

Transnational Resilience and Change

Transnational Resilience and Change:

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Strategies of Survival and Adaptation

Edited by

Dan Allen, Margaret Greenfields
and David Smith

As all three named editors have contributed equally to the development of the text, editorial attribution is alphabetical.

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INTRODUCTION

MARGARET GREENFIELDS AND DAVID SMITH

This edited volume consists of chapters derived from presentations given at a specialist workshop on Roma Resilience, held at the Second World Congress on Resilience, University of Timisoara, Romania in the summer of 2014 and subsequently developed further via online theoretical and practice-focused discussions. This text is thematically concerned with the various ways in which diverse Roma(ni) Gypsy and Traveller peoples¹ in widely differing international contexts, articulate and comprehend their strategies of cultural and psychosocial resilience. To this end we explore a number of under-researched and little-articulated themes: in particular the ways in which community resilience and resistance to assimilatory pressures (and enacted discrimination) are typically entwined for members of these communities, and are thus responsive to local and temporal circumstances impacting the population.

As will be illustrated within the empirical chapters, which provide examples from as far afield as South America, Canada and Australia, as well as within the more familiar European context, mechanisms of social and communal resilience are typically viewed by members of the Roma(ni) and Traveller communities as means to perform and maintain their identity in opposition to the overarching threat of cultural assimilation which occurs within an often hostile state. As such, the ability to maintain certain cultural characteristics and practices that distinguish the diverse communities from the dominant cultural group has become, for many Gypsy, Traveller and Roma populations, a cultural marker which may be perceived as defining them in opposition to the populations among whom they reside. It is this process and the successes; challenges; and evolving practices (particularly within non-European contexts) of community members, which are explored within this text.

This book offers an original contribution to a slowly developing corpus of knowledge in Romani studies, bringing together the works of academics at various stages of their careers and working across three continents. The intent is to critically view the impact and nature of culturally assimilatory factors on Roma(ni) and Traveller communities. A theme which we

consider of particular note is the impact of different geo-political and migratory contexts and how the stigma of “being a Roma” translates to discrete contexts or continents. Thus we see that migration (either historical or in the life-time of those represented within the empirical chapters) may bring both benefits and challenges for individuals and communities, depending upon the sociohistorical prism through which Roma(ni) and Traveller people are viewed in their country of origin or to which they migrate. Inevitably in dealing with the wide range of peoples who feature in these chapters we will engage with the familiar themes of social exclusion, state mandated marginalisation and experiences of racism. However this volume is unique in both theoretically and empirically exploring how and why counter-assimilatory practices may change, becoming adapted or culturally situated in non-European contexts where Gypsies, Travellers and Roma(ni) populations are not subject to the same set of expectations, stereotypes and exclusion as in their countries of primary origin.

By advancing our understanding of such a complex topic, this book is compliant with the spirit of “Roma Inclusion” as endorsed by the European Union. This collection of essays is particularly pertinent given that at the time of writing (late 2017) there is considerable discourse within Roma intellectual, academic and policy circles on the impact and effectiveness in Europe of both the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” (2005–2015) and the mandatory (European) National Roma Integration Strategies which were launched in 2011. Accordingly, this text is well placed to enable scope for careful analytical consideration of the role that social contexts, community psychology and individual resilience occupies in the interplay between social inclusion and resistance to cultural assimilation.

In line with the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion² endorsed by the European Platform for Roma Inclusion and the Council of Ministers in summer 2009, this edited book which draws upon original empirical research and foregrounds the narratives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people; provides the reader with the opportunity to engage with the impact of assimilatory pressures imposed on Roma(ni) and Traveller people throughout history and to consider how this has determined a number of complex social and cultural survival strategies. Individual chapters thus demonstrate how and why strategies of resistance as practiced by the community are often perceived of as politically and socially subversive by both surrounding populations and the policy community, which typically seeks to “mainstream” Roma(ni) and Traveller people. Frequently the polity reacts with baffled anger and often restrictive reactive legislation to these communities’ rejection of

“normalization” and imposed cultural mores. As such, (while also exploring when community responses may prove counter-productive in terms of achieving beneficial outcomes) this text will argue that from the Roma(ni) and Traveller perspective, actions which reduces the effects of cultural assimilation have often been consciously or responsively undertaken to guard against the normative structures being forced upon them. Empirical examples presented within this text accordingly offer a unique perspective by considering the importance of trans-generational transfer of models, attitudes and practices among these diverse communities, using these examples as a way of shedding light on why Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities often exhibit strong sentiments of anomie as they seek to preserve their identities, languages, cultural values and interfamilial traditions.

A number of chapters acknowledge the power of cultural maintenance in the preservation of identity. Others offer a more critical perspective towards some aspects of inwardly focussed and self-regulated cultural isolation, utilising specific examples to highlight the serious implications that cultural marginality can have on vulnerable groups. The cohesive nature of such communities are based on principles of what Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) term “bounded solidarity”, those forms of social capital that develop through confrontation with the majority society and which:

“Depends on an emergent sentiment of ‘we-ness’ among those confronting a similar difficult situation. The fundamental characteristic of this source of social capital is that it does not depend on its enforceability but on the moral imperative felt by individuals to behave in a certain way.”

In our concluding section of this text (Chapters Ten and Eleven) we not only draw together and discuss the theoretical concepts and findings outlined in the above chapters, but also reflect upon the variables referred to above; introducing our central thesis of how and why effective structural and policy/practices changes must be made (to demonstrate commitment to values of social justice and as a practical and logical response to the failure of enforced acculturation of Roma(ni) and Traveller communities) in order to promote multiculturalism against the increasing tide of pressure for social and cultural homogenisation.

Finally, the concluding chapter presents a number of key principles and policy recommendations which we have drawn from our reading of the empirical chapters included in this volume. We suggest that the recommendations are contextually variable and have transferability across and within continents, given the central theme of an overarching respect

and adherence to universal policies of human rights and social justice common to Europe, the Americas and Australasia. Accordingly, in our concluding discussion, we speak specifically to the need for activists, the policy and political community, as well as public services, to uphold ethnic and gender equality and to combat discrimination through recognising the right to identity and the preservation of Roma(ni), Gypsy and Traveller people's cultural practices.

Liberalism and multiculturalism are currently facing unprecedented challenges with the rise of political narratives promoting nationalism, protectionism and isolation, and the position of minority groups is looking increasingly insecure and perilous. This book highlights the need to take account of the strategies of resistance enacted by those who stand to be most impacted by these social and political changes. As Scott (1985, xvii) reminds us, such everyday low-level forms of resistance rarely make the headlines. On a macro scale, however, such multiple acts of subordination and intransigence in the face of widespread discrimination and assimilatory pressures, create political barrier reefs of their own; and in doing so increase the potential for more organised forms of opposition and resistance.

Notes

¹ While EU documentation typically uses the overarching term 'Roma' to encompass a wide range of nomadic and formerly nomadic populations (see further:

<http://a.cs.coe.int/team20/cahrom/documents/Glossary%20Roma%20EN%20version%2018%20May%202012.pdf> [Council of Europe descriptive glossary, 2012]), we have within this text (unless specified within specific chapters) used the terms Roma(ni) and Traveller to distinguish between those nomadic or formerly nomadic populations – including Yenish; Irish and Scottish Travellers etc. and Roma/Sinti peoples of Indic origins. In some countries – particularly in the UK, English Romanians will often identify themselves as 'Gypsies' which does not have the pejorative or offensive sense found in many other countries in Europe and as such the term is used within the text as appropriate.

² See further: *Vademecum: The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion* (2010) Luxembourg: European Commission Publications Office. Available at: http://www.stiftung-evz.de/fileadmin/user_upload/EVZ_Uploads/Handlungsfelder/Handeln_fuer_Menschenrechte/Sinti_und_Roma/Vademecum.pdf

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PART ONE

Introduction

In this first section of the book, we set out to demonstrate how seemingly contradictory alternatives of either “staying in a single location” or “migration” can for Romani and Traveller people both represent deliberate strategies in their ambition to escape ethnic hostility, operationalized against them as members of a community subject to intense “othering” and discrimination. In considering the importance of transgenerational identity, cultural transmission and community psychology, Part One thus sets the tone of this text by introducing a range of concepts, shedding a nuanced light on how and why Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities exhibit persistent (yet malleable and dynamic) identity systems based on opposition to externally imposed policies and practices that are antithetical to their world views and traditions.

In the first chapter in this volume, Allen presents the overarching framework for the texts that follow. He draws upon a range of theoretical and conceptual models to illustrate the interdisciplinary approach that capturing processes of cultural transmission and resilience (performed and embodied through the processes of migration, or in the alternative, retention of community within a hostile “home” environment) requires. Allen’s chapter presents insights from theories of citizenship, migration/diasporic studies, psychology and mimetics. The purpose is to underpin our understanding of *why* Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people, in a range of international and historical contexts, appear to share a resistance against the normative state and the structures it imposes on those within its territory.

Having “set the scene,” the remaining collection of chapters in this section of the volume illustrate the significant social, geographic and historical diversity in the ways that resistance to assimilation and forms of cultural transmission manifest themselves in diverse geographical locations, sometimes successfully and sometimes less so, typically reflecting surrounding sociopolitical circumstances that impact on more marginalised members of society.

In the remaining chapters in this part of the text, contributors explore the experiences of Roma migrants who have left Europe to reside in “new

world” environments (in the current context North and South America, and Australia), which vary significantly in their perceptions of, and attitudes towards Roma people. It will be demonstrated how, despite differing social and geographical contexts, distinctive cultural practices of the Romani people are reproduced. Esteban’s (Chapter Two) multi-sited and life-course ethnographic study makes the case that Romani Studies needs to account for complex histories of exchange that transcend European borders – in this case through an exploration of the networks, connections and exchanges among Romani groups, individuals and families that span the Atlantic to encompass North and South America. His fascinating case studies focus on four factors in the respondents’ life courses and journeys: the practice of im/mobilities, the place of these practices among the historical and social layout of transatlantic Romani mobilities, ties of kinship and belonging in these practices, and the perceived effects that policies and institutions had on the respondent’s journeys. Lee’s (Chapter Three) historically grounded sociological contribution utilizes Georg Simmel’s concept of “the stranger” as a starting point to explore how an increasingly multicultural Australia, provides spaces for specific types of ethnic constructivism to develop. In this endeavour, the author raises the paradox of adaptability and distinctiveness, and addresses the complex ways that this relationship is played out and manifests itself in particular historical and societal contexts. Esteban and Lee’s examples of the dynamic and dialectic relationship between cultural continuity and adaption in different historical and geographic settings, allows for the subsequent consideration (in Part Three) of how the reproduction, and adaptation of cultural practices may be practiced traditionally with more fervour as is common to diasporic groups, or lessened – or even abandoned – depending upon the geographical and social culture (e.g. post-migration) in which Roma communities reside and within such practices occur.

CHAPTER ONE

RESILIENT CULTURAL TRANSMISSION IN A HOSTILE STATE

DAN ALLEN

Introduction

Numbering 10–12 million people, Romani and Traveller people represent Europe’s largest ethnic minority (Farget 2012; European Commission 2016). Although they have been continuously present in many countries throughout the world since at least the 1400s, their history has been characterized by discrimination, ostracism, persecution and inequality (Acton and Ryder 2012; Angus 1992; Hancock 2002; Frazer 1992). Even the details of their identity are contested. The term “Gypsy” – by which most Romani and Traveller people are known to the outside worlds – is often synonymous with nomadism, an essentialized characteristic of “Gypsy” people¹. Although some Romani and Traveller people continue to live in caravans and move from place to place, most have long since settled as the challenge of living a nomadic lifestyle becomes far too great due to wider socioeconomic changes or state-sponsored settlement and assimilation policies.

Members of these communities are frequently reported as victims of widespread discrimination (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) 2017), with Ergül (2017) drawing upon Simmel’s (1971) notion of “the Stranger” to explain that Romani and Traveller people experience the pernicious effects of a unique type of negative bias that has deep and extensive roots in history and institutional cultures. Yet, despite the scale and nature of their lived experiences of adversity and hostility, Romani and Traveller people continue to transmit a proud and determined sense of cultural resilience, community solidarity and collective identity (Acton and Mundy 1997).

To understand how and why Romani and Traveller people exhibit such cultural resilience, Marsh (2008) encourages us to recognize that their

situation is profoundly intertwined with individual agency, as well as the history, economics and sociopolitical dynamics of the countries within which they live. Therefore, to explore this symbiosis and concurrent tensions between Romani, Traveller and “mainstream” populations further, this chapter utilizes the analogy of two competing “weather fronts,”² coming into contact, in ways which can be alternately benign or explosive.

Consistent with Goffman’s (1963) book, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, which assumes discrimination as a root cause of marginalisation, this chapter argues that the first weather front is created by hate and sustained by discriminatory acts. This particularly dangerous weather front sanctions national intolerance toward Romani and Traveller people and reinforces a stereotypical view of the conceptual “Gypsy” to limit basic human rights and freedoms. This first weather front also feeds hatred through repeated levelling of tropes of (unwarranted and hence suspicious) itinerancy, unlawful residency, nomadism, antisocial behavior, delinquency and fraud, against Romani and Traveller peoples. It is therefore argued that this weather front of hostility is operating within a paradigm of the spoiled identity (Goffman 1963) by encouraging blame and attributing the inequalities that Romani and Traveller people face to a preference for self-determined social isolation and rejection of public services and mainstream community norms (Engebrigtsen 2015; Philips 2007). By shaping public discourse through hate speech memes (often driven by media and political representations), this first weather front works to deliberately destabilize any opportunity for the sustained acceptance and inclusion of Romani and Traveller people.

The second weather front has been created by Romani and Traveller people in response to the relentless power of the first. It has been created by mechanisms of social rejection and hostile discourse, but it is sustained by enacted cultural resilience. This second weather front is not as potent as the first. It does not currently have the same energy or force, but it does enable some Romani and Traveller communities to minimize discrimination, assimilation and respond proactively to the threat of social rejection. Most importantly, this second weather front enables victimized people to retain cultural independence, and it provides a growing opportunity for a social movement that enables the voices of Romani and Traveller people to emerge.

Throughout this chapter (and to frame subsequent discussions and findings from the empirical chapters which follow), the analogy of these two competing weather fronts is used to explore how (and the reasons why) Romani and Traveller people can survive in a society that limits equal access to social justice. By drawing upon the paradigm of memetics,

and the more established theoretical concepts of social ostracism³, epigenetics⁴ and cultural resilience⁵, this chapter will also explain why many Romani and Traveller people living throughout the world are expected to sacrifice their ethnicity, identity, cultures and traditions as a precondition of social inclusion.

Finally, this chapter will introduce a discussion on the burgeoning field of community-led Romani and Traveller discourse and human rights, as a way of highlighting the way in which resistance to the normalization of hate and exclusionary speech operates as a crucial step towards to the greater social inclusion of Romani and Traveller peoples.

Changing public perception

In summarizing the historical and transgenerational experiences of Romani and Traveller people, Hancock (2000), Kendrick (2004), and Marushiakova and Veselin (2016) explain that during the initial diasporic period (particularly in 15th and 16th century Europe), Romani people were often welcomed in the various countries within which they lived, as they were highly valued as suppliers of skilled labour (including craft work) and entertainment. Frazer (1995, 126) noted, however, that over time, initial acceptance of the populations was replaced by conflictual relationships and rejection of Romani peoples as negative and racist stereotypes replaced fascination with these “exoticised” strangers:

“It is possible to discern a fairly consistent pattern as Gypsies spread virtually to the whole of Europe. Sporadic signs of resistance and rejection begin to show up relatively soon after their arrival in a country ... and conflicts have usually become more widespread within 10 or 20 years.”

In relation to the quote, it must be noted that changing public attitudes toward Romani and Traveller people throughout Europe was a lengthy process, often associated with other sociocultural shifts occurring during the period of their initial migration (Taylor 2014). Unsurprisingly, perceptions took a long time to change (10 or 20 years), and they did not change consistently, with variables in levels of acceptance occurring depending upon the country of residence and demographic makeup of the “mainstream” population. The fact that perceptions did alter over time (overwhelmingly negatively), influencing Romani and Traveller people throughout Europe, is centrally important to this discussion.

Examining the changing political landscape of Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries has enabled scholars and historians to recognise that Romani and Traveller people were seen as threats to the basic fabric and

function of the organised social or nation-state (Acton 1974; Acton and Mundy 1997; Blach et al. 2014). As the political landscape of Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries became increasingly reliant on commerce and centralised revenue funding streams (Cretan and Turnock 2008; Maeso 2015), hostile discourse enabled Romani and Traveller people to be publicly recognized as a threat to principles of social control (Fraser 1995). Belonging to a traditionally nomadic community, for instance, many Romani and Traveller communities were difficult to trace for any financial levies that might have been owed (Hancock 2000). As robust taxation systems were, and still are, central to the power of political institutions, Romani and Traveller communities were accordingly seen to deliberately subvert social norms (Agarin 2014; Vanderbeck 2005). Similarly, nation states and patriotism were becoming more clearly defined by geographical borders (Fraser 1995). Colonialism, racist hierarchies and the emergence of bourgeois individualism also began to shape and inform changing attitudes towards those labelled as “undeserving” or “incompetent” poor (see, for example, MacLaughlin 1998).

Given perhaps the reluctant admiration (in the eyes of the public), which could logically be seen to attach to any one resisting the demand for compliance with state regulation during the 15th and 16th centuries, a concern for State authorities became how to encourage the general population to subscribe to the notion that Romani and Traveller peoples were a challenge to State wellbeing and stability. Somehow, the State had to encourage the general population to believe that Romani and Traveller people were not making an equal contribution of “their share” to public duties.

Memetics

In addition to the various sociopolitical adaptations related to economy, surveillance, nation-state borders and explanations of changes in attitudes towards Romani and Traveller people outlined above, many scholars entertain the possibility of cultural determinism as a primary source of social conflict that Fraser (1995) describes (see further too, Acton 1974; Kovats 2003; Ergül 2007; Farget 2012; Hancock 2000).

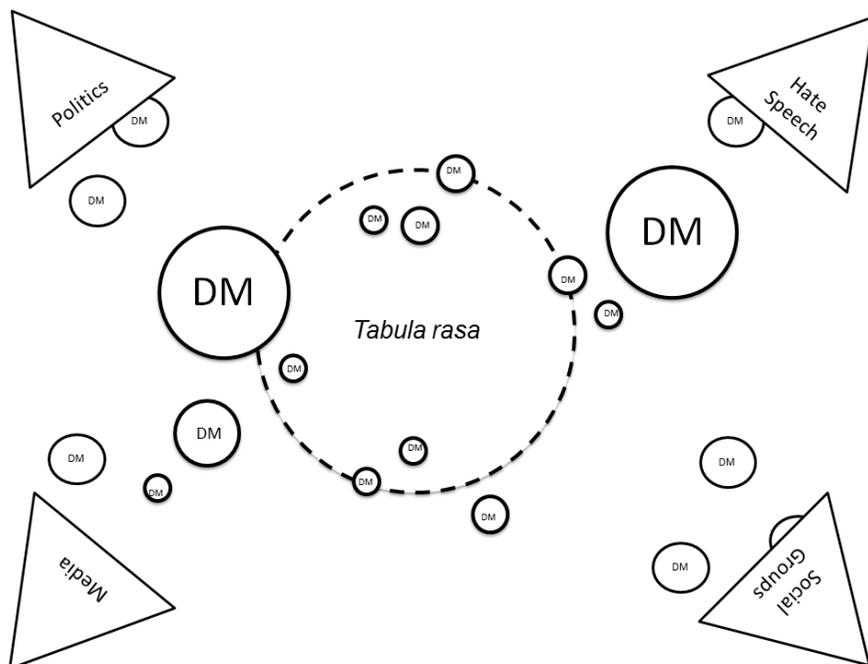
Heavily influenced by Althusser’s (1970) formulation of the state apparatus, cultural determinism is a paradigm that draws on social learning theories (see, for example, Bandura 1977) to integrate behavioral and cognitive theories into the corpus of empirical knowledge. Presenting an ideational perspective of “groupthink,” cultural determinism becomes the process by which individual behaviors, attitudes and values can be

influenced by sociopolitical milieu (Spiro 2001). It can be used to explain the shifting social perceptions toward Romani and Traveller people. Morgan (2016, 105) explains how legislators and governors, themselves part of a wider hostile culture, were able to exploit cultural determinism to galvanise a general stereotypical view of the conceptual “Gypsy,” while “enabling the agents of the State to exercise particularly close punishment and control.” However, a main limitation of cultural determinism is that it may not be genuinely scientific, resulting from a lack of clearly specified causal mechanisms. Neither has it been used to develop generalizable predictions. Therefore, in contrast to cultural determinism, as an explanation for the social changes experienced by Romani and Traveller people, the theory of memetics has emerged.

The term “meme” was first introduced by biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976 in his book, *The Selfish Gene*, to explain small cultural units of transmission (analogous to genes) and the way such cultural shifts spread from individual to individual (Dawkins 1976). A meme is a cultural idea that can move through a society, morphing and changing along the way. While Dawkins initially provided examples of memes in popular culture (music and fashion, for example), his idea has become associated with the social, cultural and psychological effects of hate speech – the advocacy of hatred based on ethnicity, nationality, race or religion (Nilsen 2006). If we recall Voltaire’s famous quotation: “Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities” (cited in McCabe 2007) it is arguable that the concept of memetics resonates as firmly 250 years after Voltaire was writing as when he first coined this phrase. Over the centuries, much destructive conduct has been perpetrated against Romani and Traveller people in the name of righteous ideologies, religious principles, and nationalistic imperatives (Hancock 2000; Kendrick 2004; Marushiakova and Veselin 2016).

Faithful to the “nurture” element of the “nature versus nurture” debate, Dawkins (1976) argues that memes are conceptualized as units of information that can self-replicate, mutate, and be passed from one person to another to form and develop the basis of an individual’s psychology, thus determining the way in which humans justify their response to specific social stimulus. Incorporating John Locke’s (1690) paradigm of *Tabula rasa* (see Lowe, 1995), the epistemological principle that can be used to substantiate the argument that individuals are not born with a built-in hate circuit, Allen (2017) illustrates how hate speech memes can be created to leave an impression on individual psychology (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Discriminatory memes (DM) entering the impressionable mind



The epoch of the weather front of hate

Rather than using hate speech memes to alter the public perception of Romani and Traveller people in isolation, political actors during the 15th and 16th centuries were able to develop a weather front of hate speech by issuing laws and edicts (Morgan 2016). By legislating against the Romani and Traveller way of life, political actors were able to embed a public perception that Roman and Traveller people were “other” and inferior (Morgan 2016). However, the absence of mass media in the 15th and 16th century meant that spreading hate speech was much harder to do. Instead, Houghton-Walker (2014) explained that state institutions were able to slowly change public attitudes by passing laws that criminalized nomadism, unlicensed trading, and the act of sleeping in tents and trailers.

As throughout Europe, increasing numbers of laws were passed to restrict the freedoms and liberties of Romani and Traveller people (Taylor 2014); Morgan (2016) and O’Nions (2011) suggest that hate speech began to noticeably alter public discourse about the populations, and provided

the catalyst for social ostracism and polarisation. More than this, hate speech memes enacted through law, meant that people who were seen to exhibit cultures or traditions associated with nomadism, and the conceptual “Gypsy” way of life, could be held accountable for their actions and then punished, arguably further priming the opportunity for conflict, as Morgan (2016) has illustrated through the example of Tudor England.

Throughout Europe, Romani and Traveller people who continued to practice traditions and cultures that had been outlawed, were systematically arrested and either executed, or punished with forced labour, forced sterilization, prison sentences, whipping, branding, and other forms of physical mutilation (Rodríguez and Araújo 2017). By the 20th century, the weather front of hate showed its true potential for destruction, when during the Holocaust committed against Roma, Sinti and other people seen as “Gypsies,” and by operationalizing the memetic influence of scientific racism and social Darwinism, the justification for murdering 600,000 people in what has become known as the Porrajmos (the “Devouring”) was provided (see further, About and Abakunova 2016; Ioanid 2006; Kelso and Eglitis 2014).

While for some readers there may remain some optimism that these outrages are contained in the pages of history, it is important to be aware that hostile states continue to perpetuate racist memes pertaining to Romani and Traveller people. These statements become galvanized in personal, cultural and societal belief systems that continue to justify and enact the atrocious treatment of Romani and Traveller people in a variety of hidden and implicit ways (Ergül 2017). To present a view of hate speech memes in action, it is possible to demonstrate how political actors are still able to leave an impression on the human consciousness with various examples of hate speech, including those in the quoted text below. The first quote by David Blunkett is taken from Tileagă (2016, 141). Subsequent quotes are taken from Keen (2005, 11):

“We’ve got to be tough and robust in saying to [Romani and Traveller] people you are not in a downtrodden village or woodland because many of them don’t even live in areas where there are toilets or refuse collection facilities. You are not there anymore, you are here – and you’ve got to adhere to our standards, and to our way of behaving, and if you do then you’ll get a welcome and people will support you.” (David Blunkett, Politician, British Labour Party)

“Gypsies are grouped around well-known criminals ... there are [Romani and Traveller people] who are born criminals [who] do not know how to

do anything other than to commit criminal acts!” (General Mircea Bot, Chief of the Bucharest Police)

“For [Romani and Traveller people] the age of criminal responsibility should be the moment of birth because being born is, in fact, their biggest crime!” (Miroslav Sladek, Politician. Czech Republican Party)

“A significant part of the [Romani and Traveller] population are unfit for co-existence! They are not fit to live among people! These animals shouldn’t be allowed to exist! In any form! That needs to be solved – immediately, and regardless of the method!” (Zsolt Bayer, co-founder of the Fidesz Party, Hungary)

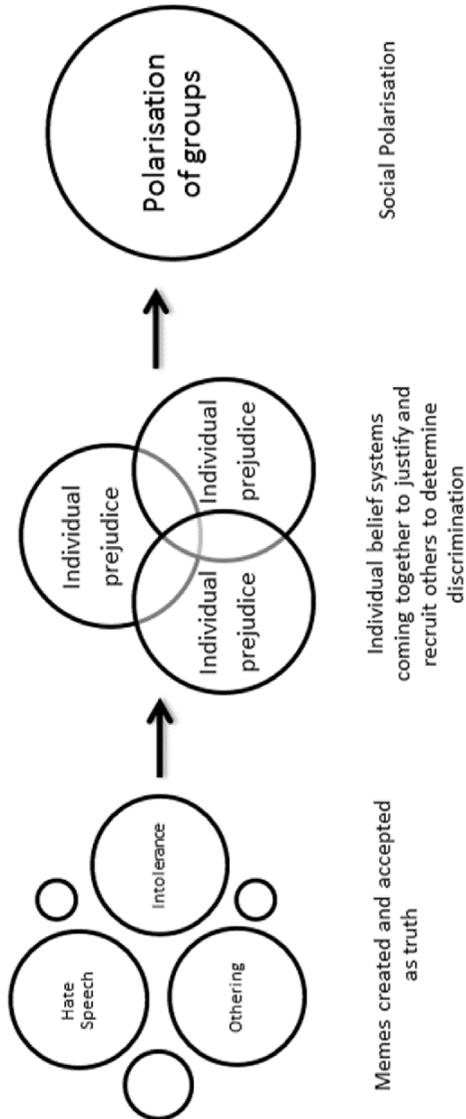
“The difference between Gypsies and cattle is that cattle are subject to veterinary control. Livestock can’t behave like Gypsies, but the reverse is allowed. Bovine rights and freedoms have been under serious pressure for years, and during that time the Gypsy woman has given birth to twins again and she’s as bloody-minded as a cow yet again.” (Kalin Rumenov, prize-winning Bulgarian journalist)

Given the power that these words have to change and affect the way that people (and you the reader) might think and feel, the theory of memetics has been used to argue that no meme in history is as malignant as those seen to incite social tension (Oboler 2012). Spoken by respected political actors, these memes can infect a human psychology, which enshrines the majority culture above “lesser” humans. As Figure 2 taken from Allen (2017) shows, hate speech memes, similar to those detailed earlier, can become internalized, and accepted by some recipients as truisms, leading in turn to societal division, stigmatization and in the worst cases, enacted hate crimes.

By creating social polarization, hate speech memes also construct classifications that reinforce a general public stereotypical view of individual Romani and Traveller lifestyle choices that are implicated in “non-normative” or “antisocial behaviors” (About and Abakunova 2016; Ioanid 2006; Kelso and Eglitis 2014). Worse still, where these concepts become normalized in media and political discourse, they create a lacuna in public discussion that omits consideration of wider frameworks of structural inequality and reactive responses to marginalization and or racism. Arguably, this normalization of such discriminatory memes is one of the reasons why Romani and Traveller people are represented in (largely unchallenged) negative terms within sociopolitical spheres. Accordingly, it is asserted that it is through the widespread perception of Romani and Traveller people as lesser human beings, that the weather front of hate is able to deepen societal division, increase stigmatization and

enhance opportunities for social tension and unrest between ‘mainstream’ and minority populations.

Figure 2: The relationship between discriminatory memes and social polarisation



In contrast, and offset against de jure proclamations of international human rights that exist to underpin freedoms and provide protected status for Romani and Traveller peoples (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) 2017), the weather front of hate continually seeks to “civilize” minoritized groups in order to “protect” society against the imagined “invasion” of people whose core values and cultures are publicly represented as repugnant or unfaithful to mainstream, normative, and acceptable social practices (Kteily and Bruneau 2017). Throughout the world, increasing numbers of human rights advocates agree that the concept of multiculturalism, or super-diversity (Vertovec 2007), remains as an ideology rather than a reality. In part, political scientists argue that the failure of human rights discourse can be associated with a growing number of political actors publicly denouncing the claim that geophysical and situational differences exist between the majority and minority populations, and might be a cause of social tension (Ringelheim 2009). For example, such narratives that minimize the lived realities of minority groups can be seen in America under the Trump administration (Narayan 2017), and in debates that fail to engage with the violence against the Rohingya in Myanmar (Southwick 2015).

Vertovec, writing in 2005, went so far as to assert that the move away from multiculturalism, tolerance, acceptance, inclusion, social justice, and any concept of international human rights, is now fuelling the manifestos of far right parties and the careers of political actors who can dictate and direct the weather front of hate through the use of silent indifference, passive aggression or examples of public hate speech memes. Indeed, the rise of elected far right parties in Europe in recent years provides evidence of the accuracy of his prediction.

The limitations of memetics

While memetic theory goes a long way to explaining the spread of hate speech against Romani and Traveller peoples, the premise of its rudimentary assumptions are not without controversy. Blackmore (2006), for example, argues that memes are ethereal and cannot be empirically defined through positivist enquiry. As memetics lacks scientific rigour when viewed through a positivist prism, it is often disregarded as pseudoscientific dogma unable to credibly explain psychological and cultural evolution (Atran 2001). Of course, there are other more empirically valid and sophisticated tools in structural linguistics (Matras 2015) and semiotics (Trumpener 1992) that could be utilized; but memetics does present the opportunity to hypothesize the way in which

ontology is constructed through social interaction, including how this ontological position is shared among minds that are unique and forever situated in their own contexts (Dawkins 1976). From a positivist position, this uniqueness of individual minds means that it might be difficult to predict how and why discrimination occurs. The fact that discriminatory behavior does occur, without being biologically determined, suggests that it must be conditioned and consolidated through processes which, again, are consistent with the tenets of social learning theories (Bandura 1977).

Despite such criticism as outlined above, memes remain powerful processes which can inspire passionate and extremist behavior based on idealistic notions of freedom, justice, truth, capitalism, religion and so on (Tileagă 2016). Often, memes represent an irrational or imagined commitment to ignorance that is fed by negative emotions, such as hate, despair, doubt and fear (Oboler 2012). Some memes reflect long-established, historical stereotypes based on perceived biological or physical differences (such as disablism, ageism, sexism, racism, and so on), whereas others are more situational and responsive to current political situations (such as Islamophobia (see Choma et al. 2016)). The time and place where memes circulate and develop shows, therefore, that discrimination and state hostility is socially constructed. However, as again shown throughout history, the hostile perception towards Romani and Traveller people is located in both physical and situational spheres (Acton 1974), which are identified and given meaning through the use of memes that are able to influence psychological evolution.

While many individuals and social groups are able to resist the influence of hate speech memes (see, for example, Frazer 1995) and thus critically examine discriminatory discourse; repeated use of “negative” memes create opportunities for the weather front of hate to influence public perception. However, Oboler (2012) argues that some memes can be created to change some individual psychologies so that intolerance and hostility become normalized. In mainland France, for instance, Muslim women have experienced direct legislative hostility (by way of legislative action) to wearing of the Hijab in public spaces, even though religious freedom exists in the private sphere (Adida, et al. 2014). As radical secularism has clashed with many Muslims’ desire to publicly display their faith, legislation is the tool used to impose normative behaviors. It singles out diverse communities and enables the punishment of those who continue to prioritise a public display of faith over state-sanctioned projects of control (Adrian 2015). Further examples from the politicolegal sphere can be found in Nigeria and many other African countries, where (for example) homophobia is justified by the use of legislation as legal

measures outlaw public conceptions of gay rights. In Nigeria, for example, a ban on same-sex marriage means that people who do marry could face up to 14 years in prison. Witnesses or anyone who helps homosexual couples marry could be sentenced to 10 years in jail (Melhado 2015). As is clear, from examples throughout the world, social tension is increasingly created through politicolegal discourse and then used to legitimize the persecution of those people who exercise their right to self-determined autonomy in the face of the commanding pressure of hate speech memes.

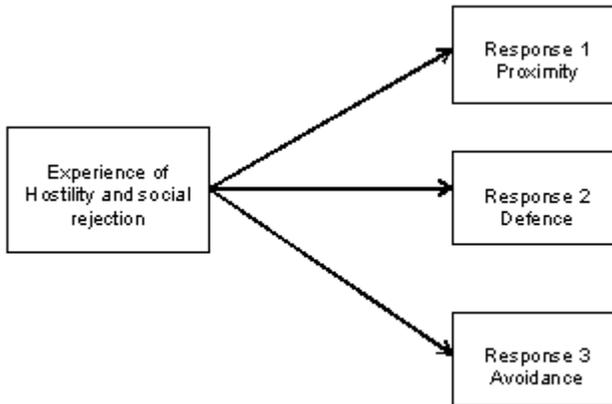
To return to the primary theme of this chapter, Romani and Traveller people are often blamed for the ills of society and dehumanized and stereotyped as antisocial thieves and vagabonds (New and Merry 2010; Richardson 2006; Stewart 2012). In this way, the communities continue to experience social rejection, which in turn impacts on their life chances. Throughout Europe, they share some of the lowest socioeconomic outcomes of any ethnic group, regularly experiencing intimidation, harassment, violence and marginalization, illegal school segregation, unemployment, substandard housing, and discrimination in access to health care (FRA 2017; Mueller 2011; Taylor 2004; WHO 2016). It can be argued that all of these negative impacts result from the weather front of hate that has pushed them to the margins of society.

Responding to social rejection

The way that Romani and Traveller people manage to survive social rejection and indeed in some circumstances thrive, despite sharing some of the lowest socioeconomic outcomes of any ethnic group, has been subject to a growing range of analysis in diverse countries (Greenfields and Smith 2010; Moreau 1995; Vanderbeck 2005). Empirical findings agree, however, that those Romani and Traveller people who experience a prolonged encounter with hostility and social rejection are more likely to experience negative emotions (most notably hurt feelings) and lowered self-esteem, with long-term impacts on their life chances and wellbeing.

As shown by Maeson (2015), Njegovan (2011), and Smith (2011), individual behaviors that accompany immediate reactions to social rejection and ostracism differ considerably. However, a theoretical model that attempts to conceptualize the typical responses to social rejection has been developed from Smart et al (2009) into a theory by Allen (2017) and is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Multi-motive model of reactions to social rejection



As shown in this rather simplified version of Smart and colleagues' (2009) model of responses to interpersonal rejection, we can see that the primary reaction to experiences of social ostracism and hostility typically involves a heightened desire for proximity or social reunification with the rejecting individual or community. In many cases, the ontological desire for proximity can be directed toward the rejecting person or institution, but this can also include the individual who has experienced social rejection or ostracism seeking out of proximity to other social groups and circumstances that can provide some reassurance, acceptance, and support; for example from friends and family members.

The second typical response to social rejection often involves strategies to defend against further repudiation and exclusion. Here the "blame" for rejection is projected outwards towards the individual or institution perceived to be responsible for causing the social renunciation. Third, people who experience social rejection can attempt to avoid experiencing continued or additional exclusion (and accompanying feelings of distress), by withdrawing from all social contact with those who are hostile towards them, in order to create distance between themselves and the source of rejection (Willems 1997).

In order to make sense of how these three typical responses are reported in the literature that reflects upon the situation of Romani and Traveller people, we will now consider each stage, in turn, commencing with "responses" two and three.

Hostility and the need to avoid further rejection

Five hundred years of exposure to hate speech memes means that large sections of the general population may have been primed to accept automatic prejudice towards Romani people. In other words, the vast majority of members of the public are often unaware that their negative thoughts and feelings toward Romani and Traveller people are indicative of a racist attitude (Judd et al 2004). For this reason, automatic prejudice serves as a significant obstacle to the attainment of complete integration for members of marginalized communities.

Intellectualizing the social impact of racism, anthropologists like Okley (1997; 1983), linguists such as Matras (2015) and other eminent scholars like Kenrick (2004), Liégeois (1998), and Gheorghe and Mirga (2001) have developed a hypothesis that some Romani and Traveller people respond to social rejection in a defensive or avoidant way. This is most notably explained through the theory of ethnogenesis (Gheorghe and Mirga 2001). For Portes (1998), the concept of “bounded solidarity” supports the argument that excluded and “othered” Romani and Traveller groups, who have developed a heightened awareness of their identity and marginalization, seek to develop a greater sense of unity by demonstrating and describing a preference for “in-group” separation.

Kenrick (2004) and Gheorghe and Mirga (2001) provide an overview of principles of ethnogenesis to suggest that the transmission of Romani and Traveller people’s culture is a resilient act, influenced by the fundamental motive of maintaining “in-group” acceptance through defending against any rejection from the “out-group” (or hostile, mainstream society). Consistent with attachment-based theories of human growth and development (see, for example, Beiser 1988) this motivational response is thought to have an evolutionary origin, developing from a biologically determined dependence on cooperative social relationships with others, who can facilitate cultural survival (Trevisan 2017). As the need to achieve a sense of acceptance and belonging is a basic tenet of human growth and development theory, the positioning of Romani and Traveller people in social situations that can enable this is essential for their psychological and physical well-being. Interestingly, Dimitrova et al. (2014), in examining the premise of social polarization, suggested that for individuals or communities who perceive hostility, there is an increased group-based identification, which, in turn, enhances individual and community well-being. This effect may occur via two routes.

First, as people identify more strongly with their group, they may become more engaged with their own sense of identity and culture (Kotrotsiou et al. 2013), thereby affording themselves opportunities to