northshire a local Gypsy contacted his MP over the consistent rejection of planning applications from local Gypsies⁶⁷. The reply showed no understanding of the predicament Gypsies faced or the possibility that the Planning Laws might disadvantage this particular community. In Southshire one of the MPs is on record in Hansard as making inappropriate remarks.

The lack of support from MPs and collusion with unpleasant remarks was a sad indication of a lack of moral leadership, but when comments were made by the most senior politicians, it was hardly surprising that racist comments were viewed as acceptable. When Jack Straw was Home Secretary he characterised Gypsies as:

People who think it's perfectly OK for them to cause mayhem, burglary, thieving, breaking into vehicles including defecating in doorways of firms (*Jack Straw, July 22 1999*)⁶⁸.

⁶⁶ July 2009.

⁶⁷ Interview, Harvey: Aug. 2009.

⁶⁸ Jack Straw, 22 July 1999. Interview with Annie Oathen, Radio West Midlands, quoted by Monbiot 2004.

On the other hand Lord Avebury and Lord Ivatts, highly placed politicians in the House of Lords, have, over very many years, consistently argued on behalf of Gypsies and Travellers. It is doubtful if the current policy regarding establishing more sites would be in place without their support. A member of the House of Lords from Westborough has spoken in the House in favour of bringing site tenancies in line with social housing tenancies.

Regrettably public officials and Members of Parliament have little opportunity to meet Gypsies or Travellers and as the senior councillor in Westborough pointed out "*the gap is very wide*". Forums as discussed in Chapter 8 do at least provide some opportunity for face to face dialogue and the potential creation of space for negotiation.

The cross-party equalities group in Westborough noted that improvements occurred as a result of the actions of committed individuals rather than a shift in public attitude, and when the individuals left, progress slowed or ceased⁶⁹. The attitude of the general public influences elected members and therefore policy development in all areas whether accommodation, health or education. Counteracting these attitudes demands considerable knowledge, energy and co-ordination among those who want to institute change.

5.5.5. Political representation

Gypsies and Travellers were not represented on any council committees or strategic partnerships in any of the three authorities and therefore had no access to decision making processes. There were, however, a small number of formal bodies through which Gypsies and Travellers could make their views known. Westborough established an Equalities and Social Justice Forum which comprised officers, councillors and representatives of minority communities which a sedentary Gypsy, a trustee of FGT, attended occasionally. The Traveller Strategy was discussed at the forum before a decision was taken by Westborough Council to adopt it. The forum was discontinued in 2007 when a different political party took office. Neither Northshire nor Southshire had similar

⁶⁹ Meeting held on Dec. 19 2009.

Equalities Forums. Gypsies and Travellers were not represented in any other council forums, committees or strategic partnerships in any of the three authorities.

In 1997, Westborough initiated the Westborough and Northshire Traveller Forum (WNTF) specifically to address Traveller issues. This initially comprised officers and councillors. The operation of this forum is addressed and analysed in Chapter 8. To date Southshire has not established a forum though a workshop and a preliminary meeting of officers and support organisations held in November 2010 may lead to the formulation of one. In 2008 Westborough formed a Community Inclusion Partnership whose membership consisted of representatives from the statutory organisations, the Council, the Primacy Care Trust, the Hospital Trusts, the Police, the Ambulance and Fire Services, the Universities and a councillor from each political party. In 2009 a working group focused on Gypsies and Travellers as one of the most marginalised communities. Though minorities were not represented on the partnership, a Gypsy attended and contributed to the working group.

In 2007 the Shire police formed a Gypsy and Travellers Advisory group with the aim of improving working relations between the police and the Gypsy and Traveller communities. A number of Gypsies from from the three authorities were invited and attended this group. The operation of the group is described and analysed in Chapter 8.

5.6. Organising collectively

As the data in Chapters 7 and 8 demonstrates, a few Gypsies and Travellers were aware of the need to organise collectively. Several organisations exist at national level. As stated in Chapter 2, the Gypsy Council was formed in the late 1960's and was successful in attracting funding for its activities. In 2004 it worked in partnership with Sheffield University to undertake influential and seminal research into the health situation of Gypsies and Travellers. However, due to financial difficulties and the death of key people in recent years, the future has yet to be assured. The Irish Traveller Movement was formed in 2007, after the demise of the Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition, itself formed in 2002. These national organisations have had some success in raising issues around Gypsies and Travellers and an All-Parliamentary Group has been established. At regional level, a Gypsy and Traveller Southern Network and a separate Southern

Organisations were formed in 2008 and 2010 respectively. These two regional organisations could be important catalysts for change, yet the culture has yet to incorporate the idea of local community organisations, as the three surveys carried three Gypsy Traveller Support Group in 2006, 2008 and 2010 demonstrated. Only three of the 148 interviewed in Southshire were interested in any form of association.

Gypsy Traveller communities have no culture of collective action or resistance and despite the formation of the national organisations referred to above. The head of the family takes decisions affecting the whole family and speaks on their behalf. He, or very occasionally, she, does not speak for other families. Culturally members will not publicly disagree with the leader, or indeed each other.

At a planning meeting on 'Applying the Mobiles Homes Act' to permanent sites in Northshire at which a dozen Gypsies and Travellers were present, the following conversation demonstrated the lack of interest in forming associations:

Traveller Officer: I don't want to go on about it but you must form a Residents' Association.
Jack: But if everything goes smoothly why have it?
Bob: We went down twice a week and nothing happened.
Officer: If you have an Association they have to come and consult you by law.
Laura: But we are in different places.
Gladys: In an ideal world that would be nice, but it isn't always like that.
Bob: We had one [a consultation] and they still went and put buildings all around us.
Officer: This government is trying to give you the same rights as people in social housing – they have Residents' Associations and the council has to consult with them.
Jack: I'd like to talk about insurance (Field notes: Jan. 29 2009).

The issue was side-stepped. A site association was not formed.

However, some activists formed very small organisations with a few relatives or close friends and carried business cards with the organisation's name address, and phone number. This was effective and increased their credibility.

5.7. Health and well being

This chapter has focused on accommodation, management structures, Gypsy and Traveller support organisations, the attitudes of the settled community and the absence of collective local voices. Accommodation and the attitudes and discourses of the sedentary community dominated and impacted on all aspects of Gypsy and Traveller health and well being in the three authorities.

5.7.1. Health problems

The lack of safe and secure accommodation, whether permanent or temporary, has a serious impact on Gypsy and Traveller health and well being. A travelling life style creates difficulties in accessing health services. As stated in the introduction, the health and education statistics of Gypsies and Travellers are the lowest of any minority in the UK (Parry 2004). Gypsy and Traveller women are twenty times more likely than the average to experience the death of a child (OPM, 2010:3). Health problems in Southshire included diabetes, arthritis, asthma and bronchitis, angina, heart aneurism, kidney problems, brain tumours, headaches anxiety, depression, paranoia, and mobility problems (ODPM, 2010). It was evident from discussions at the Westborough and Northshire Traveller Forum in September 2004 that the health services in the three authorities had very little awareness of the health needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The Parry report (2004) helped to raise awareness and over the last six years there have been a few important initiatives. A five person Sussex Traveller Health and Wellbeing Team was funded by the Pfizer Foundation and included a maternity worker. The team endeavoured to include Gypsies and Travellers in local health networks (LINKS) and assisted Gypsies and Travellers to access Adult Social Care. A mental health project was run by FGT. Despite these activities, a health assessment carried out in a Northshire district in 2010 found Gypsies and Travellers had the lowest health indices of all ethnic minorities in Northshire (2010)⁷⁰.

5.7.1. Access to health services

Two reports commissioned in 2010 showed varied experiences in accessing GPs' service and difficulty in accessing dental services often resulted in severe tooth decay among

young children (Atterbury, 2010; OPM, 2010). Travelling exacerbated the difficulties in registering and re-registering. While some Gypsies and Travellers reported good services and good relationships with their GPs as had been reported by Forest and McCaffery (2006); others found great difficulty and often experienced prejudicial attitudes when attempting to register (Atterbury, 2010; OPM, 2010). There were only four Walk-in-Centres in the three authorities and all were located in urban centres. For these reasons, Gypsies and Travellers tended to delay seeking medical help and often went directly to Accident and Emergency services, which they reported treated them quickly and with greater sympathy. They reported that the service received at local hospitals was generally good (Forrest and McCaffery, 2006).

Access to social services was complex and there was a preference to rely on the extended family for assistance. The OPM report suggests a lack of understanding of the role of the social services coupled with a fear that the services might remove their children. The individual interviews in Chapter 7 refer to experiences of removal, as did a Gypsy at a consultative meeting in Southshire.

The OPM report (2010) concluded that outreach services should be further developed and should include more mobile units and that health service staff should receive further training on Gypsy and Traveller culture and health issues. The two reports also mentioned the serious impact on health of poor quality permanent sites and lack of transit sites as major contributors to health determinants.

5.7.2. Hand-held health records

A positive move has been the introduction of hand-held health records which were first piloted by the PCT in a Northshire district council. In 2010 NHS in Surrey produced Personal Adult Health Records in small and durable folders to contain GP details, information on immunisations, medication and personal health.

5.8. Education

The gradual development of education for Gypsies and Travellers in England and the current levels of achievement are outlined in Chapter 2. As elsewhere in England, the vast

majority of Gypsy and Traveller adults over thirty-five in the three counties had very few opportunities to attend school. Even in the 1980s opportunities were very limited and though more children now attend, the pattern of low attendance and achievement followed the national pattern

In January 2010, there were 257 school aged children from English Gypsy and Irish Traveller families in Southshire (around 0.28% of all children in Southshire state schools) and 200 in Northshire. In both authorities the majority were English Gypsies. The actual number of children from Gypsy and Traveller families in both Southshire and Northshire schools was probably higher, as some under-reporting was likely (OPM, 2010). In Westborough only twelve Irish Traveller children were recorded in the city's primary schools in 2009-10. If there are less than five, the numbers are not recorded.

Table 5.7

Number¹ of Irish Traveller and Gypsy / Roma pupils attending schools maintained by Northshire, Southshire and Westborough LAs – Years 2008/9 and 2009/10 (final data)

	Number of pupils ² in maintained Primary Schools ³				Number of pupils ² in maintained Secondary Schools ³			
	Traveller Of Irish Heritage		Gypsy/ Roma		Traveller Of Irish Heritage		Gypsy/ Roma	
	2008/09	2009/10	2008/09	2009/10	2008/09	2009/10	2008/09	2009/10
Westborough	x	12	0	0	x	x	x	x
Northshire	9	6	93	103	6	x	72	83
Southshire	22	21	134	128	10	8	93	100

Data and Statistics Division, DES 2010.

1. As in January of each academic year.
2. Pupils of compulsory school age, classified according to ethnic group. Excludes dually registered pupils.
3. Includes middle schools as deemed, city technology colleges and academies.

X fewer than 5 pupils.

However, the statistics provided by the TES manager to the Westborough Scrutiny Committee in 2009 showed a considerably higher number of children had attended at some time during the previous year.

Table 5.8 Gypsy /Roman and Irish Traveller children attending schools in Westborough 2007/8

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Pupils enrolled in schools all / part 2007/08	33	16	49
Schools with traveller pupils	13	7	20
Highly mobile children resorting to the area with whom TES engaged but who did not attend any school	17	9	26

Report to Westborough Children, Schools and Family Scrutiny Panel: 28 Jan.2009.

Each of the three authorities ran a Traveller Education Service to encourage and support Gypsies and Travellers to send their children to school whether they were on site, in housing, or travelling. The TES also supported the children when they were in school. The Southshire website stated:

All schools have a duty to have a race equality policy, whether or not they have pupils from minority ethnic communities on roll. Schools should prepare their pupils for life in a multi-ethnic society. The curriculum will provide many opportunities for developing attitudes and views on racial equality and harmony and respect for different groups that will hopefully influence the behaviour of pupils as they grow up (2011)⁷¹.

The site also gave information on making referrals:

Referrals to the Team can be made directly to the Principal Advisory Teacher by Families, TES Teams countrywide and other Adults and Children's Service teams, Head Teachers/Teachers, Education Officers, Education Welfare & Education Psychology Services and Site managers (2011)⁷².

The Northshire TES worked in consortium with Westborough and as TEALS (Traveller Education and Additional Language Support) Service. It consisted of peripatetic teachers (including Early Years teachers) and Traveller Welfare Officers. It was funded by the Vulnerable Children's Group. The Northshire website stated:

⁷¹ Accessed from <http://shire.gov.uk/com/content/school-office/plans-and-policiesprocedures/ethnicityrace/> on Feb. 24 2011.

⁷² Accessed from <http://shire.gov.uk/com/content/curriulum/inclusion-equalities-support-for-inclusion-in-educational-settings> on Feb. 24 2011

We help families and pupils to find a school place and give advice and support to schools to ensure successful inclusion and pupil achievement. We can also give advice and training on legislation and race awareness relating to Traveller pupils (2011)⁷³.

5.8.1. Levels of achievement

None of the websites provided information on the levels of achievement of Gypsy and Traveller pupils and there appeared to be some nervousness about presenting the information.

In 2006 the Westborough Annual Report to Children Family and Schools did not include the detail on achievement at Level 4 of Gypsies and Travellers, despite a request that this be included. The reason given was that the number of children involved was not statistically significant. However, the report of an OFSTED inspection the same year, commented on the absence of data on Gypsy and Traveller children, as well as that on asylum seekers. Nearly three years later, my ten year long request for a report on Traveller Education was finally granted and a report presented to the Westborough Scrutiny Committee by the head of the TES in 2009⁷⁴. The report showed that two students gained GCSEs; one gained a D for English, an F for Maths and an E for Science; another gained a U for English, a G for Maths and E for science. To date, I have not been able to identify the pass rates in Northshire or Southshire due to the DCFS (DfE) policy of not releasing the figures for reasons of confidentiality if the number is below five⁷⁵.

When the TES manager was asked about the impact of evictions on the children's education at the scrutiny committee, the Westborough Assistant Director for Education quickly interrupted saying, "*We are here to discuss education. It should not be political.*"⁷⁶

5.8.2. Preschool education

The TES in all three authorities distributed book packs provided by government funding to all preschool children. Northshire / Westborough ran a play bus for preschool children

⁷³ Accessed from <http://www.shire.gov.uk/atoz/heading964.aspx?forms=&acc=1&ae=1&ah=1&al=1&ar=1&aw=1> on Feb. 24 2011.

⁷⁴ It took 10 years to get any report on Gypsy and Traveller education to any committee in Westborough.

⁷⁵ Telephone conversation with a DfE statistician: May 12 2011.

⁷⁶ Westborough Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee: Jan. 28 2009.

which visited both permanent, transit and unauthorised sites. In 2007-8, seventy-nine pre-school children from Westborough accessed activities on the bus⁷⁷. In Southshire a play bus started to visit sites in 2010 (Williams, 2010).

A few parents living on permanent sites took their young children to playgroups and Children's Centres. At a WNTF meeting it was reported that a TES worker in Northshire took a young mother to a Children's Centre and arranged for the child to see a speech specialist. Eight children attended preschool nurseries in Westborough. This support and the Centres were appreciated by the Gypsies and Travellers present, but they expressed concern that children had to leave when Travelling families were evicted. As one said, *It's like giving children a lovely Christmas present and then taking it away again* (Arthur, WNTF: Jan. 29 2009).

In Northshire a number of locally housed families regularly attended the preschool playgroup in the local community centre. Yet in Southshire, a young mother, left after one visit to her local playgroup as *"No-one spoke to me"* (Jackie, Witecross: March 2009).

5.8.3. Impact of site shortages on schooling

The Annual Report for 2007-8 for Westborough noted that the shorter the time unauthorised encampments were tolerated, the greater the difficulty of engaging with families. With relatively short or insecure stopping places, Traveller Education staff frequently encountered parental resistance to placing their children in school, with comments such as *"What's the point we are leaving soon?"* (Westborough Annual TES Report 2007-8).

Absence or non-attendance rates were highest in Westborough, the authority which had no permanent sites. The Westborough Annual Report stated that between Sept. 2007 and August 2008 there was a total of sixty unauthorised encampments in thirty locations – twenty-four of these were Irish Travellers, nineteen were English Gypsies, eleven were new Travellers and six were mixed groups. Of these, thirty-five encampments were for

⁷⁷ Westborough Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee: Jan. 28 2009.

less than seven days. The report does not indicate how many of the encampments moved on voluntarily and how many were evicted. The report stated that approximately 50% of the children engaged in "appropriate education". Of the forty-nine attending school, thirty-three attended primary school with an attendance rate of 80% and sixteen attended secondary school with an attendance rate of 76%. The statistics the following year were similar.

As stated previously the evidence shows contradictory policies. The best interests of children were rarely considered when families were evicted (Marks, 2004) and little effective coordination between departments. Weekly information on the movement of Travellers provided to Westborough councillors did not include the impact on schooling.

Accommodating Gypsy and Traveller children for short periods is a challenging issue and difficult to resolve. At a training event for a rural voluntary organisation, a TES teacher in Southshire reported that early in July 2008 she was informed that thirty-eight Irish Traveller children had arrived from Ireland, but they could not be accommodated as the school was full. At the same meeting, another participant reported that the school in her village had welcomed and supported a group of Traveller children and were disappointed when they left, but the school had received no financial support as they were not in attendance in January when school numbers are calculated.

The educational situation of Gypsies and Travellers in Northshire, Southshire and Westborough reflected the national situation with many negatives but also some positive developments. The TES was supporting children, parents and schools. An English Gypsy was on the governing body of a Community High School in Northshire and was trying to persuade the school to include Gypsy and Traveller culture in the curriculum. The same school also employed a Traveller as a teaching assistant. The TES also actively encouraged transient children to attend school but the shortage of permanent sites and the prevalence of insecure stopping places, resulting in frequent moves created a very challenging situation.

The information on Gypsies and Travellers provided in Chapter 2 and the concepts described in Chapter 3 foregrounded the specific data on accommodation, health, education and the discourse of the sedentary community in these three authorities as set out in this chapter.

The low levels of literacy would suggest a focus on literacy provision for adults but the complex social and political environment influences decision making processes, including decisions around educational provision for adults. The next chapter analyses the policies for lifelong education in respect of Gypsies and Travellers.

Chapter 6. Lifelong Learning Policies and Provision

Previous chapters outlined the origins and culture of English Gypsies and Irish Travellers, the theoretical framework, the research methodology, the research site and the gradual development of educational support for the children. The social and political environment was complex and influenced decision making processes including decisions around educational provision for adults. My first research question was on the extent of adult education and literacy provision provided for and accessed by Gypsies and Travellers. This chapter addresses this question by analysing the policies and provision for Lifelong Learning for English Gypsies and Irish Travellers.

The need for educational opportunities beyond the compulsory school age is intimately connected to achievement at school. Yet at the inception of the adult literacy campaign in 1974, all those involved were careful to avoid citing the failure of schools as the reason for the number of functionally illiterate adults. Failure to learn to read was due to factors other than poor teaching and the preference was to blame the victim (Mace, 1979). Reasons given for the low level of literacy among adult Gypsies and Travellers follow the same pattern. The efforts to prevent children attending, as in Croydon (cf. Chp.2), and the absence of opportunities for adults over thirty-five, are rarely mentioned.

6.1. Literacy levels

The low levels of achievement in formal schooling in the three counties, as elsewhere in England, and the corresponding low levels of adult literacy suggest a need for adults and young people to have the opportunity to re-engage with education and improve their literacy skills at different stages in their life. Yet my research indicated little interest in providing this opportunity in any of the three authorities and found almost no literature on improving the general education or literacy levels of adult Gypsies and Travellers and no suggestion of their need for literacy provision in the policy documents. It is as though they were invisible. The UK government has supported a number of literacy projects for adults in marginalised communities in different countries as detailed in the recent DfID briefing on adult literacy (2008) including the previously mentioned project for nomadic Fulani

pastoralists (1997–2001). In Ireland, Travellers were one of the government's key target groups in the drive to improve adult literacy and numeracy skills.

Educational opportunities for adults delivered by local councils, the employment sector or voluntary organisations were widely available in the three counties. A raft of government policies promotes adult learning and a range of government and non-government organisations provide adults with opportunities to extend their general education, to improve levels of literacy and numeracy, to improve their English if from overseas, to gain additional qualifications, to undertake preliminary studies prior to entering higher education or to update their skills in relation to the constantly changing employment market. The last purpose, to gain employment related skills, was currently the driving force behind the policies. This was reflected in the title Department of Universities, Industry and Skills (DIUS) renamed again in 2009 as the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) emphasising to an even greater extent the focus on skills rather than education for personal development.

Very few adults can be described as 'illiterate'; most will have some level of reading or writing skills and strengths or weaknesses in particular areas (DfES, 2003). The Literacy Campaign was started in 1974 for an estimated million people with low level reading and writing skills. At the time it was thought that a brief campaign with the high profile television programme *On the Move* and provision largely delivered by volunteers would solve the "problem". In hindsight the underestimate of the numbers and the concept of addressing this in just a few years, was an indictment of an education system which counted the successes of schools and ignored, what some termed, the "failures"⁷⁸.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) estimated that 14.7% of the population had low or very low reading, writing and numeracy skills. The Moser Report (1999) estimated that 20% of adults were not functionally literate. It is not clear whether Gypsies and Travellers were included in these surveys, but if so, their ethnicity was not separately identified.

⁷⁸ As a governor of a local high school in the late 1990s I was only able to obtain the percentage of GCSE passes in relation to those who entered for the exams, not the percentage of passes for the age cohort.

In 2003 a DfES survey (Tables 6.1 and 6.2 below), found that 16 million people in England and Wales had literacy levels below Level 1, which is below GCSE, D grade. 1.7 million, 5%, could only read short texts of familiar material (Appendix 1 shows equivalencies to school reading levels). Gypsies and Travellers, as stated, have literacy levels well below the average.

6.1.1. Age distribution

The Skills for Life Survey (DfES 2003), carried out between June 2002 and May 2003, showed a remarkable similarity in literacy levels across the age ranges, though as the same DfES report stated, twenty years earlier, the literacy levels of older adults would have been lower due to interrupted schooling during the war years.

Table 6.1 Literacy levels among 16 to 65 year-olds⁷⁹.

Level	%	number
Entry level 1 or below	3	1.1m
Entry level 2	2	0.6m
Entry level 3	11	3.5m
<i>(All entry level or below)</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>5.2m</i>
Level 1	40	12.6m
Level 2 or above	44	14.1m

Table 6.2 Literacy levels by age⁸⁰

Age Group	% at entry level or below	% at Level 1	Total % below Level 2	% at Level 2 or above
16-19	16	41	57	43
20-24	13	45	58	43
25-34	13	40	53	47
35-44	15	39	54	46
45-54	19	36	55	45
55-65	22	40	62	38

However, in contrast to the current situation in the general population, the literacy levels of Gypsies and Travellers over thirty-five, are significantly worse than those of younger

⁷⁹ The tests focused on reading rather than writing (DfES, 2003).

⁸⁰ *Calculated by adding % at Entry level and % at Level 1 so figures may not add up due to rounding (DfES, 2003).

adults due to their lack of schooling. Thus one might anticipate Gypsies and Travellers would be among the groups targeted by the government for post-school provision in the same way as speakers of other languages and unemployed people. However in England this was not the case.

6.2. Policies

As previously stated, statistical data on the education of Gypsies and Travellers was limited. There was no overall record of the number of Gypsies and Travellers in post-16 education and training.

6.2.1. Invisibility of Gypsies and Travellers

Policy documents on further and adult education barely mentioned Gypsies and Travellers. There was no mention in the Department for Education and Science DfES document, *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances (2006)* even though it stated that the Further Education section

is effective in reflecting and responding to the diversity of local communities and has a strong track record in tackling inequality and reducing achievement gaps (DfES, 2006 para.1.3).

The Learning and Skills Council's (2005) remit was to plan and fund high quality learning and skills development for everyone aged sixteen and over. The remit covered further education colleges, school sixth forms, specialist further educational colleges, work based learning, training for young people, adult and community learning, information, advice and guidance for adults and education / business links. The LSC's *Agenda for Change* proposed to promote "equality of access and diversity of provision" (LSC, 2005a:9).

The *LSC Annual Report and Accounts 2006-07* promoted equality and diversity and specifically mentioned disability, black and ethnic minorities and gender equality, but there was no reference to Gypsies or Travellers. However the *LSC Race Equality Scheme (June 2005–May 2008)* did refer to Travellers:

Some groups, including refugees, those with language needs and travellers, may face additional barriers to participation and achievement (LSC, 2007: Section 3).

Travellers are mentioned as eligible for fee remission in the Learn Direct programme (LSC, 2003).

These are the only references I found. No information on levels of participation was given in the Learning and Skills Council documents. Even in the Race Equality Scheme (2005-8) Gypsies and Travellers or Roma were not included in the success rates of ethnic minorities in further education or work-based learning. They were also not included in levels of participation by the Department for Industry Universities and Skills (DIUS)⁸¹ or the National Association of Continuing Education (NIACE). It is expected that Gypsies and Travellers will be included in the national census in 2011 and therefore in all reports on black and ethnic minorities. At the time of writing, with the exceptions above, Gypsies and Travellers are invisible in English policy documents.

6.2.2. Visibility

Irish policy documents give Travellers a significantly higher priority. Travellers are specifically identified throughout the *White Paper on Adult Education: Learning for Life 2000*, which recommends strategies to:

Mainstream adult education programmes for people with disabilities, Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers, and to address barriers in rural areas (2000:20).

Additionally,

They [Travellers] may also have distinct cultural patterns, which must be acknowledged in an education context (Ibid, 2000:50 para.1.82).

Statements throughout the papers recognise the need to address the exclusion of Travellers from the mainstream. The *Adult Education White Paper* notes that the *Employment Equality Act 1998* outlaws discrimination on nine distinct grounds including membership of the Traveller community. *The National Employment Action Plan, 2003–2005 (NAPS)* specifically states a commitment to an integrated strategy and the intention to remove any remaining barriers. *The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) Strategic*

⁸¹ Formerly the Department for Education and Science, then the Department for Business Universities and Skills.

Plan 2002-2006 does not specifically mention Travellers, though they were one of the groups whose needs were addressed in the development of a national curriculum framework for adult literacy and numeracy (Mace et al., 2007).

Despite very positive reports (DES 1995), concern grew that such separate provision contravened race relations and equalities legislation. Recommendations outlined in the *Report and Recommendations for A Traveller Education Strategy 2006*, called for an integrated approach to the education of Travellers. In 2004 a review of the Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) was undertaken. This generated considerable debate with some arguing that the centres provided a safe learning environment and others arguing that such separate provision contravened Equal Opportunities legislation. The outcome was a *Strategic Plan for 2008–2012* that retained the centres and recognised their contribution to breaking down the barriers of discrimination.

In Ireland, there is now a clear policy framework and an extensive and well organised structure of educational opportunities for adult Travellers. In England, there is as yet no similar strategy.

6.2.3. Impact of invisibility

The lack of strategy in England was apparent in the Skills for Life Programme, Train for Gain and general adult literacy and numeracy provision which is open to Gypsies and Travellers as to all other groups and individuals. When I interviewed senior LSC managers in the South East, it was clear they were committed to improving access for marginalised groups including Gypsies and Travellers, but the policy had not been implemented as intended:

If we look at basic skills and 'Skills for Life' launched in 2004, we wanted to address basic levels from pre-entry to Level 2 (GCSE), so people could pick up on whatever level and keep on to Level 2. We wanted to keep them, so the target was set at Level 1 and Level 2. The practice was different; the majority of providers saw the target as the main driver (Interview: Director, LSC SE Region, Feb. 24. 2009).

As this senior manager pointed out, funding from the LSC depended on student performance and achievement and this led to institutions focusing on Levels 1 and 2 and

not lower levels, as the LSC had originally intended, even though funding could be provided through 'the Laying the Foundations' programme.

6.3. Targeting provision

Policies are not always fully implemented, but without a clear policy there is likely to be little provision. The difference in policies and provision in England and Ireland showed this clearly. In 1974, the first of twenty-nine Senior Traveller Training Centres was established in Ireland to provide basic education, work-related skills and knowledge and general education in order to break the cycle of intergenerational educational disadvantage (*DES, 2000:172 para. 8.12*). Travellers were a target group in the programmes designed to up-skill the Irish workforce such as the Back to Education and Training Initiative, Return to Learning, FAS (Training and Employment Authority) training and employment programmes and literacy and numeracy provision organised by the Vocational Education Councils.

In many instances the provision was culturally responsive to Traveller interests, as the examples in Appendix 5 demonstrate.

6.3.1. Small short term projects

As the policies might indicate, there are no government financed programmes for Gypsies and Travellers in England. Enquiries to the LSC and NIACE produced very little information. In London, there have been short-term projects on sites, and limited provision provided by several boroughs. A few short term projects were funded by NIACE (Hubriak, 2009). A project in Cheshire and Warrington aimed to build links between the community and the education adviser. A programme in Leeds at the Cottingley Learning Centre offered learning opportunities for Traveller women and pre-school children, including cooking, crafts, well-being and relaxation. There was also a group specifically for Traveller women who wanted to improve their reading, writing and computer skills. In Cambridgeshire a bus took IT facilities and training to a range of venues including four Traveller sites (Turner and Casey, 2005). In Kent there was an active Gypsy led and organised youth group which a few adults attended to improve their literacy skills.

In Derby, *Read on - Write Away* was a family literacy programme developed when the Traveller Education Advisory and Support Team and the Early Years Social Inclusion Team working with young children on site recognised the need to work with the parents and contacted Read On – Write Away (ROWA), an independent strategic literacy partnership which began in 1997. The report on the project stressed the importance of consulting with the Gypsy and Traveller Community and developing a Steering Group. Travellers were represented on this by the Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group (Hrubciak, 2009).

These programmes in England, though individually excellent, demonstrate that without a coherent strategy, as was developed in Ireland, projects were small, short term and piecemeal. These small projects showed that successful programmes can be developed, particularly if they are developed in partnership with potential participants.

6.4. Survey of adult education providers

I carried out a survey of fifteen adult education providers in Westborough and Southshire between April and July 2009 (Appendix 6). This revealed that local authority adult education organisers and heads of centres had almost no knowledge of whether any Gypsies or Travellers participated in their provision and had very little knowledge or understanding of the community. The response was slightly different in each authority. In Southshire three organisations responded and two were interested in receiving further information. Some weeks after the surveys had been sent out, three people to whom I had not sent the survey, requested information.

In the second rural authority, there had been short term project provision some years previously, but this had ceased. In the urban authority, though there was no targeted provision, there was a greater awareness. Travellers and the need “to do something” were mentioned by senior staff and one of the voluntary organisations had hosted training on working with the Gypsy and Traveller community⁸². However not all were either aware or positive. On meeting one head of adult education at an event, I asked about the survey.

⁸² Training run by “Working Together” and hosted at Hawkhurst Inn, Feb. 2009.

He laughingly commented to his colleague, the principal of a college, "*We can't contact them, aren't they always moving?*" And they both laughed.

In neighbouring authorities the situation was similar, though in one there had been a mobile bus some years previously which had attracted parents as well as young children, A search on the web for adult education for Gypsies and Travellers revealed projects for young people, but not for adults.

6.4.1. Surveys of Gypsies and Travellers

Interest in, and attendance at, adult education provision including literacy was included in the surveys undertaken by GTSG in Southshire.

6.4.1.1. Change-Up survey

In the 2006 GTSG Change-Up survey described in Chapter 5, one hundred and twenty-six Gypsies and Travellers were interviewed. 54% were Romani Gypsies and 28% were Irish Travellers. Only seven had accessed any kind of educational provision. Four were at college, one was using the Learn Direct Programme and two attended some education provision at an unemployment centre. Only two had made enquiries at any adult post-school education or training organisation. None of these were following a travelling lifestyle. None had made any enquiries regarding improving their levels of literacy (Forrest and McCaffery, 2006).

The survey carried out for Change-Up in Westborough contacted thirty-five people all of whom were New Travellers, though this had not been the original intention. There was greater interest and knowledge of adult education services and a greater interest in education than was apparent among the Southshire respondents. Twenty-four had made enquiries about post-school education. Five of these had been to University and seven to colleges of Further Education (Forrest and McCaffery, 2006).

Only two people out of the further twenty-eight interviews had attended college and none contacted any adult education organisation or participated in any family learning.

6.4.1.2. Connecting Communities survey

As stated in Chapter 5, I decided that guided semi-structured interviews would be the most effective method of gaining the information required for this survey. Of the twenty-one interviews carried out between February and May 2009, only two interviewees were using the services of educational establishments. One had completed college and was looking unsuccessfully for a plumbing apprenticeship, and one was still at college. None expressed interest in attending any literacy classes.

6.4.1.3. Red Bus Project

While the Red Bus project, referred to in Chapter 5, was not a survey, it proved a useful exercise enabling the adult education officer responsible for extending provision to “hard to reach communities”, to talk to the adults on site. Contact with the officer led to joint negotiations with the TES and the establishment of Stepping Stones which, as previously mentioned, was initially attended by housed Gypsies.

The development of one small literacy class was a very positive outcome of the project, but the absence of Gypsies and Travellers in local authority classes poses many questions. There may have been several reasons why neither providers nor survey respondents were interested in adult education, training or literacy. The next chapter considers the experience and perceptions of individual Gypsies and Travellers in order to explore their perceptions of the importance of literacy and what factors impeded or supported their engagement in literacy and adult education provision.

Chapter 7. Literacy: Access, Experience and Attitudes

The surveys referred to in the previous chapter revealed no specific adult literacy provision or adult education for Gypsies and Travellers in the three authorities. Providers were unaware of the need and none of the Gypsies and Travellers interviewed had enquired about literacy provision. In this chapter, I present the data gained from the semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with Gypsies and Travellers, and the data gathered from observation at local and national meetings. As stated in Chapter 4, the discussions and dialogue I had with the Gypsies and Travellers constructed joint understandings of their perceptions and use of literacy.

In order to ground the data in the reality of Gypsies' and Travellers' lives and to provide an in-depth richness to aid understanding and contextualise the situation, I first present four of the interviews in some detail and then consider these in relation to the data provided by the other interviews, discussions and observations.

7.1. Interviewees

The majority of interviews took place on permanent sites, but both formal and informal interviews also took place on unauthorised sites, private sites and houses and flats. Among the thirty-two interviewees, all of whom were interesting, engaging and intelligent people, three were long in-depth interviews of leading activists from neighbouring counties who played important roles in developing the dialogue in Westborough and Northshire. Though all the interviews were concerned with literacy and education, these were not their dominant concerns; safe and secure accommodation was their priority. I also interviewed four Travellers in Ireland and visited five literacy classes there.

The information from these interviews is supported by data from interviews with six officers, two councillors and with the directors of two support organisations. I also interviewed officers and literacy tutors in Ireland (Appendix 2). I had many informal discussions with women and men at local and national meetings, which reinforced the information given by those interviewed.

The names, ages, location and the date of interview of the thirty- six Gypsies and Travellers I interviewed are given in Appendix 2⁸³. Appendix 3 summarises the approximate reading levels of the 32 interviewees from England based on interview responses, self-declaration and observation at meetings.

I had known my first three in-depth interviewees two years before I requested an interview. The most informative interviews could be described as unstructured conversations (Levinson, 2004; Fontana and Frey, 2005). The length of the interviews varied; several lasted over three hours. In these cases:

The interview [became] a site for interactive knowledge production. It is the assimilation of this new knowledge that constitutes "emancipation" through the development of revised conceptions of social reality by the researched and the researcher, and new understanding of personal location within it (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005:37).

In some cases the interviews were recorded and transcribed. When recording was not appropriate, I took detailed notes. Both the transcripts and notes demonstrate how the interviewees took control of the situation and I occasionally commented, asked questions or sought clarification.

Heyl (2001) describes ethnographic interviews as being characterised by frequent interaction over a period of time resulting in the interviewee partly shaping the course and outcome of the interview. This describes my interaction with Martin which was a joint exploration of the situation over two years.

The four interviews were selected to demonstrate very different but common situations. The first was Gary, an English Gypsy, who lived on a permanent site in Southshire; the second was Martin, a Traveller of Irish heritage, who lived in a house in Westborough; the third was Harvey who was from a large English Gypsy family in Northshire, had been brought up on a site, but now lived in a flat in one of the towns; the fourth was Siobhan, who lived in a neighbouring authority, but who played an important role in Northshire and

⁸³ I have given pseudonyms but other details such as age and type of accommodation are correct.

Westborough and a lead role nationally. As these four and the other interviewees made clear, literacy was not a major issue. All those interviewed were extremely capable, intelligent people who led rich and full, if challenging, lives.

7.1.1. Interview 1: Gary

I met Gary and his family through the Connecting Communities Project when interviewing on the Hurstvane site, where he lived. After the first interview in February 2009, I had two more meetings with Gary between February and May 2009. I made notes during our discussions and wrote these up immediately afterwards. I also had a formal meeting on May 27 2009 with Gary, a representative from FGT and Ann the Senior Traveller Liaison Officer with overall responsibility for site management, illegal encampments and highway enforcement in Southshire. Gary and I also had several phone conversations regarding the situation, as described below, for which he required my assistance and also several months later when he asked me how to obtain permission for a fence around his son's pitch. The account below is a summary of twenty pages of notes.

Gary was particularly open about his lack of literacy skills and it was he who initially raised the issue. We developed a good rapport immediately and soon Gary trusted me sufficiently to talk about his difficulties. While each person's experience is individual, the comments of other Gypsies and Travellers suggest that's Gary's situation was fairly typical of his generation.

Before meeting Gary, I had talked to several families on Hurstvane. I then knocked on several caravan doors to which there was no answer. The door of fourth opened and I was invited in. The caravan was spotless. A large agitated man of about 50, Gary, was addressing my colleague who turned to me and asked if I knew how he could get a permanent pitch. Gary and I became involved in conversation.

7.1.1.1. Negotiating for a pitch

Gary explained that he had had a pitch on a different site in the county, but had been harassed by other residents there. He said that other residents made a great deal of noise and disturbance into the early hours of the morning and his daughter's car tyres were

slashed during the night when she came down from her site in Lincoln and stayed for a few weeks.

It cost me £500 to put the tyres right. The warden did nothing; he said, "Put it in writing and go to court". He was such a coward. He wouldn't say anything. I felt safer on a lay-by, than on it [that site] if you've got drunken men all round you. I had to sell my home – well you can't stay with that trouble going on.

He had phoned the Traveller Liaison officer who said he would be placed on the list for a permanent plot at Mereton and would be allowed stay temporarily at Hurstvane. When I visited Hurstvane, he and his wife Doris were living in a small tourer, and his son and daughter-in-law and their two children under three, in another tourer on the same plot. They had also moved off the previous site due to the trouble, but had not been offered any alternative and were sharing the plot with Gary and his wife. This comprised "doubling up". His son and the children counted as one family, but with his daughter-in-law the group became two families and two families were not allowed on the same plot.

Gary said he was very worried. His wife was not well and he had to take her to hospital later that morning. He then asked me for advice saying he couldn't read and write and added by way of explanation that,

If you get a fool with education he's a wise man. If you get a wise man without education, he's a fool.

I assume he meant that, however sound his arguments, the fact that he was not educated would mean that he was not listened to. Although he couldn't read, it was not only the reading that concerned him:

You don't quite understand a word. Don't know what the word meant. You get a form – and somebody reads it to you – you still don't know what the form means – educated people know the words, know what they mean. I'm embarrassed about it. Before it didn't matter; I never went to school – it's not easy. If you read, you can look at it, think about it and read it again. If you don't, you have to remember it all at once; you can't go back to it

We travelled all over the place, England and Scotland on the road in the sixties – they were grand times and then again in the seventies.

He then went on to say that these sites were opened by the government in order to settle the Gypsies. *"The Council wants to get them all off the road and the children into school"*. He also complained at the way pitches were allocated, citing the case of a man whom he claimed had a pitch, but also a council house in Westborough. I asked if there were any Gypsy-led support organisations that could assist him and I mentioned activists in neighbouring authorities. He was delighted that I knew Bernie and this gave me some credibility. He spoke of his wife's distant family connections to Bernie whom he wished to phone but had lost the phone number. As luck had it, I had the phone number on me. I tore a page out of my notebook and wrote down the number and the name and address, before realising he could not read the latter.

At that point he went off and returned with a book of photographs of Gypsy families over the last hundred years published by the Romani Family History Society and proudly pointed out members of his family. I asked him if he knew Gordon who was active in the west of the county and whom I had met several years earlier at a Traveller Forum. He replied rather dismissively, *"Not a real Gypsy – married a Gypsy – got his land – doing all right."*

I asked him if he would attend a meeting organised for Gypsies and he said he would:

If you had an organised meeting, I will come, if it is sensible and there is someone with a bit of knowledge, I would come. An organisation for Travellers and Gypsies could sit you down and explain things and have a chin wag and a cup of tea and discuss things and get it down. We need a referee on our side – dedicated to us. Even the council – even some of the officials are a little bit prejudiced and if you go in and ask to see a Gypsy Liaison officer, their manner changes; you can see it in their faces. They are still nice to you, but you can see it.

Though perhaps intrusive, I asked him how his family travelled round Scotland if they couldn't read. How did his parents find their way around? He paused and I felt a hesitation I had not felt previously.

Well I expect Bernie told you this (I hadn't asked Bernie about it). When it comes to the country, we could live off the land. They were very independent and had their own way of going on – had signs; you know put a little pile of stones down to

*show gone this way. Nobody else would notice it, or a bunch of flowers, nobody would see it*⁸⁴.

He then reverted back to his immediate problem, saying he was worried about this and that and maybe he just worried and repeated "My problem is with reading and writing". I said he could learn, that there were places he could learn, but he replied "Not had the time to learn to read and write with all this worry and that". He then went out of the tourer, collected his wife, whom I would not have identified as a Gypsy in a different context, and they drove off to the hospital.

I rejoined my colleague and realised I had not offered Gary the £10 as agreed. When he returned from the hospital, I handed him the form. He signed with a cross without any embarrassment. He was very friendly when we parted and I said I would enquire about the plot. At that point two men I had spoken to earlier drove in and I passed them the form. The younger man of about thirty tried to read it and partly answered the questions. The second slightly older man could read, "Do you use...?" but could not read "services".

Approximately a month later, when I had a meeting nearby, I phoned Gary and asked if my colleague and I could come over. When we arrived, he greeted me warmly, called to his wife who apologised that she was still Hoovering the tourer. We went in. The tourer was very, small and I could not imagine living in such a small space. The television was on but Gary turned it off and we sat down. Both he and his wife had been ill. Gary had been in hospital with back problems and Doris had had a minor heart operation a few weeks earlier. She stayed with us, occasionally interrupting which Gary sometimes tolerated and sometimes treated impatiently. At one point he went outside to smoke.

When he came back he repeated the story of why they left the previous site:

The violence...went on for three years....nobody on the site will complain or speak because of the recrimination. The previous warden had his house smashed. They knew who did it. They had balaclavas on - beat up the cameras...I went to the deputy and asked what was happening. The manager has said the site we were

⁸⁴ Picking a bunch of flowers to point the way is shown in the film *Latcho Drom*.

promised would be available after Christmas. She phoned and said the work had been held up and it would be Easter. Well Easter is on us. When I asked her she said it could be six months, a year, two years. Her deputy said she should not have promised. I have witnesses to say we could have it. No 3 plot here has been empty for five months but they say they need it to store the building materials on when they refurbish the plots.

Bernie - he's a good chap. He contacted the manager, but she never got back to him. If she treats Bernie like that what about me?

As he had moved off at the beginning of winter, he tried to apply to an ordinary caravan site.

I thought there's one down the road we might try. I had a big 23ft Hobby. I tidied myself up, tried to look nice and went there.

'Got any vacancies?'

'Why?'

'Want somewhere for a few months'.

'I've got to ask you this. Are you Gypsies?'

'Why?' and my face dropped.

'Don't want any Gypsies on the site? We have Gypsies come on, say they're here for a few months and then we can't get them off. Before you come you have to say you are not a Gypsy'

My colleague and I were surprised that the owner could quite openly refuse admission on account of ethnicity, but my understanding is that she was not necessarily acting illegally. If she was a member of the Caravan Club she had a right to refuse non members, though that was not the reason she gave. As said, "You can put a Gaujo on a Gypsy site, but not a Gypsy on a Gaujo site".

Gary had been fortunate to be given the temporary pitch on Hurstvane and it appeared this might become permanent. He hoped that another plot on the Hurstvane site might become vacant in which case, he would move onto the new plot and hoped his son and daughter-in-law and their young children could have his present plot. She was expecting a third child in five months. This required difficult negotiations. The manager had told Gary's son, Jack, that if Gary's plot became vacant he and his family would have to move off for two weeks before it could be allocated to him, even though they would have nowhere to go in the interim.

Gary and I decided to seek a meeting with the Senior Traveller Liaison Officer Manager. We planned the questions we would put to her. He pointed out:

What we don't have is what Ann said in writing. We made a mistake. When she said that, we should have asked for it in writing and we didn't.

I commented that he had said his wife could read, to which he replied,

It's not just that. It's being able to put what you want to say in the right words. It's knowing the words. ````

I hired a room in the Community Centre of the nearby market town for a meeting two weeks later. Although the town was only about fifteen miles from the site, Gary didn't know the community centre and had never been there.

I had a couple of other issues to discuss with the Council Sites Manager, so I arranged to meet her first, as I wished to avoid asking Gary to leave while she and I continued. However, when I was driving there, Gary phoned and asked if he and I could meet first. I tried to discourage this, but without success. He drove up behind me as I arrived at the Centre. He had brought his book of family photos which I had already seen and I wondered if this was just an excuse to meet earlier to ensure I came.

7.1.1.2. Meeting with the Sites Manager

The room we had been allocated was large, bare and dismal. Ann and I, and an FGT worker met first and Ann explained that the delay with the pitch allocated to Gary was due to problems with the flooring of the utility block which would have to be redone at a cost of £100,000. During the discussion I went out to get tea and saw Gary waiting. At the time, I could not identify the reason, but he looked out of place. I was uneasy on his behalf so I suggested to the others that he should come and join us, which he did.

Gary repeated his account of trouble on the previous site and Ann explained the temporary allocation on Hurstvane. Gary prevaricated saying he had been ninety-nine percent promised Mereton. Ann agreed and explained that the situation had changed since then and she was now considering a pitch on Hurstvane. Gary asked if his son could have

his Hurstvane pitch when he vacated it. She explained the current timetable, at which point Gary stretched out his hand and touched her lightly, as if to restrain her, and said "*Hold on a bit – I can't read you know. I have to remember it all*". Ann said that the current "doubling up" was illegal and therefore a problem. Jack, Gary's son, would have to move off before she could allocate the plot to him, otherwise those on the waiting list for pitches would be resentful. She would enquire if Jack and his family could move temporarily onto another piece of land. Gary then asked her if she could "*put it on a bit of paper because I have to remember it all*", but Ann declined saying she would know more next week. Gary then suggested they shook hands on the agreement, which they did. After the meeting, I decided I would email Ann what had been agreed in order to avoid future misunderstanding.

The next day Gary phoned and asked me to come out as his family were confused. I went the following day. To my surprise he was not there, but his wife, son Jack and daughter-in-law Susan, were. We went into Jack and Susan's small tourer, again very clean and the two very young children were also there. Susan could not understand why the family would have to move off temporarily and was extremely worried they might be "*stuck on the side of the road*", and even more worried that they had no guarantee they could have the pitch. In addition, the baby was expected around that time. She eventually had to agree there was no alternative. I gave Doris a copy of the email I had sent to Ann explaining that it stated what had been agreed at the meeting. Susan then began thinking about where she could store her cooker and her fridge when they had to move off.

Doris offered me a cup of tea and we went back to her tourer. I repeated the fact that I was doing research and she agreed I could interview her. She confirmed she could read and that Jack could read "*but not that well*".

7.1.1.3. Issues

The interview highlighted several issues. Many older Gypsies and Travellers are unable to read and had not previously considered this a disadvantage or embarrassing, but it was clear that Gary felt disadvantaged in the current situation. Though he and Ann shook hands, his request to have it "*on a bit of paper*" signified that he knew the importance of

having written evidence. Gary also felt that it was not simply a question of reading the words but of understanding them.

7.1.2. Interview 2: Martin

My second case study was of Martin who gave me considerable assistance. I am reluctant to use the word "inform" as that would misrepresent the situation. Although I carried out several interviews before I met him, Martin greatly assisted my access to the different communities, introduced me to individuals and invited me to different meetings, the police authority in particular. We got to know each other sufficiently well to argue about different issues while still respecting each other's views. He also frequently passed on information to me, some of which I had received from elsewhere, much of which I hadn't. I met him after a friend of his, whom I had previously interviewed, suggested I speak to him. Coincidentally Martin spoke eloquently at the next WNTF meeting and I introduced myself without knowing it was the person referred to.

A few weeks later, I phoned him nervously to ask if he would consider working for GTSG as we were seeking a part-time worker, but he refused the offer. I mentioned his friend and his first question was "*How do you know Jamie?*" I must have answered appropriately as this was the first of several long phone conversations, formal and informal meetings and meetings at various events. I had many conversations, meetings and phone calls with Martin over a period of two years and he gradually took on the role of teaching me (Spradley, 1979:83) and bringing new information to my attention I took detailed notes of thirteen of these meetings and typed them up afterwards. Thus, this summary is drawn from fifty pages of notes. In addition we worked on two projects together. The first was to assist with a Harmony Festival to celebrate diversity in his neighbourhood; the second was his suggestion to work with another voluntary organisation to conduct a questionnaire on sites in Northshire. We put a considerable amount of time into planning and discussing this, but Martin always delayed and the survey was never carried out. I suspect that although he knew many of the residents, ultimately he was uneasy about the project. Additionally, in retrospect, it coincided with the beginning of his illness.

I informed him I was doing research on literacy during our first phone conversation and

we discussed education and literacy many times over the course of two years. He would often refer to me as "academic" or "educated" when talking about his literacy difficulties. He also asked me to help a young neighbour who had very poor reading skills.

I felt particularly privileged when I was invited into his house soon after we met. I had offered him a lift home after a meeting. My dog's lead in the car led to a discussion on dogs. To my surprise he said:

Well you can come and meet my dog. I did something for someone and she was given to me in return. I didn't really want her, but she is a lovely dog.

Although it was late afternoon and I felt I had to get home, it was an invitation that might not be repeated as he subtly pointed out. Traveller homes are private places and to be invited as a Gaujo was an opportunity I could not refuse. He and his family lived in a council house, social housing as it is now described, on a large estate in Westborough. In front of the house was a wonderful bank of beautiful flowers, cornflowers and others. The dog, a bull terrier, greeted me. His wife, Mary, and his son, were there and I was offered and accepted a cup of tea. The son was using the computer. His wife Mary showed me around the house and garden. At the very end of the garden was a small two wheeler caravan. Martin teased me by saying it had been lifted over the house by a big crane, whereas in fact he had taken the back fence down to get it in. When we went back inside, a young man was sitting on the sofa and Mary announced that, *"He is going to have a baby and he is getting married."* He looked about nineteen. Martin asked if she was a Traveller, and Mary responded almost by way of apology, *"But she is very nice."* He looked far too young to me to be starting a family, but Traveller culture is to marry in the mid to late teens.

Speaking with Martin many times, I realised he was very perceptive and as he said *"susses people out."* On one occasion he said to me that someone was *"a bit of a hippy like you,"* suggesting I might be a little unconventional. As May (2002:130) suggests, we gradually came to explore each other "to discover what each of us was like" and develop cooperation and trust. However, to ensure he knew I did not romanticise Gypsies and Travellers, I made it clear that living in a caravan did not appeal to me.

When we were talking I let him speak, occasionally asking him to clarify something. If he did not respond or hesitated, I let the issue go. Although we had many conversations and meetings, Martin was always in control. We met or spoke when he wanted to communicate with me and I suspect his children were instructed to say he and Mary were out when people phoned, or so it appeared on some occasions.

7.1.2.1. Early years

He first referred to his childhood during our second meeting and subsequently enlarged on it, but I still know only part of Martin's life story.

He had a very difficult, and I believe, traumatic childhood. He was the youngest of a large family of Irish Travellers from Northern Ireland. I understand that eight children survived and at least four, including a set of twins and a single twin died at, or just after, birth. His father was in the British Army and Martin spoke of his father's pride in wearing the uniform and his own pride in going into shops with his uniformed father. He also said he was not allowed in the same shops when accompanying his mother, as she was known to be a Traveller. Though the army provided married quarters they were not allowed to use these and lived in a trailer near the base. When his father left the army, they moved to England where he worked on building sites. As he said:

I'm an Irish Traveller...The older ones, up to Ann were born in Ireland, and the younger ones in Moss Side on sites. They were rebuilding Moss Side and pulling the old houses down and we lived in [trailers] on the sites of the old houses when pulled down. They built this great block of flats and then it became one of the worst slums. Built up where we lived – and Dad used to work for the building people when he came out of the army. One of my uncles, who had also been in the army, did pulling out cables. The electricity hadn't been turned off. He was cooked on the spot. And my dad saw it. £5 a day was what they got.

He continued, "When we were snatched", and I asked who they were snatched by.

The Social Services – I expect they thought they were doing the best thing...It's still happening. Two [of us] went to Liverpool, two to Manchester, one to a Nunnery – the church got her - and one brother and I to in Kent.

At this point he said, "Don't forget my Mum couldn't read or write at all". At the previous meeting he had asked for my assistance in emailing officers as,

I only went to school for about six months. I and my brother were in a Children's Home for six months. Siobhan and Jamie got us out, and then I just went. I first started travelling at about fourteen and went all over - Cuba, South America and the West Indies and didn't come back until I was twenty-six. I have been to places where people are poor. I like it there – South America, Asia, Nepal. The Kathmandu Valley, it's very beautiful, and Pokhara.

I suggested he should write down his travels to South America and Asia, but he felt no-one would be interested.

On one occasion when talking about a meeting he had attended in another county, he suddenly said:

It was strange, I was sitting there talking to them and when I looked out of the window there was this Catholic Church they used to try and take me to as a child when I was snatched. It was very strange sitting there talking to these people.

He remembered his mother with both fondness and admiration:

My mother was head of the family – a large extended family. People who had disputes in Ireland would come over and ask her to sort it out. We have our law. We settle things our way.

Mary and he had been married for twenty years. I understand that they went traveling together and returned to Westborough in order to send their children to school when they reached primary school age. Mary, his wife, is half Traveller and was adopted, but I have not been told the circumstances. Her adopted family valued education and her brothers and sisters went to university. Martin said that they have been going to their graduations. "Quite odd really." He relied on her a great deal. "She helps me and does a lot of paper work – reading and writing; Mary is very clever."

During these conversations a number of issues emerged which were reflected in conversations with other Gypsies or Travellers.

7.1.2.2. Personal and working relationships

Martin is secure in his identity as an Irish Traveller but appeared quite at ease with people who were not of his culture. He had lived in the same locality, which he described as "rough", for at least ten years and was concerned for his neighbours. During our first interview he said:

It's all about community - being part of a community and including Travellers in that – like at Hawkstead, they should be part of the community – not separate. People round here are friendly. They don't mind Travellers.

He advised Travellers who were encamped nearby to use a struggling local laundrette which increased their business significantly. His children attended local schools and the local youth club, He had at one time successfully raised funds for a children's charity. He asked me to assist a young neighbour who, he said, "*was bright and deserved more than to stay on the estate, have ten kids and be beaten up by her husband.*" He also supported a young girl to whom young Traveller boys had made sexual remarks which metamorphosed into alleged rape. He was well known in the community and when I went anywhere with him was warmly greeted by local people. As he said, "*I'm like my Mum. I get on with settled people*". On another occasion he said, "*We do like you people, the Gaujos.*" I have never heard him make derogatory remarks about "Gaujos" in the way "Gaujos" make remarks about Gypsies and Travellers.

He appeared to be well integrated into the community but other evidence, particularly the reaction to the possible development of a Travellers' site on the edge of the estate, suggested that he was perhaps over optimistic about the extent to which Travellers were accepted.

He could, however, be quite intolerant of individuals, both Gaujos and Gypsies and Travellers. He was particularly antagonistic towards people whom he thought were involved "*for the money*" and after I had known him some time said:

John Smith, I don't like him. Don't like the way he says we can't leave all these stinking Gypsies to rot. We must do something. I don't like that patronising bit. He takes all that money and is well paid.

Education workers could also come under attack:

She works from 9.00 – 5.00 and then goes home. How can she fulfil the needs of Travellers? You can drive a car all your life and not know how the engine works. She nods and says "Yes, Yes."

Nevertheless, he was able to separate his personal feelings for individuals from their work and liked some of those whose work he criticised. However, he did not appear to appreciate that however well paid they were, officers and workers could choose to support other minorities which might have been equally, if not more, rewarding.

He was particularly upset at the amount of work he did voluntarily while others in both the voluntary and statutory sector were paid,

We had a meeting. Organisations were asking us to signpost Gypsies and Travellers to them, working off our backs. They're all paid and we aren't.

Yet he preferred not to be paid and chose not to apply for funds for his organisation, AGIT. He also refused work when organisations such as GTSG offered it to him. *"I want to be straight with you. I am not taking money from GTSG. As far as I am concerned she [the Chair] is in it for the money"*. The person referred to was a site manager elsewhere, but all her work for GTSG was voluntary. However, he worked occasionally as a diversity trainer for the police and he also gave a presentation to an organisation supporting rural communities for which he was paid. I think he believed he would be compromised as a paid employee, or as an organisation, if in receipt of funding. He worked for Northshire for a short time, but left their employment after a few months, with, I believe, ill feeling on both sides.

Relations between Gypsy and Traveller organisations and individuals within them, can be fraught. When wishing to denigrate the work someone does, one of the most damaging accusations is that he or she is not a Traveller. A worker in another area of the country who had received an award for her work was accused in this way.

Jane, up in Westmoreland – she's not a Traveller – we always knew her father was settled- but thought her mother was a Traveller. She's not. She and Fred have had a real bust up.

In this case the arguments were around several issues – she had received an award for her work when others had not; there had been an argument about funding, and there was competition to represent Gypsies and Travellers at prestigious high level meetings in Europe. Martin also said of another Gypsy, who had set up a successful business partly working with Gypsy and Traveller support organisations, that he had, “*Gone Gaujo*”.

7.1.2.3. Prejudice

Like many Gypsies and Travellers he was very aware of the hostility and prejudice frequently directed towards them. He told me that a councillor had said in a closed meeting “*If I had terminal cancer I would strap a bomb to myself and go down to the Traveller site. She did get sacked.*” He was particularly angry at prejudice among councillors or officers as he felt this caused delays in establishing sites. He was very concerned when he heard that a council officer had used the word “Pikey” in conversation even though it had been in response to a question. As stated in Chapter 5, he received a Labour Party leaflet through his door and was furious at what he perceived to be the racist tone of their objections to a Traveller site in the ward. He confronted the councillor who wrote the article and also took his complaint to both local and national organisations and to the police. The producers of the newsletter apologised for causing offence which they maintained was unintended. On the other hand he was amused when, “*I was once called a 'mono' – a white monkey. I thought it was fantastic.*”

He was equally upset when Gypsies and Travellers exhibited racism at meetings as he was aware of the adverse impression this created. The racist remarks were often around accommodation issues and the charge was that accommodation was provided for immigrants rather than themselves. The racism could be overt as Martin recounts:

I was at a Southern Network meeting and Parvee was there. Her phone went off and she went outside to take the call and Bernie got up and said 'What do you know about it, you Paki?' I was furious and got at him. A lot of people don't like it when you slag others off.

7.1.2.4. Sites and Culture

Martin was concerned at the proposed restrictions on animals and the absence of work places on refurbished sites:

I'll take you to the sites for you to see how the licenses they are bringing in erode their way of life - making sure they sign the licenses that take away our way of life.

He believed sites should be small with up to six pitches, enough for an extended family. He calculated that a transit site for fourteen pitches could have as many as seventy people on it which he considered too many. He was always respectful to residents when visiting a site and believed you should treat it as someone's garden which you would not enter without asking permission.

He pointed out that culturally those already on an unauthorised encampment could not prevent others joining them, even if they were not known to them and they were aware that an increase in the number of vehicles would encourage enforcement action by the authorities.

One of Martin's strengths was that he had a very balanced perspective. At no time did he ever minimise Gypsy and Travellers tensions or inter-community relations and he would speak of fights and serious inter-family feuds. He never asked people what they did for a living as he considered, *"that was their business."*

7.1.2.5. Agency

He devoted considerable time to the Traveller movement. The proposed survey was one aspect of this commitment. He was involved in diversity training for the police; he attended the Traveller forum but became increasingly frustrated; he supported one of the Travellers who was accused of threatening a council worker with a gun and attended the court hearing; he also supported the Travellers at Dale Farm in Essex who were threatened with eviction. He sent a letter to the court in Westborough setting out the health and welfare reasons why a family, whom the council had taken to court, should not be evicted. Many of these activities involved the need to read and write.

7.1.2.6. Literacy

Martin's level of reading and writing was difficult to determine. When I had known him about a year, we discussed his difficulties. On one occasion I said to him, "*You say you are dyslexic, but seem able to read.*" He was not embarrassed as he was aware I knew many people in his position. He described his situation as follows:

I've had problems with literacy, school of life, learnt on the road and that. I have a good memory and that helped me. I remember things. I have friends who are supporters, hippies here and there who are interested in the culture and they support me.

I taught myself mostly from reading comics when I was young – the English ones, Dandy and that, not the American ones, not Captain Marvel, then I went straight on the Guardian newspaper. I never read the Mail or anything like that - just the Guardian.

I expressed surprise that he read the Guardian. I asked how he managed "*long and boring papers*" at meetings. He answered by changing the subject saying he was not going to attend WNTF in future as they were "*a waste of time, just talk, talk and talk*". At different times, I showed him newspaper articles on related issues. He looked at the articles and seemed to scan and understand them. At meetings he had the papers in front of him and anyone who didn't know him would have assumed he was reading the papers. When I asked about this, he said,

I pick up what is there most of the time, but not always. Sometimes I get it wrong. You've been there when they've said 'No Martin, that's not what it says' and that's because I have read it wrong.

On the occasion I observed this, my impression had been that he had simply misunderstood the paper in the same way as those with good reading skills might, but he said that he had not read the words correctly.

When he asked me to assist a young girl improve her reading, I took along a couple of ghost stories designed for adult readers which had proved very popular in the past. He opened the book and started to read it to himself. I said I had chosen those books as they had exciting stories and the words were not difficult. After reading a page or so, he said

They are good. I could get this word. I thought it was 'clim'. But when I went on, I saw it was 'climb up the mountain'.

By scanning the sentence and contextualising the word he had arrived at the meaning.

He was disinclined to write anything. He said that his wife Mary wrote his letters. We had a short conversation about this as he always carried a notebook to meetings.

*Juliet: But you've got a notebook and are writing things down.
 Martin: But that's short notes.
 Juliet: Well OK, but your handwriting is fine.
 Martin: Short notes are OK, but when it comes to writing more, it sort of gets...muddled...between my head and my hand.*

I looked at his notes. They were brief, but the letters were well formed and the handwriting perfectly acceptable unlike another Traveller whom I had asked to write his name and phone number before realising he would have difficulty. I occasionally received emails from Martin, but he said all his emails were written by his wife as, "*I can't write.*" He did occasionally write short emails, as in this example:

*Juliet how is Tuesday 1.30 at the vally centre
 All the best
 Martin*

When we met, we discussed that email. I pointed out that he had made only one spelling mistake and that was leaving the "e" out of "valley". He said he didn't know how to spell "community" and I asked if he had spell checked it. He pointed out correctly that the spell check doesn't always pick up mistakes. When I said the email was fine, he laughed and said "*Well you don't know how long it took me to write it!*" And of course I didn't.

On several occasions he asked for my help. One of these was in relation to the site questionnaire. He proposed that we would go to the sites together, he would ask the questions and I would write down the answers. He also asked for my help when we both attended a consultation meeting and there was a three page form to complete. When a Gypsy-only led forum was set up with a Gypsy chair, he asked his wife to email and

suggest I attend "to take notes for him", which I did. On another occasion he asked me to help him propose a change to the minutes of a forum meeting.

It came over as though I thought Gypsies and Travellers should be given the jobs over others, but that's not what I said. I don't always get it right.

We discussed alternative wording and at the meeting Michael stood up and queried the minutes. The meeting agreed to the changes he proposed.

He said he was not educated, yet he was extremely intelligent, had a fund of knowledge about a range of issues, was generally well informed and was an extremely interesting person to talk to. He was quite experienced at meetings and his interventions were usually appropriate and well made. Nevertheless he still felt that "When we go to meetings we are chancing our arm – I still don't understand the setup and didn't know the line." He referred to training he had attended and said:

It's like a jigsaw puzzle without the pictures ... We want academics to go there and learn about it and come back and explain things. We go there and we get migraines and headaches and claustrophobia, all the things Gypsies get from strobe lighting when we want to be outdoors.

I would have liked to help him improve his reading as I found it difficult to believe he could not improve to a level that would give him more confidence, but he was uninterested. A friend who was an English teacher had apparently helped him for some years and he said he had learnt from her:

I don't want to do it now [learn to read]. I'm nearly fifty. I've got other things to do. I've got a short life – I don't want to spend it reading and writing letters and that. I don't want to read unless I've got nothing else to do. I like Graham Greene. I really like him.

Martin was a remarkable person. He had a wealth of knowledge. He was secure in his identity and was well integrated into the settled community in which he lived. His children all completed school and one secured a good job with a large company. Martin was active and influential in promoting the Gypsy and Traveller cause, yet he felt he lacked oral and written literacy skills and this reduced his confidence.

Sadly his prediction that he had a short life was realised and as stated in Chapter 3, he became terminally ill and died six months after my last conversation with him.

7.1.3. Interview 3: Harvey

Harvey was the last of these four people to be interviewed. I selected him as he was one of the few Gypsies or Travellers I met who had had any higher education. He had been to university and therefore had a different perspective from the majority of those interviewed. He was a young man of around twenty-five, though he looked older. He had grown up on a permanent site in Northshire as part of a large extended family who still lived on the site. His father ran a successful family business for which Harvey did the accounts.

Harvey lived by himself in a pleasant small flat in a residential area of the town and said he would not return to living on site. He had severe asthma and was significantly overweight. He was a highly articulate and confident young man and as a result was much in demand as a spokesperson for his community. His commitments included chairing the WNTF, membership of the Police Gypsy Traveller Group and the only Gypsy or Traveller in the three authorities to be invited to become a member of the All Parliamentary Gypsy and Traveller Group. While he made a significant contribution, this was not always to his advantage as other Gypsies and Travellers sometimes felt he had become too closely aligned to the Gajjos.

I first met Harvey at the WNTF and six months later, soon after he became chair, I asked him if I could interview him about literacy and education. He readily agreed and we arranged to meet at the office of FGT where he worked part-time. On the agreed date I arrived early to avoid keep him waiting. After thirty minutes he had not arrived so I contacted FGT's administrator and it was only then I realised he was coming from Eastcombe twenty miles away and did not work regularly in the offices. The administrator phoned both his home number and his mobile without success. After waiting for a further half hour I left.

Two days later the administrator phoned me to say that the day before our meeting Harvey had been hospitalised following an asthma attack. Harvey had suggested I should contact him a couple of weeks later when he had recovered. I did so and suggested we met in Eastcoombe. We met at his flat on August 18 2009.

His flat consisted of living room, bedroom, bathroom and kitchen on the first floor of a very large Edwardian house set back from the road in what once must have been a wealthy residential area. The flat was very clean and tidy and comfortable. When I arrived, he made me a cup of tea and I explained that I was doing research into literacy, particularly adult literacy. I did not record the interview but took notes and wrote them up immediately afterwards. As was my usual practice, the interview took the form of a conversation with areas I wanted to cover noted down beforehand. Our conversation centred on education and on the Traveller forum.

7.1.3.1. Education

Harvey started by saying that the statistics in Traveller education show that children were not receiving the support they needed. Parents were unable to help with the homework and therefore children, *"Go to school without the homework completed and get a detention."* He described some of the tensions he had experienced at school.

My Mum brought me up to know that if you are at school you do want they want..... At home you do what we want. So after school I had to do what my Mum and Dad wanted and that would be helping them, not school work.

I went to nine different schools until we settled [on the site]. I was still struggling, wasn't learning and not learning my Friday spelling – but I never got help. In Year 8, I struggled. In Year 9, I picked up and in Year 10, I really tried and went to after school clubs and everything. Then my Dad wanted to pull me out. Nan said, "You can do what you want." I went to further education. Then I wanted to go to University and my Dad said, "No".

He did go to University and studied Behaviour Management, *"which I have never used."*

Although he achieved well at school and has now taken an advocacy role on behalf of his people, he was ambivalent about education and made several contradictory statements

during our two hour interview. After stating, "*I tell you education failed me,*" he followed this almost immediately by saying, "*We do need to be educated*". He then continued,

I've been a success. When I look at my cousins, I say what do you want to do and the boys want to work with their Dads. [My brother] can go into my Dad's business and earn £300 a day and drive up to the school in a Porsche. The kids don't need education and the teachers don't understand it. I don't need to read and write and my brothers will take over the business which will be there for many years. You don't need to read and write to cut a tree down. [My Dad] has health and safety officers and surveyors and he has a good relationship with his clients.... Eighty percent of Gypsies and Travellers work for themselves.

At an ITM [Irish Traveller Movement] conference when Obama had just been elected President of the US, Lord Avebury put the question, "Could a Traveller become Prime Minister?" Then he said, "They wouldn't have the literacy skills". I stood up and said, "I don't need to read and write to represent my people."

He had a real ambivalence towards his own educational experience and the value of education for Gypsy and Traveller children:

We do have a Traveller education; we need to fight for it. I didn't need the support, others do. I was in the top set and still had an assistant.

The education system is failing my brother. The head teachers have not got a clue, yet forty percent of the children [at this particular school] are from Gypsy and Traveller families- and not a day on training.

7.1.3.2. Agency

As chair of the WNTF, Harvey declared his strategy was to ensure the WNTF was led by Gypsies and Travellers. He put this into practice very quickly and the next meeting was only for Gypsies and Travellers and invited support organisations. In his view Travellers in the north of England had been more effective in developing organisations to present their views than those in the south. His long term plan was to develop a forum for the South East which would have county sub-committees meeting regularly and an annual South East event with "*the best people to come and speak*" as an example to the rest of the country. Support organisations such as GTSG and FGT would be invited to assist. There would be workshops on education, health and site accommodation. The ambulance

service, police and the TES would also be involved. He was also planning cultural awareness training for public officials.

He said he had a team of five people to implement his plans within the three months. However the timetable proved to be too ambitious. Surprisingly he did not contact other active Gypsies and Travellers who had already formed a Southern Network.

He believed people should join together and fight for what they wanted and said that, *"[They] had never had the sense to put a petition together and go to Downing Street,"* apparently unaware that a Gypsy youth group from Kent had presented a petition to the Prime Minister.

7.1.3.3. Prejudice

Despite his enthusiastic plans, he believed the level of prejudice and racism made the future for Gypsies and Travellers bleak. He thought education had improved a little, but accommodation was "dreadful" and health was "off track". He spoke of having an advocacy role so that the lives of his younger brothers and sisters and his future children would be better. He wondered why people were so prejudiced and said *"all you get are small minded people who type letters and make complaints."* He went on to say that:

All my people say is that they want to be accepted. Wanting to be mainstream is not recent. My people fought for this country. My auntie works in nursing and pays taxes.

When he was eight he was sent to see the child psychologist at school, *"because of my culture"*. The psychologist asked me why I was there. I said, *"Because I'm a Pikey"*. He continued:

You know what, I got respect in Senior School when a boy got to me and I hit him back – then they respected me and I became popular.

He had written to his local MP over the number of planning applications submitted by Gypsies which had been rejected. They had bought their land and then erected mobile homes or small structures without prior planning permission. In his letter he had also

suggested that the duty on councils to provide permanent sites should be re-imposed. The reply he received upset him. The MP replied that he did not agree that imposing a duty would be any more efficient or effective than previously and that granting applications in situations where others would be refused would be unfair. Harvey felt the reply showed no understanding of the impact of the planning regulations on his community, showed no sympathy and offered no solution. He thought his letter was an example of carefully worded prejudice.

7.1.3.4. Progress

However he cited a number of examples where progress had been made over the last few years - a refurbished transit site, a district council had established an advisory group which included Gypsies to identify land for sites, the Primary Health Care Trust was piloting hand-held health records, the ambulance service was considering making a DVD, the police had set up an advisory group and planned to advise young men on safe driving and the fire service, previously reluctant to go on sites, now did so.

He still felt there was a long way to go as the basic things – health, education and accommodation - were not yet in place. Improving the health of Gypsies and Travellers was not a theoretical construct for Harvey. He had lost two cousins; an aunt aged sixty had died of pneumonia and there had been a tragic cot death two months previously.

As one of the very few university educated Gypsies in the area, there was considerable pressure on Harvey to respond to both worlds.

7.1.4. Interview 4: Siobhan

The interview with Siobhan was the third interview I undertook and the first of the four cases presented here. Siobhan gave me permission to record the interview. Siobhan lives in a neighbouring authority but I chose to present her case because it was important to include a female perspective on the culture, education and literacy. Siobhan had considerable experience and was articulate and very reflective. She provided insights into the situation that less reflexive Gypsies and Travellers did not. Although not living in any of the three authorities, she had played an important role in the WNTF and with her then

husband had given an excellent training session for Westborough councillors for virtually no fee. It transpired that she, like the others had health problems, for which she received hospital treatment. She also had had several tragedies in her family.

I first heard Siobhan at a national conference and subsequently met her at similar conferences. I also met her on several occasions at WNTF. During a long conversation over lunch at an ITM conference, I asked her if we could talk about education as I was doing research into literacy. She agreed and we arranged that I would visit her in the city in which she then lived, as she had separated from her husband a few months previously and had to leave the family site. The interview took place on January 27 2009 in her flat near the city centre. The flat was small and very tidy. China was on the shelves and the net curtains in the windows were hung in the style I had seen in mobile homes. I recorded the interview which lasted four hours during which she made me tea and sandwiches.

Talking to her and writing up the interview afterwards was a thought provoking experience which sometimes felt intrusive. At times, I wondered why she talked to me for so long and revealed very personal details which I have not repeated here. She answered my questions about education without hesitation, though she was obviously thinking through what she was saying while speaking, as she halted several times and frequently repeated herself.

7.1.4.1. Early years

She told me the story of her childhood:

My mum had 22 children. I was the seventh eldest. She had five sets of twins, only one alive. The problem was we were vagrants and that was why we were taken away. We were in Kent. Smoke used to wake me up every night. Coming out was icy cold. When I was eighteen months, she was pregnant with twins. They died with cold weather - only one survived, the other died of convulsions and she had another set of twins when she was forty. They were stillborn.

They didn't just take me. They took my brothers and they didn't put boys and girls together. We were separated. They kept us separated. There was no need for that. I'd be constantly running away from one home and they'd be running away from another. We'd be searching for each other and the authorities would put us down as

problem children. I was sent to one of those Madeline Sisters Institutions for three years. My brother was one of those who got compensation.

I went back there two years ago. Sometimes you have to go back. The memory would hurt you. I went back and faced the nuns. The funniest thing happened. When I went in, a nun opened the door. When I said who I was, she said, "I know someone who knows you," and this old nun came out.

Siobhan said she was writing her story and, when I expressed interest, showed it to me. A friend had typed it up. I read the beginning. Some sections were bland and some incredibly vivid as the description of her sitting outside the room in which the nun, to whom she had been closest, was dying and being unable to understand why she was not allowed in. Siobhan was anxious to know what I thought of her book. I replied that she had a very important story to tell and that she should continue to write it. She then said *"Something is playing in my mind, so I can't write it. I'll draw it as the pictures are in my mind."*

At this point she got up and looked anxiously for a folder which she eventually found. The pictures were of animals in different situations which expressed different aspects of her life.

7.1.4.2. Education and literacy

Siobhan, like many other Irish Travellers, had had very limited schooling:

I went to school for about six months and that was it, because we went from one place to another. We were constantly moving, constantly moving, from Ireland to England, England to Ireland, from Ireland to France to Germany. We was constantly on the trot somewhere. At the time I suppose for the older generation, education wasn't important.

I had to get on with life without worrying about the reading - that opportunity was never there for me, so I've had to keep ahead...It wasn't until some years back, probably about five years, I desperately wanted to learn to read. I couldn't read at all. I couldn't read a word. So I started getting these children's books out of the library...

I asked her how she and others managed at meetings if they couldn't read:

People think Travellers are illiterate, well a lot of them are, but they've still got a good brain. It's like somebody who is deaf or not got good eye sight; if you get somebody who is blind, they know every little object – they will know what has been moved, what hasn't. It's like that. A lot of Travellers go to the meetings that you and I go to. They've got papers in front of them. Everyone thinks they read, but they don't; somebody turns the paper over, so they think "OK", and turn the paper over. The best thing about it is the papers they give you have numbers...and they say right, "We're going on to 6". So you think ok, you know what number 6 looks like, so you turn over and you're like everyone else in the room and nobody knows any different.

With the reports and everything else I would tend to wait...they would go round the table and then they'd be reading something and somebody would read something out loud and say this is so and so and then I was able to pick it up straight away and knew what was on the table. Or somebody would turn round and say "Well it says this in the report", and then somebody says "but if you go further down the page, it is contradicting itself and it says this and this". And I knew automatically where to come in because [then] I knew what the paper was about. That was only listening to other people and I thought - right, now I really need to learn to read.

She said that many Travellers can't read and mentioned a few whom I knew. I asked her why they didn't go and learn and she said they were shy.

Siobhan decided to teach herself. She explained the process:

Siobhan: I started getting those little children's books from the library. I started looking at them, just the words 'the' and 'and' and then I'd try to learn and spell it. There's no point in trying to read it if you can't spell the stupid thing because if I see it, I'm not going to remember what it means. Anyway...I thought well let's try to put things together and that's what I started doing. Learning to remember a word for a whole week and then learn to spell it.

Juliet: But how did you know it was 'the'?

Siobhan: I end up knowing it was 'the' because you see things on the television and you know you've got these sign things, sub titles....and you think "Ah, there you go, there's the word then"... , You've heard them say it on television, but still don't know if that was actually the correct word.

It's like a constant game and then I copy it and then when I used to go down to my doctor's...lovely, lovely people down there. I'd take words into them and say "What does that say?" And she would tell me the word and I'd say, "Oh that's brilliant – now I know what that word is."

What I used to do once a week, I'd try and find a word and then learn the word and then spell the word. So when I see the word again, I would know what it is.

Juliet: So you would learn to spell it at the same time as you would learn to read it?

Siobhan: I thought I'll learn to spell the word, and then I'll learn to write it as well, because when you write letters, then you need to start spelling, so I started both at the same time, that's why it took so long. The trouble is, as adult Travelling people, it's harder when you get older...you don't pick up words, and certain words, even today I still can't say them.

Juliet: Can Robert read?

Siobhan: Robert's been learning from me for a year now. He is able to write 'Wood Farm'. The word 'farm' took him ages I wrote it down for him and said, "That's what it looks like Robert, now you just sit and copy it and copy it and copy it and then you'll get it in the end. Then you'll be able to write your address because that's your address".

She thought it was harder for adult Travelling people because, "when you get older you're not as quick as when you're a child and don't learn things as quickly." She talked about not "picking up" words.

Certain words, even today I can't say them ...but if I know what I mean and say that I think I might have said the wrong word, someone might go, "Well, what you actually meant Siobhan, was this", and I go "Yep, that's the word". So I don't get embarrassed over it. Well some people would get embarrassed but I don't, because I say to people, "If I've said the wrong word, you tell me, otherwise I'm not going to learn".

When I asked how well she could read now, she replied that she wasn't fantastic but was getting pretty good. She said she could read the newspaper though there were words in it she couldn't read and said:

I'm not into this sluttish Sun; I do like the Guardian and I do like the Times. There's a lot there I can't read, but if I get the gist of the story I know what the story's about.

She thought education in the form of reading, writing and maths was very important today, "as the world is changing", but other subjects, and she specifically mentioned biology, are not important for Travelling people, particularly those on the road. She said that understanding money is in the Traveller culture and children are brought up with money, understand it and can't be cheated.

She knew from personal experience that reading and writing was valued in the job market. "You want to go and clean the toilet, you have to have qualifications or a CV, or whatever they call it." She explained that the ability to read and write is required for working on the tills. "You've got to be able to write in the items, say it's a cabbage. You have to write the cabbage in and then it tells you how much the cabbage is." She could stack shelves by looking at the pictures on the tins.

I asked her, as I asked everyone, how they managed to travel when they couldn't read. She replied, "You pull down the window and ask," and we both laughed as I had done exactly that in order to find her flat:

Once you're shown, and once you find the area, what Travellers tend to do is like what we did in Germany and Sweden, you get in your car and start driving around and finding places. You look around and think where the nearest hospital is in case a child gets ill? Where are the nearest doctors? You make an effort to go and find out by asking people.

They find all the horse shows and they're miles away. They ask and once they've been there once, they know. They look for signs... I do the same today. I'm on the motorway and I'm going somewhere I've not been before, I will try and find something and I'll look and I'll think, right, there's a house that's very, very pink; things that stand out to you and then you look for a sign that might be completely different from a normal motorway sign, something with cows on it or something. You look for different things so when you go back to that placeAh, the pink house; right. I know where I am now...It's bred into your brain. You've done it as a child. People, you know think Travellers are illiterate ...yes ...well ...a lot of them are, but the thing is, they have still got a good brain.

7.1.4.3. Schooling today

All her children and grandchildren went to school. While insisting education was important, she had concerns about schools, particularly bullying in schools. She recounted her grandson's experience:

My Red was in hospital. This is what happened to him. I want this published. When he was small he really enjoyed school and everyone knew him. When he went to big school, he just kept quiet. One day a teacher was talking about culture and said to him. "Tell us about your culture". Red said, "What? Mine is the same as yours". The teacher says, "No it isn't, you're a Traveller. Tell us about your culture".

Then in the playground he was really beaten up; his head bashed and bleeding and everything.

You can imagine what it was like when Jamie and I got a phone call to say come quickly. When we got there he was lying on a bench all on his own and bleeding. He was unconscious. We called an ambulance and rushed him to hospital. It was awful to see him lying there with tubes in him. When he see me he just said "Hi Nan". It broke my heart to hear it. His Mum went up to the teacher; she was going to kill him. He had to run round the desk... In fact the teacher really liked him.

The head teacher had done nothing. He had to go to a meeting. Just thought it was boys in the playground, just left him there. He did apologise when he learnt how serious it was. But I want this known.

This incident was the result of a well intentioned teacher apparently unaware of how other students would react to the knowledge that Red was a Traveller; Red had known.

Siobhan was not aware of any studies on bullying and thought head teachers would not admit to bullying. She thought those working in Social Services, schools and the TES were incorrect in thinking that they knew everything about Gypsies and Travellers. She mentioned that a teacher from Northshire, who had worked in the TES for many years, had told her that the children all did well at school. Siobhan asked if they had they gone to university or college or if they were unemployed. She didn't receive an answer. Information from the TES in Northshire would suggest that while some were successful, fewer continued to tertiary education than might have been expected considering the level of support they received. She thought those funding the TES should monitor the impact of the service and provide more after-school provision and also provide help for adults to support their children. She wondered whether there were any statistics on the level of alcoholism and drug dependency as she is called out to take Gypsy and Traveller girls to the drug centre.

She was involved in her grandchildren's primary school and went into the school to tell the children her stories. At one stage her stories were so popular that she was going in three or four times a week. She showed me her illustrated story about a foal that became frightened after accepting a lift from an elephant, but who returned home safely; it was a clever story which warned children about "stranger danger" in an appropriate way.

7.1.4.4. Prejudice

Siobhan was really upset about her grandson's experience in school, but she had also faced prejudice herself. She recounted an incident when out with a friend:

We're sitting there watching football; from there I think we went for a Chinese, I really don't know, and one of his friends turned up, really, really nice guy... girl friend turned up. She seemed alright... no problem... but she's actually a midwife. Now she said, "What about her car?" Her car was parked under a railway bridge. Now I know it sounds stupid but to someone like me... Would he move her car, or do something about the stupid car, yeah? And - she turned round and she said, - because she had oxygen bottles, because she's a midwife she had oxygen bottles, and so and so, in case the Pikeys steal them. I just looked at her and I said, "Well I don't think they will steal your oxygen. They might go and steal your car, but wouldn't know oxygen bottles are in your car", and the man she was going out with said, "Yes, well, them Pikeys steal anything".

I just sort of looked up from my food and looked at the guy I was with - and he looked at me and he didn't say nothing, but I know somewhere along the line, if I carry on with the friendship,...somewhere along the line, I'm going to flip, and somebody's going to say something, and how long can you keep that sort of thing in. Do you see what I'm saying?

She was clearly upset and thought that eventually a similar incident would break her relationship with her friend.

Siobhan was clearly proud of her heritage and proud she had been born into a travelling family *"Even though, to be honest with you, they weren't very good travelling parents - but God gave them to me, so I had to get on with it ."* Although there were individual Gypsies or Travellers she disliked, she said she worked for all organisations and would work to benefit Romani Gypsies, Irish Travellers and Roma. She said that her fear was being stigmatised as a Traveller.

When she received an honour, a journalist friend wanted to write an article for the local paper and was disappointed she didn't inform him. She told him she didn't want to be praised as a Traveller who had done well. Even whilst repeating the story she became very upset. Siobhan said, *"It's a bit like blacks thirty years ago - in gangs selling drugs, that's the image - You're different."*

7.1.4.5. Culture

As previously stated both girls and boys were frequently withdrawn from school at puberty. Siobhan explained:

Girls stayed at home learning how to be a wife and mother. I made sandwiches for my Dad and learnt how to scrub the caravan inside and out; so you didn't get out to pubs and discos. Romanies do. Irish don't. The English don't have to be pure if somewhere they have lost their purity. Irish Travellers are still like this though some have gone to the Born Again Faith now which is more or less telling them the same thing. Even if you go up to Dale Farm, they don't go to clubs or discos. They don't do that or they'd be sent back to Ireland. It's not religion, it's culture. You give yourself to that man. You have to be pure.

She had visited Israel and said she had found the culture towards women fairly similar as they married first or second cousins as the Irish do and "You can't be soiled goods." She continued by saying that:

An Irish woman is very lucky if she marries an Irish man who doesn't get drunk and stuff, - but they're good workers and give the women the money – leave the money on top of the dresser. Once a week there's a pile of money on there and they go away and buy what they want. A lot of Irish women have left and gone with Gaujos but they find it difficult. Irish marriages last as they know each other – better the devil you know that the one you don't and they put up with it. In the Romani Gypsy people it is really the woman who has the say. In the Irish Travellers he is head of the family. She is the boss inside the home and he is the breadwinner. The Irish women don't need to go to work. He comes home; the caravan is clean, dinner on the table and maybe a beer ...and if he wants things, she can go and get it.

I asked if women working affected the relationship. She replied that it did and that her activities outside the home had led to the break up of her marriage. They had both been very active in the Gypsy and Traveller movement and for many years they always went together, but then they started going to different meetings.

This is where the trouble came. Someone would say with a smile, "Oh I saw your lovely wife at a meeting". I never stayed overnight without him – to stay in a hotel would be dishonouring him... It started building up. Then an official phoned up and Jamie answered the phone and he said, "We want her to come and work with the government". Jamie nearly died...Then I took a step further when Jamie said,

"Don't expect me to take you to these meetings". And I said "I will get someone else then", and I went to one of the members I knew and they got me a driver.

She and her husband separated which caused tensions in the extended family. Siobhan was slowly adjusting to life on her own and appeared to be appreciating the independence.

7.1.4.6. Agency

Despite being unable to read, Siobhan had played an instrumental role in developing the WNTF. She had appeared on the politics show and on the government working group. She has been honoured for her work promoting Traveller issues. She is forceful and quite outspoken, more so than her husband whom I also interviewed.

She was asked to get involved with the Gypsy Council, but she refused because *"I thought it was too late to kick the Gaujos out."* I queried the wisdom of this suggesting it was reverse discrimination, but she continued and spoke of an organisation in Derbyshire which had done some of the best work for adults in the country. She also said she challenged Gypsies and Travellers she didn't like when they dominated meetings.

The first ever conference on domestic violence was held in July 2009, six months after this interview and Siobhan was a key speaker. Many in the audience thought she was exaggerating and certainly she didn't mention domestic violence in the interview, but indicated that she and her husband had had a good relationship until she got very publicly involved in Traveller issues. However her younger brother, though unwilling to admit Travellers could be abusive to their wives, told me that she had suffered.

I am most grateful to Siobhan for sharing her experiences with me as this considerably enhanced my understanding.

7.2. Analysis of the four interviews

These four interviewees were very different people in very different situations, but their experiences and views on the current situation for Gypsies and Travellers were similar. When I summarised their cases I realised they all had very serious health problems. While I am aware that the average life expectancy of Gypsies and Travellers is ten years less

than the UK average, the fact that all four had problems emphasises the seriousness of the situation.

In the chart below I have compared aspects of their lives and the key issues they raised - site accommodation, prejudice and interaction with Gaujos, as well as their views on education and literacy

7.2.1. Four interviews compared

Table 7.1.

		Gary (50+)	Martin (47)	Harvey (25)	Siobhan(44+)
	Circumstances				
1	Childhood	Travelled.	Orphanage, travelled.	Travelled then permanent site.	Orphanage, travelled.
2	Schooling	None	Minimal.	University	Minimal
3	Literacy	Unable to read and write. Little interest in learning to read and write.	Poor reading and writing skills, lacked confidence, Self taught. Had some help to improve, – now other priorities.	High level reading and writing skills.	Very poor reading and writing skills. Teaching herself.
4	Accommodation	Key concern to obtain preferred pitch on permanent site.	Now settled in housing.	Grew up on site – now in own flat.	Until recently on own private site - in flat after marriage breakdown.
	Reflections				
5	Education today	Did not comment.	Reading, writing and maths important. Their children completed school.	Ambiguous views.	Reading, writing, maths important but not other subjects.
6	Importance of literacy	Not thought important until very, very recently. Need to “know the words”.	Parents did not think important, learnt through “school of life.” Need to “know the words”.	Parents did not think important. Help with literacy not required.	Parents did not think literacy important. Important to “know the words”.
7	Help required with literacy tasks	Negotiation with site manager.	Contacting authority and assistance with writing.	Had advanced literacy skills. Assistance not required.	Assistance for reading and writing official material.

8	Interaction with Gaujos	Little interaction.	Considerable both personal and "professional".	"Professional" interaction and at university.	"Professional" interaction – some personal.
9	Gaujos helping	Sought assistance over site issue.	Sought assistance with writing.	Sought advice on establishing organisation.	Sought assistance with reading.
10	Experience of prejudice	Private site owner and council officials.	Pub and local politicians.	School and local MP.	Social and grandson bullied in school.
11	Involvement with Gypsy Traveller movement	None.	Very active at local level, some at national level.	Becoming very active locally.	Among the dozen leading activists nationally.
12	Sites	Concern to secure pitch for his family.	Desire to improve sites for Travellers.	Desire to improve sites for Travellers.	Sites not mentioned.
13	Future for culture	Not specifically mentioned.	Tension between education and culture.	Tension between education and culture.	Education necessary for progress and retain culture.

Several key issues emerged from these four interviews. Only one of the four could read well. He was twenty years younger than the other three and the only one who had completed school. The three over thirty-five said their parents had not considered education important. Even the younger man commented on his parents' lack of support. They acknowledged a need for some level of education today – at least the ability to read and write. They emphasised that their society was an oral one and their people intelligent and competent. Any literacy difficulties mentioned referred to dealings with Gaujos, and these generally referred to interactions with the authorities or dealings with bureaucracy. Gary, who lived on a permanent site, was not involved in any Gypsy or Traveller organisations but thought one might be useful. Martin had travelled widely and probably had the greatest engagement with non-Gypsies personally and professionally. Harvey appeared in the process of grappling with what his education both offered and threatened.

The four cases provided considerable information on the lives and perceptions of two English Gypsies and two Irish Travellers. The other twenty-eight interviewees and those interviewed in Ireland had had similar experiences, though none had been sent to orphanages. In this section I emphasise some of the similarities and differences in their experiences and views on education and literacy.

7.3. Childhood and schooling

Unlike the four selected interviews, few of the other twenty-eight interviewed mentioned their childhood apart from saying their parents' life style was the main reason they didn't go to school. This response from a Gypsy in Southshire was typical:

I can't read. I didn't have the chance – in them days my parents were around all over the UK. Not thought important then (John: Dec. 2008).

Education was not always the highest priority for some of those working with Travellers:

I am 58 now. I didn't go to school. The Legion of Mary came out and taught us our prayers – and that's all. They were all about religion (Irish Traveller, Literacy Centre, Dublin: Nov. 2005).

In the 1970s, children's experience of education was not always positive:

I went to a Christian Brothers school in Ireland. If they didn't beat you they abused you (Jamie: May 2008).

There was a long silence after Jamie said this. I didn't pursue it. When the information on the systematic sexual abuse in these schools was finally revealed, the story focused on Ireland⁸⁵, yet Siobhan and her brothers were in orphanages in England and one of them received compensation. While their home conditions were appalling and babies even died of cold, Jamie and Siobhan considered life in the orphanages in England was worse. The next quotation from an Irish Traveller of around 40, who worked as a support worker in the Traveller Centre in Dublin, sums up the both the past and the present.

Years ago I didn't get much schooling – I'm going back thirty years. We didn't need literacy as we were educated in a completely different way. For the girls it was washing, cooking, cleaning and selling and for the boys, tin smithing. It's now moved on and we're mixing more with settled people. Something of the culture died. The art of tin smithing died out years ago. The farmers don't need it now. We also did seasonal work; the farmers now have machines to do it. The selling door to door died out. Some of the women cannot read and write, but need to go into the banks and need to fill in forms, even to write names, addresses and Christmas cards - means we need literacy (Traveller, Pavee Point, Dublin: April 2006).

⁸⁵ ITV News Channel 4: May 21 2009.

Though many aspects of life are different, the division of male and female responsibilities and therefore the level of education or training required to fulfil these responsibilities has remained and affects attitudes to education, particularly around puberty.

Working life had started at an early age for older Gypsies and Travellers. An Irish Traveller on a large unauthorised site commented:

It's good up there, [the community centre is] a good thing. I wish I had gone to school. I left school at seven, had to go to work. I was working at 7. I was shoeing horses when I was 10. (Irish Traveller, Dale Farm: April 2008).

Working from an early age alongside their fathers was the expected norm.

7.4. Literacy levels

Appendix 3 sets out the details of the other thirty-two people interviewed in relation to the national literacy standards for adults and the national literacy standards for schools. Table 7.2 below summarises the levels of the adults interviewed.

Table 7.2 Summary of interviewees' reading levels

Approximation to National Adult Reading Levels	Estimated reading ability	Nos.
Level 3 or above	Fluent readers	5
Level 2	Good readers	3
Level 1	Reasonable readers	8
Entry Level 1	Very limited readers	7
Below entry Level	Below entry Level	9
		32

The table shows that sixteen, 50%, had minimal textual literacy skills. Five could sign their name and write a few words; nine could not sign their name. 64% of the men had low or very low literacy skills compared to 36% of women. The "reasonable" readers used a variety of strategies to understand the information presented but could not read word for word and had very poor writing skills. Three had a level of literacy above NVQ Level 2, (above GCSE level) and two of these were women. The three fluent readers had all completed secondary school and Jack and Harvey had both been to University. The eight good readers had secure accommodation; five out of the eight lived in houses or flats and

three on permanent sites. Only one person interviewed travelled throughout the year; three, including a young husband and wife were unlawfully on plots on permanent sites, and one of these was evicted with her very young family soon after I interviewed them. All those with poor, or very poor, reading skills lived on sites apart from one who moved into a flat a few months before the interview.

Most of those who had some reading skills were the younger people or those who had attended school, if only for a limited time. There were exceptions. Despite a travelling life style, Doris now around fifty and living on a permanent site in Southshire was able to read:

We went to school. Granny said we loved school. We would sneak off and go to school... I love reading. I like reading books (Doris: April 29 2009).

She said she enjoyed reading, and her husband sometimes asked her to read to him. An Irish Traveller in Dublin had also learnt to read and write:

I learnt to read and write but I learnt with people; I don't quite know how, but I can read and write. Now [they] all need it even if they work for themselves – [doing] the books and giving receipts (Irish Traveller, Pavee Point: April 7 2006).

An older English Gypsy who could read reasonably well had been taught by the army.

Well, I've wheeled and dealed all my life if I've wanted something even with the British army. They said if I stayed in and played football they would educate me (Bernie: Aug. 2008).

The comments on their education were generally brief and dismissive. Sometimes the information that they couldn't read arose during a discussion on site issues or a request for assistance that involved writing. As I became better known and trusted, I was able to choose an appropriate moment in the conversation and simply ask if they could read. The context normally confirmed whether an answer in the affirmative was accurate. The only example of a non-accurate response was when an eighty year old woman signed a form with a cross, though she had said she could read and write.

7.5. Education today

Like Gary, Martin and Siobhan, all the interviewees had sent their children to primary school:

- Bernie: I insisted my children ... I meanthe youngest one and I think she's about 42. We made a point of it; they went to school.*
- Juliet: Were you travelling or were you settled?*
- Bernie: No this, well.....way after. see when I came back from the war:we, we settled down (Bernie: Aug. 2008).*

Another spoke was equally forcibly:

I sent my son to the local school and he did very well....made sure my children could read (Harriet: Feb. 2009).

Bernie was adamant that school was very important for all his children, but appeared reluctant to admit they stopped travelling and settled down. He was among the Gypsies forcibly moved out of the New Forest and offered accommodation in the 1950s.

Like Martin, several had children who had been successful at school and held good jobs. The daughter of one is a nurse and the son of another is an electrician.

7.5.1. Access

Many of those interviewed said that school was a stressful experience for Gypsy and Traveller children particularly for those whose families still travelled. With relatively short or insecure stopping places Traveller Education staff frequently encountered parental resistance to placing their children in school. As this woman pointed out:

It is very difficult, very hard for us, getting our kids an education when we have nowhere to live, and may be evicted, very hard for our kids (Carol: March 2009).

For transient families this causes considerable stress as well as lack of achievement.

I have a daughter of thirteen who is bed wetting. She went to school one day. She had to move from there when we left [the] transit site; she went back today. My daughter of eleven is not good at reading and writing. They wanted to keep her back for a year (Kate: Jan. 2009).

This family were moved five times in nine months and at the time of writing Westborough council was seeking a court order for eviction.

The DfES (2005) estimated that 1,200 Gypsy and Traveller children are not registered at a school. It is therefore surprising that the literature does not place more emphasis on the impact of evictions. The best efforts of the TES including paying for taxis for Kate's children to remain at the same school could not avoid the disruption. No statistics correlating numbers leaving school with enforced evictions are available. Additionally some permanent sites are not well situated and there can be transport difficulties as at Meadowfair in Southshire.

Bernie stated that access for mobile families was an issue in his authority. Our conversation had led, as always, to site provision.

The position is, under the education law... every child between the ages of five and fifteen is entitled to education by law. So if a Traveller pulls up and they have six or seven children to go to the nearest school, "No we can't take you", the schools say, because we don't have room. You can't come here because we are teaching xxx number of children"... That's a fact. That was only two years ago..... the telephone goes barmy [with people wanting help], particularly in the summer months (Bernie: Aug. 2008).

Another Traveller in a different authority said that at one time she had to drive her daughter twenty-two miles to school and back because no school nearer would accept her. According to Clark (2006) the lack of site provision has resulted in FGT receiving numerous enquiries from Travellers trying to secure school places.

7.5.1.1. School capacity

The example in Chapter 5 demonstrated there are issues around school capacity when a large group of Gypsy or Traveller children suddenly arrive.

OFSTED have suggested strategies for minimising disruption including the use of IT, distance learning and transferring records, but though very positive, these only mitigate the situation to a certain extent (Wilkins et al., 2009).

Despite government policy that *"Every Child Matters"*, the policies on site accommodation and stopping places in England fail to sufficiently acknowledge the impact on children's education (Jordan 2001; Derrington and Kendall, 2004; Marks, 2006), though the Scottish Executive recognised the link between the availability of stopping places and levels of school attendance (STEP, 2003). In Westborough the practice varied. In some cases there was an effort to evict families with children in school only at the end of the term, but this was not always possible. Cooperation between the education department and the department responsible for evictions was not always apparent. In Ireland an officer in the Traveller Centre in Dublin felt *"There was little joined up thinking between the Department of the Environment and the Department of Education."*

7.5.2. Bullying

A few Gypsies and Travellers spoke of positive experiences with schools but many did not. Bullying was mentioned over and over again in interviews, informal conversations and at sessions on education at conferences. Racist bullying in general may be monitored by the school, but racist bullying towards Gypsies and Travellers is not always separately identified, even though Gypsy/Roma and children of Irish Traveller heritage have been included in the school census since 2003. In 2008 a DCSF report outlined the benefits of voluntary self-declared ethnicity including stating that it is a "human right for the world to respect you for who you really are" (DCSF, 2008a).

However, as we have seen, self identification can be problematic. When a young Gypsy from Southshire was asked about the reaction if he self identified, he replied emphatically *"Oh the bullying got much worse, much worse". (Field notes: 24.4.09).*

The Red Bus visited sites in term time and during school hours. The aim of the visits was to contact the adults but children of school age were usually on site and came on the bus and some were very competent at using the computers. When asked why they were not at school, the most frequent answer was that they were bullied.

Revealing your identity or having your identity revealed was not only unpleasant but dangerous, as Siobhan's account of her grandson's experience demonstrated. This results

in difficulties in monitoring behaviour, bullying and exclusions as well as levels of attendance and achievement. Derrington and Kendall (2004) note that patterns of 'medical' absences, which in some cases coincided with bullying episodes, were not always investigated or analysed by schools.

The DCSF guidance in 2009 suggested mainstreaming Gypsy, Roma and Traveller issues into Local Authority race equality agendas, and ensuring that teachers were aware that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are covered by the Race Relations Act.

7.5.3. Cultural issues

Many interviewees agreed with Siobhan that learning to read and write was very important but considered other subjects irrelevant:

I think all this other stuff, like the biology and all that sort of stuff is neither here, nor there to be honest with you, for Travelling people, especially for the people on the road, it's not that important (Martha: March 2009).

Doris, who was literate herself and who had had sent her children to primary, but not to secondary school, agreed:

I don't like what goes on there. They get to know too much ...I've got an 11 year old granddaughter and her parents won't let her go to secondary school. The teacher says it is a pity because she is very clever and could be a journalist (Doris: April 2009).

In analysing the perceptions it is tempting to over simplify, but as the interviews showed the attitudes are complex and sometime contradictory suggesting considerable tensions over the issues, as was demonstrated in this interview:

Jamie: We're talking about reality, the reality of children being excluded from mainstream education, right, because of who they are. And they feel there is not an obligation because any Gypsy child that goes to school is not encouraged to stay on after their twelfth or thirteenth birthday.

Juliet: Well education people say that's because Gypsies and Travellers take them out.

Jamie: They do take them out ... they haven't taken into account our sexual orientation, sex education ... which is ...done ... in the home, not taught outside our family. So what we try ... don't expect you to understand this, but we separate our children at certain ages. Our children are separated at puberty or around twelve or thirteen years of age. When you've got male and female in a classroom being taught sex education, we feel this is promoting [a promiscuous way of life] – and it goes totally against what we believe. We have asked for our children to be excluded from sex education and they will not do it.

As parents can request that their children are withdrawn from sex education I queried the legality of this, but he replied:

They feel that Gypsies who are in housing are not Gypsies and so they get excluded from school when they refuse to attend sex education.

He went on to say:

A lot of them won't do PE, games, things like that. They're not our way oriented. Some boys are, some boys aren't, but girls certainly aren't. It's like dress codes; some schools have their dress code, is that the skirt has got to be above the knee, one inch above the knee. We are saying no.

He was very positive about education yet at the same time recognised the serious cultural tensions around morality and behaviour. This traditional separation of the sexes at puberty, insistence on modest dress and rejection of sex education were noted by Siobhan, an Irish Traveller, when she visited Palestine and I noted cultural similarities with the Fulani in Nigeria. Both these comparisons are with Muslim cultures, but until the 1960s, strict Catholics had modest dress codes, very little, if any, sex education and after puberty mixing of the sexes was limited.

In both England and Ireland, those interviewed thought there was an urgent need to incorporate Gypsy and Traveller culture into the curriculum and to provide cultural training for teachers. Jamie was actively involved in introducing Traveller culture to his local school and, in addition, had set up a Gypsy and Traveller youth club to which they could invite their Gaujo friends.

The issue of maintaining the culture is fraught with tension. I asked Bernie who had ensured all his children and grandchildren went through school if they still felt linked to their Gypsy heritage and part of the Gypsy community; he responded:

My second son, the second boy he's in Canada, the eldest boy he's in Germany. I think so but I honestly don't know...I mean I feel ...I'm just normal. I know who I am ... a Gypsy, what I do ...at least it comes naturally. It is the same as Gaujos... what they do comes naturally. It is something I cannot answer honestly, because I don't know (Bernie: Aug 2008).

There are Gypsies in Canada and the USA and his second son may be part of a Gypsy community there. However many people who move away from their place of birth make a deliberate choice to live and work in a different environment.

7.5.3.1. Education otherwise

Education Otherwise / Elective Home Education (EHE) in which parents can choose to educate their children at home with support from the education service were options that some Gypsies and Travellers utilised. Conversations on site suggested that work was not regularly set, monitored or marked. OFSTED (2003:5) commented adversely on the overall adequacy, suitability and quality of home education. Anecdotal evidence from the TES indicated a yearly increase in the number of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller families opting for EHE especially in the secondary phase. Ivatts (2004, 2006) and Badman (2009) suggest that EHE is used as a device to avoid school attendance without legal penalty and that the quality of provision is inadequately monitored.

While some Gypsies and Travellers may be able to add aspects of the formal education system to their traditional methods of education, it is difficult to see how parents with poor literacy skills and no formal education themselves can achieve this with the support of only occasional visits from professionals.

7.5.4. School atmosphere

There were clear preferences for schools. One parent said his daughter would not go to the local secondary school but would eventually go to a neighbouring college in a couple of years as "*They do all kinds of things there*" (Ben: Feb. 2009).

I did not plan to interview children or young people but on a couple of occasions young people were present during the conversation and gave their views. On one occasion a young man said:

That [school] was awful, one way in and one way out – had to have identity cards to get out. The school was not run by the teachers, run by youths...they in control. Most of them carry knives ... You know [the school] even had three security guards with flack vests and that (Hurstvane: Feb. 2009).

Until they obtained a permanent pitch on their current site, his family had had to live partly on the road side continually being moved on, and partly in rented accommodation on short term six month lets. He mentioned two other secondary schools he had attended which he said were good. He gave the reasons as the presence of a large number of other Travellers and a more relaxed atmosphere. An OFSTED inspection for this authority had recognised that the higher than average attendance of pupils at some secondary schools related to staff expectations for Gypsies and Travellers. The DCSF (2008b) identified a number of issues that encouraged a good atmosphere and positive relationships between the school and Gypsy and Traveller families including awareness of their heritage and an understanding of their culture.

At the ITM conference in 2007, a school was held up as an example because it gave the highest priority to talking to parents, not specifically Gypsies and Travellers, but all parents. Staff always made time to listen. Unfortunately this concept of listening had not permeated all schools:

My daughter was educated. Years on her son was bullied. She goes down there. She doesn't speak with passion as I would speak, but she goes down there, but even so she gets labelled as aggressive... I know lots of other parents who go to school and they get called all sorts of things, partly because they are so passionate about what they are saying, so the school wants them out (ITM conference: Sept.2007).

There were many similar stories, some accurate and others exaggerated, but the important element was how Gypsies and Travellers perceived education as this perception

directly affected the level of support and encouragement they gave their children. Support from schools varied. A TES officer in Southshire commented that,

The schools won't talk to me or the Travellers. They often send a letter home which the parents can't access. So the parents say the school is not talking to them so they won't talk to the school (TES officer: March 2008).

An activist, who assisted Gypsies and Travellers when they had problems, commented that the relations with teachers were often poor:

And the worst problem we have in the schools is the teachers. It's not the children, it's the teachers. It's their attitude. A lot of the teachers are so racist. You put down you're a Gypsy and it follows you all through your school life (ITM conference: Sept. 2007).

Another participant at the same conference joined in the discussion adding:

It's very, very important now, because the way things are even at the side of the road. But it's difficult because you are constantly getting reports from the teacher, "Oh your child won't settle down. Your child can't read." Many children at school can't read.

One parent was pleased with the school atmosphere, "Lovely people, good attendance, place to stay, part of society we thought". Then the situation changed. The parent continued:

There were fifty kids in the school and the locals took their kids out of that school. That was their choice obviously, but that was pure racism, not correct as far as I can see (ITM conference: Sept. 2007).

7.5.5. Traveller Education Service (TES)

Harvey and Siobhan criticised the TES but they were not the only ones to do so.

When we studied it we found that what it actually does, it promotes segregation...You've got some people who do really good work. You've got some people who do really bad work...It doesn't really worry about Traveller children not being in school. It lets them stay out. ...They are now more into the European Roma (Jamie: May 2008).

However, solicited and unsolicited comments from the interviews suggested that despite government support for the TES, the situation for many children in school was not satisfactory.

Those born in 1967 when the first Traveller School was established in England by volunteers are now 42 years old. Those born in 1983, when the first government paper on education for Gypsies and Travellers was issued, are now 26 years old. For many families, formal school education was a very new experience. For these families there was very little experience to draw on, or to set their children or grandchildren's current experience against, whether this was positive or negative. Other parents could relate their children's experience to their own experience, whether this was praise from the teacher or bullying in the playground, and so place the incident in a broader context.

7.5.6. Attendance and exclusions

The interview data suggested several reasons why levels of school attendance and achievement of Gypsy and Traveller children were significantly below the national average. There was some evidence that local authorities did not always place as high a priority on the attendance of Gypsy and Traveller children at secondary school as on other children and also a higher level of "informal" exclusions and "part-time learning". At a conference an English Gypsy commented on his grandson's experience:

When the education system does engage them, they will put pressure on the parents to stay... I had a grandson now who can't settle in class, so he's there two hours every day in the Fresh Start. All the scallies are turned out on the street. Now that's not engaging anyone (ITM conference: Sept. 2007).

The most common reasons given for the exclusion of Gypsy pupils were physical aggression towards peers and verbal abuse towards staff. Irish Travellers were excluded for persistent disruptive behaviour (DfES, 2006b).

What happens is, the father goes down to the school, sees the head teacher, "You touch my little Johnny and you'll deal with me." And that's how it goes, round and round all the time. We are very protective of our children you know (Jamie: May 2008).

However some Gypsies and Travellers acknowledged that the behaviour of their children did not fit the school norm, as one said *"We bring our children up for our way of life"* (Doris: April 2009).

A teacher in Northshire admitted she found Gypsy and Traveller children difficult.

I was supply teaching and there were several in my class. I found them quite difficult. Fortunately another teacher took them out of the class. I don't know what I would have done otherwise (Diversity training: Nov. 2009).

On another occasion a teacher's commented that a Traveller child she had taught would continually go outside, tear up the daffodils and throw mud at the windows. This particular teacher had strong religious beliefs and was involved in Christian charity work.

The CREATE programme for education in low income countries, referred to in Chapter 2, also analysed the factors leading to gradual exclusion. Similar explanations can be applied to Gypsies and Travellers, but while useful, the discourse is one in which the community rather than the education system is seen to be at fault.

Table 7.3 Analysis of exclusion

Zone	CREATE Zones of Exclusion	Analysis of Gypsies' and Travellers' gradual exclusion in England
Zone 0	Pre schooling.	Access to pre-schooling among Gypsies and Traveller children is significantly less than the general population. 57% of Gypsy/Roma and 56% of Irish Travellers scored in the bottom 20% of the Early Years Foundation P Scales compared to 17% of white British children.
Zone 1	Access to schooling denied.	Access for mobile Gypsy and Traveller children remains very difficult and a serious issue for children with special needs.
Zone 2	Low attendance and achievement, temporary withdrawal, vulnerable living circumstances and possibly poor health.	Applicable to Gypsy and Traveller children. Participation rates at Key Stage 2 are 84%, but decline rapidly at the secondary level and are 47% at key Stage 4 (DCSF 2008:8). Of those participating, the average attendance rate is 82% at primary level and 76-77% at Key Stage 3-4. (DCSF 2008:9). In Westborough with no permanent sites 34% (26) of the children who were within the city boundaries during the school year did not attend any school. ⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Westborough Annual TES report 2008-9.

Zone 3	Children in school but at risk of dropping out.	Gypsy and Traveller children formally enrolled, but with sporadic attendance and with resulting difficulties in following the curriculum plus discrimination for socio-cultural reasons.
Zone 4	Low transition rates to secondary and early drop out at puberty.	Applies to Gypsy and Traveller children.
Zone 5	Continue in school but make poor progress lose interest and see greater economic advantage in leaving school than staying.	Applies to Gypsy and Traveller children, particularly boys who work with their fathers.
Zone 6	Continue in school but gradually excluded through low achievement.	Applies to some Gypsy and Traveller children, but many gradually drop out.

The gradual reduction in children's participation in low income countries included perceptions of schooling as of little relevance to life, the economic situation as a support or constraint for schooling, household cultural capital, characteristics of individual learners, and lack of effective policies and implementation mechanisms at provincial or district level. Gypsy and Traveller parents in the three authorities were also concerned about unsuitable and culturally inappropriate sex education.

7.6. Literacy

The people with whom I had built up good relations over a period of time were the most prepared to admit difficulties with literacy.

Like Siobhan, Martin and Harvey and others interviewed did not equate inability to read text with ignorance. When I asked how they managed with limited literacy skills the question was often side stepped,

I honestly believe we have an advantage over Gaujos. Let's be honest. During the war, the only really healthy people were Gypsies; they could live off the land. The Gaujos, they were begging, borrowing and stealing stuff, where we could get what we wanted (Bernie: Aug.2008).

The answer always strongly denied disadvantage or any suggestion of lacking something:

We're educated people, but we're not educated in the reading? Do you see what I'm saying in that sense, but we're educated I suppose in the world we know

exactly everything what's actually going on, but when it comes to put paper in front of us with things on it, it's like...(Siobhan: Jan. 2009).

Many were adamant that inability to read bore no relation to general capabilities. As Gardner (1993) points out there are multiple intelligences; decoding and understanding text is just one of them. Others suggest that those who can read have lost memory skills that others retain (Gee 1996) and I have heard people with reading difficulties give a speech to a thousand people without any memory aids.⁸⁷

Everything is oral. Get some who say they are ignorant, but they are very articulate. We are highly articulate people; we express ourselves very well and have good memories (Jamie: May 2008).

Memory was mentioned by several people:

I think you find with Travelling people, they've got very good memories, fantastic memories, so if you hear something that plays a great big part in the older education with Travelling people (Bill: May 2006).

None of those interviewed mentioned difficulties communicating with their own people. Several, like Gary, suggested they had ways of communicating among themselves at weddings and funerals as well as horse shows and fairs were important social gatherings where news and information was exchanged. At a comparatively small horse fair I attended in Northshire, the comings and goings and the number of cars in the forecourt of a small bungalow adjacent to the fair, as well as the marquee glimpsed in the back garden, indicated that a Gypsy living there was keeping open house and exchanging news and formation.

I asked all those I interviewed how they managed to travel all over the country and Europe without being able to read. They replied, as did both Gary and Siobhan, that travelling was no problem. You went there once and familiarised yourself with the area and after that you remembered the way.

⁸⁷ Speech on International Literacy Day in the presence of Mrs Mubarak, wife of the Egyptian President: Egypt 2004.

7.6.1. Requirement for literacy

Observation suggested that in daily life reading and writing was not a necessary or important skill in the Gypsy and Traveller community, but some of the respondents thought the ability to read and write would have been useful in certain situations. These are as summarised below.

Table 7.4 Textual literacy and bureaucracy

		Individual/ Family
1	Accommodation issues	Site applications, planning applications, tenancy agreement, records of rent, homeless applications, housing benefit, household bills, land purchase
2	Legal	Eviction notices, court proceedings, summons, statements to the police, receipts for money carried.
3	Health	Doctor's /dentist's registration, personal health records, children's health, instructions on medicine, children's immunisations.
4	Personal	Passport applications, letters, emails.
5	Civil society	Committee papers, minutes, application for funding.
6	Work	Skills training, licenses for cold calling, application for employment.

The four highlighted cases showed that the greatest need for good literacy skills was when engaging with Gaujos over issues relating to accommodation, health, and the law. Other issues could generally be handled by seeking help from inside or outside the community. Jamie commented that his organisation's funding application was refused because "*We didn't write it right*". He also had a very complex situation regarding his planning application as he had not understood the conditions. He said that reading difficulties mean that many Gypsies and Travellers, like others with difficulties, ignore letters, so bills get ignored. Gary needed help in negotiating a site. Martin needed his wife's help with emails and letters, my help completing a consultation form, understanding a new tenancy agreement and suggesting changes to the minutes. Siobhan realised how important literacy was in securing a job and had become frustrated at her inability to read the papers at meetings.

7.6.2. Officers' views

The data provided by officers in the Traveller Liaison Teams supported the view that Gypsies and Travellers generally managed without literacy skills but liaison officers thought low levels of literacy were a problem, at least for some. As one said:

They will say we went up so and so. If you said to me I'm going to Manchester I've got a very good idea where Manchester is on the map. They don't quite know where things are and the way to go there. A lot of it is using the road they've always used. Some have sat navs., or the woman navigates; many women do. One went up to Blackburn to the dentist (Westborough Traveller officer: Nov. 2008).

In Southshire the application form for a plot on a permanent site constituted six pages. In Westborough the Traveller team assisted with applications for pitches on the transit site and the forms required for housing benefit:

When we sign them up we sit them down in an interview room and go through the clauses. If they have got to sign, they have got to understand it, but however carefully we go through it, understandably all they want to do is get in there. We can help with housing benefit. It has to be filled out honestly; correct information has to be given to the benefit office. We assisted an Irish woman. It's a huge form and for people who have an unsettled way of life and are going into housing, it is very difficult. (Westborough Traveller officer: Nov. 2008).

Officers all thought poor literacy skills had impacted adversely on individuals:

Literacy goes with a lot of issues – you know their problems, care problems and anything else that needs to be communicated ...when you think about it, quite a lot of our support is helping people to read and write...they will often ask for specific information, say about health or the dentist, need to know where licensed tips are. I've filled out a passport application, and the Mobile Homes Act will apply to Travellers sites. It's massive, not user friendly, but there is a point where you have to send a letter so it is on file (Westborough Traveller officer: Nov. 2008).

She was correct in stating that Gypsies and Travellers were no different from most people in having difficulties with forms. The Housing Consultation document circulated by Westborough in August 2009 was a good example of a long and complex form.

The Senior Traveller Liaison officer in Northshire thought that without literacy "communication is fraught". She thought that many of the difficulties Gypsies and

Traveller experienced stemmed from their difficulties with literacy such as measuring the amount of powdered milk for a baby's bottle and not "*throwing in an extra spoonful*", getting a licence for waste collection and obtaining driving licenses and thought poor literacy skills limited employment opportunities. She also mentioned difficulties obtaining new licences for mobile homes, registering with a dentist and helping children in school. She commented on the cost in health, social care and trading standards. She believed that the ability to read would:

Open everything up - basic child care information and inoculations. I think you have to enable everyone in that community to perform at their optimum. I think not having any provision [for adults] is not only short sighted but verging on the criminal (Northshire Senior Traveller Liaison office: June 2009).

She also noted the social cost.

Gypsies say all the time that they don't get this and they don't get that...others don't read, don't earn a living, go down the pub, get pissed and get nasty...they feel excluded by ethnicity, joblessness and feel vulnerable in a macho culture of being in control - so they feel disadvantaged and excluded and don't show it and then become aggressive (Northshire Senior Traveller Liaison officer: June 2009).

She suggested there might be a high incidence of dyslexia citing one family who all went to school, but only one of the five learnt to read. In another family the father, John, runs a business but can't read at all, his partner can read "a little" and the eldest child reads for them which the officer felt was a considerable burden on the child. An adult literacy teacher in Germany noted that many Sinti in the class found the relationship between the sound and an abstract symbol difficult and adopted other reading strategies (Muller and Szabo, 2000:212).

The liaison officers were producing an information leaflet on doctors, dentists and schools for Travellers coming to the city and were thinking of producing an informational DVD. Dealing with bureaucracy and the forms and associated papers is difficult for most people, but an officer echoed what Martin, Siobhan and Gary emphasised, "*It's not just the reading but understanding the words.*"

It's literacy and usage - they're not used to it. The majority can't read, but its literacy and associated issues – so even if they can read, it's understanding it. To be honest it is difficult for anyone (Westborough Traveller officer: Nov. 2008).

I attended the High Court on Dec. 3+ 2008, to observe the appeal by Basildon Council's against the Appeal Court's decision to evict residents at Dale Farm. In this case, the defendants had high level expert counsel. This is rarely the case when councils go to court to obtain an eviction order. In Westborough, in the majority of cases when an eviction notice was issued, the Gypsies and Travellers moved on. Occasionally a court order was challenged when a Gaujo friend assisted, whereas New Age Travellers, with a higher level of education, successfully challenged the authority three times in 2009.

7.7. Learning literacy

The interviews and the surveys suggested that the Gypsies and Travellers knew very little about available provision and providers knew very little about Gypsies and Travellers and had not directed any advertising or outreach work towards them. It is likely that few, if any, providers had ever visited a site. No organisations delivering adult education in the three authorities had any record of Gypsies and Travellers attending their "mainstream" provision.

However attending classes does not guarantee success. In another authority the sister of a young man was angry that he could do the practical aspects of a plumbing course successfully, but despite attending classes, could not manage the literacy and therefore could not qualify. Speaking at a national conference workshop she said:

He tried real hard. I went up to the college and asked if he could not do the literacy, but just do the plumbing. They said "No". He had to do the plumbing. So he left (ITM conference: Nov. 2008).

While I am informed that this is not unusual in colleges, it is particularly poignant as so few Gypsies or Travellers undertake any third tier education.

It's not only young people who are unsuccessful when they do attend formalised learning. I asked Bernie why he didn't use a computer. He replied,

The lessons were free. I went four times and I never even learnt how to turn it on. I said to the lady "It's not your fault my dear, but I haven't learnt anything and I won't be coming again" (Bernie: July 2008).

Perhaps one of the most revealing comments was made by Jamie who was involved in developing youth provision; he commented that providers,

Can't set up a uniform programme...because it won't work – it's not structured. Can't structure a programme when the society is unstructured...like it's a wild horse ... you can't just get on with it.....If you are trying to structure people into a structured way of life it will be a failure (Jamie: Aug.2008).

7.7.1. Fear of prejudice

Both Martin and Gary expressed little interest when I suggested improving their skills, Siobhan, on the other hand, had reached a point in her life when she was determined to learn. I asked why she and other Travellers were reluctant to attend available classes. She answered hesitantly as though she was thinking through the issue.

Siobhan: They're shy.

Juliet: Well, so is everyone else ... I don't think the shame is different for Travellers, probably less.

Siobhan: I think the thing with Travellers, Travelling people is they haven't got a shame about silly things as far as I am concernedif they have to go to college and learn to do reading..... I think they go with the burden, that's right, one, you've got the burden, you are a Traveller, then you think, well, OK fair enough, but is anybody in this class going to know?

Juliet: That you're a Traveller or that you can't read?

Siobhan: That you're a Traveller.

The reason is that, (she hesitated)...the reason is, the reading bit's not important.

Juliet: But you don't need to tell them [that you're a Traveller]

Siobhan: No, but if you are booking in for it, somebody books you in for it, this is the thing.....Another thing... Yes. this is the problem, this is what I have been trying to get across to the education people ...What happens is (she paused), the reading is not the embarrassing thing. It honestly, truly isn't....If you can't read, you can't read. If somebody's sitting next to you, you're brazen enough to turn round and say each time "What's that say?... It's not the reading when you have to go to these colleges,... it's for people to know who you are (Siobhan: Jan. 2008).

Siobhan had, of course, experienced the serious attack on her grandson at school and this may have affected her attitude towards educational organisations, but her fear of being identified contrasted very strongly with the pride she expressed in being a Traveller.

7.7.2. Independent learning

As explained earlier, Siobhan had decided to teach herself to read. Jamie's family also decided to address the issue themselves:

My son is dyslexic. I am a bit. He can't hardly read and write. Now he's a fully trained electrician and gas fitter – what we done was encourage him anyway we could. He taught himself, for example, how many amps over a hundred meters and had to do the different things. He had to go with a computer. He got his daughter to teach him through the computer. Taught him through 'spell check' (Jamie: Aug. 2008).

Others, who could read, were not sure how they had learned but had "picked it up". A Gypsy poet in Southshire said she had learned using the computer.

IT learning programmes were also thought useful. The driving test was particularly popular and an IT programme used in literacy classes in both England and Ireland was purchased by a young Gypsy woman of about eighteen who told me that though her reading was not very good, she was learning her driving theory through an IT programme (*Private site: Aug. 2008*).

7.7.3. Participation

The interviews and the surveys in the three authorities suggest that adult Gypsies and Travellers were reluctant take up learning opportunities. However, as a result of the Red Bus Project a small class was established. This had built on the "Stepping Stones" programme funded through the LSC *Laying the Foundations / Action for Communities* Programme which aimed to engage groups currently not involved in adult education. A year later, another small literacy class was started on one of the permanent sites in Southshire. An E-Lamp IT basic skills programme was also planned.

Another positive development was the interest of several services in providing training. The police planned instruction in safe driving for young Gypsy and Traveller men – possibly because two were killed in a driving accident in 2009. The fire authority attended cultural fairs and demonstrated how to avoid the dangers of chip pans and gas heaters. Two members of the ambulance service planned first aid and resuscitation training and were aware that literacy issues might arise. These were small but positive steps outside the dominant discourses of educationalists. In all cases, the education or training took place on the Gypsies and Travellers “home ground” and was designed to meet an expressed need or in the case of the Rescue Services to improve safety.

In Ireland, education and training for Gypsies and Travellers has been successfully established in mainstream locations. A tutor in Dublin explained how a literacy class had started in the Community Hall next to a small Traveller “housing” development, but the learning was continually interrupted by children and family members and after a few months the group moved into the education centre several miles away (Literacy tutor, Dublin: Feb. 2006). The successful programmes (Appendix 5) show that Gypsies and Travellers engaged when the education or training was relevant and accessible.

The data from the interviews with Gypsies and Travellers and the officers corroborates the statistical evidence showing that the majority of Gypsies and Travellers in the three authorities had very poor textual literacy skills, had considerable ambivalence towards schooling, did not attend either literacy or educational provision for adults though they recognised a need for better reading skills and what they termed “educated” language skills. Gypsies and Travellers understanding of and use for textual literacy in their lives challenges dominant discourses of literacy and development as they rejected textual literacy as important for economic survival and as an important component of personal self confidence and community respect. Literacy was predominantly required in order to communicate with authority, but even here “knowing the language” was more important. The next chapter focuses on these issues.

Chapter 8. Situated Literacies

The previous chapter focused on the experiences of individual Gypsies and Travellers who denied that poor literacy skills affected them adversely, stressed their intelligence and highlighted the many skills they possessed. However, in relation to my second research question, on whether literacy impacted on their ability to interact with authorities, they spoke of requiring assistance with particular literacy tasks and this was confirmed by professionals who worked with them. Individual Gypsies and Travellers also said that on occasion they didn't know the "right" words and didn't fully understand what was being said. They lacked confidence in their ability to speak effectively in certain situations and would sometimes ask people to speak for them. This was also supported by officers.

This chapter focuses on the use of literacy as a community capability and specifically how Gypsies and Travellers engaged with the literacy and discourse of bureaucracy and whether this affected their ability to influence decision making processes.

In considering these issues, I am conceptualising literacy as more than understanding and interpretation of text but as an "integral part of social events and practices" (Gee, 1996:46), Street (1995) and Maybin (2000).

8.1. Changing focus

When I resumed my research after a two year intermission, I gradually began to focus on the interaction and dialogue between those from the Gypsy and Traveller communities and those representing the sedentary society, realising that:

The clearest way to see the workings of language and literacy was to displace them from the centre of attention, moving society, culture and values to the foreground (Gee, 1996: vii).

Gee (1996:vii) argued that language always comes "attached to stuff" such as social relations and cultural models and this accords with the view of New Literacy Studies as discussed in Chapter 3.

In order to analyse Gypsies' and Travellers' use of language and literacy, I drew on all the events I attended while focusing particularly on eight meetings of the WNTF held between April 2008 and December 2009, and seven meetings of the PGTG held between October 2008 and April 2010 (Appendix 2). These two forums were organised in different ways and developed different atmospheres, while at the same time demonstrating many of the characteristics I observed in other meetings and conferences.

8.1.2. Process

There were several stages to the process of observation and analysis. The first was observing the interaction at the meetings, writing notes and comparing these with the minutes for accuracy on the factual information presented. The second stage was typing these out in a four column table to record each speaker and each specific point they made. The first column numbered the paragraphs for future reference. The second column identified the speaker, the third column what the speaker said, and the final column was for my observations and comments. I then recorded my overall impressions of the meeting. The third stage was re-reading this record, grouping together and noting down significant aspects of the dialogue, its relevance and effectiveness. The fourth stage was analysing the ways in which Gypsies' and Travellers' technical literacy and their ability to engage within the specific discourse of the meetings, impacted on their ability to contribute to and influence the proceedings. I was surprised at the difference in the effectiveness of engagement in the two forums both in terms of Gypsies' and Travellers' contributions and the potential outcomes of the meetings. These related to broader political and social processes.

8.2. Westborough and Northshire Traveller Forum (WNTF)

To place my observations in context, I first briefly describe the formation and history of the forum. It was established by an Assistant Director as one of the strategies to improve the situation for Gypsies and Travellers entering the city.

The first meeting was held on October 1 1997 in Westborough Town Hall. Three councillors from Westborough⁸⁸ and eight from Northshire attended. Officers were invited to attend to support the members and the police were invited to send a representative. Although all three authorities had been contacted, there was little interest from Southshire. At the second meeting on December 3rd 1997 it was agreed the forum should be the Westborough and Northshire Traveller Forum (WNTF) but also open to districts in Southshire. The forum had the support of the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions.

Terms of Reference had been drafted by the Assistant Director. In summary these were:

1. To exchange information about traveller issues affecting the areas covered by the Forum.
2. To develop best practice for dealing with travellers locally.
3. To seek to influence thinking at national level regarding the law, policies and practices relating to travellers (Minutes. Dec. 3 1997).

No representative from a Gypsy and Traveller support organisation or any Gypsies or Travellers were invited to attend.

The discussions centred on “managing” the situation and developing a joint approach. Councillors who attended received reports on government guidance for managing encampments and on the number of Travellers entering the area. As a result they became increasingly well informed of the national shortage of sites, the cost of evictions, the complexity of the situation and the need for agreed strategies in their authorities.

Following Westborough’s lead, Northshire developed a Traveller strategy, as did several districts in both Northshire and Southshire. At the meeting of February 7 2001 a presentation was given on the Traveller Law Reform Bill by the Cardiff University Traveller Law Research Unit. In 2002 meetings for councillors were reduced to twice a year alternating with meetings of officers. Gypsies and Travellers were still not invited. All the meetings were organised by Westborough and held on their premises.

⁸⁸ I was one of the Councillors who attended this meeting.

The Forum did not meet between 2002 and 2004, possibly due to the departure of the Westborough Assistant Director and the secondment of the Traveller Liaison Officer to Northshire which resulted in a reduced focus on Gypsy and Traveller issues in Westborough.

The Forum was reconvened in 2004 by Northshire and councillors from Westborough were not initially invited. I attended as the representative of the GTSG. New Terms of Reference were agreed.

8.2.1. Inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers

The first few years of the forum had been characterised by the absence of Gypsies and Travellers. At the first meeting of the forum in 1997 the Chair had proposed inviting representatives of Travellers and Traveller support groups, but the councillors had voted against the proposal and agreed:

(iii) That representatives of travellers and travellers groups be invited to attend on an as and when required basis in a non-voting capacity (Mins. Oct. 1 1997).

This indicated the distance between councillors and the Gypsy and Traveller community. Two representatives of the FGT attended the meeting on 29 September 2000 and the minutes show they subsequently attended regularly. At the meeting of 30 September 2002 the FGT requested that a Traveller they had identified be invited to join the forum. This was agreed.

In 2004 when the forum was reconvened, it adopted new Terms of Reference. These stated:

That the presence of Travellers able and willing to express their needs and opinions, either as individuals or as representatives was essential to the success of the Forum (Mins: Sept. 6 2004).

Thus seven years after the forum first started Gypsies and Travellers were formally included. The Terms of Reference were revised to include Traveller participation:

- To enable Travellers and the relevant authorities to work in partnership and focus on action towards equality for, and the elimination of discrimination against Travellers.
- To exchange information between Travellers and the relevant authorities and monitor activity around Traveller issues.
- To discuss and develop best practice around Traveller issues including
 - Provision and management of permanent and transit sites and temporary stopping places
 - Non-nomadic Travellers
 - Welfare and education.
- To seek to influence thinking at national level regarding the law, policy and practices relation to Traveller issues.

(Mins: 6 Sept. 2004)

Instead of managing a situation, the aim now was to work with the Gypsies and Travellers to effect change. Attendance was broadened to include representatives from different council departments and from voluntary sector organisations. The Chair of the National Association for Romani Rights, and three members of the Gypsy and Traveller community, one from Northshire and one from Southshire and a New Traveller from the GTSG attended the first meeting of the reconvened forum. The meetings were hosted by different districts in the county in eleven different locations (Appendix 2).

8.2.2. Developing the dialogue

Participation by Gypsies and Travellers increased slowly with several events stimulating attendance. In 2003 the high-profile incident of burning a cardboard caravan with figures of Gypsies at the window drew activists and supporters together, but perhaps the most important stimulus was the government's Accommodation Needs Assessment for Gypsies and Travellers referred to in Chapter 5.

8.2.3. Beginning of engagement

Eight Gypsies and Travellers attended the meeting on March 9 2005 in Westborough. Three were activists from neighbouring authorities, including the representative from the National Association for Romani Rights, and an English Gypsy who referred to himself as the Chair of the "proper" Gypsy Council.

Jack, previously invited, and one of the very few Gypsies and Travellers who had been to university gave a presentation. Two Gypsies and Travellers who attended had been site

managers for many years and were therefore conversant with bureaucratic procedures. Three had considerable experience of meetings and were able to engage sometimes hostile audiences. Of these three, two had reasonable levels of literacy, only one could not read at all. Two other Gypsies and Travellers and one new Age Traveller attended.

They challenged the officers and councillors on a number of issues including the refusal of planning applications. They stressed the need for effective consultation and regretted they were not invited to discussions on issues affecting them. One speaker proposed that the Accommodation Needs Assessment (ANA) be delayed until the issue of consultation had been properly addressed. The forum agreed to hold an emergency meeting to discuss this.

Some years later, I was informed that March 9 2005, the day of the meeting, was the day the Sun newspaper had published its notorious headline "*Stamp on the Camps*".ⁱ Possibly this contributed to the Gypsies and Travellers' determination to challenge very vigorously. At the time I, and other forum members, were unaware of the newspaper report and the headline and neither were referred to at the meeting.

The following month the Northshire Liaison officer invited residents of a local Traveller site to attend the next forum meeting to be held in a nearby community centre. Six attended, but did not contribute to the discussions.

On November 29 2005, all residents on permanent sites, the activists and Gypsy and Traveller support organisations were invited to discuss the findings of the ANA. This proved an extremely contentious meeting. The Gypsies and Travellers thought the survey had significantly under-represented their accommodation needs. Their anger was exacerbated by the failure of the consultants to attend due to a car breakdown. As they were reportedly seen in the car park afterwards, the Gypsies and Travellers believed they had stayed away deliberately. This increased the tension, already high, as the consultants had refused to use Gypsies and Travellers as peer interviewers, on the grounds that the results might be perceived as biased.

By 2006 over forty people from a range of organisations regularly attended the forum. The extent to which Gypsies and Travellers were able to participate meaningfully in such a

large gathering is questionable. To what extent were technical and oral literacies important elements in their ability to contribute?

8.2.4. Issues discussed

Issues discussed at the meetings included:

- The Accommodation Needs Assessment
- Site refurbishment
- Prejudice towards Gypsies and Travellers
- Unauthorised encampments
- Hand-held health records
- Police operations
- Services for older people
- The annual caravan count
- The Traveller Education Service
- The Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month
- Planning law and planning application procedures.

Agendas and minutes were initially sent to all participants by post and later emailed. Very few formal reports were sent out in advance of the meetings. Speakers presented their subjects either verbally, or more frequently, by talking to power point presentations, thus enabling those with limited reading skills to follow the discussion. I have only commented here on presentations on education and where training and education for adults was mentioned.

8.2.5. Education and training

The head of the Northshire and Westborough TES gave several presentations including one on Children's Centres previously referred to in Chapter 5. She explained how the TES supported Gypsy and Traveller children in school, and also reported on the activities for Gypsy Romani Traveller History Month in 2008 and 2009.

There were only two references to the education of adults at any of the meetings I attended, and one came from a Gypsy who said:

We have to teach everyone how to use the electrics and water and be able to find jobs (WNTF: July 24 2008).

The second occasion was during a presentation from Northdown Housing to which Gypsies and Travellers were referred for advice on accommodation. The speaker noted that:

They wanted support around literacy, mental health, benefits, domestic violence...They had literacy issues and hadn't been able to work out what was going wrong for them. Sometimes there was no correspondence in the home. We would have to track this down and may have to help the family get legal advice. Sometimes bailiffs had been called and we would call them to put them on hold (WNTF: June 29 2009).

8.2.6. Hand-held health records

The Primary Care Trust (PCT) gave a presentation on hand-held health records as an effective way of ensuring doctors had the necessary information on the health of their Gypsy or Traveller patients. After the presentation, a student observer from Nigeria asked if they would be able to read it. It was clear from the answer that this had not been considered (Mins. March 24. 2007).

Hand-held health records were on the agenda again a year later. A paper was handed round at the meeting and people were asked to vote on three options. The literacy difficulties of many Gypsies and Travellers present had again been overlooked. At my request, the liaison officer agreed that people could phone in their comments. At the national ITM conference "A Time for Change" held in 2009, examples of a Personal Adult Health Record were handed out. Though it was beautifully produced and considerable effort had been to make the record easy to follow, many Gypsies and Travellers would have difficulty in understanding it without assistance; the correlation between poor literacy and poor health (Wolf et al., 2007; Smith and McCaffery, 2010), appeared not to have been recognised.

8.2.7. Participation and attendance

Though forty people regularly attended the forum, the number of local Gypsies and Travellers attending only increased slowly. One or more of the four activists from the

neighbouring authorities usually came. Gypsy and Traveller attendance did not necessarily relate to items on the agenda. None attended on 23 March 2006 when a report on emergency stopping places, an issue of particular importance to Gypsies and Travellers, was discussed, yet two activists, and representatives from three Gypsy and Traveller families attended the following meeting. Other factors were responsible for attendance or non-attendance, including familiarity with the location and loss of potential earnings.

Martin, the Irish Traveller I interviewed, referred to the loss of potential earnings on several occasions. He and colleagues discussed the issue when I met them at a cultural fair (Field notes: August 2008). They resented giving up a day's work when 95% of those present were attending in paid time. They queried this with the liaison officer who responded that nobody was obliged to attend, by which they understood that their presence at the meetings was not considered important. Travel expenses were paid but the amounts were sometimes disputed and not all receipts were submitted in the required format (Field notes: Aug. 2 2008). One Gypsy sent a forcible message to the forum *"I'm not fucking coming without payment."* (Field notes: Oct. 16. 2008). His colleague did not deliver the message!

8.2.8. Increasing frustration

From 2008 the apparently slow progress by Northshire Council in implementing the ANA and the fear generated by losing planning applications increased the Gypsies' and Travellers' belief that the forum was at best a talking shop and at worst a process of prevarication. There was also a strong feeling among Gypsies and Travellers that it was not "their" forum. This frustration boiled over many times. *"You give us policy this and policy that – twenty-five years ago we were told to go and buy land and now..."* (WNTF: Jan. 29 2009).

Once the ANA had been completed and the report published, a period of consultation on the recommendations followed, after which, Councils were to identify land for sites. Grants were available both to build and to refurbish sites. Westborough and Northshire applied for, and received, grants. Understandably Gypsies and Travellers expected the situation to improve quickly. However as one said:

I've been sitting at these meetings for three to four years and nothing has happened yet. I feel sometimes you are wasting our time coming here. These five sites round here. One of the sites still has open sewage. It's like the third world. I looked at these sites thirty years ago and nothing [has changed] (WNTF: March 22 2007).

This was followed by a verbal attack on the organisation contracted to manage this site. Another activist commented later that, "All we want is a piece of land where we can put our homes which we take with us" (WNTF: March 22 2007).

8.2.8.1. Culture and identity

When presentations were made on refurbishing sites, issues around culture and identity frequently arose. The difficulty in identifying land for new sites led to reviewing existing sites with a view to enlarging them. This provoked anxiety among current residents.

Martin pointed out the need for,

a place to leave work tools and a work area. We think there is a danger they are not provided with what their life style needs. At the moment it looks as if the life style is being taken away, and the sites made to look pretty. I have a computer and Gypsies and Travellers all work from home (WNTF: April. 8 2008).

At the next meeting another Traveller commented:

This is increasingly divisive, no fires, no horses, no dogs, no relatives without permission. This is designed to harness and destroy the culture (WNTF: July 24 2008).

As many Gypsies and Travellers traded in horses, space for horses was an issue for both permanent and transit sites⁸⁹. A resident on a site where additional pitches were planned said that:

At the moment we have horses and stables – they are talking about more pitches, but what would we do with the horses – they have to come in at night? (WNTF: April 8 2008)

⁸⁹ A cleaner employed on the Westborough transit site phoned up the liaison team one morning to say there was a horse in the toilet (Officer: Nov. 2009).

The minutes of this meeting referred to a barn on the site as an illegal structure which would be demolished, but this was disputed as it was there when the site was established. The minutes were changed⁹⁰.

Residents were also concerned that increasing pitches on a site would cause overcrowding and potentially cause problems. As one resident stated *"There never has been a sixth pitch for seventeen years and maybe twenty five years"* (WNTF: July 24 2008). When a year later, an officer said that two sites could be extended *"as people are living happily there,"* a row broke out and he was angrily challenged:

It just isn't true to say they are all happy when there's been shooting and all kinds of things there....splitting the sites up and cramming them in like rabbits [won't work] (WNTF: Dec. 9 2009).

Following this exchange, a Gypsy, who had submitted a planning application, made the angriest comment I heard at any forum meeting:

If [my application] is turned down, they're going to find a site, put a big fence around, chuck us in a reservation and throw a bit of meat over the fence (WNTF: Dec. 9 2009).

Although the Gypsies and Travellers were extremely frustrated and felt mainstream society was prejudiced against them, they recognised that the people present were trying to help. Though challenging, they were rarely personally hostile. They were frustrated at the lack of knowledge of the general public because, *"If people think Gypsies are the bogey men, it will be impossible"*. At the same meeting another commented that *"Gypsies are blamed for everything, even if a space ship landed"* (WNTF: July 24 2008). The comment related to a council planning committee's rejection of a site application despite officers' recommendation after vociferous anti-Gypsy demonstrations had been held outside the Council Chamber; similar demonstrations led to the refusal of another application in a neighbouring authority.

⁹⁰ The barn was demolished despite the successful challenge to the minutes.

8.2.8.2. Contributions ignored

Sometimes the contributions made by the Gypsies and Travellers were simply ignored. On July 24 2008 a presentation was given to the forum by a university lecturer on his research on education in Southshire. Nine Gypsies were present, comprising twenty-five percent of the audience, though none were from Southshire.

His findings supported those of other researchers and echoed the comments of people I had interviewed. He found that the educational attainment of those who identified themselves as Gypsies or Travellers was low. There was a fear of bullying expressed more clearly than in other research and parents feared "stranger danger".

When he talked about bullying a Traveller interrupted and said,

I've been to Asia and we had racism there. The Dalits, the lowest caste, came to our rescue and took us in.

Though an interruption, the contribution could have added to the debate. A comparative discussion on racism in different cultures could have broadened the discussion, but the contribution was ignored.

A second interruption followed almost immediately.

Gypsy: In parts of Europe Gypsy children and Roma are segregated [from the rest]. Don't you think the TES does things FOR not WITH the Gypsies and Travellers and the TES just work for themselves?

Lecturer: (Ignoring the interruption). There is a new danger – stranger danger – we found they did not want children to be exposed to strangers, so school was seen as a dangerous place (WNTF: July 24 2008).

There was an acknowledgment, but no response to the comments. The second interruption made an important political point of considerable concern to Gypsies and Travellers. The speaker could have drawn on this and widened the discussion, but both interruptions were ignored and the presentation continued as though they had not spoken. This contrasted with the speaker's opening statement that the research aimed, "to give a voice to a community".

On another occasion, a Gypsy interrupted when a senior officer talked about the forum:

Senior officer: We are on a journey. Gypsies and Travellers were [previously] out of sight.
Female Gypsy: Why out of sight?
Senior officer: There was no requirement.
Male Gypsy 1: Well get on with it.
Senior officer: We're on a journey. (She outlined the council's strategy).
Male Gypsy 1: But not about planning?
Senior officer: Westborough and Northshire are the only two authorities in the South East that have transit sites while Northam is closed we have allocated emergency stopping places?
Male Gypsy 2: What about private land?
Senior officer: We are not responsible for planning.
Male Gypsy 3: But what about private land?
Senior officer: I understand you are concerned.

The challenges were direct and pointed, but their concerns were largely ignored. The Gypsies and Travellers found it almost impossible to influence the proceedings. There was a realisation that councillors and officers attending the forum were largely supportive, but increasingly the Gypsies and Travellers realised the influence they had was limited. This was particularly evident in relation to planning. Such comments as, "*What's the point of coming here, no-one can help us; no-one of you can answer our questions?*" became increasingly frequent and sometimes spilled over into outright anger. Bob raised the issue of how to effect change:

Gypsy: How do we get people who can make the change?
Cllr: I am one of those people who can change things.
Gypsy: But the site at Inham was refused.
Cllr: But I was not a councillor then; that was before I was on the council.
Gypsy: (Getting angry). You are airbrushing the whole thing!
 (WNTF: Oct. 16 2008)

My field notes state that "*It began to look a bit nasty*". Somehow it calmed down and the meeting continued, but the refusal to discuss issues of immediate concern frequently caused frustration. A supportive officer pointed out "*They should be allowed to talk. Otherwise if there is nothing in it for them – they won't come*" (WNTF: Jan. 29 2009).

8.2.9. Controlling the meetings

At some point in most meetings the Chairs had difficulty controlling the situation. The Chair started the meeting in April 2008 by saying:

I suggest that if you want to speak, it helps if you hold up your hand, and then speak. If you all speak at once we can't hear and it won't be minuted. (WNTF: April 8 2008).

An architect began a presentation on draft plans for a site. This was almost immediately interrupted by several Gypsies asking about repairs to sites. The Chair tried to stop this by suggesting they allowed the presentation to continue but was ignored by Bernie, a Gypsy activist, who said *"We can't just run through things as you have brought Travellers here and we want to have a discussion"*. The discussion on repairs continued. Fifteen minutes later, when the discussion had moved to quite different subjects, the Chair tried again to regain control saying *"Can we continue with the presentation?"* Bernie responded:

With due respect we are simple Gypsies – we can't tally up the questions and ask at the end – we like to ask while we go through (WNTF: April 8 2008).

Even when Harvey, a Gypsy, chaired the meeting there were difficulties. After the very angry exchange culminating in the reference to reservations, he said:

I'm going to bring this meeting to order now – if we go on like this I am going to disperse this meeting (WNTF: Dec. 8 2009).

8.2.10. Successful challenges: agency

However, sometimes challenges were successful. Three activists queried the use of government refurbishment grants for running repairs (WNTF: April 10 2008). The activists were sufficiently experienced to check the minutes and to challenge them for inaccuracies. Martin challenged the minutes on the accuracy of his statement on the employment of Gypsies and Travellers (Mins. Oct. 16. 2008). Bob referred to the minutes when the details they had requested on planned locations of extra pitches were not forthcoming. Bernie asked why the minutes did not include the costs of refurbishing a transit site as had been agreed (Mins: June 29 2009). The minutes were amended on each occasion.

The location of sites was a contentious issue and there was much opposition to establishing sites on tips or near rubbish dumps. Arthur compared the condition of a proposed site to one above a disused tin mine in the West Country which had caused sickness. On a memorable occasion, the delay in providing sites was again challenged by Arthur who stormed up to the front of the meeting with a photograph of himself serving in the Second World War to make the point that he had fought for this country and had the same rights as other citizens (WNTF: Oct. 16 2008).

A proposal to have a question and answer session was agreed, but was then superseded by a proposal from an officer that a Gypsy or Traveller should chair the meeting. A Gypsy immediately offered. This was minuted and Harvey, (cf. Chapter 7) chaired the next meeting (Mins. Jan. 29. 2009).

The first meeting he chaired focused to a greater extent than previously on planning issues. On the agenda was a talk by a Gypsy whose planning application had been refused. When officers were unable to answer the details of her individual case, a councillor pointed out the forum was for general discussion, not particular issues. Harvey as the Chair responded:

This is the only forum they have and the only place they can take these things to. I know this is a general forum, but have a heart. I have a home I can go to. They don't. Where can they go? So this is the forum they can go to (WNTF: April 9 2009).

At the subsequent meeting to which only Gypsies and Travellers and support organisations were invited, the district planners were asked to provide information on progress in identifying land for sites. They had to account directly to Gypsies and Travellers for the first time. Seventeen Gypsies and Travellers attended this meeting, double the number at any previous one. Harvey suggested every authority should have a forum and convene once a year at a regional South East meeting. He stated that "*We need to be recognised at a local level but also recognised at a national level*". As a member of the All-Parliamentary Group he had an awareness of the situation at national level. He also proposed that a range of organisations should be invited to the forum to talk about their work.

8.2.11. Working together

On several occasions the more experienced Gypsies tried to move things forward by suggesting cooperation and more effective consultation. In the discussion on creating more pitches the following exchange took place:

- Gypsy 1: With respect it should have started with consultation among the residents. There has been some consultation butI suggested one [extra] pitch and what's happened – there are six pitches and [they are] proposing taking the stables down.*
- Gypsy 2: I suggest you take this debate and discuss it with residents on the site.*
- Jamie: I don't know whether to say this as I don't know how it will be received.*
- Jack: Go on say it and put a tin hat on it.*
- Jamie: Lack of consultation leads to confrontation. What we are trying to do is for councillors, planners and Gypsies to work together in advance and convince their local population that this little bunch of human beings should not be left without accommodation and without running water. Its common humanity (WNTF: April 8 2008).*

At the following meeting Bernie asked if,

Gypsy organisations could be informed formally? Now we only know when we come to these meetings. If we could; it's just a little thing, but for us it is very important, so we know before we come to the meetings (WNTF: July 24 2008).

On another occasion, a speaker appealed to local pride suggesting that Northshire could be the first in the country to implement the ANA.

We can be a model for it, let's not lose that possibility – and we could do it here. We need to have a model the rest of the country can follow. Let's get on with it (WNTF: July 24 2008).

8.2.12. Language and literacy

As stated, there were very few written reports; most invited speakers gave power point presentations. On the very few occasions, when it was necessary to read information, one of the activists, or a member of a support organisation, would suggest it be read out "as not everyone can read." The Gypsies and Travellers were also confident enough to laugh

at themselves. During a presentation on their organisation, one gave the credit for forming the network to his colleague and was interrupted by another in the audience shouting out "*Why don't you tell the truth – he's the only one who can read and write!*" This was greeted with a great deal of laughter and no embarrassment.

Despite this open acknowledgement, as we have seen in relation to the health records and consultations, many organisations and officers did not appear to take account of the reading difficulties many Gypsies and Travellers experienced.

It was noticeable that those leading the debate and challenging the officers most effectively could read. As stated, two of the younger ones had been to university and two older men had learnt to read and write in the army. They had a greater awareness of how non-Gypsy/Traveller society operated, and a greater understanding of bureaucratic discourse. On several occasions local Gypsies and Travellers said they did not understand what had been said. On one occasion a Gypsy said to an officer:

Arthur [a Gypsy] put it in a way I can understand. I couldn't when you said it. I could understand it when he said it." (WNTF: Dec. 8 2009).

Harvey, the Gypsy in the chair, followed this by saying to the officer, "*You're educated and they're not. I might understand it. It needs to be said in clear English*". Addressing his own community he then said, "*I'm not undermining your intelligence*" (WNTF: Dec. 8 2009).

He was very careful to stress their intelligence and made the same point several times during the meeting. He was making a clear distinction between education in formal schooling and intelligence, as did the Gypsies and Travellers I interviewed.

8.2.13. Limited success

Without dialogue, political engagement is absent or confrontational. In the past dialogue between Gypsies and Travellers and local politicians was virtually absent in the three authorities.

Southshire had no Gypsy and Traveller forum; the first cross-council internal discussion took place in November 2010 without any Gypsies present. Out of three neighbouring authorities, only one had a forum. The authority with the largest Gypsy and Traveller population in the South East did not. For more than ten years the WNTF provided an arena for dialogue and debate. It started as a forum for councillors and officers to share their experience of “managing” Gypsies and Travellers, then invited leading Gypsy and Traveller activists to participate and slowly drew in local Gypsies and Travellers and created a space for discussion.

Control operated in several ways. When asked detailed questions, the planners cited planning regulations or formal consultation processes. When discussions began to refer to specific cases such as particular planning applications, officers and councillors tended to block discussion by referring to the forum’s remit for general discussion not individual issues. On occasion they claimed they had insufficient knowledge to comment, thus distancing themselves from the debate. As one Gypsy pointed out:

All you people want to help us, not one of you can do it for us...no-one of you can answer our questions (WNTF: Jan. 29 2009).

Councillors determined policy and strategy, but were responsible to and dependent on voters. Two of the councillors most supportive to Gypsies and Travellers were not re-elected in 2007, and another was removed from the forum by his district council. He claimed it was because he pointed out:

That [a proposed site] was dangerous, as it was too near heavy traffic. [The Leaders of the Council] said it wasn’t and there isn’t much traffic, but there is. So they took me off the forum (Personal communication: Jan. 26 2009).

The forum was an importance source of information for officers and particularly councillors, who had little opportunity to engage with Gypsies or Travellers. It was noticeable that the councillors who attended developed a greater understanding of the issues and the need to resolve them. While not resolving all conflicts, these were aired. Greater, if not complete, understanding developed on both sides:

8.3. Police Gypsy and Traveller Group (PGTG)

The PGTG provided a useful comparison with the WNTF and I had expected the meetings to follow a similar pattern of control and frustration. Martin had facilitated my attendance by introducing me to the superintendent responsible for the group. I followed the same procedure in undertaking my analysis as I had for the forum, that is, I wrote notes at the meetings and checked these against the minutes, and identified and wrote down the issues that emerged.

The first meeting of the PGTG I attended was held on January 21 2009. Coincidentally the first item on the agenda was a presentation by a Senior Officer on the WNTF. She described the services Northshire County Council provided to the Gypsy and Traveller community, their progress on the provision of pitches and the current refurbishment of the transit site. She outlined how all partners, and Gypsies and Travellers themselves, contributed to the Traveller strategy via the Traveller forum. The Gypsies and Travellers, who comprised more than half those present, nine out of sixteen, were very critical. Jack, the chair of the PGTG, and one of the Gypsies who had been to university, said he had two points to make:

Firstly that the Travellers' forum was just a talking shop where local government is over represented.... Secondly that the Gypsy and Traveller community have access, but no influence (PGTG: Jan. 21 2009).

Martin commented that the forum existed to "tick a box". The officer disagreed and said the forum was robust but could not discuss individual issues. The Gypsies' and Travellers' comments on the forum clearly demonstrated the frustration they experienced. The Northshire officer's presentation and the remarks that followed revealed very different perceptions of the forum, useful to officers and councillors with little knowledge of the culture, frustration for Gypsies and Travellers who wanted to see improvements in their situation.

I attended seven meetings and my observations suggested there was far less frustration, and much greater accord than at the WNTF. Though difficult questions were raised and

the police were directly challenged on a number of issues, the meetings were good-humoured and enjoyable. In order to appreciate the success or failure of these meetings and the context in which they were held, I first summarise the attitudes to Gypsies and Travellers held by many officers in the police force.

8.3.1. Attitudes in the police force

The Last Bastion of Racism: Gypsies, Travellers and Policing (2007), was written by John Coxhead, a former police officer⁹¹. Although his book exposes "*warts and all*", he states that the purpose is to look forward. The data on which he builds his analysis was collected between 2003 and 2005 and must therefore be considered as representative of very recent and possibly current attitudes in the police force. He states that:

The policing relationship with Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers has been poor for several decades, evidenced by a mutual lack of trust, respect and co-operation. Police training has often omitted issues facing Travellers. Where Traveller issues have been raised, many police trainers identify cases of overt racism from police audiences, which trainers are unable to address effectively (Coxhead, 2007:1).

Since the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the resulting Mcpherson Report in 1999 there has been a strong focus on eliminating racism in the police force but until recently this had not included Gypsies and Travellers. One reason for this non-recognition

was a blurring of white European ethnicity.....It's not seen as racism..... Prejudice against Travellers is not only acceptable in the force, it is expected (Coxhead, 2007:62).

The police are now attempting to address the situation through Police Diversity Training. In his book, Coxhead states that during training,

Comments and jokes about Gypsies and tarmac are common. The problem is that senior officers of today were young bobbies 30 years ago when it was the accepted practice to throw bricks at caravans until the Gypsies moved on (Coxhead, 2007:63).

⁹¹ Coxhead worked for ten years in the police force as a police Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer. He was the British Adviser to the European Law Enforcement Officers in Budapest and advisor to the UK National Centre for Citizenship and the Law.

One officer said:

Police go on to sites to check fuel and that. They tend to provoke the young people until they get a reaction. Officers from a PSU unit went onto a site and let off fire crackers. These things are normal (Coxhead, 2007:65).

A lot of police still view Gypsies and Travellers as subhuman and treating them as such is seen as some sort of achievement that should be bragged about (Coxhead, 2007:48).

There was a general feeling among the Gypsy and Traveller community that "*The police are not our police*". Until 2009, incidents now defined as racist towards Gypsies and Travellers, were not defined as such, and therefore not recorded as racist, as in the case of an elderly lady who had been firebombed. There was no investigation because they said "You know what it is like, it will be just one family having a go at another one" (Coxhead, 2004:63).

Any incident is racist that is considered to be racist by any other person (Macpherson, 1999 cited in Coxhead, 2004:63), yet it can still be difficult to prove.

The reports of racism recorded by Coxhead (2007) were paralleled by similar accounts at the PGTG. At the first meeting he attended, Harvey, whom I had interviewed, was vociferous on the subject of police racism:

When we are talking about race, we are talking about Gypsies and Travellers. Race is a big factor for us and we don't feel it's being dealt with..... Police allowing men, women and children to be thrown all over the place – trying to get it right around the table – but I don't see it for my community – all those police watching the eviction shows racism. None of those police were challenged about it...I'm only 27 years old. I've been on the roadside as a child. That had an effect on my mental health (PGTG: July 22 2009).

Will, an older Gypsy, followed this with an account of a police raid on a site:

The site was raided with twenty police, two district commanders. Within ten minutes [the man] arrested was let go. I said, "Why did you do this?" He said, "We always do this going on sites as we don't know who is there." They had six or seven police cars, flak jackets, probably armed. When he went to the police station, he was there ten minutes and then gone [released] (PGTG: July 22 2009).

Raids were obviously not uncommon. When I interviewed him, Jamie described a raid on his property. He lived in an adjacent county and owned his land, but his neighbours objected. One day armed police arrived without warning. He had to shout to his children to get down for fear they might be shot. Again they found nothing and there were no charges (Jamie: Aug. 2008).

Comments similar to those cited by Coxhead were also made. An officer talked about organising "*a Pikey picnic in his back garden*" (PGTG: July 22 2009). It was acknowledged that senior officers still needed educating. In considering the effectiveness of the advisory group it is important to set it against this background of extreme distrust towards the police which was greater and far more overt than that expressed towards councillors and council officers.

The police, like council officers and councillors received a considerable amount of abuse if they did not act as the public wished. On one occasion when police considered there were insufficient grounds to evict an encampment and chose to work with the Travellers until they agreed to move on, the relevant district council sent a letter to five hundred households accusing the police of not doing their duty. Harvey proposed that a complaint of racism be made against the council regarding the content of the letter (PGTG: July 22 2009).

8.3.2. The advisory group

The police have adopted several strategies to improve policing to the communities they serve including establishing Confidence and Equality Boards and Advisory Groups. Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) were first introduced by the Metropolitan Police in 1999 to help in the efforts to restore the confidence of black and ethnic minorities lost after Stephen Lawrence's murder. As the police website states:

Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) play a key role in ensuring that [the] Shire Police is independently challenged with regards to their decision making and subsequent operational outcomes. IAGs also help ensure that the police

understand the needs of communities.....They form a vital part of our efforts to increase the trust and confidence that people have in us⁹².

The Advisory Group, PGTG, I attended was established in 2007 to improve policing in the three authorities. A senior officer was appointed the "Gypsy champion". He informed me that in 2006 despite progressive policies, little progress had been made, so he contacted Jack's Gypsy Media company to ask Gypsies and Travellers what they wanted and, as he said, *"It started from there"* (PGTG: Oct. 1 2008). A web site has recently been established as part of the communication strategy and this states that the PGTG,

Has been working closely with local Gypsies and Travellers to identify ways of improving our service delivery to this community and finding opportunities for developing a shared understanding of our cultures⁹³.

It meets four times a year and its remit, stated above, is very clear. At the meetings I attended Gypsies and Travellers were in the majority, usually just over half those present. All attendees were paid an attendance allowance as well as expenses, which they very much appreciated, but eventually this cost limited the numbers of people invited.

Table 8.1 Advisory group attendance

	Total	Gypsies and Travellers
31 10 2008	11	7
21 01 2009	16	9
28 04 2009	18	11
22 07 2009	17	8
21 10 2009	21	11
20 01 2010	19	11
09 04 2010	18	12

Their numbers increased and in April 2010 it was decided to limit the group to fifteen Gypsies and Travellers and three or four police officers. Gypsies and Travellers attending lived on sites, in housing and temporary unauthorised encampments. Representatives of Gypsy and Traveller support groups attended.

⁹² Accessed from http://www.....police.uk/about_us/race_diversity.asp#diversity on Feb. 7 2010

⁹³ Accessed from http://www.police.uk/about_us on Feb. 7 2010

The group was chaired efficiently by Jack, who ran the Gypsy Media Company. A police superintendent with responsibility for improving community relations was the Deputy Chair. Minutes were taken by a police administrator. The police equalities officer attended, as did others with liaison responsibilities. At first, meetings were held in a local leisure centre and then at the police training centre in an old manor house. The meetings lasted for three hours, were preceded by a buffet lunch and frequently included a presentation.

Presentations included:

- The Criminal Justice System
- WNTF
- The Custody Equality Impact Assessment
- South East Coast Ambulance Service
- Overview of Race Equality Groups
- Cash seizures
- Talk from the Deputy Chief Constable
- Hate Crime.

The Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month (GRTHM) and the cultural event to celebrate the month were also discussed. Regular agenda items at every meeting included a detailed report on police enforcement on unauthorised encampments and progress on the items listed for action at the previous meeting.

The list demonstrates that very serious and contentious issues such as custody and cash seizures were grappled with. The discussions were not always easy and sometimes heated, but the meetings were managed in such a way that they were genuinely enjoyable, with laughter and joking.

8.3.3. Travellers and custody

The first difficult discussion I observed was the process of taking a Traveller into custody. None of those present argued that a Gypsy or Traveller who had committed a crime should not be taken into custody, but both they and the police were concerned to improve the process. Privacy, communication and literacy had been identified as areas requiring

improvement. A working group, comprising two members of support organisations and one Traveller, had examined the Equality Impact Assessment and visited the cells. The working group expressed concern that they had not seen the report of the visit prior to the meeting at which it was presented, but the officer responsible noted that he *"Found their work very helpful – to see it from their point of view"* (PGTG: Jan. 21 2009). The meeting was informed that Gypsies and Travellers could apply to become Independent Custody Visitors.

8.3.4. Cash seizures

Though this was a very difficult issue, the discussion was filmed for a police training DVD. A member of the Police Financial Investigation Department gave a presentation explaining that:

The reason for the talk and presentation is for the police to gain a better understanding of the Gypsy Traveller cash economy so they could work with them to ensure they were not discriminated against by the cash seizure policy (PGTG: Oct. 21 2009).

Under the new law police are authorised to seize cash of more than £1,000 found on a person and hold it until evidence of ownership is provided. If this is satisfactory it is returned. As the Gypsy economy is a cash economy and expensive items are purchased in cash, the new law can be seen, and was seen, by the Gypsies and Travellers to adversely affect them.

Almost before the speaker had started, an older Gypsy interrupted saying *"Of course young people do have money on them. It's a load of rubbish"*. The chair had to intervene and say, *"But our speaker is here so we can talk to her and give her some advice and put some guidance together"*. However the subject had triggered a different resentment:

But we can't knock on a door any more – cold calling – they want you to join in the trading standards – you've got to go out like a rep. We're being criminalised all the time. My son-in-law got caught doing tarmacking – he's a bit of a !!, but that's a different story. All his money was frozen for three months – and they put marks on his caravans and cars. It's not just us, the Chinese deal in cash.

The chair interrupted saying, "*Can we just hear what our speaker has to say (PGTG: Oct. 21 2009).*"

The speaker continued and explained that the purpose of the law was to prevent criminals and drug dealers profiting from their crimes. Two Gypsies interrupted again saying:

Judith: If my son-in-law went to buy a car he would buy in cash. It's cheaper in cash. I have no credit so I have to pay outright.

Will: When you go and buy a horse – you might have £30,000 in your pocket. If the police stop you there is no way you can prove how you got the money. We don't write receipts. I thought you were innocent until you were proved guilty.

At this point the Deputy Chief Constable, who was attending this meeting, entered the discussion:

We are trying to see where you are coming from. That doesn't mean we necessarily agree with you. I really liked this law until now. I hadn't thought it affects Gypsies...Let's keep the law and increase our understanding...I do not know what it feels like to be a minority in this country. Your answer is valuable to us. You have touched us. Please come back ...Now some of us want to listen (PGTG: Oct. 21 2009).

Bill responded by saying:

If listening, please come up with something different. I am still arguing about things I been arguing about for thirty years.

The outcome of the presentation and discussion was that three actions were agreed: two volunteers from the group would have further discussions with the unit outside the meeting in order to make recommendations on how to move forward, the police would communicate the concerns of the Gypsy and Traveller community to the Home Office, and evidence of any cash seizures would be brought to the next meeting.

The police had responded by accepting the problems the law was causing Gypsies and Travellers and listened, but they did not apologise or indicate they would seek changes to the law. The Deputy County Commander had been open in admitting he had no

experience of being a minority – which could have invited a range of critical responses. It didn't, possibly because he also reinforced the remit of the advisory group to work with Gypsies and Travellers to create better understanding and better relations. Towards the end of the discussion one Traveller said, *"The police have taken us on board and they have taken on board that we are an indigenous people."*

8.3.5. Red flagging

A presentation on "red flagging" was given by the ambulance service covering the three authorities. The ambulance service "red flagged" sites to warn other ambulances to ask for a police escort before going on sites on which crews had previously experienced trouble. The speaker introduced herself as the Ambulance Gypsy Traveller Leader who was working collaboratively with communities, *"To dispel myths, provide meaningful data to the organisation on who the users are and what they need and want from the service"* (Mins. July 22 2009). A second speaker from the service was the Community Resuscitation Development Officer who said he had been surprised at the negative reaction he had received when going on to a site.

The occasional difficulties faced by the ambulance service were not denied, but there were two complaints. Once a site had been "flagged" there appeared to be no re-evaluation of the situation. The warning stayed in place. The second complaint questioned why all the families on the site should suffer because one behaved badly. *"If you had eight families on a site and you had a bad experience with one, why should seven families be suffering?"* Harvey was very concerned:

[I] would never condone it. If my Nan is unwell, I would be mad if I had to wait for the police before the ambulance came (PGTG: July 22 2009).

8.3.6. Unauthorised encampments

In order to monitor police overuse or underuse of their powers, a detailed list of unauthorised encampments in the three authorities was presented at each meeting. This showed the location, the district, the number of vehicles, requests for police action, response to the requests, and the date the vehicles were either removed or departed. According to the statistics, there were thirty-eight unauthorised encampments in

Westborough between January 1 and December 31 2009, eighteen in Northshire and twenty-four in Southshire. The police used their enforcement powers, Section 61 or Section 62a, in twelve cases, all but one in Westborough, when they considered the encampments were causing obstruction, damage or when antisocial behavior had occurred (Mins. Dec. 9. 2009). It was noted that the police used their powers less frequently as the year progressed. Martin challenged the use of the words criminal damage. *"It could just be referring to damaged grass verges"* (PGTG: Dec.9 2009).

Residents and councillors frequently complained when the police refused to move the encampments, but by law, as stated in Chapter 5, local authorities have to make health and welfare checks before asking the court for a Section 55 to repossess their land. Gypsies and Travellers rarely challenged the court applications even though they could get advice from legal support organisations. The difficulties in Westborough should not be underestimated; managing 240 vehicles, as many as sixty in one encampment over a three month period in the summer of 2009, was a complicated and expensive task.

The police and senior Westborough officers reviewed the police use of powers between August and December 2008. There were issues of proportionality but no misuse of powers. When New Travellers refused to move to a piece of land suggested by the authority, the police used Section 61 to remove them. The Superintendent was concerned that one transit site and one permanent site, when built, would be insufficient to meet the demand and commented that most councils would have difficulties managing the high numbers Westborough experienced. This was challenged. *"A whole football field was used during a festival [the previous] year. We didn't see the police moving them on"*. The superintendent replied that they had asked permission in advance.

Martin drew attention to the increasing difficulty Gypsies and Travellers were experiencing in finding suitable stopping places in Westborough:

Martin: There is what used to be common land in the centre [where there are now parking controls]. Now the area around another park is controlled. This has made things more difficult for New Travellers and they go to places where Gypsies would normally go. People are moved around from pillar to post. The places have to be recognised and accepted.

Superintendent: There has to be some sort of challenge to Westborough Council. I can't do this. It's not my job.

Janice FGT: I have asked [the council] if they did a Race Impact Assessment on the bunding, but they didn't answer. I thought they had to; but they said they didn't. Do they have to do one? This puts a lot of pressure on other places. If they can't go there, they move nearer the centre (PGTG: Jan. 21 2009).

8.3.7. Language, literacy and education

The exchange of views in these meetings was generally very open. Both police and Gypsies and Travellers expressed their opinions freely. There was more paper work at these meetings than at the WNTF, and this was referred to during the meeting. As people were seated around a table, I had expected to be able to identify whether people could read the papers, but it was not easy. On one occasion I noted that only two Gypsies had their papers on the table. The interview with Martin in Chapter 7 described his difficulties. At the same July meeting, those present were asked to comment on a "Myth Busting" leaflet, the text of which they had previously discussed and agreed. However, there were very different views on the final product which had sentences like "*Who are they? Do they all steal?*" "*Aren't they all dirty?*" on the cover, and the rebuttals inside. My field notes (July 22 2009) state:

The women seemed to like it more than the men, but I am not sure they could read the words rather than just gain a general impression from the attractive colouring and layout as I saw Janice (from FGT) reading out the words to Caroline AFTER she had said she liked it. The Superintendent did not take on board the literacy issue here.

In relation to information leaflets about different services available to Gypsies and Travellers, a Gypsy pointed out that information was of little assistance to Gypsies and Travellers who couldn't read.

However, among the senior officers present there seemed to be a general awareness that poor reading skills caused Travellers difficulties, when they were charged with an offence or when a group on an unauthorised encampment was asked to move. The superintendent pointed out that "*Families should be served with a 61 notice so they can see it. If they can't read, [they should] have it read to them*" (PGTG: Jan. 21 2010).

The Ambulance Service was trying to recruit Gypsies and Travellers and the officer stated that a lack of qualifications such as GCSE would disadvantage people even if they could read and write, but they could address this by taking the numeracy test on line, or seeking educational support from a community group.

As stated, the Rescue Services were planning on-site training and the Police and the Fire Services were collaborating to give young drivers the opportunity of computer simulation to practice for driving tests.

Language and the protocol of meetings were more problematic than technical reading skills. No one complained that they had not understood the presentations or the discussion, but some rarely contributed and others constantly interrupted. The language and discourse in particular contexts was raised as an issue. A Gypsy in the group pointed out that language was a barrier to Gypsies' lack of understanding of the custodial processes and the legal system. (Mins: Jan. 21 2009). Discussing the minutes a Gypsy asked:

Gypsy: What if somebody doesn't understand the processing system and then half an hour later someone comes to help them and they see what they said was wrong [as they couldn't read their statement]?

Police: Can be changed.

Gypsy: With an interpreter? We have to get them.

*Jack: We are talking about a cultural interpreter not a language interpreter.
(PGTG: April 28 2009).*

Legal and bureaucratic discourse is difficult for most people; as Harvey pointed out when referring to the difference between non-criminal racism and racism as a criminal offence, *"I'm educated, and I can't understand it (PGTG: Jan. 20 2010).*

8.3.8. Effectiveness of the PGTG

The Gypsies and Travellers who attended the meetings appeared to appreciate the efforts of the police to communicate and listen to them and there was evidence of improvement. For example, when evictions had to take place, junior officers were instructed not to move Gypsies and Travellers immediately but to allow them time to organise and move the following day. The practice of red flagging sites decreased. After initial difficulties, Harvey

and officers sorted out policing arrangements for his aunt's funeral. Jack said he would now call the police if he was being threatened. Harvey agreed with Jack saying:

Because of my life I don't think most of us would pick up the phone and complain. We might take it into our own hands or get on with it. If I had an argument with Will and he turned up with a load of men, we wouldn't call the police. We would either deal with them or go off. But it's down to people like ourselves to persuade our people to report crimes. It's about building trust. It will take time to build up trust (PGTG: July 22 2009).

Even though his family, who lived on a site, was making a complaint against the police for harassment, Harvey said, *"I have faith in what the police are trying to do"*. Jack perhaps gave the final accolade *"Due to these meetings, there is some transparency between Gypsy Travellers and police, but not with councils."*

8.4. WNTF and PGTG: Similarities, Dissimilarities and Agency

WNTF and the PGTG both aimed at fostering dialogue and improving relations but Gypsies and Travellers perceived them very differently. In analysing the reasons for the differences I drew on Przeworski and Teune's (1970) model of "most similar and most different" which though designed as a theoretical framework for comparing communities, provided a useful framework for analysing the discourse and interaction in these two forums.

Table 8.2: Forum and advisory group: similarities and dissimilarities

Similarities

	WNTF	PGTG
	Some Gypsies and Travellers	Some Gypsies and Travellers
1	Had poor reading skills.	Had poor reading skills.
2	Had considerable experience of formal meetings, others had none.	Had considerable experience of formal meetings, others had none.
3	Expressed their views clearly and appropriately.	Expressed their views clearly and appropriately.
4	Interrupted the speakers, spoke inappropriately and introduced personal issues into the discussion.	Interrupted the speakers, spoke inappropriately and introduced personal issues into the discussion.
5	A good pre-meeting lunch was provided.	A good pre-meeting lunch was provided.

Dissimilarities

	WNTF	PGTG
1	Practical arrangements, large room rows of chairs.	Practical arrangements – smaller room, seated round a table.

2	Thirty to forty people regularly attended the meetings.	The maximum number of people attending was twenty-one, later limited to fifteen.
3	Gypsies and Travellers were in the minority – less than 25% of attendees.	Gypsies and Travellers were over 50 % of those attending.
4	Travel expenses were paid.	Travel expenses and a good attendance allowance were paid.
5	Little written material presented, but government reports available.	Considerable written material presented but few government reports.
6	On some occasions the non-Gypsy chairs appeared to lack confidence.	The chair and the police superintendent appeared in control at all times.
7	Some Gypsies and Travellers did not think the presentations relevant to their lives.	Presentations addressed issues of direct relevance to their lives.
8	Personal issues ignored.	Personal issues heard and taken up outside the meeting.
9	Gypsies and Travellers could perceive little practical outcome from the meetings.	Actions to be undertaken were identified at the meetings and the result reported on at the next meeting.
10	No joint action undertaken.	Joint action in training, working groups on specific issues and planning a cultural event.

There were similarities in the two meetings, but a greater number of dissimilarities and I discuss the impact of these on the outcomes below.

8.4.1. Practical arrangements

The meeting rooms were laid out in different ways. The WNTF room arrangements intimated a formal and hierarchical setting with rows of chairs facing a top table – a ‘them and us’ situation. Sitting around a table at the PGTG suggested a democratic discussion among partners seeking to work together.

The WNTF paid Gypsies and Travellers travel expenses; the PGTG paid a good attendance allowance as well as travel expenses which compensated for loss of earnings and made it financially worthwhile for Gypsies and Travellers to attend the meetings.

8.4.2. Literacy and Language

There were technical and oral literacy issues in both meetings, but it was how these were addressed that appeared to make the difference. In both meetings, though more frequently in the WNTF, speakers were interrupted. In both meetings the majority of Gypsies and Travellers had difficulty with reading and writing. Even if they were able to decipher the words in the official reports they found some of the language difficult to understand. In both groups there were some who had minimal reading skills, for whom

written reports, including the minutes, were irrelevant. At both meetings there were occasions when technical difficulties with reading and writing were recognised and accommodated, and in both there were occasions when this was overlooked or forgotten.

In both, one Gypsy had had a university education, could read and understand all documents and expressed himself clearly and appropriately. One of these chaired the PGTG and the other eventually chaired the WNTF. In both groups there was at least one older Gypsy who had learnt to read and write in the army and knew the procedures having attended other formal meetings. One at the WNTF in particular was adept at managing the formalities and the discourse.

The WNTF provided a range of government documents including the documents on developing and managing sites, the ANA survey and the results of the consultation. The PGTG provided reports in relation to agenda items, few government documents, but a Metropolitan Police Service document on working with the Travelling community. In both meetings, reference was rarely made to the actual text which was usually mediated through talk.

In both meetings, the chairs, including the Gypsy chairs sometimes had difficulty controlling the meetings. As one Gypsy said:

When you put a load of Travellers together, they all talk at once – one man raises his voice, and the others get louder and louder, and whose voice gets loudest is heard. Some people find this threatening (Jamie: May 2008).

In both meetings, the language of bureaucracy was an issue. In the PGTG this was raised in relation to police processes rather than the language of the actual meetings, while at WNTF the language used in the meetings was challenged:

The language we sometimes use; those that know the language are alright. We should really talk in more simple language, as though I am council and social services trained and can understand it, others can't (WNTF: Oct. 16 2008).

At the PGTG meetings, the vice-chair, a police officer, dealt with interruptions that raised serious personal issues by arranging for these to be dealt with outside the meeting. This diffused the situation and assured the speaker that his or her concerns had been heard.

The police have a history of interaction with Gypsies and Travellers, unlike councillors of whom very few have met a Gypsy or Traveller. One senior police officer commented that both the police and Gypsies and Travellers knew what it was to be hated by the general public. Previous interaction may have been confrontational but there was a shared knowledge and a shared history.

8.4.3. Elements of partnership

The comments of Gypsies and Travellers suggested they felt the police were working with them. For example, they were asked to suggest issues for presentation and discussion. This ensured the subjects were relevant and were those which most concerned Gypsies and Travellers, whereas at the WNTF the presentations were chosen by the Liaison Officer and therefore not always of greatest concern to Gypsies and Travellers. It took many angry exchanges before planning was discussed at WNTF.

Establishing working parties to examine specific issues such as custody and cash seizures, planning the training and the GRTHM cultural event, as well as producing a DVD, suggested a working partnership between Gypsies and Travellers and the police. No similar joint activities were apparent in the WNTF.

The apparent lack of outcomes from the WNTF in relation to issues of concern to Gypsies and Travellers further exacerbated the tensions. However, it should be emphasised that the council officers worked hard to establish and administer the WNTF. The councillors who attended wished to improve the situation, whether they considered Gypsies and Travellers a "problem" to be solved, or desired to improve the council's service to them.

The police had made a deliberate decision to listen and to hear the Gypsies' and Travellers' concerns. The reason for the different perceptions may lie in the underlying concepts behind the initial formation of the forums. The WNTF was initially conceived as a

forum to “manage” a situation caused by a particular group of people. Though the original remit was subsequently reversed, this still has to be tested. The PGTG was conceived as one of several strategies to improve the relations between the police and ethnic minorities, in this case Gypsies and Travellers. The difference in conceptualisation impacted significantly on implementation. This difference led to listening on the part of the police but avoidance among councillors and officers when difficult issues were raised.

In the past, dialogue was virtually absent from any political forum and absent from the three authorities in this research. The ability of Gypsies and Travellers to engage and to challenge effectively was related to ability to use the secondary Discourses of institutions as well as to knowledge of the world beyond their immediate community, whether gained through formal education or “life” experience. In the forums the Gypsies and Travellers often failed to detach themselves from the immediacy of their situation and were unable to adopt the apparently neutral and detached mode of communication required by the bureaucratic Discourse.

This chapter has presented my observations on the communicative practices and d/Discourses evident in the dialogue and interaction between Gypsies and Travellers and public officials in two consultative forums. Though textual literacy would have been an advantage to the Gypsies and Travellers attending, knowledge of, and the ability to use, the appropriate Discourses were more important. I suggest differences in the forums were due to different approaches adopted by the organisers which related to the purposes for which the forums were established.

The importance of d/Discourse above facility with text in dialogue and debate outside the immediate community challenges the emphasis on textual literacy in provision for adults and raises important questions. The next chapter considers these issues and the questions which guided my research – Gypsies’ and Travellers’ perceptions and use of literacy and whether improved literacy would contribute to agency or to assimilation into the dominant sedentary community.

Chapter 9. Access, Agency, Assimilation

The previous chapter focused on language and Discourse and noted Gypsies' and Travellers' difficulties in communicating effectively with authorities in two forums. This chapter suggests that the rich data presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 provide additional insights into theories of literacy and theories of d/Discourse. In adopting a position informed by postmodernist perspectives this research allows us to know something about Gypsies, Travellers and literacy without claiming to know everything (Denzin and Lincoln 2003:508). As outlined in Chapter 3 literacy, the language and discourse of minority communities have been comprehensively studied in many contexts in many parts of the world, yet research into Gypsies' and Travellers' perceptions and use of literacy as a communicative practice is under researched. Their opportunities for adult literacy and education and training have not previously been examined, nor have the current models of literacy, as described in Chapter 3, been considered in relation to their literacy requirements. This chapter presents the findings of my research and suggests these increase our knowledge and understanding of the complex debates about literacy and discourse at both an empirical and a theoretical level.

I start by re-presenting the questions which guided my enquiry, the research methods I used for data collection and the theories which guided my analysis. My three questions were:

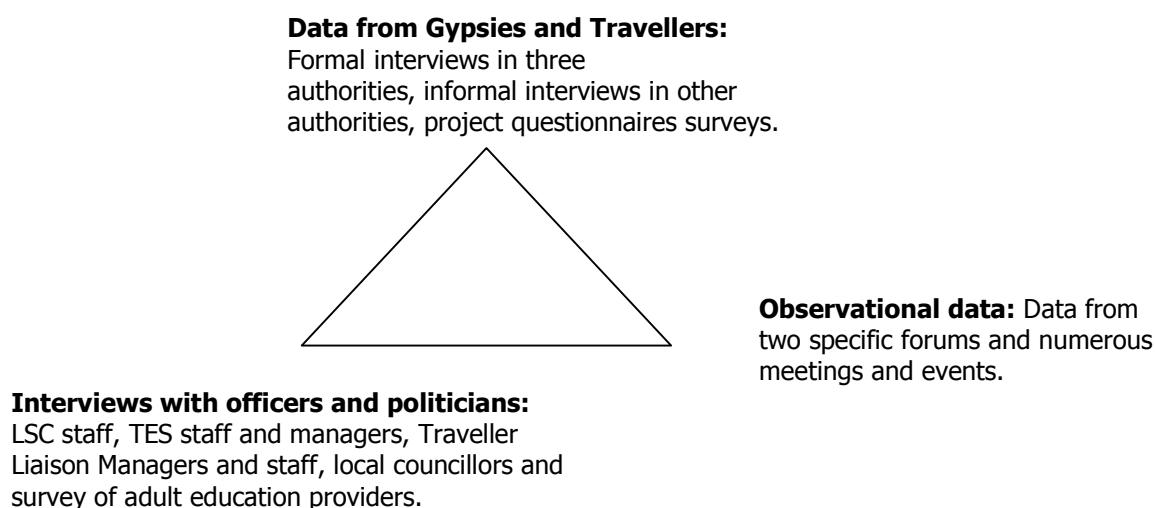
1. What is the extent of adult education and literacy provision provided for and accessed by Gypsies?
 - i. What social and political factors influence this?
 - ii. What factors impede or support Gypsies and Travellers engaging in literacy and adult education provision?
2. How does literacy impact on Gypsies' and Travellers' ability to engage individually and collectively with authorities?

3. Do literacy and education lead to greater agency in relation to determining their future or to a potential loss of Gypsy or Traveller identity and assimilation into the dominant mainstream culture?

In exploring these questions using ethnographic methods, I separately identified textual and oral communicative practices, literacy and language, noting the impact of different discourses on interactions with authority. The theories I used in analysing these issues are outlined in Chapter 3. Literacy is defined in different ways in the dictionary and I linked the different definitions of literacy to different concepts and models of literacy provision - literacy as skills, literacy as tasks, situated literacies and critical literacies - and I now consider whether these models address Gypsies' and Travellers' literacy requirements.

The data collected through interviews with Gypsies and Travellers, public officials and local politicians, a survey of adult education providers, observation of the forum, the advisory group and sundry national and local meetings, provided rich data on the place of literacy in the lives of Gypsies and Travellers. Within constructivist research, the methodology I adopted, triangulation is one method of enabling multiple perspectives to be compared and space created to construct meaning from the data.

Fig 9.1. Triangulated data



I present my findings in relation to the three questions. I first discuss Gypsies' and Travellers' perceptions of the place of textual literacy in their lives, their access as adults

to culturally relevant literacy learning opportunities, and how the negative identity for Gypsies and Travellers constructed by and maintained in the discourses of the sedentary community impacts socially and politically on provision of and access to adult education. I then examine how primary discourses and secondary Discourses affect Gypsies' and Travellers' agency and interaction with public officials, consider strategies of engagement and critique current models of literacy provision in relation to agency and assimilation. The next section presents the contribution of this study to our knowledge of Gypsies' and Travellers' engagement with literacy and to theories of literacy and d/Discourse. Following sections acknowledge the limitations of the research, suggest areas for further research and reflect on the future.

9.1. Requirement for textual literacy

The overarching purpose which framed my three questions was an exploration of literacy in Gypsies' and Travellers' lives, their perceptions of its importance and the ways it affected them. Data from the interviews in Chapter 7 showed that the majority of Gypsies and Travellers interviewed had poor textual literacy skills. Those over thirty-five with good literacy skills had either completed formal education or been taught in the army. Others had been helped by friends or family to read enough to "get by". Many had difficulty understanding the language and secondary Discourse of bureaucracy and this hindered their ability to communicate effectively with public officials.

Many Gypsies and Travellers I interviewed avoided talking about literacy and deflected the conversation when I raised it. They considered other issues more important. However, the interviewees in the four selected examples were prepared to discuss literacy and education. My findings are based on these and thirty-two wide-ranging interviews, observations at the forums and the interviews with officers, which together identified a range of text mediated situations where it would be advantageous, if not essential for the individual concerned to have the ability to read and write. Other situations might be handled effectively with assistance.

Table 9.1 Situations requiring textual literacy

	Reading essential	Reading very desirable	Help from others
Police	Making a statement, Notices of eviction, custody.	Arrangements for fairs and festivals.	
Accommodation	Planning law.	Planning appeals.	
	Record of rent paid.	Challenging eviction.	
	Confirmation of pitch.	Negotiating for a pitch.	
Education	Registering child in school, information from school.	Supporting early years and school education.	Choosing schools.
Health	Registering with doctor and dentist, personal health records.	Reading medicine bottles and dosages.	
Work	Receipts, bills, skills training in college.	Application for licenses.	VAT, Tax returns.
Forums/Advisory Groups	Notices of meetings.	Committee papers.	
Gypsy /Travellers Associations	Organising accounts, recording minutes.	Applying for grants.	Writing reports.
General /personal		Emails, passport application, personal correspondence.	Travelling.

In most situations, where text-based literacy was perceived as desirable, help was sought from family or friends who could read, but some situations, for example, challenging eviction notices, were more complex. Often there appeared to be no-one available with sufficient literacy skills to challenge an eviction, or register an appeal at court. The interviews also suggested it was easier to find someone to assist with reading than to assist with writing; many Gypsies and Travellers interviewed and observed had some reading ability, but very little writing ability. I did not identify any occasions of “scribing” - paying another person to undertake the required writing.

Personal activities related to reading involved interaction with the legal system, work-related activities outside the Gypsy and Traveller community, personal documentation such as passport applications, or the reading required in formal meetings. Siobhan commented that she required the ability to read in order to work as a cashier. A young man could not qualify as a plumber without completing a literacy course to the required standard.

Advocates of NLS argue that reading and writing of text can be a collective and collaborative activity and they provide examples of instances where this has achieved the desired outcomes (Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Kalman, 1999; Maddox, 2001) and this was evident in some of the situations I observed. In addition, many of the activities involving writing cited in Table 9.1 were undertaken collaboratively and a Northshire officer noted that children with experience of schooling were sometimes called upon to assist their parents. Additionally as Siobhan explained, Gypsies and Travellers would ask verbally for information which others might acquire from printed materials such as maps or notice boards.

9.1.1. Reading

On many occasions, those I observed appeared to scan and derive meaning from a text, but were not able to read it "word for word". As stated in Chapter 9, several Gypsies and Travellers judged a leaflet produced by the police by its appearance and indicated their approval, but retracted this later when the text was read out. At another PGTG meeting Martin read the words in a document incorrectly and this limited his inability to engage in further discussion on the subject.

The interview with a TES manager, statements on family members' difficulties made at conferences and observation of the high levels of intelligence of some interviewees who had tried, but had not succeeded, in learning to read and write, suggest the possibility of a greater incidence of dyslexia - particular and specific difficulties with reading and writing - among Gypsies and Travellers than among many communities. Muller and Szabo's analysis of their literacy class for Sinti students in Bremen, which aimed to encourage students to develop "their own view on important social issues", noted that they learned the text by heart but "almost nobody could co-ordinate the letter and the corresponding sound" (Muller and Szabo, 2000:213- 214).

9.1.2. Writing

Gypsies and Travellers with some reading ability expressed concern over spelling and writing. I received no written correspondence from Gypsies or Travellers during my research. I received a few emails from those I knew well; though they were clear and

easy to understand, they were very short and contained spelling errors which would be deemed unacceptable in a work situation, and if received by a public official, would be likely to substantiate views of Gypsies and Travellers as “illiterate” and therefore “ignorant”. This was a key issue, as it limited their ability to present written information in presenting a case for a pitch, for challenging eviction and for appealing planning decisions.

9.1.3. Perceptions of literacy

Despite the need for textual literacy required for the tasks identified above, it became apparent that, unlike many other communities, Gypsies’ and Travellers’ self-perception, confidence and status in the community did not depend on the ability to read and write. They did not consider their lack of reading and writing skills indicated a lack of intelligence, thus echoing the challenge to the literate / non-literate divide made by many researchers (Labov, 1973, 1988; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 1988, 1993; Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Papen, 2005).

The Gypsies and Travellers viewed “literacy” and “education” as separate concepts, and despite correlating “knowing the words” with being educated, did not correlate lack of formal schooling with being “uneducated”, as they were “educated in the world”. The data showed that an understanding of, and facility with text, was required primarily for interaction and communication with officials in the public sector in relation to accommodation, health and children’s education, the law and to a lesser extent in relation to work. It was not important for intra or inter-Gypsy and Traveller communication.

Doris was the only Gypsy interviewed who regarded reading as a pleasure. Martin and Gary, who had both sought assistance with written materials, expressed no interest in improving their reading. They were not exceptional in perceiving other aspects of their lives either more important or more interesting. They did not equate the ability to read and write with modernity, self-confidence and self-actualisation. This lack of importance attached to the ability to read and write can be considered uncommon in advanced industrial countries, where literacy skills are usually valued highly, equated with intelligence and a prerequisite for almost any employment and it also challenges the dominant discourse of development.

Gypsies and Travellers recognised that literacy skills are partial and they gave greater value to the practical skills acquired through “communal apprenticeship” as for generations these had given them an impressive ability to adapt to changing circumstances (Hancock 2000). They were aware of the strength of their intellectual abilities and practical skills which enabled them to operate in a complex, highly industrialised society. As Siobhan commented, “*We may not be educated in the reading, but we are educated in the world,*” and as Martin said “*in the school of life*”.

9.2. Literacy provision for adults

In answer to my first question on the extent of adult education and literacy provision for adult Gypsies and Travellers, my research revealed that there was no targeted literacy provision in the three authorities and very little elsewhere. Those I interviewed had almost no knowledge of mainstream provision.

The educational situation for Gypsy and Traveller children in the three authorities, as described in Chapter 5, paralleled that of Gypsy and Traveller children nationally, as outlined in Chapter 1. Gypsies’ and Travellers’ lack of achievement in formal education and their gradual exclusion from the learning process were highlighted by the analytical frameworks developed by CREATE, which, through framed in the dominant discourse of development, indicated similarities in the experiences of Gypsies and Travellers to those of children in low income countries. Additionally Gypsy and Traveller parents and grandparents expressed concern for their children’s psychological security, physical, and sexual safety in school which supports findings from previous research (Parry, 2004; Derrington and Kendall, 2004; Bhopal and Myers, 2008).

The current lack of suitable opportunities for adults again mirrors similarities with low income countries as the model below, adapted from CREATE, demonstrates. The levels of provision for adults are inconsistent, curricula are unresponsive and pre-determined cultural factors are frequently not acknowledged, financial resources are scarce and there is hostility to certain groups, in this case Gypsies and Travellers.

Table 9.2 Provision for adults

	Components (adapted from CREATE)	Application of components to Gypsies and Travellers in England
1	Inconsistent levels of provision for adults.	Minimal provision in England focused on adult Gypsies and Travellers.
2	Rarely a statutory priority.	Not mentioned in policy documents.
3	Low levels of finance.	No specific finance.
4	Large government programmes with pre-determined curriculum.	Mainstream national curriculum focused on employment related skills.
5	Short term funding for non government programmes.	Government programme for Gypsies and Travellers in Ireland, but not in England.
6	Few contexts related culturally situated programmes.	Very few culturally situated programmes.
7	Shortage of suitable learning locations.	Few community facilities on sites.
8	Shortage of learning materials.	Some suitable learning materials in Ireland, none in England.
9	Culture not acknowledged in the learning teaching situation.	No acknowledgement of the culture in mainstream provision, acknowledged in the very few focused programmes.
10	Little control over the curriculum content.	Little control over curriculum content.
11	Few Family Literacy programmes.	One Family Literacy programme in England.
12	Prejudice against certain groups including nomadic pastoralists in some countries.	Hostility and prejudice towards Gypsies and Travellers in England.

The survey of adult education providers in the three authorities revealed no targeted literacy provision for Gypsies and Travellers, little knowledge of the community and minimal interest. Gypsies and Travellers were virtually absent in government policies on adult literacy and education (cf. Chapter 6), despite their low levels of school achievement and a stated policy to serve minority ethnic communities. This lack of policy in England was matched by a lack of accessible provision.

The interviews and the surveys showed that Gypsies and Travellers were unaware of available literacy provision and expressed little interest in attending. The adult education organisations surveyed did not record Gypsy and Traveller ethnicity, were not required to do so, and therefore had no knowledge of whether any Gypsies and Travellers attended. None of the organisations had applied for, or had plans to access available funding to encourage their attendance. This contrasted with the situation in the Irish Republic where

there was a considerable amount of well attended literacy provision targeted at Gypsies and Travellers.

The few respondents, who wanted to learn to read, chose not to attend mainstream provision; Siobhan was determined but she taught herself in preference to attending a class, as have others elsewhere (Nabi et al., 2009). Siobhan was not embarrassed about her inability to read, but feared prejudice from fellow students if they discovered she was a Traveller.

9.2.1. Political and social factors affecting provision

The situation highlighted in Table 9.2 and the limited success of current efforts to overcome the difficulties of access and low achievement, plus the absence of adult education provision, suggests a complex situation which requires unravelling. There was evidence that the discourse of the sedentary community both constructed and maintained a negative image of Gypsies and Travellers and, in Sen's (1999) term, considered them "culturally alien". This discourse and distancing led to a lack of concern at all levels apart from those working directly with, or in support of, Gypsy and Traveller communities. Most settled people, or politicians have never met or talked to a Gypsy or vice versa. As a councillor said, *"People are afraid of what they don't know and fear those who appear to live by different rules to themselves"* (Westborough councillor: June 2010).

As Fairclough (2003:67) stated, "Language ... controls, constructs, positions" and reproduces society. In Chapter 5, I gave specific examples of the discourses of the public and the secondary Discourses of officials and politicians in the three authorities which demonstrated negative attitudes towards Gypsies and Travellers. Local politicians in Westborough strongly denied their remarks were prejudicial. A frequent comment in relation to planning laws and the rejection of Gypsy and Traveller applications was the need for "fairness to both communities". As previously stated, Van Dijk (1999:543) maintains that the denial of racism in informal conversation and in public secondary Discourses is a form of positive group self-preservation.

As explained in Chapter 3, discourse – ways of speaking and behaving in different communities - are not related to speech alone. Gee (1996:32) states that “historically and socially defined discourses, or Discourses, speak to each other through individuals, their history, culture and physical deportment”. Bourdieu (1991:13) term this physically as “hexis”, a physical embodiment of culture and class “a way of standing, of speaking and laughing ...The body is the site of incorporated history”.

Even without oral interaction, this “hexis” applies to Gypsies and Travellers, on occasion setting them apart from the mainstream and explains why Gary seemed “different” sitting in the community centre, why a young man entering a room to discuss Gypsy and Traveller History Month could be immediately identified as “different” and why Siobhan would not attend mainstream literacy classes. In addition, certain characteristics or behaviour unfamiliar to Gaujos can cause anxiety and be viewed as threatening even when there is no obvious cause, as was evident at the meeting on the unofficial encampment in Westborough described in Chapter 5.

The level of general hostility and prejudice in the discourse of the sedentary community openly expressed at all levels of society including the secondary Discourse of politicians, impacted on national and local democratic decision making processes, not only on the development of site accommodation in the three authorities, but also on health, social services and education. While media headlines maintain and reinforce attitudes, the casual remark feeds into public perception and maintains the construction of negative identity.

As stated in Chapter 3, the source or rationale for these attitudes is difficult to determine, Coxhead (2004) suggests that the subconscious motive may be elimination and the image of the burning cardboard caravan gives some credence to this, as do the theories of McVeigh (1997), Ni Shuinear (1997), Monbiot (2003) and Bhopal and Myers (2008). Foucault (Gordon, 1980) maintains that these perceptions, formed by the dominant members of society, are transmitted through institutions in subtle and often unrecognised forms and, I suggest, contribute to the lack of educational opportunities for adult Gypsies and Travellers.

9.3. Discourse and Agency

My second research question was the role of literacy and language in the development of Gypsy and Traveller agency and their ability to influence the decisions that affect their lives. The data from the interviews in Chapter 7, and observation of the WNTF and the PGTG in Chapter 8, revealed that language was perceived as more important than the ability to read. As Gary said when interviewed, "*It's being able to put what you want to say in the right words. It's knowing the words,*" and Martin's reason for asking for my assistance was because "*You know the words*". Both Martin and Gary realised they did not know the language and procedures, the secondary Discourse, required to communicate effectively with public officials.

Most of the tasks in Table 9.2, which required the ability to read, concerned different public authorities, the police, local authorities, health and education sectors, but these also required considerable linguistic ability and a knowledge of their particular secondary Discourses (Gee 1996).

9.3.1. Primary and secondary Discourses

To understand Gary and Martin's dilemma and the frustration of many Gypsies and Travellers who attended the WNTF, I drew on theories of language development (Bernstein, 1971; Labov, 1973; Bourdieu, 1991) and theories of primary and secondary Discourses (Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1997) as explained in Chapter 3. They argue that people in minority communities are socialised culturally and historically into different values, different ways of "seeing the world" and different communicative, language and literacy practices. They maintain that experience of schooling, whether negative or positive, assists communication with those outside the immediate cultural context of family and community. In primary discourses language, vocabulary and structure are used within the context and the shared understanding and experience of the community while the secondary Discourses, predominantly acquired in school, do not rely on shared understandings and the form of expression is neutral and detached from the immediate context. The form of expression is not inadequate or inferior, but in particular situations, does not carry the same weight as the secondary Discourse. Furthermore the discourse

identifies the place of the speaker in the social hierarchy, affects how they are received and the weight their words carry (Honey, 1988; Bourdieu, 1991).

The difference in the primary discourse of the Gypsies and Travellers and the secondary Discourse of councillors and officers in the WNTF was apparent. One of the difficulties experienced by the Gypsies and Travellers, as noted in Chapter 8, was the generalisation and detachment of the secondary Discourse. Will, an experienced Gypsy, had attended many meetings, but, like others, had not mastered the techniques of abstract and generalised secondary Discourse and as a result was frequently ignored. The frustration the Gypsies and Travellers experienced in the WNTF was evident. The detachment of the secondary Discourse and related procedural rules effectively hindered their ability to raise, debate and influence the issues that most concerned them.

9.3.2. Translation and mediation

The difficulties Gypsies and Travellers experienced in understanding the secondary Discourse on occasion led to mediation or "translation". When an official's language was "translated" by a Gypsy who could operate in both the community's primary discourse and the secondary Discourse of the WNTF, Harvey, the Gypsy chair, was careful to state that the language used by the Gypsies was not inferior to that used by the officials, but different (Gee 1996).

As detailed in Chapter 8, translation and mediation occurred on a number of occasions in the WNTF. When Archie rephrased an officer's words, a Gypsy responded by saying "*Now you have said it, I understand what he said*". When Gypsies' understanding of police custody procedures was discussed in the PGTG, Jack, the Gypsy chairing the meeting, referred to the need for a cultural interpreter. The language was "translated" from one community-based code into a secondary code, from a primary discourse to a secondary Discourse. In both instances the need to mediate the language of authority was recognised by the Gypsies and Travellers.

9. 3.3. Language and power

Gee (1996:32) identified the salient features of secondary Discourse as inherently ideological involving accepted values and viewpoints. He argued that secondary Discourses, as defined positions for speaking and behaving, are intimately related to the distribution of power.

This disjuncture of discourses and the way bureaucratic structures operate to control and silence Gypsies' and Travellers' political and operational demands were particularly evident in the WNTF. The Gypsies and Travellers gradually became aware that the decision making power determining their lives lay not within, but outside the forum. They realised that the councillors and officers with whom they interacted, some of whom genuinely wanted to assist, were conduits of intangible power operating through a variety of institutional secondary Discourses and mechanisms (Foucault, 1972; Jones, 2000).

However the situation in the PGTG was different; the police appeared to have been delegated the decision making powers necessary to institute, or at least discuss, change. The physical arrangements for the PGTG suggested genuine consultation. The police showed interest in the culture and listened carefully to the views on policing expressed by the Gypsies and Travellers and as a result made several operational changes, for example, increasingly refusing requests to evict unauthorised encampments unless there was clear evidence of anti-social behaviour or obstruction.

9.3.4. Agency and engagement

As evidenced in Chapter 8, the rules and procedures of secondary Discourses, such as speaking in turn, addressing the argument in question and speaking dispassionately, were all difficult for the Gypsies and Travellers to adhere to. This was demonstrated by the constant interjections during presentations and when two Gypsies, with positive comments to contribute, were ignored when they interrupted inappropriately during the presentation by a university lecturer.

Their ability to use the secondary Discourse determined the extent to which their contributions were heard. One activist in particular, who was always able to make his

point, “filtered” aspects of the secondary Discourse into his primary discourse (Gee 1996:158). He often started with *“With respect Madam Chair”*. This respectful and slightly arcane formality signified to those present that he respected their authority and their right to allow, or to prevent, him from speaking. In this way, he was able to make quite radical and uncomfortable statements. On one occasion, he expressed his gratitude for being invited. When I interviewed him, he patted a large dictionary next to his typewriter and said:

That’s where my brains come from – a universal dictionary, that’s where my brains come from. There are lots of words when they come along with some of these things – I mean the circulars – and I am not too sure of a word, what it means, then I look it up in the dictionary (Bernie: Aug. 2008).

He understood the secondary Discourse of bureaucracy. He viewed literacy as a communicative practice, and a practice with particular modes of expression, rules and regulations which he learnt. He was heard while those who were unaware of the rules were often ignored or overruled.

Though on many occasions Gypsies and Travellers expressed their frustration at the WNTF and their disgust at *“just talk, talk, talk and nothing happens”*, they had no alternative but to persist and impress upon their audience their strength of feeling. During the period I participated in, and observed the WNTF, Gypsies and Travellers became more confident and more assertive in their demands, even though the structure and the Discourse of the forum was not modified to enable their participation to be more effective.

The importance of knowing the modalities of engagement and acquiring the ability to utilise secondary Discourses (Gee, 1996), as discussed in Chapter 3, was recognised by some and became one of the strategies of engagement. As Jamie said, *“We must be able to converse in a political manner to demand our rights”*.

Developing agency is perhaps Gypsies’ and Travellers’ most pressing need. As stated in Chapter 5, there is no cultural tradition of representation or political organisation, yet having remained and chosen to remain outside mainstream society for several centuries, changing economic circumstances and a range of pressures have resulted in some recognising the need to negotiate a discursive space.

The concept of primary and secondary Discourses and Bourdieu's (1991) theory of habitus, assist in explaining Gypsies' and Travellers' perceptions of education and literacy as unimportant and potentially inimical to their culture. The data from both the forums and individual contact with authorities evidenced the tension between the need to improve literacy and acquire the secondary Discourse and their fundamental view of the world and how to operate within it. The data from this thesis suggests the current models of literacy provision, described in Chapter 3, do not sufficiently address this dilemma and need to change to take account of these issues, as is discussed below.

9.4. Critiques of literacy provision

The empirical data indicated that textual literacy was not generally required for intra and inter-community communication amongst Gypsies and Travellers and that information and news was exchanged orally at annual events and family gatherings such as weddings and funerals and horse fairs. New technologies, incorporating visual images, such as the web and DVD's are increasingly used. However, when Gypsies and Travellers move outside their own communities, the data revealed that a greater range of literacy skills, textual and oral, would be advantageous and increase their agency particularly when communicating with public officials.

9.4.1. Four models of provision

In Chapter 3, I presented four models of literacy provision based on the different conceptualisations of literacy and I summarise these below. In the light of the empirical evidence presented in Chapters 7 and 8 and Gypsies' and Travellers' expressed literacy requirements and aspirations, as noted in Table 9.2 above, each of these models would meet some, but not all their literacy needs.

Table 9.3 Four models

Skills Model

A neutral autonomous set of skills, emphasising sound symbol relationship, decoding and encoding skills necessary in order to ascribing meaning.

<p>Tasks model</p> <p>Focuses on the ability to read and write the literacy required in everyday tasks in family and domestic circumstances such as health and schooling, and common bureaucratic tasks such as registering births, deaths and marriages. Relates to the immediate context but does not address cultural or identity issues.</p>
<p>NLS (situated literacies)</p> <p>Focuses on the culturally situated context and therefore the tasks for which literacy is required including the tasks identified above. This addresses issues of individual and cultural identity but the cognitive aspects tend to be minimised. Methods of operationalising the model need further emphasis.</p>
<p>Critical literacies</p> <p>Addresses power dimensions through analysis of the political and social situation and encourages "action for change". Some emphasis on the cognitive aspects of reading and writing and some attention to discourses as identified above.</p>

Research indicates that building on the knowledge and experience learners already possess results in effective teaching (Rogers, 1986, 1992; Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic 2000; Mace, 1992; Papen, 2005; Street, Rogers and Baker, 2006; McCaffery et al., 2007). Each of these models offers relevant learning opportunities but each has shortcomings in relation to the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

9.4.1.1. Skills model

The skills model would enable Gypsies and Travellers to learn the autonomous skills - sounds, symbols, phoneme/ grapheme relationships and the grammatical structure of written text. Though this individual cognitive model has been critiqued among others by Street (1984), Gee (1996), and Lankshear (1997), the ability to decode and encode is essential. If, as is suggested, there is a possibility that some Gypsies and Travellers may have particular difficulty with the sound / symbol relationship, reliance on this method alone is likely to prove unsuccessful and the context to which the word relates will be of crucial importance.

9.4.1.2. The tasks model

The tasks model would enable teachers of Gypsies and Travellers address the numerous domestic and work related tasks identified in Table 9.1. The few targeted literacy programmes appear to have adopted this model. The Cottingley programme in Derbyshire was concerned with the literacy required in the family context. The Stepping Stones

initiative of 2010 though small and short term, introduced work related literacy tasks. The Rescue Services in Northshire and Southshire offer an example of practical training serving immediate needs in which literacy can be embedded. In teaching herself to read, Siobhan was concerned to achieve the practical reading tasks required to work in a supermarket.

9.4.1.3. NLS and situated literacies

The emphasis on culture and context in the situated literacies model suggests that the NLS model of contextually situated literacy would be appropriate for Gypsies and Travellers. The use of ethnographic tools to determine the situated cultural context and the literacy events and practices of the Gypsy and Traveller community should ensure the content was relevant, as were some of the literacy programmes in Ireland described in Appendix 5. The production of meta-narratives, maintaining culture and identity over time to construct and record community and family identity (Belton, 2010) could be linked to literacy programmes as they have been for other groups in the UK and nomadic cultures elsewhere including the nomadic Fulani pastoralists and the Tuareg (Bergeret, 2000; Ezeomah et al., 2006). The cultural narratives are being reinforced by the interest in family histories and the production of memories, both recorded⁹⁴ and written⁹⁵ some of which are published by the Romani Traveller and Family Society⁹⁶.

The NLS model of literacy provision would assist in maintaining and valuing the culture and identity of Gypsies and Travellers and the importance of this should not be minimised, yet the model can be critiqued on two grounds – insufficient attention to the cognitive processes of reading and writing and to the dimensions of power. While meanings are determined by culture and context – “site” for example has a particular meaning in the Gypsy and Traveller cultural context – unless the individual letters can be encoded into a recognised word, the symbols have no meaning. NLS appears to overlook this when it minimises the cognitive process and focuses on the underlying features of language and communicative practice. Street (2001:20) contrasts the concept of “the basics” as the

⁹⁴ The Travellers' Tales DVD is a series of 17 digital stories created by Gypsy and Traveller communities accessed from www.grtleeds.co.uk on Oct. 10 2009.

⁹⁵ *Memories of the Marsh: A Traveller Life in Kent* by Betsy Stanley, Romany and Traveller Family History Society (1998).

⁹⁶ Accessed from http://www.genfair.co.uk/product_list.php?sid=101&page=22387 on June 20 2010.

"surface" features of language and literacy, such as "rules of grammar and rules of phoneme and grapheme relations" in England's National Literacy Strategy, with the NLS concept of "the basics" as "generative, deep structures that facilitate learning" and understanding. Brooks et al., (2007) argue the cognitive processes cannot be so readily dismissed. They have to be learnt, not as autonomous skills, but in the context of the particular cultural situation. I agree with Brooks that in order to learn to read and write successfully, the learner has to master these "surface" structures in order to reach the "deep" structures.

NLS proponents such as Gee (1996) and Lankshear (1997) recognise a key issue for Gypsies and Travellers - the power dimension inherent in all literacy learning. Gee (1996) argues that people from minority and non-dominant communities can become bi-discoursal, able to operate in their primary discourse and utilise the secondary Discourse when the occasion demands. As we saw in the examples in Chapter 8, Gypsies and Travellers agency would be enhanced by gaining the ability to communicate in both local and secondary Discourses, but learning secondary Discourses is not an NLS priority and currently not addressed in NLS literacy programmes.

The concept of situated literacies offers an important way forward in relation to situating literacy programmes in social and cultural contexts but does not meet the important language requirement identified by the Gypsies and Travellers.

9.4.1.4. Critical literacies

The NLS model of situated literacy has a tendency to focus on the present and the immediate community, rather than on extending understandings and abilities to communicate beyond the immediate boundaries. The concept of critical literacies or 'literacies for social transformation' encourages analysis of the political and societal situation in order to institute change (Freire and Macedo, 1987; Archer and Cottingham, 1996; Lankshear, 1997; Crowther et al., 2001). Chapter 3 provides examples of programmes such as REFLECT, developed by Archer and Cottingham (1996), in which the local social, political and economic situation is analysed through maps, matrices and diagrams from which the initial literacy vocabulary is drawn, but which also identify areas

for change. Gypsies and Travellers could utilise these methods to plan practical improvements to sites. Critical literacy programmes could perhaps also enable Gypsies and Travellers to “handle the inherently ideological dimension of literacy” and the role of literacy in the process of domination and control” (Crowther et al., 2001:4). An element in critical literacies and in REFLECT is the possibility of learners deciding for themselves which literacies would enable them to take greater control over their circumstances.

9.5. Literacy and political agency

Gypsies and Travellers strongly rejected the idea that they needed to be “developed”, but they wished to gain the language and literacy skills to challenge the law, engage in political dialogue and debate. The data showed their greatest need for textual literacy and oral fluency was in order to argue for permanent pitches, resist eviction and speak at formal meetings with politicians and public officials. These situations demand skills beyond that of knowing the text and knowledge beyond that residing in the immediate community. The political process involves strategic thinking, careful planning and knowledge of institutional Discourses. Political agency is linked to developing the capability of the community to critique, to analyse, to formulate new ways of thinking and to express ideas to a possibly hostile audience. A programme to support this might include training in public speaking, developing persuasive arguments, and learning the rules of engagement - when to speak and how to challenge those in power which literacy programmes, even critical literacy programmes, do not normally, but possibly could, include. Several of Gypsies and Travellers interviewed were beginning to develop some of these skills themselves.

The ability to speak effectively in the forums accords with Laitin’s (1977) view that the ability to speak the language of the state is essential for participation in the political process. The language of the state is, of course, the dominant secondary Discourse which can be acquired through formal schooling, but one question this thesis has raised is whether Gypsies and Travellers can do this without losing their primary discourse and cultural identity.

The way forward is unclear; Levinson (2007:27) quotes a Gypsy as stating that "*Literacy has a lot to do with gaining power.*" How this power is to be gained is subject to conflicting trajectories and cognitive dissonance. Despite playing an important advocacy role, Harvey was ambivalent about the importance of formal education and Jamie suggests two ostensibly contradictory, but in fact compatible strategies. On one hand, like several other leaders, he saw the future as developing a working relationship with the authorities and suggested that:

We can pool our knowledge and work with the councils and be in contact with them. If we all work together, us, local councillors and borough councils, so when you start [identifying land] you can have meetings with local people – so we can convince them (WNTF: June 29 2009).

Yet on the other hand, at a meeting of a National Gypsy organisation a month earlier he said that, "*We've got to fight this battle with the weapons of the enemy*" (Jamie, May 20 2009). The weapons were not specified but could be assumed to be the language and strategies of the dominant and this implied learning and utilising the secondary Discourse, despite his distrust of the potential impact on cultural identity. When suggesting "work with councils" he was addressing an audience in which public officials predominated; in the second he was addressing Gypsies and Travellers. He recognised the different spaces, different audiences, different identities and therefore different discourses. While Jamie's "battle" is ultimately about improvements in income, education, health and safe accommodation, he, like Martin, rejects the dominant patronising discourses of development and argues that the community must acquire the linguistic tools necessary to achieve their aims.

9.5.1. New technology

New technology is providing another tool to enhance political agency. There is evidence that new technology and the resulting rapid modes of communication are aiding the process of forming a Gypsy and Traveller collective voice through communication and dissemination of information on planning applications and potential evictions⁹⁷. Activities, events and evictions are videoed and circulated among themselves and to local and

⁹⁷ "Savvy chavvy" and "On Road Media" are web sites for young people

national media. The web is facilitating communication among the Roma internationally⁹⁸.

As Kress stated:

The broad move from the centuries long dominance of writing to the new dominance of the image, and on the other hand, the move from the dominance of the medium of the book to the dominance of the medium of the screen, is producing a revolution in the uses and effects of literacy and of associated means of representing and communicating at every level (Kress, 2003:1).

There is some evidence that these faster methods of communication are uniting the community and increasing their political power and agency at a global level.

9.6. Agency /assimilation

The aims of education are varied and the Gypsies and Travellers rightly perceive them to include socialisation, citizenship and possible assimilation. Though the Human Rights Act accepts the right to a "nomadic way of life", experience elsewhere in the world shows that when nomadic people lose their traditional culture, their societies experience serious difficulties and possible disintegration (Le Roux, 1999; Dyer, 2006). The issue of whether literacy and education bring about desired changes or lead to cultural assimilation brings the ideological focus into sharp relief. My final research question was to consider whether the acquisition of literacy would lead to Gypsy and Traveller agency or assimilation.

9.6.1. An "unfreedom"

Sen (1999) argues that denial of education is an "unfreedom" and that:

Press and political participation may be hindered by the inability to read newspapers or to communicate in writing to others involved in political activities (Sen 1999:259).

Both formal school education and adult literacy are theoretically available to Gypsies and Travellers but the data from this research and from other researchers (Derrington and Kendal, 2004; Levinson, 2007; Bhopal and Myers, 2008) demonstrates the physical and cultural problems Gypsies and Travellers experience accessing it.

⁹⁸ Rokker Radio in the UK provides news and information. In Argentina, a radio programme provides Roma international news and contacts

This lack of access, according to Sen (1999:16) results in Gypsies and Travellers being denied "the opportunity to take part in crucial decisions regarding public affairs" and is "a clear limitation of their freedoms in a democratic society". Unfortunately, although he clearly advocates the importance of literacy and education, he does not explain the nature of the education he is advocating, which, as both critics and supporters point out, can have a negative as well as a positive impact on girls and minority communities in many parts of the world (Unterhalter, 2008).

9.6.2. Education as control

In contrast to Sen's support for literacy and education, Bernstein, in his postscript to *Class, Codes and Control* stated that:

The school functions....as an instrument of social control regulating the behaviour of [the working class]..., their emotional sensitivities...and their modes of social relationship to what is considered acceptable to a section of society to which pupils often feel they do not belong (Bernstein, 1971:259).

Education and literacy have been vehicles for exerting state control, for exerting authority, for collecting taxes. For many Gypsies and Travellers non-participation in education contributed to avoiding this state control as did the absence of a fixed address and a verbal, rather than a written, economy. In relation to adult literacy, Street (1995) stated that no literacy programme is neutral; all education is ideological. Herein lies the dilemma: education may provide the ability to become bi-discoursal and to engage in the political process but it may lead to acculturation and assimilation.

Interview data from Gypsies and Travellers reflected the fear that education beyond the basics of reading and writing would lead to cultural dilution and "Gorgification" (Bowers, 2004:13). Many saw schooling as of little value and associated with "the erosion of more important knowledge gained at home" (Levinson, 2007:24). Many of those I interviewed regarded reading and writing as necessary, but feared that participation in education beyond the basics of reading and writing risked greater incorporation into the culture of the sedentary community. The lack of knowledge and cultural invisibility in the school curriculum was viewed by Gypsies and Travellers as a rejection not only of their language

and behaviour, but of their way of life. Such rejection can result in confusion or rejection of identity (Bernstein, 1971; Scollon, 1981; Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1997; Bruner, 1998). Harvey, George and others, stated that working alongside their fathers enabled young men to gain the knowledge required to earn a living through the practical process of induction different from the abstract learning required in school (Heath, 1983; Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1997; Rogers, 2000). Learning through the family taught skills and also transmitted the community's culture and understanding of the world.

Levinson (2007:32) states the antagonism to education more strongly:

Formal (school based) literacy was still viewed by many...as being potentially divisive, its very use signifying a degree of assimilation. At the extreme end...there persisted a mistrust of the written word itself, a *gadjo* code, both a symbol and potential weapon of an antagonistic external world. For some, there appeared to remain something taboo about the process, tools and materials of literacy.

Hancock (2000) and Levinson (2007) suggest that a conscious rejection of literacy may act to reinforce group cohesion, cultural identity and pride. Hancock (2000:20) asserts that for some Gypsies and Travellers retaining a non-literate tradition has become institutionalised "serving as a means of sustaining non-acculturation". In contrast Jamie while viewing literacy as the language of the enemy, asserted that learning to use this weapon maybe a necessity. Gee (1996) and Lankshear (1997) argue that the possibility of acculturation is counteracted by developing the ability to become bi-discoursal and to develop social and political awareness and meta-linguistic understanding.

In considering the education of nomadic pastoralists, Kratli (2000) stated that education was usually intended to transform the pastoralists into something else and those involved, policy makers, local officials and teachers, generally believed that nomads had to be 'saved' from their way of life. The similarity between this view and the angry rejection by Martin, an Irish Traveller, of the motives of a voluntary sector worker in England as "*wanting to save us from ourselves*" demonstrates the conceptual and theoretical framework in which education for minority cultures, in this case cultures with a tradition of travelling, are framed across the world.

The situation among nomadic pastoralists described by Kratli (2000) has similarities to the situation of Gypsies and Travellers in England – a rift between the culture of the school and the culture of the community leading, in the case of Gypsies and Travellers, to a fear of assimilation and resistance by the community (Bernstein, 1971; Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1997).

Over thirty years ago Worrall (1979:3) described education as a site of conflict between the dominant settled community and Gypsies and Travellers:

Education within this context of often acute social conflict cannot but reflect and take account of the broader social tensions, and indeed cannot avoid playing a role within that conflict. Education provision in its nature and in the style of its execution has a direct bearing upon the conflict, tending to either further undermine the Travellers' morale, and above all their possibilities of retaining their economic integrity, or it will serve to enhance the Gypsies' power to remain their own masters. There is no such thing as a "neutral" education.

Each of the models of literacy provision, described above, can address some of Gypsies' and Travellers' literacy requirements, but none address the priority they identified, that of language and discourse. Different requirements require different programmes. A culturally sensitive programme which provides opportunities to become bi-discoursal might assist in developing greater Gypsy and Traveller agency whereas unsituated, culturally dismissive literacy provision might destroy what Gypsies and Travellers seek to preserve.

9.6.3. Choices

By engaging in education Gypsies and Travellers could face a double loss by losing their language and culture through cultural assimilation while at the same time failing to achieve educationally. This tension between on the one hand, the need to communicate effectively in new contexts and on the other, the possibility of acculturation through formal education, is one of the key findings of this thesis and the basis for any proposals for action following from the research and theory described here.

Different societies will come to different conclusions. In both high and low income countries different communities and individuals have different requirements for literacy according to their social, political and economic circumstances.

Sen (1999:241) maintains:

The demise of the old ways can cause anguish, and a deep sense of loss...It is up to the society to decide to determine what, if anything, it wants to do to preserve old forms of living, perhaps even at significant economic costit is a question of balancing the costs of such preservation with the value that society attaches to the objects and the lifestyles preserved.

Each society must decide its own future. Each situation is different, culturally, economically and politically. Some will see education as the route to survival and future prosperity, others will shun it. In some situations adult literacy may contribute to disempowerment, in others it may assist agency. This research highlights the difficult choices Gypsies and Travellers have to make.

9.7. Contribution to knowledge

My research on the perceptions and uses of literacy among Gypsies and Travellers offers new insights into these complex tensions and contradictions at both an empirical and a theoretical level. Several authors such as Dyer (2008), who take a nuanced view of the different aspirations of different communities, critique the dominant discourses of development and literacy. Dyer's (2008) work with the transhumant pastoralist Rabaris and this research undertaken with a culturally different, but also historically "travelling" community, both challenge standard categorisations and demonstrate the importance of recognising other versions and perspectives.

This research exploring the perceptions and use of literacy among Gypsies and Travellers contributes to increased understanding of their communicative practices and highlights the difficulties they experience in developing greater agency. Theories of language and d/Discourse have not previously been applied to Gypsies' and Travellers' communicative practices or to how the community is constructed through primary and secondary d/Discourses and thus the research expands our understanding of the value and

importance of these theories. The research also demonstrates that current models of adult literacy provision are not designed to assist Gypsies and Travellers communicate more effectively with authority and thus develop their agency. I expand on some of these areas below.

9.7.1. A vacuum in policy and practice

Such research into the literacy of adult Gypsies and Travellers is a new area of research. The little research on education previously undertaken, focused on school education, leaving a vacuum in relation to educational policy, provision and practice in education and training for adult Gypsies and Travellers. Analysis of post-school policies found Gypsies and Travellers were rarely mentioned and largely invisible even in documents purporting to address equality issues. Until now there has been no estimate of their levels of literacy, no exploration of how low levels of literacy impact on their lives in terms of health or income and no investigation into how improved levels of literacy could improve their lives or meet their future requirements. My research has contributed to filling this gap by providing rich data on situations where Gypsies and Travellers require literacy.

9.7.2. Literacy and status

The lack of value Gypsies and Travellers have attached to textual literacy, reading and writing, as a communicative practice, challenges dominant policy perspectives. Dominant policies perceive textual literacy to be essential to development, to economic achievement and an important component of an individual's self esteem and status. Gypsies and Travellers reject this view of literacy, do not view literacy as an important element in economic success and did not perceive the ability to read and write as contributing to their community status or their own self esteem. Other skills, which have contributed to their cultural survival, are valued more highly.

9.7.3. Discourse and the construction of identity

My analysis of the construction of a negative identity for Gypsies and Travellers through the secondary Discourses of the settled community (cf. Chapter 5) contributes to theoretical understandings of prejudice experienced by Gypsies and Travellers.

Analysis of both primary discourses of the public and secondary Discourses of officials and politicians in Chapter 5, suggests that the absence of educational opportunities for adult Gypsies and Travellers is not accidental, but a result of deep seated negative attitudes in society. This influences the decisions of democratically elected representatives and results in limiting the opportunities and well being of Gypsies and Travellers. The negative d/Discourse is rarely publically challenged even by those who effectively challenge prejudice against other groups such as immigrants and asylum seekers.

The few Gypsies and Travellers interviewed who desired to learn to read, were also adversely affected by the negative discourses and preferred to teach themselves or be taught by friends or family. This critiques the inclusivity of education and training for adults.

Negative sedentary discourses and the absence of education and training for adult Gypsies and Travellers can be viewed as supporting Sen's (1991) theory of "unfreedom" as exclusion from the democratic processes and an inability to "choose the life they wish to lead".

9.7.4. Discourse, power and agency

The data on literacy and language gathered during the research and the analysis of Gypsy and Traveller experience contributes to our understanding of d/Discourse theory. Interviews and observation showed clearly that "*knowing the words*" was an area of considerable concern to Gypsies and Travellers individually and collectively and of more importance than being able to read. The data provide additional evidence to support the concept of bi-discursivity – the ability to move from a primary to a secondary Discourse as demanded by the particular situation. Analyses of the discourses at the WNTF forum and the PGTG meetings demonstrated how the inability of all but a few Gypsies and Travellers to use the appropriate secondary Discourses, limited their effective interaction and engagement with the bureaucratic institutions which controlled and regulated their lives, reduced their agency and limited their ability to challenge dominant power structures.

The comparison of the WNTF and the PGTG in Chapter 8 and the modification of the secondary Discourse in the PGTG, demonstrates that dominant groups can modify their particular discourse to communicate effectively with users of primary discourses. Though the results were beneficial to the Gypsy and Traveller community, such modification reinforces theories of power and control (Bourdieu, 1991; Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1997; Jones, 2000) as the choice of language and discourse remained with the dominant group, who in this case chose to address, rather than distance themselves from the immediate needs of the Gypsies and Travellers.

9.7.5. Critiques of literacy

At a theoretical level, the research challenges current models of literacy for adults as none of the models outlined in Chapter 3, including NLS and critical literacies, focus sufficiently on the issue of communication identified in this research, namely the ability to utilise secondary Discourses. These models, then, do not assist Gypsies and Travellers become bi-discoursal. The research noted that Gypsy and Traveller "activists" who were formally educated were bi-discoursal and able to operate within the secondary Discourses of bureaucracy without having lost their primary discourse. Though others had life experiences which gave them some understanding of the discourses of power and bureaucracy, and in some case were able to utilise some aspects of the secondary Discourse, they were not usually able to challenge as effectively as those who were formally educated.

The research also critiques NLS and the concept of culturally situated literacies as failing to sufficiently address the cognitive aspects of learning to read and write. While ethnographic studies associated with the NLS approach are important and meaning is embedded in culture and context, the NLS appears insufficiently aware that without the ability to decode the symbols, the reader has no meaning to communicate. There is some indication that Gypsies and Travellers may experience above average difficulties with the technical and cognitive aspects of reading, though this should not be over emphasised.

9.7.6. Bi-Discursivity

Whilst understanding the culture is vitally important to any literacy provision, however, as noted in a different context (Dyer, 2006), patterns of life are changing and the NLS focus on the present risks neglecting the future in which the ability to read and write and interact with secondary Discourses may become essential to survival.

My research analysing Gypsies' and Travellers' current literacy practices has, then, increased our knowledge of the importance of bi-discursivity, that is the ability of minority non-dominant communities to utilise the secondary Discourses of the sedentary community to develop agency to challenge the dominant power structures controlling their lives. As in other parts of the world, learning the secondary Discourse risks incorporation into the dominant community, but inability to use the secondary Discourse to interact effectively can lead to individual and community assimilation or community and cultural breakdown.

9.8. Limitations

Undertaking this research has led me to new ways of thinking about knowing. My thinking on literacy and language and on Gypsy and Traveller identity and culture has shifted and changed as increasing contact with the community has provided new insights.

Adopting an ethnographic interpretative approach enabled me to interact with many Gypsies and Travellers both formally and informally and to gain the trust of several leading activists. My work in a Gypsy support organisation and as a councillor gave me access to forums and official meetings. In retrospect and in the light of increased contact with the community I would undertake a greater number of in-depth reflective interviews, but people's availability was limited and considerable time was required to build the necessary trust. Semi-structured interviews for the surveys of Gypsies and Travellers would have provided more information than the structured survey, but quantity versus quality is a difficult balance. The findings of the one hundred and thirty-eight interviews of which ninety were conducted by a Romani Gypsy provided statistical indication of the lack of knowledge and non-participation in adult education.

During the period of my research the gendered nature of their society began to be recognised by both Gypsies and Travellers and support organisations. I would now examine the impact of gender on their communication practices more closely.

9.9. Further research

Further research into the language and literacy requirements of Gypsy and Traveller adults and their literacy strategies could benefit them and educational agencies. Some suggestions are made below. All the areas of research suggested would be enhanced by a close attention to gender.

9.9.1. Literacy Levels

Literacy levels are currently estimated by assessing school achievement. As many Gypsies and Travellers reject or do not succeed at school, a clearer understanding of adult Gypsies' and Travellers' abilities to negotiate and understand written text would provide a firmer evidence base for developing provision. As more Gypsy and Traveller children attend school, levels of text-based literacy should improve, but the current low level of achievement suggests this is not inevitable and many adults will continue to have very poor formal literacy skills for the foreseeable future and will require the opportunity to improve these.

9.9.2. Learning literacy

There was evidence that several Gypsies and Travellers interviewed had taught themselves to read and write, or had been helped by friends or family. During the course of this research I have identified six Gypsies or Travellers with reasonable reading skills, five of them women, who have learned in this way. Further research on this would compliment work already undertaken on "*Hidden Literacies*" (Nabi et al., 2009) and could suggest learning strategies for Gypsies and Travellers.

9.9.3. Ethnographic studies

Gypsy and Traveller identity changes as people adapt to and incorporate their environment (Belton, 2010:42). Gendered ethnographic studies on the use of text in the home and in inter and intra-communal activity would further enhance understanding of

which literacies are used by women and men in which circumstances. This would also involve further investigation of current use of Romanes and dialects building on the work of earlier research (Okely, 1983; Acton, 2000; Kenrick, 2000; Matras, 2000).

9.9.4. New technologies and communication

An exciting area of research would be the increased use of communication technology, the internet, email and texting and the extent to which these communicative mechanisms are utilised effectively. Research might explore the current use of texting, the reading and writing skills required and the extent to which these technologies improve communication and enhance Gypsies' and Travellers' agency and their ability to organise collectively.

9.9.5. Education and assimilation

Many Gypsies and Travellers in the south of England have settled and apparently assimilated into the dominant society. There has been little research on the level of assimilation resulting from full engagement in the educational process and employment in the formal economy. More information on the impact of education on cultural cohesion is required. For the past hundred years, each generation has predicted the loss of the Romani Gypsy and Irish Traveller culture and yet it has survived.

9.9.6. The impact of public prejudice

The acceptability of overtly hostile statements and the discourse of sedentary society which reflects negative attitudes impacts on the democratic process. Politicians at national and local level are responsible for making decisions regarding Gypsies' and Travellers' accommodation, health and education yet little is known of their attitudes, how these are formed and maintained, or the extent of their knowledge of the culture and the community.

9.10. Concluding remarks

My conclusions are evidence based, but as explained in Chapter 4, my previous knowledge and experience of working with minorities affected what I heard and how I interpreted my data. My conclusions reflect my position as a participant observer and researcher at a particular point in time.

During the course of this research, I have come to know and respect many Gypsies and Travellers, and though as they themselves say, "*No one in any community is perfect*", I agree with Lord Ivatts that in order to move forward, the wider society must accept its responsibilities. I also agree with Worrall (1979), one of the early advocates for Gypsy and Traveller education and with Street (1984, 1995), Gee, (1996) and Lankshear (1997) who say that education is not a neutral activity; for Gypsies and Travellers it is a site of contestation.

In England there is a pressing need to develop an educational policy in conjunction with Gypsies and Travellers. Informal, responsive, culturally appropriate education for adults to provide the skills and discourse to engage and challenge could contribute not to assimilation, but to Gypsy and Traveller agency and self determination and to Jamie's vision of harmonisation. I hope that this thesis can contribute to a positive shift in dominant approaches to Gypsy and Traveller education and social position and help realise such a vision.

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Appendix 1

New Age Travellers

My research has not included New Age Travellers as I was focusing on Gypsies' and Travellers' perceptions and use of literacy. New Age Travellers are not defined as an ethnic minority. Most attend school and some have very high levels of education. From the evidence available, they understand the bureaucratic systems and laws regulating their life style and negotiate or challenge the authorities with some success. The majority choose their life style and the evidence in Westborough suggests that many, though not all, move into housing when their children reach school age.

People have taken to the road for many reasons including land enclosures, seeking work avoiding persecution in medieval England and escaping from famine in Ireland. The current phenomenon of New Travellers emerged in the 1960's during the counter-culture movement when young people seeking to escape the pressures of modern life, took to a variety of vehicles, adopted an ideology of "spiritualism, peace and ecological respect" and travelled around doing casual work. Music festivals became an increasingly important part of the travelling routine (Kendrick and Clark 1999:120). The first free festival was held at Glastonbury in the early 1970s and New Age Travellers joined the Druids to celebrate the summer solstice at Stonehenge. The number of festivals increased until there was a full calendar from around June to September. Kendrick and Clarke (1999), estimate that there were around 15, 000 New Age Travellers in 1999.

The infamous Battle of the Beanfield in June 1985 (Clark 1997) was not the only skirmish between police and convoys of New Age Travellers, but it had important ramifications for traditional Gypsies and Travellers. There were violent clashes when police attempted to stop a large convoy moving towards Stonehenge for the Summer solstice celebrations. Following this, the government introduced the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act which tightened the laws on trespassing making stopping on the roadside much harder for all travelling people.

Westborough is one of three cities in England with a large number of New Age Travellers. There is considerable tension between them and the settled community over where they park their vehicles and a perception that they rely on benefits.

Appendix 2: Data Sets

2.1. Interviews with Gypsies/Travellers/Roma

1. George, Northshire: July 2004.
2. Bernie, Hampshire: Aug. 2007.
3. Martin, Westborough: May 2008 – Oct. 2009.
4. Jamie, Kent: May 2008.
5. Siobhan, Kent: Jan. 2009.
6. Jack, Northshire: July 2004 / Jan. – Dec. 2009.
7. Mary, Westborough: Jan. 2009.
8. Harvey, Northshire: Aug. 2009.
9. Samuel, Witecross, Southshire: March 2009.
10. Kate, Westborough: Feb. 2009
11. Germaine, Westborough: Feb. 2009.
12. Carol, Witecross, Southshire: March 2009.
13. Jackie, Witecross, Southshire: March 2009.
14. Rachel, Witecross, Southshire: March 2009.
15. Gary, Hurstvine, Southshire: Feb.– Oct. 2009
16. Doris, Hurstvine, Southshire: April 2009.
17. Jack, Hurstvine, Southshire: April 2009.
18. Susan, Hurstvine, Southshire: April 2009.
19. Bob, Copsewood, Southshire: March 2009.
20. Bill, Copsewood, Southshire: March 2009.
21. Will, Northshire: May 2008.
22. Tracy, Kent: May 2008.
23. Robert, national organisation: Dec. 2008.
24. Patrick, Basildon: June. 2008.
25. John, Basildon: June: 2008.
26. Martha, Bournedean, Southshire: Feb. 2009.
27. Mable, Bournedean, Southshire: Feb. 2009.
28. Jimmy, Breach Barn, Northshire: Dec. 2008.
29. Helen, Witecross, Southshire: March 2009.

30. Harriet, Witecross, Southshire: March 2009.
31. Carla, National organisation: Oct. 2008.
32. Fred, National organisation: Dec. 2008.
33. Roma leader, Pavee Point, Dublin: April 2006.
34. Roma leader, Pavee Point, Dublin: April 2006.
35. Irish Traveller, Pavee Point, Dublin: April 2006.
36. Irish Traveller, Pavee Point, Dublin: April 2006.

2.2. Focus group discussions Gypsies and Travellers attending literacy classes

1. Snr. Traveller Centre, Dublin: April 2006, 2005.
2. Literacy Centre, Dublin: Nov. 2005.
3. Pavee Point Roma literacy group: April 2006.

2.3. Interviews with Officers, Managers, Organisers, Tutors

1. Head of Traveller Education Service, Northshire and Westborough: July 2005.
2. Gypsy and Traveller Site Manager, Vonas Ltd: March 2005.
3. Senior Traveller Liaison Officer, Northshire: March 2009.
4. Traveller officers, Community Safety Team, Westborough: Nov. 2008.
5. Assistant Director Environmental Services, Westborough: June 2009.
6. Traveller Enforcement Officer, Community Safety Team, Westborough: June 2009.
7. Adult Education Outreach Worker, Southshire: June 2009.
8. Deputy Director, Learning and Skills Council: Feb. 2009.
9. Manager, Programmes for Vulnerable People, Learning and Skills Council: Feb. 2009.
10. Director, Families Gypsies and Travellers: Aug. 2009.
11. Senior National Co-ordinator for Snr. Traveller Centres, Ireland: April 2007.
12. DES Officer with responsibility for Further Education, Ireland: June 2006.
13. Education Officer, Pavee Point, Dublin: April 2006.
14. Literacy tutor, Listowel, Ireland: Nov. 2006.
15. Family literacy tutors, Listowel, Ireland: Nov. 2006.
16. Literacy tutor, St Basil's Centre, Dublin, Ireland: Feb. 2006.
17. Adult Literacy Organiser, Ballymean, Dublin: Feb. 2006.
18. Adult literacy tutor, City of Dublin VEC and NALA organiser: June 2006.

2.4. Meetings

1. Traveller Manager, Southshire: April 2009.
2. Head of Traveller Education Service, Southshire: July 2008.
3. TES teacher, Southshire: July 2008.

2.5. Interviews with Councillors

1. Cllr. Westborough: June 2009.
2. Cllr. Westborough: Aug. 2009.
3. Cllr. Southshire: April 2007.

2.6. National Conferences

1. *Building Partnerships, Traveller Law*, May 7 2004, Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition, Irish Club, Birmingham.
2. *Working Together: Raising the Educational Achievement of Gypsy and Traveller Children and Young People*, 9 June 2004, Gypsy Council and Traveller Education Service and the Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition, Bonnington Hotel, London.
3. *Gypsy and Traveller Health Conference*, Oct 1. 2004, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London.
4. *Moving On: Traveller Law Reform Coalition*, Oct. 27. 2004, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London.
5. *Developing Services for Gypsy and Traveller: Improving Services, Sites and Social Inclusion*, Advisory Council for the Education of Romani and Other Travellers, 24 Feb. 2005, Inmarsat Conference Centre, City Road, London
6. *Gypsy and Traveller Health*, Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition, (GTLRC) Oct. 25 2005, Friends Centre, Euston Road, London.
7. *Gypsies, Travellers and Communities: Achieving greater cohesion*, GTLRC Nov. 21 2006, Policy Spotlight, Bonnington Hotel, London.
8. *Mainstreaming the Agenda*, Sept. 12 2007, Irish Traveller Movement, Bonnington Hotel, London.
9. *The Road Ahead: Travellers, Social Inclusion and Human Rights*: Irish Traveller Movement, Nov. 19 2008, Resource Centre, London.

10. *A Time for Change: Planning and Managing Gypsy and Traveller Issues*, Irish Traveller Movement, 19 Nov. 2009, Resource Centre, London.

2.7. Gypsy and Traveller Forums

1. Travellers Forum, Oct. 1 1997, Westborough Town Hall.
2. Travellers Forum, Dec. 3 1997, Westborough Town Hall.
3. Travellers Forum, Feb. 4 1998, Westborough Town Hall.
4. Travellers Forum, Sept. 1 1999, Westborough Town Hall.
5. Travellers Task Group, Aug. 4 1999, Westborough Town Hall.
6. Travellers Forum, Feb. 22 2000, Westborough Town Hall.
7. Travellers Forum, June 13 2000, Westborough Town Hall.
8. Travellers Forum, Sept. 26 2000, Westborough Town Hall.
9. Travellers Forum, Feb. 7 2001, Westborough Town Hall.
10. Travellers Forum, Dec. 5 2001, Westborough Town Hall.
11. Travellers Forum, April 17 2002, Westborough Town Hall.
12. Travellers Forum, Sept. 30 2002, Westborough Town Hall.
13. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, Sept. 6 2004, Northshire Community Centre District 1.
14. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, Dec. 10 2004, Northshire, Sports Hall District 2.
15. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, March 9 2005, Leisure Centre, Westborough.
16. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, June 22 2005, Northshire Town Hall District 3.
17. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, March 23 2006, Northshire, Town Hall, District 4.
18. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, June 29 2006, Northshire, Council Chamber, District 5.
19. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, Sept. 7 2006, Northshire, Sports Hall, District 2.
20. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, Dec. 12 2006, Northshire, Community Centre, District 6.
21. Travellers Working Group, Jan. 23 2007, Council Offices, Wellsend.
22. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, March 22 2007, Northshire, Sports Centre, District 7.
23. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, June 24 2007, Northshire, Community Hall, District 8.
24. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, Oct. 2007, Northshire, Civic Centre, District 5.
25. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, Jan. 21 2008, Northshire, Sports Hall, District 2.
26. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, April 8 2008, Northshire, Council Offices, District 9.
27. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, July 24 2008, Northshire, Town Hall, District 9.
28. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, Oct. 16 2008, Northshire, Business Centre, District 10.

29. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, Jan. 29 2009, Northshire, Town Hall, District 9.
30. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, April 9 2009, Northshire, Sports Hall, District 9.
31. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, June 29 2009, Northshire, Business Centre District 10.
32. Gypsy and Traveller Forum, Dec. 8 2009, Northshire, Community Hall, District 2.

2.8. Police Gypsy and Traveller Group Meetings

1. October 31 2008, Leisure Centre, Southshire.
2. January 21 2009, Leisure Centre, Southshire.
3. April 28 2009, Leisure Centre, Southshire.
4. July 22 2009, Training Centre, Southshire.
5. October 21 2009, Training Centre, Southshire.
6. January 20 2010, Training Centre, Southshire.
7. April 9 2010, Training Centre, Southshire.

2.9. Additional meetings

1. Residents' meeting, March 31 2005.
2. Open Spaces Forum, Westborough, Dec. 6 2006
3. Agenda Item: *Gypsy and Traveller Health*, Equalities Forum, Westborough, Jan. 17. 2005.
4. Additional Support Programme, Change-Up Partnership, Southshire, 15 meetings Jan. 2005 - Dec. 2009 held in three districts.
5. Additional Support Programme Seminar and Workshops, June 4 2007, Southshire.
6. Agenda Item: *Gypsy and Traveller Health*, Equalities Forum, Westborough, March 7 2005.
7. Agenda Item: *Gypsy and Traveller Health*, Equalities Forum, Jan. 17 2005 and March 7 2005.
8. Change Up Workshop, Southshire, April 2006.
9. Agenda Item: *Gypsy and Traveller Strategy*, Equalities Forum, November 2007.
10. Agenda Item: *Gypsy and Traveller Strategy*, Equalities Forum, February 2008.
11. *Developing Strategies*: Government of the South East, Feb. 2008, Guildford.

2.10. Meetings of the Gypsy Council

1. April 26 2008, AGM, Greenwich.
2. July 19 2008, Greenwich.
3. June 10 2008, Dale Farm.
4. Oct. 11 2008, Greenwich.
5. Dec. 13 2008, Greenwich
6. May 30 2009, AGM Greenwich.
7. June 27 2009, Launch of Memorial issue of Roma Journal, Greenwich University.

2.11. Additional events

1. Gypsy Festival, Singleton Museum, Aug. 2004.
2. Kent Gypsy Fair, Kent Showground, Aug. 2008.
3. Court of Appeal, London, Dec. 2008.
4. District Court, March 2009.
5. Expert Witness, Planning Appeal, Northshire District Offices, March 2010.

Appendix 3: Literacy Levels of Interviewees.

Approx reading levels*	Interviewee	Nos. at the level	Age	f	m	Accommodation
Fluent Readers Level 3 or above	1. Jack	3	35	f	m	House
	2. Harvey		25		m	Flat
	3. Mary		43		m	House
	4. Bernie 5. Doris	2	85 50+	f	m	House Permanent site
Good readers, avoid writing Level 2	6. Mandy	3	35	f	m	Permanent site
	7. Samuel		20			Permanent site
	8. Fred		50			House
Reasonable readers Level 1	9. Martin	8	40+	f	m	House
	10. Martha		40+			Unauthorised
	11. Carla		19			Permanent site
	12. Rachel		50			Permanent site
	13. Carol		19			Unauthorised
	14. Jack		20		m	Unauthorised
	15. Susan		19			Unauthorised
	16. Jamie		50		m	Private site
Very limited readers Entry level 1	17. Siobhan	7	45+	f	m	Site – flat
	18. Bob		45			Permanent site
	19. Bill		40			Permanent site
	20. Will		70+			Private site
	21. Jackie		35			Permanent site
	22. Jimmy		18			Private site
	23. Mary		18			Private site
Below Entry level readers	24. Robert	9	45	f	m	Unauthorised
	25. Patrick		60		m	Unauthorised
	26. John		19		m	Unauthorised
	27. Kate		45		m	Permanent site
	28. Mable		19			Permanent site
	29. Gary		50		m	Permanent site
	30. Harriet		82			Permanent site
	31. Tracy		50		m	Permanent site
	32. George		40			Permanent site
		32		15	17	

*National Adult Literacy Curriculum Levels

Appendix 4: Change-Up Survey

Structured interviews on services in Westborough and Southshire 2005 – 6:
Sections on respondents details an, education and post school education.

1. Respondents' Details

If respondent prefers to remain anonymous, tick here.....

Gender	Result	Percentage
Female		
Male		

1.1 Self Definition

	Result	Percentage
New Traveller		
Truck dweller		
Vehicle dweller		
Van dweller		
Van Traveller		
Welsh Traveller		
Human being		
Traveller		
Housed over winter		
New Age Traveller		
Not into definition		
Middle aged Traveller		

1.2 Do you have a permanent address?

		Percentage
Yes		
No		

1.3 Age range

Age Range	Result	Percentage
Not stated		
10-20		
20-30		
30-40		
40-50		
50-60		
60+		

1.4 If no permanent address, do you have an address where you receive mail?

		Percentage
Yes		
No		

1.5 Do you travel during the year?

		Percentage
Yes		
No		

1.5.1. For how many months in the year?

How Long	Result	Percentage
Not stated		
12 months		
2-4 months		
3 months		
4 months		
6 months		
6-8 months		
most of it		
not much		
Varies from year to year		

1.6. Where do you normally live?

Accommodation	Result	Percentage
House		
Caravan on permanent private site		
Caravan on permanent local authority site		
Caravan or trailer on own land		
Caravan on transit site		
Caravan on unauthorised site		
Van		
Other		

1.7 Do you have a mobile phone?

	Phones	Percentage
Yes		
No		

1.8 Do you have access to a computer - for email and/ or the internet in order to find information?

	Where	Internet Access	Percentage
Yes	Personal		
Yes	Personal/Public		
Yes	Public		
Yes	Public - FGT		
Yes	Public (work)		

6.0 EDUCATION (1) SCHOOLS

6.1 Did you attend school?

	Result	Percentage
Not stated		
No		
Occasionally		
Yes		

6.2 Do your children attend school?

	Result	Percentage
Not stated		
No		
Yes		

7.0 EDUCATION (2) POST SCHOOL/ADULT EDUCATION

7.1. For advice or assistance on post-school education or training, do you go to?

	Result	Percentage
FGT	a	
Traveller Liaison Officer	b	
Traveller Education Service	c	
Resource Centre	d	
Citizens Advice Centre	e	
Unemployed Centre	f	
College	g	
University 1	h	
University 2	i	
WEA	j	
Voluntary AE Centre	k	
6 th Form College 1	l	

6 th Form College 2	m
Other – college/library	n

xv How did you know where to go?

xvi Where do other people in your community go?.....

7.2. Do you?

	Result	Percentage
Go in person		
Telephone		
Write		
Get a family member to go, write, phone		

7.3. How are you received when you contact the organisation?

	Result	Percentage
Not stated		
Very friendly		
OK		
Cool		
Hostile		
Rude		

7.4. When you have been to an organisation have they?

		Result	Percentage
Not stated			
Normally been able to assist you			
Occasionally been able to assist			
Never been able to help			

7.5. Do you think they know anything about the circumstances of Gypsies, Travellers, or Van Dwellers?

	Result	Percentage
Not stated		
No		
Not sure		
Yes		

7.6. What do you think of the service you have received?

	Result	Percentage
Not stated		
Excellent and very useful		
Good		
Ok		
Poor		
Bad		

Note: The survey for Connecting Communities asked similar questions but these were simplified to allow greater flexibility in answering.

Appendix 5: Examples of Culturally Responsive Provision from Ireland

Literacy programmes in Ireland have continued to incorporate local culture into the teaching / learning situation. Four examples are given here to demonstrate how literacy classes can relate to different aspects of Traveller life.

1. In North Kerry, an educational visit to a religious site brought back memories for a group of women. As the tutor said:

They really enjoyed it. One woman started talking about her family and the past, how they wore long skirts.....and how they made paper flowers to go out and sell. This led to talking and then writing about the "old ways" (Interview: Nov. 2006).

2. In Dublin, discussions about travelling led to looking at a globe to identifying the countries to which they had travelled. This in turn led to learning to read road maps.
3. The Lourdes Plant was a striking example of culturally responsive and empowering teaching reported to me by the tutor of a Travellers' class in Dublin. It is included in the *Curriculum Framework for Ireland* (Mace et al., 2009). Below is a short summary:

During a tea break early on in the course, the tutors overheard a conversation among some of the women. They were talking about a particular plant with 'miraculous powers'. The women called it the Lourdes Plant. Lots of women joined in and seemed to know something about the plant; this included the belief that if a husband and wife quarrelled in front of it, it dies....It protected the trailer from fire and sickness. The tutors - one had expertise in gardening and community horticulture, also joined in the conversation.

Building on this interest the tutors encouraged the women to bring the plant into class and discussed the best way of keeping it healthy and also taking cuttings. This led to a general interest in plants and horticulture.

Following several sessions the group decided they would like a course on horticulture and invited the director of the Centre to a meeting to hear their proposal. Not only had they improved their literacy and numeracy through learning the names of plants, purchasing pots, in which to grow their cuttings, they had developed the confidence to call the director to a meeting to present a case for funding a module on horticulture (quoted in Mace , McCaffery and O'Hagan, 2009:54-55).

In this case an informal conversation led to increasing confidence and the ability to negotiate.

4. Snr. Traveller Centres had a flexible and varied programme and offered a range of courses – art, hair dressing, childcare, food, cooking and personal development. Traveller students were also studying general English, communication skills and producing portfolios. There was a wide range of ability and activity. As a tutor explained, her group was not homogeneous:

20% can't read much. I have two distinct groups – teenagers of 15 and up. If they have been to school their literacy is pretty good though some have fallen through the net....then we have the other group. Married or widowed women. The over 50's can't read. The metro is too hard for most of the women. Some might be able to do their name and address (Interview: North Dublin Nov. 2006).

When interviewed, the national coordinator explained that the Snr. Traveller Centres no longer concentrated solely on providing education for work and had developed a holistic approach which they define as “the web connections mode” supporting the family with form filling, child benefits and social literacy. He stressed the importance of providing culturally appropriate education which was relevant to the lives, needs and aspirations of those Travellers who attended.

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