Chapter 4

A Wider View of the Rom

and Education

Introduction

This chapter reviews selected literature from Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States on the education of Rc ma. This study has also undertaken an evaluation of the views presented in these wo ks, giving an indication as to the strengths and weaknesses of the literature in the Australian context.

Studies about the lack of education and educational facilities for the Rom first appeared in England in the late 1960s, picking up momentum in 1970 with the formation of the National Gypsy Education Council. Since then, a number of significant studies on the education of Roma have been conducted in England. In

Western Europe, since the early 1980s, the Council of Europe and the European Community have both conducted systematic analyses and put forward proposals in this same area.[1] Although there have been a number of studies conducted in the United States, conducted mainly in the 1970s, in Australia there is a lack of any major study on the education of Roma.

England

Dennis Binns describes the campaigns and attitudes in England towards education of Romani people during the Eighteenth Century. He notes that the first practical attempt in England, was in Cambridge in 1810. Most of these initial endeavours were destined to fail for two reasons, one being the expenses incurred and the other being that the Romani parents were on the whole, unwilling to part with their children.[2] The first documented school in Europe was in Prussia in 1830 and its aim was 'to attempt religious instruction of the Gypsies and consequently their social and moral improvement'.[3] These early endeavours were characterised by an almost evangelistic zeal of the Gajé towards education of Romani children. This attitude persisted right through the Eighteenth and into the Nineteenth Century:

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[1]   J. Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, trans. S. ní Shuinéar, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1994, p. 203.

[2]   D. Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers in Nineteenth Society*, C. U. P., 1988, pp. 103, 105, 116-118, quoted in D. Binns, 'History and Growth of Traveller Education', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, London, vol. 38, No. 3, 1990, pp. 251-2.

[3]   E. Frossard, 'The Gypsies in France', *The Saturday Magazine*, No. 165, January 31, 1835, pp. 39-40, quoted in Binns, p. 252.

The philosophy behind most cf these campaigns was basically to save

the children from the unaccep able lifestyle of their parents who were

regarded as pariahs and outcz sts.[4]

Many laws were passed in the hope o 'forcing travellers to come into line with the rest

of society, imposing fines and other r ore serious penalties for noncompliance. These

made little difference to the number cf Romani children in school. The first significant

breakthrough came in the form of the 1967 Plowden Report which devotes a whole

chapter to 'Britain's most educa ionally disadvantaged group', the Gypsies.[5]

Voluntary groups responded quickly and a number of mobile and segregated primary

schools appeared around England. Segregation of Romani children into their own

schools, was considered to be the best option as the mainstream schools were

regarded to be unprepared for the ir flux of previously uneducated and socially inept

children. In addition to this, it appeared that the majority of parents preferred this

option.[6]

The major stumbling block in the way of education of the Rom in England is the lack

of provision for camping sites for those who travel. Often these families are moved

away within a very short time of t eir arrival. The 1968 Caravan Sites Act, Part 2,

which was implemented in the eaily 1970s has brought about more legal sites on

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[4]   Binns, p. 252.

[5]   B. Plowden, *Children And Their P. imary School*, H.M.S.O., vol. 2, quoted in Binns, p. 254.

[6]   Binns, p. 254-55.

which Gypsies could stop, making regular access to school much easier. Even with this measure, Roma in England are hard pressed to find stopping places and many are camping in illegal sites without the resources to improve their situation. These illegal sites have no provisions for hygiene maintenance and this is another factor in these children not attending school.

One of the most comprehensive studies on the provision of education for travelling children was a study by Christopher Reiss, in England in 1975. It examines the issues surrounding the education of all Traveller children (not just those of Romani heritage) as one of the series in the Schools Council Research Studies. Although the eighteen-month study includes Roma, canal-boat, and fairground children, Gypsies and Travellers were the main subject of the research project. In analysing the English state of affairs in the early 1970s, this study takes into account the history, the nature of the lifestyle, the role of the schools and different approaches being used and those which could possibly be used. The results of the study are available to all teachers and schools involved in the provision of education of travelling children and even now it is hailed as one of the few studies to provide detailed information on the plight of the Romani children in England and the difficulties and needs involved in providing them with an education.

One of the main aims of the report is teacher education and from that perspective, it includes a chapter on methods of organisation and class allocation. It also outlines the main strategies of individual schools and teachers developed to deal with Roma and

Travellers in the classroom. Reiss notes that most of these are simply 'expedient and pragmatic responses by schools and teachers' rather than solutions that had been based on a sound educational theory. He states that one of the most important considerations that may need to be faced is that progress in school and the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Rom may be incompatible. Reiss uses the work of Passow, Goldberg and Tannenbaum with American Indians to illustrate this:

> the [American] Indian child achieves more in an integrated school than under segregation, however his exposure to children from other cultural backgrounds tends to have an eroding effect upon his cultural identity. The moral question arises as to whether it is right for the school to attempt making over the Indian traditions which have a long, rich history, even though these traditions present a handicap to material success and enlightenment in twentieth century America. ... The traditional American dilemma over whether to preserve cultural pluralism or to make our society one of the world's great melting pots.[7]

In the section titled 'Dilemmas of Assimilation and Heritage', Reiss discusses the difficulties associated with placing Romani children into mainstream classes and how the degree to which the cultural heritage of these children is exposed should be

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[7]   A. Passow, M. Goldberg & A. Tannenbaum, eds, *Education of the Disadvantaged*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1967, p. 88, quoted in Reiss, p. 93.

determined by the children themselves. For example, Romani children who have been

assimilated into the Gajé classroom will not want to be treated differently from the

other children and exposure of their heritage may very well expose them to ridicule.

On the other hand, class activities may require that all participating children are literate

and possess other basic skills, provded by the school. He also feels that traveller

children may need to be treated differently from Gajé children, as their needs are quite

different. One of the problems presented by the Romani and Traveller children is

because they are present at school for such a short time, the advancing of literacy

skills and other educational goals cannot easily be realised.[8]

He presents examples from his case studies on primary schools of assimilative

dispersal, inductive classes followed by dispersal, complete segregation (in separate

facilities with different teachers), and segregation in on-site extension classrooms and

dispersal with removal for special classes. For secondary schools he presents examples

of normal class allocation, normal classes with substantial periods of withdrawal, and

an ESN (for educationally sub-normal Gajé children) - traveller unit with a specially

trained teacher in a comprehensive school.

Some of the innovative measures trialled include an all-age separate school for

Traveller children, and an extension classroom on a caravan site. The aim of this

school for the Traveller children was to 'provide a viable inductive or preparatory

education before normal school attendance and class assimilation' was introduced, a

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[8]   Reiss, pp. 147-48.

process it was envisaged would ta:e at least five years. This school has at least five or six full-time staff with a ratio of :eacher:children of 1:5. It was noted that the high staffing ratio, in addition to the rer ting of premises, makes this project a costly one. There have also been trials of on-site pre-schooling, summer school programmes, mobile education units, educatioiial visitors and adult education and community development projects. Interestingl), those projects which were most productive owed their success to involvement of the Rom themselves, through direct approaches or by using their own community organi;ations to provide a lead in.

Reiss concludes that there are thr:e main areas where discrepancies occur. Firstly, there are administrative-type prob ems, such as the incompatibility of school terms with travelling patterns and a lack c f liaisor. between area school administrations. He describes how:

> several weaknesses of the maintained system are exposed by the special demands of Travellc r educaiion: the system is neither designed nor geared for a nomad c people with the characteristic mass abstention, late starting, in egularity of attendance at several schools within the same academic year and premature withdrawal to participate in the family ecc nomy. Indeed, though there is no absolute conflict between nomadism and education, regular school attendance and nomadism are to an ex :ent incompatible.[9]

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[9] Reiss, p. 166.

He considers that these administrative difficulties could be remedied 'with little difficulty' by cooperation between the Rom and the education system. However, the simple presence/absence of literacy skills is not seen as the real area of dissent.

Secondly, the areas of most concern found were the attitudinal differences, as well as the degree of disparity between the two traditional value systems. Teachers tended to give up quite easily assuming that because a child was a Traveller, he would never learn to read and write. Others felt that the social background was inimical to attaining literacy and that this was too great a barrier to be overcome, due in no small part to the unavailability of support at home, for example, the child would be asking an illiterate parent to help with their spelling. Schooling was feared by many Rom parents because it could be used to indoctrinate or 'soften' the child, resulting in a lowered capacity for coping with the extreme rigours of the travelling life. As the children gained maturity and reached adult status within their own community (at about the age of twelve to thirteen) every hour spent at school was an hour not spent contributing to the survival of the family in economic terms.

School is promoted as a way of moving upwards socially, out of the confines of the lower socio-economic class. For the Rom, this promise means nothing, for in their minds, they have no place in Western society out of which they need to move. Because the socialisation of the Rom takes place almost exclusively within the

extended family, once the basic skills of literacy are attained, which incidentally, makes the child a 'scholar' in their society, there is no further need for school.[10]

Lastly, was the traditional antipathy of the Rom towards education. The Rom are found to be proud of the discrepancies between their lifestyle and that of the sedentary Gajé, which included the lack of educational 'trappings' that the Gajé hold so important. He also found that the Rom

> take great pride in 'getting on' independently without education, literacy and received knowledge. Many base their economies on the gullibility and naïvety of Gaujes [Gajé]; they have living proof that education in schools is of little worth in such matters - indeed, that some of their strategies may succeed precisely because education puts blinkers on the individual. Many, who have a superficial level of literacy and education, will exaggerate their illiteracy and lack of education when they face officialdom or forms.

> In many cases the Traveller superiority complex is a defence mechanism. They know that there is little likelihood that their children will shine in school, and that actually there is real danger that they will be classified as ignorant, illiterate, even ineducable. They may even fear that their children will be categorised ESN or 'mental'.

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[10]   Reiss, p. 167.

Attendance at school also exp)ses their children to host community

prejudice, abuse, and on playgrounds - assault ...[11]

It was felt, at least in this study, that th?se obstacles, in the pervading English climate, were virtually insurmountable. Englard, at the time of publishing this study in 1975, was far in advance of where Australia is in 1998 in terms of acknowledgment of the difficulties faced by the Rom in mainsiream education. The reasons for this are many, but perhaps the most notable is that the problem in England is overt. Widespread publicity has ensured the attention of influential and government groups and as a result, they have been targeting this community for many years. While some of these projects may be feasible in theory, they would possibly find little practical success in an Australian context.

However, if similar research coulc be undertaken from a position of current knowledge about the situation of the Romani population in an Australian context, there are many possible avenues for a ction research. For example, the mobile schools and those on camping sites would be difficult to implement because of the wide dispersal of Romani populations. The e is no set pattern of migration and families may leave a caravan park or house to go in separate directions depending on family needs. If the parents can be convinced about the advantages of literacy, then their attitude towards education could perhaps be swayed. Adult education may open the way for

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[11]   Reiss, pp. 166-7.

education of the children. Many other ideas could be extended and these have been elaborated on as areas of future research in Chapter Eight.

Building onto this ground-breaking research by Reiss has seen many new initiatives in schools. Teachers are encouraged to discuss their difficulties and more conferences are being held to deal with specific issues involved with Traveller education. There has in the last few years been a clear shift in the thinking of others about the status of Travellers from a deficit model of cultural disadvantage to ethnic minority status. The rhetoric of multiculturalism was evident in 1987 when it was said that 'every classroom is a multicultural classroom. It is the sum of all the children's experiences. The degree of experiences may vary from area to area'.[12]

Most of the recent research and advances in the field of education have come through the participation of England in the projects of the European Community and are therefore included in this discussion.

Europe

The lack of literacy of the Romani people has been a consuming passion across the European Union since the end of the Second World War. However many low profile, individual attempts have been made since the first recorded attempt in Prussia in 1830.

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[12]   P. Holmes, Department of Education and Science, *Regional Course Report: The Education of Gypsy and Fairground Children*, Buckinghamshire, March 17-19, 1987, p. 1.

The first serious international moves towards universal education of the Romani people started when the Internationa Romani Union (IRU) was granted Observer status to the United Nations in March 1979, which was upgraded from observer to Category II: Consultative status in 1993. This meant that proposals from the IRU carried weight, some of these proposals were focused on education. Currently in Europe there would be upwards of one thousand political and cultural organisations, many of which have school provision as one of their agendas.[13]

The European Parliament had demonstrated an ongoing awareness of the difficult situation of Gypsy communities, but the history of the European Community's specific interest in the issue of school provision for Gypsy and Traveller children dates from 1984. On the 16th of March of that year, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the education of children of parents with no fixed abode, in which it invited the Commission of European Communities to cooperate with the Member States in the development of measures to ensure that such children would be provided with an education suited to their needs.[14]

In 1986, the report *School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children* was published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. The research for

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[13]   Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, pp. 259-61.

[14]   J. Liégeois, 'The Genesis of a Resolu ion', in *Interface*, trans. S. ní Shuinéar, Paris, no. 1, February 1991, p. 3.

this report was conducted by the Gypsy Research Centre in the Université Ren

Descartes in Paris. The final report outlined the state of Gypsy education and gave a

100-point summary, and recommendations for improving the situation. There followed

much consultation of Education Ministries, teachers, experts, and community groups,

under the general direction and control of the Education Committee and:

> Finally, on 22nd May, 1989, the *Council and Ministers of Education*
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> adopted a *Resolution* on school provision for Gypsy and Traveller
>
> Children. This is a very significant text and one which can rightly be
>
> called historic ... One of the opening paragraphs recognises - indeed,
>
> emphasises - that Gypsies' and Travellers' 'culture and language have
>
> formed a part of the Community's cultural and linguistic heritage for
>
> over 500 years'.[15]

This ground-breaking document has resulted in a number of new initiatives aimed at

improving the educational status of the Rom across Europe and England.

The *Interface* Journal is promoted as an information newsletter for 'Gypsy and

Traveller organisations, other associations, teachers, teacher trainers, coordinators,

inspectors, librarians, and local, regional, and national administrative services'.[16] It

was set up within the context of the implementation of the Resolution on School

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[15]   Liégeois, *Interface*, p. 3.

[16]   *Interface*, trans. S. Ní Shuinéar, Paris, February 1991 -

Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children adopted by the Council and the Ministers of Education of the European Community Its function is to serve as an information link, ensuring the cooperation and participation of all Member States by provision of information and wide publication of the developments in school provision for Gypsy and Traveller children. While there does appear to be much action on the research side, there are still many difficulties at the grass roots level. There is still a lot of racism in Europe standing in the way of true progress and much of the Interface is aimed at negating this attitude. A section of each issue is devoted to one country, in which there is a discussion of the Rom and their cultural background, and their experiences, difficulties and progress in education.

Many of the initiatives taken by groups under this Resolution are occurring in recent times, for example, 1994 was declared a 'pivotal' year, this was the year in which a series of 'action programmes' were set up (see Appendix B). These programmes embraced the beginning of some new activities and the continuation of some already under way. As a result of the lobbying of several small but persistent groups, there was a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council, to establish the 'Leonardo da Vinci' project on vocational training and the Community action project on education 'Socrates'. This last project is an example of the successful use of a combination of different tactics to bring Romani, traveller children and education closer together.[17]

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[17]   J. Liégeois, (ed.), *Interface*, no. 18 May 1994, p.2.

The Socrates Community action prog·amme is scheduled to run from January 1995 to December 1999, it is comprised of :hree areas of action: higher education (called *Erasmus*), school education (called *C(menius*), and horizontal measures which cover language skills in the community (*Lingua*), open and distance education and promotion of the exchange of informɛtion and experience.

Comenius envisages three foci of actiɔn:

Action 1: Partnerships betweɛn schools. These should be multilateral, involving at least three schoois from three Member States, and built around European education ʃrojects (EEPs) focussing on areas such as the languages of the Euroʃean Union, pupil mobility, exchange of information and experienc(, and the use of information and communication technologies. Among the categories listed for priority consideration are projects wi:h 'elements aiming to meet the needs of children with specific educat onal needs and capacities'.

Action 2: Education of the cl ildren of migrant workers, as well as the children of occupational travellɛrs, Travellers and Gypsies; intercultural education ... 'Ɉinancial assistance may be allocated to transnational projects aiminɡ to:

− promote as full a particip.ition as possible in school activities and equal opportunities for cl ildren cf migrant workers, occupational travellers, Travellers and Gypsies,

– improve their schooling and the quality of education they receive,

– meet their specific educatic nal needs and capacities,

– promote intercultural educ ition for all schoolchildren.

These projects may include ir particular:

– the exchange of information and experience especially on all aspects

referred to in the first para graph,

– the design of special cours e and teaching material,

– the introduction of intercu tural teaching practices.

Action 3: Updating and in proving the skills of education staff.

Projects in this category may promote, for example, 'the updating and

improvement of the skills of educational staff more particularly

engaged in activities aimed at raising levels of school achievement and

at ensuring as full a particif ation as possible in school activities of

children with specific educational needs and capacities.'[18]

It can be argued that participation of the Rom in the Europe Community has resulted

in their assimilation into the very po sition it was feared that would result, that is, the

lowest social strata. The following s atemen: by a Romani journalist and dramatist in

Serbia illustrates the disastrous con: equences of assimilation for the Romani people:

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[18] Decision No. 819/95/EC of the E iropean Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995 establishing the Community actio 1 programme 'Socrates', *Official Journal of the European Communities*, 20 April 1995, No. L 37, pp. 10-24, quoted in *Interface*, No. 18, May 1995, pp. 3-4.

The problem of getting Roma children into the education and training

systems is an acute one, particularly from the point of view of Roma

integration into society at large. Roma are stuck into a vicious circle

of poverty, excluded from the social division of work by their lack of

formal education, and this in turn because they do not enjoy the

minimum conditions which would enable them to access normal

schooling. Without the legal minimum of normal schooling - eight or

nine years worth - steady employment, a basic means of social

promotion, remains beyond the grasp of most Roma ... We may rest

assured that this long-term exclusion of Romani children from regular

schooling will continue to produce generations perpetuating illiteracy,

handicapped from integrating into the modern currents of social life.

In effect everyone knows - and sociological research is forever

reconfirming - that Roma are at the very bottom of the social ladder.

This is true, not only as a result of historical processes but also the

consequences of their position among the most disadvantaged ...[19]

This self-defeating attitude is a result of Roma trying to assimilate into mainstream

culture. It cannot be allowed to happen in Australia.

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[19]   K. Paćaku, 'Reflections and Options: Teaching Roma in Europe', in *Interface*, No. 21, February 1996, p. 4.

The United States

Roma in the United States tend to settle in large groups, congregating usually in areas where there are already large numbers of other ethnic minority groups. Most of the strategies used to improve literacy revolve around the setting up of segregated schools, actually within the Romani community, although the focus is usually to provide a general introduction into the schooling process, preparatory to integration into mainstream schools. Volunteer and charity workers account for a large proportion of the professionals who work in these schools. Attempts to have children placed in state schools start with Welfare departments trying gentle persuasion first, followed by 'vigorous proselytising' and threats of Juvenile Court action. While in some cases, there was initial cooperation, mostly the family concerned would simply pack up and leave.[20]

Louis describes one particular group in Richmond, Virginia, which had been the subject of four attempts of 'special group instruction' in five years, before the fifth, successful 'Romany School' was started. She states that 90% of the adult population were illiterate and that most of the children had never been to school, few of them having received more than two or three years of schooling.

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[20]   A. Louis, 'Recent Innovations in Gaujo Methods of Education, Organisational Problems of a Gypsy
         School: The Romany School of Richmond', in *Current Changes Among British Gypsies and Their
         Place in International Patterns of Development: Proceedings of the Research and Policy Conference
         of the National Gypsy Education Council*, ed., T. Acton, National Gypsy Education Council, Oxford,
         1971, p. 37.

Because the projects are aimed sole y at Rcmani children, no existing educational government funds could be utilised (nd therefore funds for these projects had to be pooled from the resources of the Soc al Services Department. The initial programmes set in place are usually fragmented a1d special teaching methods are rarely used, but the initial results are encouraging. The Romany School was run on a volunteer basis, although once underway, some fund; were received from outside sources such as the San Francisco Children's Hospital as they were interested in the health related aspects of the project.

Although they objected to sending t 1eir children to the state schools in the area, the Rom community leaders were founc to be accepting of any system that would:

> not subvert their authority and which would keep the children together
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> in a safe and well-supervisec. atmosphere. The Gypsies were pleased
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> with the results of these first ;fforts to educate their children in special
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> classes. The concept of a G\psy school had great appeal for them.[21]

This school was seen as a way to give their children literacy skills and schooling without exposing them to the local : chools which were generally rough and plagued with racial violence. In addition, the historic reaction to pressure from truancy officers, that is 'pack up and leave', was no longer the only option. It was found that a productive relationship had develo >ed between the Rom community leaders and the

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[21] Louis, p. 38.

local social services department. Th: notion of the school progressed from that natural starting point, with volunteers and the appropriate authorities nurturing lines of communication. The result is of be left to all.

One person was responsible for the running of the school and most of the teaching as well, although two other teachers were part-time, one of whom was an arts and craft teacher. The school was designed specially to meet the distinct needs and problems of the Romani children, given that these children would be of all ages. Five months of intensive planning went into the school before it was presented to the Romani community and this was also felt to be instrumental in ensuring the success of the school. The other teachers were also briefed very carefully about the attitudes and behaviour which would be considered appropriate for working with Romani children. The curriculum was specifically geared towards literacy skills which it was felt needed to be presented in a fun and interesting way and all lessons were individually prepared. A popular strategy once initial literacy skills had been learned was for the children to tell their own stories which were then typed (by the children) and used as readers for the whole class.

A school board and its directors were elected and comprised Roma from the local community. The board set the rules for the school and policies which governed the school and its participants. Because the school was such an integral part of the local community, the board, teachers and directors met once a week. This proved to be instrumental in effecting the continuation of the school as one of the difficulties was

that because of this closeness, there were many times when the politics of the community became inextricably linked to the politics of the school. The teachers also became involved with the community as it was found that some of the discipline problems that occurred were caused by fights or disagreements within the children's families. A much more effective way of solving the problem turned out to be that instead of punishing the children, the parents and sometimes the whole community would be called in for a meeting and d fferences of opinion would be sorted out at this level. Difficulties with children not attending were minimal and at the end of the year, thirty-eight children received a special certificate. The school was opened up to include a community centre for meetings, parties and gatherings of the local Roma and this was heralded as part of the success of the school in becoming an integral part of the Rom community.[22]

An article titled 'Portland's Gypsies See School In Their Future', describes a project to prepare Romani children for integration into the local school.[23] Of the 250 Romani children estimated to be living in the local Portland area, most could not write or read their name, they were also much more comfortable speaking Romanes than English. These drawbacks combined with the spring migration during which most Roma left town contributed to the literacy problems. The 'king' of the Portland Gypsies approached the local government, asking for:

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[22]   Louis, pp. 38 - 40.

[23]   Y. Egan, 'Portland's Gypsies See School In Their Future', in *American Education*, vol. 16, no. 2, March 1980, pp. 20-24.

a Gypsy Centre in Portland a place where young and old could meet

and hold fiestas, a place where children and adults could learn to read

and write and learn skills that would land them jobs, but where their

cultural heritage would not be stolen away by educators intent on

stirring Gypsy children into the great American melting pot and

pouring them out in the all-American mold.[24]

It was agreed that an educational programme be set up, but with a focus on getting

the children ready for integration into mainstream schools. A three-part programme

was devised in which there would be a summer school for young Romani adults over

the age of 18, followed by specific vocational training, and a school programme for

school-aged children. The school was to be for two and a half hours each day, starting

at lunch, on the school grounds. The project initially received little support from the

local Romani community despite having the backing of the local 'king'. It was thought

that assurances that the school system did not intend to 'steal the children' had to

come from trusted members of the local community. In fact, one of the reasons for the

success of this school was the participation of three 'Special Gypsy Counsellors'.

Their role was to recruit children by visiting the parents and convincing them that

'school was a good place for their children to be'. They also provided transport to and

from the school and at least one of the counsellors stayed on the school grounds at all

times. Because of the focus of this project, funding was received from the school

district, the State Disadvantaged Children and the Federal Impact Aid funds.

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[24]   Y. Egan, p. 21.

The initial difficulties in the school were caused by the apparent lack of discipline of the children and an inability to concentrate on any one task for more than a few minutes. This was explained by the tightness to which the Romani mothers would hold onto their children protecting them from the outside world. It was decided that the children and in particular, the older children, needed to first acquire the social skills for schooling as well as the required literacy skills. In addition to the regular curriculum, self discipline, group behaviour and individual responsibility were regular features of the day, and often, issues of cultural differences as well.

The school project was the only one of the three that got off the ground and even so, there were only 40 children attending the school, out of the 250 who live in the district. It was hoped that the positive feelings those children were experiencing about school would permeate the children who had not attended the school. Enthusiasm was also being shown for another try at the young adult basic skills programme with more 'emphasis on survival skills such as vocational training, health and nutrition classes, shop, and home economic classes', in addition to the literacy sessions.[25]

There was a complete lack of follow-up information available on either of these two school systems making it impossible to know if either or both approaches were successful in their aims. An interesting phenomenon is that there appears to have been no projects started and recorded since this flurry in the early to middle 1970s and it leaves one wondering why this is so

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[25]   Y. Egan, pp. 21-24.

Conclusion

There has, in the last few years, teen a clear shift in the way that the Rom are perceived, throughout Europe, England and the United States. They have moved from the class of the culturally disadvantaged to ethnic minority status. There are many projects being implemented, attacking the 'Gypsy problem' from every angle and yet, despite the change in official thinking from assimilation to cultural pluralism in one of the most multicultural areas of land - Europe, the collective mind of the general populace remains the same. Even now, it seems that, without money, there are only two choices, to assimilate and disappear into the mainstream school system, or to stay away and retain the traditional culture.

Despite this somewhat pessimistic conclusion, one must admit that tiny inroads have been made by these projects and studies. There are more Romani children now who are literate than ever before, they have the new strength of the label, ethnic minority, behind them and finally, recognition of the right to retain their culture and traditions.

The design of this study is discussed in Chapter Five. This methodology has been developed out of much of the documentation of the European and American experiences, but taking account of the Australian context. This study takes advantage of the information gleaned from these international studies, their successes and failures have been noted and their ideas used as sounding boards during discussions with informants. Out of this chosen methodology have come recommendations that rest on the fact that the Romani people are not a class of culturally disadvantaged people, but

are an ethnic minority with all the rights and responsibilities commensurate with this status.

These rights and responsibilities are stated in the information paper by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs in 1997.[26] The implications of these for the Romani people are discussed in Chapter Eight.

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[26] Department of Immigration and Mu ticultural Affairs, *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, What is Multiculturalism*, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Canberra, April 1997.

Chapter 5

The Methodology

Introduction

Discussed here are the research methods used and the relationship between the methodology and the objectives of the study. Much of the discussion in this chapter will focus on the advantages and limitations of the chosen methodology - ethnographic case study. The methodology used n this study has been chosen owing to the need for current information about the Rom in Australia, their attitudes towards education and the need to first identify the prevail ng conditions in an Australian context. From this position of current knowledge, there can emerge a practical basis for future policy decisions for the Romani people. Although the chosen approach may be somewhat restrictive with respect to sample size, this technique will be able to yield powerful data on the problem in the Australian context.

This chapter investigates the type of knowledge required to address the research questions posed, ensuring interrelation with the method of acquiring this knowledge which in its turn, sets the foundation stone for the way in which we view the situation and its phenomena.[1] It highlights how the knowledge gained from this study is set apart from other methods of comprehension such as that acquired through belief, the senses and opinion by the application of rigour, definition of the question and a systematic investigation to find the solutions.[2]

Starting with the theoretical framework from which the research methodology arises, this chapter will discuss the application of the techniques used in the fieldwork phases of the study. The methods of data analysis underscoring the determination of the reliability and validity of the trial and ethical considerations are also discussed.

The Research Method and Guiding Paradigms

This study contains an ethnographic description of two groups of Roma living in Australia. It is based on fourteen months of intensive participant observation, interviews and a lifetime of experience, struggling with the same problems as described in this study.

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[1]   A. Kaplan, *The Conduct of Inquiry, Methodology for Behavioral Science*, Chandler, Pennsylvania, 1964, p. 34.

[2]   R. Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods in Education*, Longman Cheshire, Victoria, 1990, p. 1.

The approach chosen for this resea:ch was the qualitative approach based on the interpretative or post-positivist paradigm. The socially critical paradigm was not considered appropriate for this study as raisirg awareness and inciting political action amongst the Rom were not motives for the research. The choice is justified on the following grounds.

Positivism, also known as scientific e npiricism, refuses to concede the status of reality to things not directly observable and therefore, quantifiable.[3] Out of this very one-sided view developed the quantitative approach to research, which has as its basis the premise that data must be capable of yielding proof or strong confirmation, in probability terms, of a theory or hypothesis in a controlled research environment. The methodological processes of this approach necessitate the formation of laws to account for both the explicable and inexplicable events in the world, thereby attempting to provide a firmer basis for prediction of future events and control of immediate and distant environments.[4]

Control is effected by taking a variable environment and replicating it in a controlled environment in which each identifiab e variable can be manipulated individually. In this manner, for any theory or hypothesis to be declared valid, it must pass the rigours of tests of objectivity, reliability, generality and reductionism. It is held by this approach that data are measurable and therefore quantification is required in order for a proper

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[3]   C. Grant, *Research & Multicultural Education: from the Margins to the Mainstream*, The Falmer Press, London, 1992, p. 64.

[4]   Burns, p. 2.

conclusion to be drawn, and that human interests must not be brought into arguments leading to a logical, scientific conclusion. A coherent argument, justifying the way the investigation was conducted is usually offered so that findings can be given provisional trust. Finally, the entire enterprise is typically reported as an argument so that the wider community of researchers can evaluate the validity of the findings. Nothing is taken for granted, so runs the traditional logic of the scientific (quantitative) method.[5]

The major disadvantages of applying this philosophy to a piece of research in the field of educational policy for minority groups is that the humanistic side is so very important. The personal interactions and interchange of information in a real setting are two aspects that cannot be taken out of their environment and reproduced in a laboratory, under the strict control of the researcher.

The qualitative approach accepts that the social, economic, political, cultural and personal circumstances are vital components of the empirical sciences with their focus on what we can learn through interaction with the 'real' world, leaving formal science to focus on the roles and quality of reasoning. Basic to this approach is the belief that reality cannot be wholly subsumed within numerical classification and therefore research conducted within the confines of this approach places most emphasis on the validity of the subjective, experiential 'life-world' and holistic analysis, 'as opposed

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[5]   R. Macpherson, 'Contexts of Postgraduate Research', in R. Macpherson, *Ways and Meaning of Research in Educational Administration*, University of New England, Armidale, 1987, p. 7.

to the criteria of reliability and statistical compartmentalisation of quantitative research'.[6]

Perceptions and interpretations of reality are not seen as a fixed and stable entity, but as a type of variable that might be determined only through analysis. The main difference between quantitative and qualitative research is perhaps, not so much the use of statistical methodology, but rather that in quantitative research, numerical values are fundamental to the understanding of events, while in qualitative research they are incidental and often of little significance.

There are four major areas of limitation with respect to the qualitative approach. The first is ensuring adequate validity and reliability by traditional scientific methods is usually unachievable. This is due to the highly subjective nature of the data collected and the singular nature of its origin These factors cause difficulties with replication and generalisation of findings to the wider perspective. The second, is the time required for collection, analysis and interpretation of data, in order to properly understand the implications of the observed behaviours. Thirdly, the need for anonymity which often forms the basis of trust between the researcher and informant may cause difficulties when endeavouring to comply with the requirement of authenticity Lastly, the possibility of bias on the part of the researcher and the informants must be identified and elucidated.[7]

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[6]   Burns, p. 8.

[7]   R. Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, 2nd edn, Longman Australia, Melbourne, 1994, p. 13.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the main strengths of the qualitative approach lie in its ability to get close to a situation, to identify and elucidate the reasons behind why such an interaction is taking place, or why a situation is occurring. New and unexpected reasoning may be brought out because of the implicit acceptance of the natural scheme of things, and the lack of rigid methodology. Qualitative inquiry is characterised by a 'methodological eclecticism, and an hypothesis-free orientation allowing the freedom to explore new qualities and subtleties not previously uncovered. Another advantage is the user-friend y presentation of the data and outcomes which can enable more immediate implementation of concepts into a practical situation.[8]

With these thoughts in mind, the qualitative approach was considered the most fitting for the research questions posed. The particular research methodology chosen for this research was case study using ethnographic tools including participant observation and key informant interviewing.

Ethnographic Research

The methodological approach used is ethnographic case study, that is, case studies using the tools of ethnography - participant observation and key informant interviews.

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[8]   Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, p. 14.

Ethnography refers to the exercise of describing and explaining a particular culture. It is through ethnographic research that we can isolate and explain general aspects of this culture and the behaviour and human variation among the participants.[9] By going 'inside' the cultural boundaries, the ethnographer is able to construct the cultural and perceptual world according to that group. It may be possible to uncover the impact of their social, cultural, or normative organisation on incidents that occur.[10] Burns describes the purposes of ethnography as:

- The understandings (for example, beliefs, perceptions, knowledge) which participants share about their situation;

- The routine methods (for example, social rules, expectations, patterns, roles) by which their situation is structured;

- the legitimisation by which participants justify the normality and unquestioned character of their situation; and

- The motives and interests (for example, purposes, goals, plans) through which participants interpret their situation.

  In other words, ethnographers focus on how different people define

  an event through their actions, perceptions, interpretations and

  beliefs.[11]

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[9]   J. Spradley & D. McCurdy, *Anthropology, The Cultural Perspective*, 2nd edn, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1980, p. 29.

[10]   J. Spradley & D. McCurdy, p. 29.

[11]   Burns, *Introduction to Research*, pp. 245-249.

These purposes demonstrate the applicability of ethnographic description specific to the Australian situation. Ethnographic research is the most likely of all the research techniques to uncover these needs and to expose relevant, innovative thought towards production of strategies that could assist the formulation of future educational policies and to further cater to the educational needs of Romani people.[12] Such information is vital in order to ensure that in this context specific information is provided to decision makers. In terms of policy development, one of the aims of this research is to provide a sound basis for any decisions. This means that policy development aimed at improving the level and quality of school-based education in Australia is based on and directed at the actual situation[13] Policy built on preconceived notions of what 'those people' are supposed to require may result in 'politically correct' policy that is in reality, useless to those who are most in need of help.[14]

The use of ethnographic techniques such as participant observation, and key informant interviews in this study, made it possible to observe and question these observations, to develop theories, and possible solutions, and to uncover issues of particular relevance to the Australian situation.

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[12]   W. Borg & M. Gall, 'Qualitative Research', in *Research Design and Methodology*, Longman, New York, 1989, p. 390.

[13]   Burns, *Introduction to Research*, p. 224.

[14]   M. Agar, *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*, Academic Press Inc, New York, 1980, p. 11.

Participant Observation

For the ethnographer, participant observation is a fundamental approach, facilitating data collection in the field, at the same time assisting with ensuring the validity of the data collected by other methods. It assists with establishing relationships and rapport in new and sometimes unfamiliar environments. An important component of this is the ability to remove oneself at the end of the day from these cultural immersions and the ability to write about all experiences (relatively) objectively. Familiarity with the community under study lessens the likelihood that informants will change their behaviour when the researcher enters into a situation. It can help with the formulation of 'sensible' context specific questions for both surveys and face to face interviews.[15]

Participant observation can substantiate collected data with understanding of the meaning behind the data, allowing the researcher to make strong statements about cultural facts. It extends both the internal and external validity of what is learnt from interviewing and general observation. In a nutshell, participant observation is the only reliable way to discover the meaning behind a culture, and to gain a first hand understanding of its inner workings.[16] Participant observation was used in this research to gain information about other groups within the cultural milieu, but outside the researcher's own particular sphere. There are many fundamental similarities between Romani groups all over the world, but there was a need to determine the

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[15]   Bernard, p. 148.

[16]   Bernard, pp. 149 - 152.

level of differences in their practice cf the beliefs and to determine if the justifications for their actions could be considerec to be the same.

Key Informant Interviews

In addition to participant observaticn, semi-structured and unstructured interviews with key informants are among the most useful tools of the ethnographer:

> An interview is defined as a verbal interchange, often face to face, in which the interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs, or opinions from another person ... Ths illustrative data provides a sense of reality, often describing exac ly what an informant feels, perceives and how they behave.[17]

Interviews can also be used to gain second-hand accounts of events that may be vital data, but cannot be seen first-hand. Unstructured interviews are useful for gathering information such as life histories, in clinical or group situations and when in-depth information is required. This type of interviewing generally takes the form of a conversation between the researcher and the informant. There is no standardised list of questions for the researcher. It is a free-flowing discourse relying heavily on the quality of social interaction between the researcher and informant. Although it can be subtly redirected if it goes to far off the track, it should be as natural as possible.

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[17]   Burns, *Introduction to Research Met iods*, p. 277-8.

Semi-structured interviews based on the use of an interview guide allow the 'conversation' to be guided around points that require classification of certain events that have occurred. These types of interviews give greater flexibility than fully structured interviews, whilst being more focused than those that are completely unstructured.

Structured interviews involve the use of surveys and questionnaires and are useful for eliciting information in opinion polls and clinical case history taking. They are usually followed by quantitative analysis. Every person being interviewed will be asked the same questions. They will usually have a time limit. A conversational style cannot be maintained. The questions are closed, requiring a specific answer and there is no flexibility allowed to either the researcher or the informant.[18]

Unstructured and fully structured interviews were initially thought to be of less benefit than semi-structured interviews, given that the purpose of the interviews was to clarify thoughts and beliefs about incidents that occurred earlier in the day, or aspects of cultural heritage that did not surface using other techniques. Although the use of unstructured interviews turned out to be quite a valuable tool, fully structured interviews were not attempted at all.

The techniques used often uncovered essential pieces of information that the key informants did not think were important, or that they just took for granted. The use

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[18]   Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, pp. 278 - 80.

of semi-structured interviews allowed the interview to focus on crucial issues, whilst allowing the informant to relate their own feelings on these topics. This also allowed discrepancies between information given in interviews and behaviour or comments noted during periods of participant observation to be followed up in the interviews. The questioning techniques varied according to the particular informant and they were designed to elicit the most descriptive and explanatory responses. In general, the interviews focused on eliciting specific information about certain aspects of the lifestyle of the Rom, and how they fee about education and how they thought it could help them best.[19]

One of the basic underlying assumptions in the use of interviewing techniques in research is that the respondent is willing and able to give truthful answers.[20] The Rom are notorious for their ability to evade and misconstrue invasive questions which could result in the collection of purely fictitious data. Whilst it is accepted that this is a part of the need to maintain individuality and secrecy, it is recognised that this will be the major pitfall of any research methodology chosen. The researcher needs to be acutely aware of this at all times and be able to discern those points at which deliberate fabrication of responses starts.

The Rom do not willingly open themselves up to scrutiny from outsiders. This, combined with the high degree of illiteracy, has meant that there are limited and often

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[19]   Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, pp. 273-9.

[20]   Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods in Education*, p. 343.

inappropriate research data available There is also a strong tendency for the Rom to state the truth as they see it at a give 1 moment. There is little conception of the Gajé concept of 'truth and lies' and being for the most part, excellent judges of character, they are fond of giving the answers they know are the most likely to please. Determination of their needs has been difficult because of this fact and also because their needs are wont to change from day to day as circumstances change.

Simple techniques such as offering no material reward for information given and being inside the cultural milieu of the Roma were instrumental in ensuring sincere answers. My long term kinship with both familia and respondents in this study ensured reliable responses from informants. Wherever facts were considered dubious or inaccurate, cross questioning quickly divined more accurate answers. Due to the extensive analysis of the data provided and the understanding of the cultural nuances of the responses, the final outcomes from these interviews can be considered accurate.

The high degree of illiteracy amongst the Romani people necessitated the extensive use of verbal interaction and interviews, made all the more difficult by the wide geographical scattering of the people This was overcome by the extent of travelling, both by myself and other individuals.

Case Studies

The use of two families as case studies of Romani experience in formal schooling allowed intensive investigation of certain cultural aspects of the study. The validity of the data was reinforced by the use of interviews of other participants in the wider community. The use of the case study technique helped to focus the study more tightly, with depth of investigation being considered more vital than breadth. Therefore making more manageable the spread of data that may otherwise have been overwhelming.[21]

The use of two mini case studies enabled a degree of objectivity allowing the researcher to focus on relevant aspects of cultural heritage and the experiences of the Rom in mainstream education. They were used to provide an insight into the social customs, expectations and rules that govern the lives of the participants and the beliefs by which they appear to justify the extent of their formal education as being appropriate according to their perceptions of their cultural heritage. Although the two families appeared to have different views on education and its value, on closer inspection it was found that the main differences were on the surface. The deeper convictions remained the same. Most interestingly, the key informants from both families used the same arguments to justify their views on education.

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[21]   R. Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, p. 256.

Reliability and Validation

Application of the quantitative expectations of reliability to qualitative research methodology is difficult. Quantitative interpretation of reliability refers to whether or not you get exactly the same answer using the same instrument more than once. Instruments in qualitative methodology can refer to questions that you ask informants.[22] Burns describes how in qualitative interpretations, reliability is more often expressed in terms of the fit between what is recorded as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study. The difficulties associated with determining reliability of a qualitative study are that assumptions of reliability are based on two notions. The first is that the study must be reproducible, that other researchers may replicate the steps of the original study using the same tools and perspectives as the original researcher. However, due to their natural surroundings, and the nature of change, situations are bound to change. Incidents are rarely likely to present a second time and the participants in a given incident will learn from their experiences and so they too will grow.

The other assumption requires that the next researcher would be able to assume the same position within the society under study and therefore, the same type and degree of information would be afforded to this person.[23] In this instance, the research would need to be done by a person of Romani heritage, well known to the informants. Because of my background, I have been given access to many incidents and insights

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[22]   H. Bernard, *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, Sage Publications, California, 1988, p. 49.

[23]   Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, p. 270.

that would not be afforded to an outsider, even after extensive periods of participant observation.

Reliability is also restricted by the informants who provide the data. Each informant will bring his/her own unique perspective to each incident and piece of data. No single informant can give universal information, therefore data on the same topic were collected from a number of different informers and the same informer using different techniques and cross-checked. To enhance the reliability of this research, I have outlined the reasons for completing the study and the major questions that were addressed. I have clarified my perspectives on the question and stated my biases, and I have explained the data gathering procedures.[24]

The validity of any piece of qualitative research is the degree to which the researcher is actually observing what they are supposed to be observing with accurate identification and description of salient characteristics or phenomena. Every study can be classed as typical or atypical and the basis for comparison and translation may be established. The validity of a study is enhanced by the practices of participant observation, informant interviews, living among the participants, and collecting data for long periods of time. These approaches provide opportunity for continual data analysis and comparison.

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[24]   Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, p. 271.

All these techniques have been used in this research. Of particular note here is that there was no period of time where the actions of the participants may have been caused by the presence of the observer. I am a very familiar feature at social and family gatherings. Initial questions in interviews centered on aspects of culture which are often discussed among Roma, thus ensuring that the informants in this study were used to my asking questions and did not find it to be a sudden intrusion into their lives. Initially I used natural settings and gradually extended them into interview situations, often without my informants being aware of the change. After a while, I conducted semi-structured interviews, focused on specific areas.

Wherever possible I used triangulation to augment the internal validity of the research, using both different methodology and different informants to confirm and validate data. With respect to external validity, as is the difficulty with an ethnographic study, the theoretical basis of this research and the techniques used could be used as a basis for other research within the Roman community and these results may subsequently be translated across sites and disciplines. It is unlikely, however, that the data gathered here and some of the theoretical bases would be applicable to ethnic minorities other than the Romani community.[25] Where individual strategies have been implemented to improve the reliability and validity (both internal and external) of this research, I have given these consideration under the individual sections discussing the field techniques used.

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[25]   Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, pp. 271-273.

Criteria for the Admissibility of Data in the Study

The case studies focused on two ɪatsia of Roma in Australia, the Ganešti and the Lovara. The follow-up interviews involved first, second and third generations of Romani families in Australia from many different natsia, many of whom were not known personally prior to the stud; . Evidence of Romani descent was by traditional methods such as acceptance by ot ɪer Rom families, family ties, knowledge of the language, customs and other accep:ed traditions.

Sources of Data and Data Collection Methods

Case studies of two typical Romani families were conducted. These mini case studies focused on relevant aspects of cult ɪral heritage and the experiences of the Rom in mainstream education. They provid ed insights into the social customs, expectations and rules that govern their lives an(the beliefs by which they appear to justify their lack of education as being approp :iate acɔording to their perceptions about their cultural heritage.

The main body of data for the initia phase of the study was generated by:

- Regular participant observat ɪon with the two case study groups over a period of fourteen months.

- Participant observation at sɵveral festivals held in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide.

Case Study 1

Familia A was educated (for the most part) in the mainstream Australian education system. This *familia* comprises two parents, four offspring, and their children.[26] They could be described as relatively sedentary, travelling taking up about 25% of each calendar year.

Bob   58 years   has completed formal education to Year Ten high school.

Marie   53 years   has completed formal education to tertiary level.

Kathy   31 years   is currently completing formal education at post graduate level.

Nancy   27 years   has completed formal education to Year Eleven and has completed tertiary studies at a non-government institution.

Michael   21 years   has completed formal education to Year Ten high school.

Simon   16 years   has completed formal education to Grade Seven.

Case Study 2

Members of *Familia* B have had very little education in the mainstream Australian education system. This *familia* comprises two parents and five offspring. Their lifestyle can be described as relatively mobile as they move between Melbourne, Adelaide, and Sydney on a regular basis, travelling usually taking up about 60% of the calendar year. However, for the last eighteen months, it has taken only 35%.

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[26]   Pseudonyms are used throughout the study to protect the privacy of the individuals and their families. See List of Pseudonyms at the front of this paper.

George	37 years	has two cays formal education.
Jackie	36 years	has periodically attended school to about Grade Five.
Henry	14 years	has periodically attended school to Grade Seven.
Karen	11 years	has periodically attended school to Grade Four.
John	5 years	has not yet attended school or kindergarten.
Suzie	2 years	has not yet attended kindergarten.

It was during this phase that data were collected about cultural heritage, beliefs and education, education policies and the Australian government. It was necessary to first ascertain the level of understanding which the adult family members had of these issues. From this point, discussions were tailored to the level of understanding identified. The observation phases of the case studies took place during both day and evening, observing both families participating in daily activities.

As a participant observer, it was necessary to act as a functional member of both families for two or three days at a time on a sporadic basis. *Familia* A were living in a two bedroom house with each married couple living in a different room. *Familia* B was living in a caravan, therefore it was necessary to keep accessories to a minimum. As I am very familiar with both families, I did not anticipate or experience any difficulties in this area. Allocation of short but intense visits with both families ensured that had any difficulties arisen, necessitating such measures, I could have distanced myself easily without any person feeling obligated.

These data were complemented by data taken from:

- Unstructured, semi-stru ctured and focused interviews with members of both families and

- Interviewer-administere 1 surveys with Romani elders and other Roma in Australia.

Initially, the interviews concentrated on issues or events that occur during the observation phase. They were discursive, in depth, and mostly unstructured (open-ended), being directed by the interviewer. Subsequent interviews focused on experiences within mainstream educational institutions. Each interview focused on the informant's responses to a known situation which was analysed by the interviewer prior to the interview. The interviewer was thereby able to use the data from the interview to substantiate or reject previously formulated theories.

These data will be complemented and verified by data taken from:

- a selected review of literary works focused on the education of Rom in Europe, America and the United Kingdom and

- analysis of the research er's own life-time of experience as a participant observer in Romani culture in Australia.

Analysis of the Data

Data analysis is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain the existence of these patterns.[27] In this study, the researcher's search for patterns led to the development of ideas. These where subsequently tested against observations made by the researcher. These observations were then used to determine whether the original ideas needed to be modified.

This ethnographic case study generated notes from many different sources including interviews, observations, and documents. These notes are in the form of written notes, diary entries, audio tapes and video tapes. Analytical induction was used to determine the relevance of information, scanning data for relationships and emerging themes.[28] Data were categorised according to the theme of the information. Each of these categories was then further broken down into *vitsa* groups and into specific incidents, following a natural progression of date order. As different themes emerged, the categories changed name and structure gradually settling comfortably into the structure outlined in Figure 1 below

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[27]   Bernard, p. 319.

[28]   R. Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, pp. 265-66.

Figure 1: Struct iral Design of Categories

for Data Storage

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                                                    ┌─────────┐
                                                    │ Familia │
                                          ┌─────────┤    A    │
                          ┌─────────────┐ │         ├─────────┤
                          │   Beliefs   ├─┤         │ Familia │
                          │             │ │         │    B    │
                          │             │ │         ├─────────┤
                          │             │ │         │  Other  │
               ┌──────────┤             │ │         │ Familia │
               │ Cultural ├─┤           │ └─────────┴─────────┘
               │          │ │                       ┌─────────┐
               │          │ │                       │ Familia │
               │          │ │         ┌─────────────┤    A    │
               │          │ │         │ Traditions  │         ├─────────┤
               │          │ └─────────┤             │         │ Familia │
               │          │           │             │         │    B    │
               │          │           │             │         ├─────────┤
               │          │           │             │         │  Other  │
               │          │           │  Familia    │         │ Familia │
               │          │           │     A       │
               │          │           │
               │          │           │  Familia
               │  Social  │           │     B
               │          │           │
               │          │           │  Other Familia
Data ──────────┤
               │          │
               │          │                         ┌─────────┐
               │          │                         │ Familia │
               │          │           ┌─────────────┤    A    │
               │          │           │  Beliefs    │         ├─────────┤
               │          │           │             │         │ Familia │
               │          │           │             │         │    B    │
               │          │           │             │         ├─────────┤
               │          │           │  Incidents  │         │  Other  │
               │          │           │             │         │ Familia │
               │Educational│──────────┤
                                      │  Policies
                                      │
                                      │                       ┌─────────┐
                                      │                       │ Familia │
                                      │         ┌─────────────┤    A    │
                                      │  Proposals│           │         ├─────────┤
                                      └──for the Future        │         │ Familia │
                                                │             │         │    B    │
                                                │             │         ├─────────┤
                                                │             │  Other  │─────┤ Elders │
                                                │             │   Rom   │
                                                └─────────────┴─────────┘
```
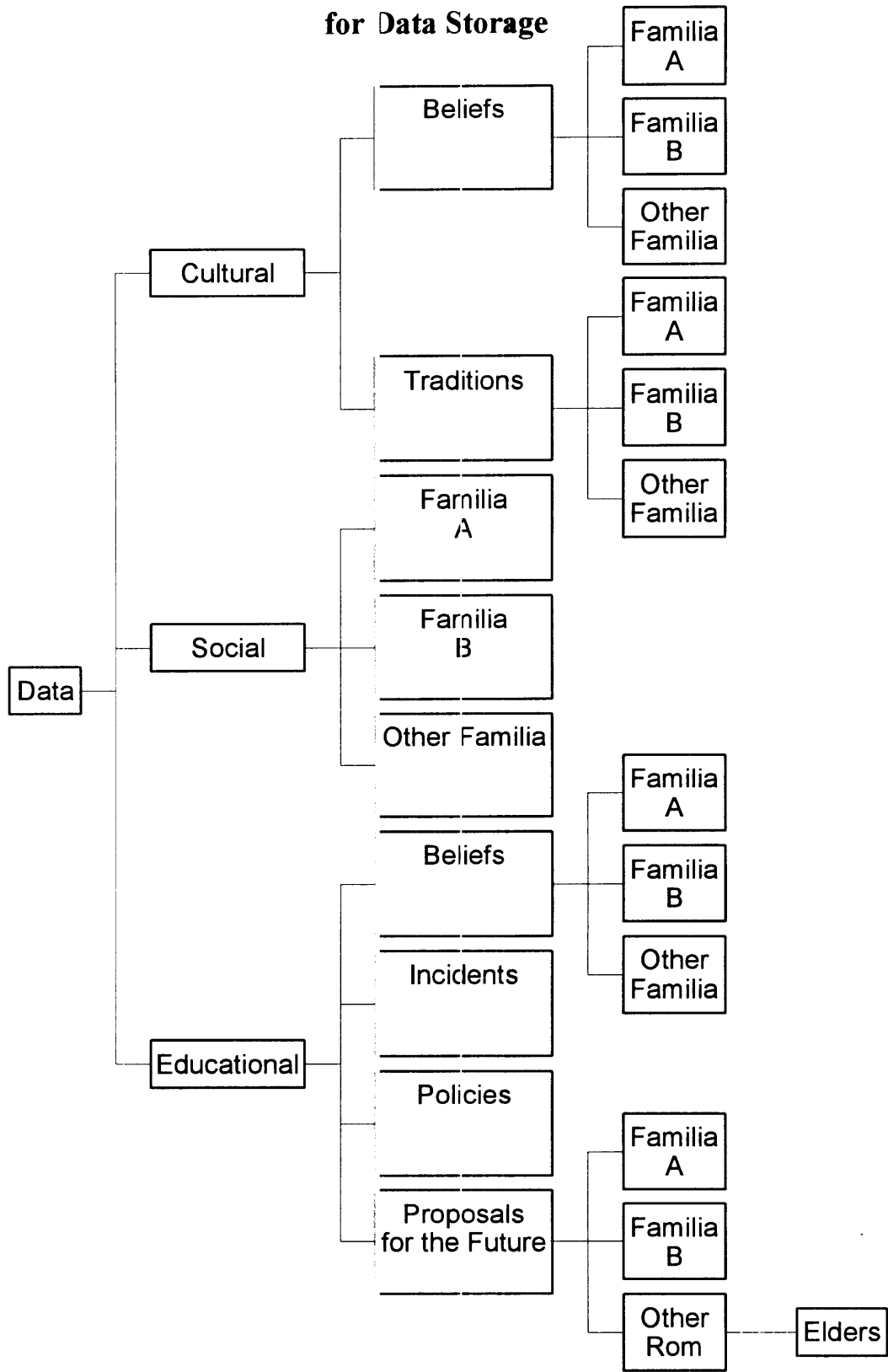
Attached to many of these folders were personal notes and reflections about incidents and interviews. This enabled the comparison of data and events to find similarities and differences between proposed hypotheses and actual reality. This method of analysis facilitated the addition of new knowledge to the current knowledge base about the Romani people in Australia and determine the origins of the attitudes of the Rom towards formal education and literacy, to determine if the outwardly expressed mind-set was inward as well, and from where did it spring.

One aspect of analysis that was minimal was that of determining whether the reactions of the informants were coloured by the presence of the researcher. As the researcher was from inside the cultural milieu of the Rom, there were very few instances of this.

For example, early in the investigative phase of the research, one pattern that emerged was that those Rom newly arrived in Australia had very different views based on different tenets than those Rom living in Australia for two or more generations from the country of immigration. Therefore, these data were filed for mention, rather than analysis. The differences between environments has a 'profound effect on the shaping of people's subjective, interpretive symbolic view of the world.'[29] Europe has a culture quite disparate from Australia and this may account for these differences.

Analysis of the data also served as a constant validity check on the fieldwork and ensured the objective nature of the analysis. These checks included the following:

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[29]   Bernard, p. 323.

1. Look for inconsistencies and consistencies between knowledgeable informants and find why informants disagree about important things.

2. Wherever possible, check informants' reports of behaviour or of environmental conditions against more objective evidence

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3. Be open to negative evidence ... When you encounter a case that does not fit your theory, ask yourself whether it's a result of: (a) normal intracultural variation; (b) your lack of knowledge about the range of appropriate behaviour; or (c) a genuinely unusual case.

4. As you come to understand how something works, seek out alternative explanations from informants ...

5. Try to fit extreme cases into your theory, and if the cases won't fit, don't be too quick to throw them out.[30]

The concurrence of opinion between informants was used to determine both the validity and importance of each piece of data, and to put aside those which were purely personal opinions and those which seemed to be borne out of the culture in which we live. The responses received often determined the next step and the analysis of data was a continual process, rather than one which could be isolated and

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[30] Bernard, pp. 320-21.

conducted in isolation from the whole investigative process.[31] My long term close relationship with both *familia* and most of the informants in this study ensured that responses were relatively truthful. Cross checking of dubious facts at a later interview and with other members of the same familia, or vitsa quickly highlighted areas of conflict and the truth was easily discerned.

The review of appropriate literature and interviews with Elders in the Romani community, cross-checking of responses with those of other informants were all methods of analysis that served to ensure validity of the research.

For example, the Rom in Australia, except for a few isolated cases, are not yet convinced of their need for education. Therefore one of the first needs to be addressed is to convince them that they have a need. For most *familiyi*, once the children have basic reading and writing skills, there is no need for any further schooling and these children continue their normal *famili a*-based instruction. They are aware of their legal requirement to send their children to school and do so for as long as the children need to go, in their view.

As far as the adults are concerned, from the data it was found that there is overall, a dire need for basic literacy skills. After conducting interviews with many of the Rom Elders, analysis of the data shows that for most of the older people, their attitudes are now so ingrained, and so often reiterated that it is too late for them to admit their need

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[31]   R. Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, pp. 323-25.

for literacy skills; there were no exceptions to this. It would therefore, take a massive transformation of the whole of the Romani community for even one of these people to be able to openly access available literacy services. This would require acknowledgement that the Gajé were 'right' and they need to be able to read and write in order to survive and progress. No consensus could be reached on whether the needs of the children could be met through the mainstream education system and this was clearly reflected through analysis of the interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Informants in this study were placed at minimal risk.[32] All interviews were conducted by myself. A large proportion of Roma in Australia are illegal immigrants. Thus by including in this study only legal residents of Australia, I am ensuring that no danger of persecution is posed to those participants in my study. Informants were free to withdraw from the study at any stage. They were informed that they did not need to answer any question they consider to be an invasion of privacy. Anonymity was protected by each informant choosing their own alias. See Appendix B. Should there be a need for further contact or follow-up interviews, I hold a list of informants' code names with their relevant phone numbers. No corresponding list of aliases against identifying names or data will be kept on completion of the research project. Informants needed to be informed of this as the danger of being reported to

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[32] L. Cohen & L. Manion, *Research Methods in Education*, Routledge, London, 1994, pp. 347-82.

attendance officers is a very real threat. All information obtained about an informant during the course of the investigation is confidential.

Allocation of short but intense visits with the case study families ensured that it was possible for me to distance mysel` quickly without any person feeling obligated, should any difficulties necessitating such measures have arisen.

The results of the study will be made available to all participants should they wish to avail themselves through Romani International - Australia Inc. No identifying features of any participant have been included in the results of the study. I am available by mobile phone for any participants who have concerns or questions.

Chapters Six and Seven portray the results of the data collection and analysis phases, with illustrations of key issues and concepts by the use of citations from key informants. Chapter six discusses the main cultural and social aspects underlying Romani attitudes and life in Australia.