Chapter 1

The Nature of the Study

Introduction

This chapter introduces the study, its structure and aims. It states the research questions investigated and summarises the findings. It also outlines the objectives of the study and its significance, some limitations and a brief overview of the methodology. Setting the scene for the rest of the report, Chapter One describes the problem selected for research, detailing the traditional attitudes of the Rom to education, in particular, mainstream education. It concludes with a brief summary of each chapter of the thesis.

Focus and Aims of the Study

This study investigates the attitudes of two groups of Roma living in Australia, the Lovara, and the Ganeśti, towards formal education. It also examines guiding principles and underlying Government policies and laws pertinent to the difficulties experienced by the Rom in Australia. It investigates the need for changes to current educational policies and recognises where the needs of the Rom are able to be met under current policies and conditions.

It was strongly felt that there was a need for study in this area due to the number of illiterate and semi-literate Rom in Australia. Some of the questions raised include whether the nature of the disadvantage is that the Rom are unaware of the opportunities available to them. A number of avenues presented themselves for exploration, perhaps it was the case that some degree of change must first be accepted by the Romani people themselves After all, if there is no willingness to change, then all the changes to educational policies to improve participation of the Romani people in education would be worthless. Given the underachievement of the Romani people in education, the question then remains, 'How can the participation of these Roma in key aspects of Australian culture, such as education, be improved, whilst at the same time ensuring the preservation of their heritage?'

The Rom / Mainstream Schooling Nexus

The Rom are acutely aware of the pressures, both political and social, being brought to bear on them to send their children to school. Although they are generally not willing to send their children to mainstream schools, some are becoming increasingly aware of the shortcomings of their own illiteracy and its disadvantages. Education is seen by many Australians as a key issue in the development of a truly multicultural Australia. In particular, many ethnic minority groups perceive schooling to be extremely important in furthering their life chances.[1] The relationship between education and social standing is complex. Whilst education is often seen as an important means of achieving increased status and power among ethnic minority groups, ethnicity and social class have also been shown to strongly influence both the nature and extent of the use of mainstream educational services.[2] The overriding influence that ethnicity can hold is illustrated in the case of the Romani people. In Australia, the Rom comprise some sixteen thousand, five hundred people of whom an estimated eighty-one percent could be described as illiterate or semi-illiterate.[3] Although this appears on the surface to be an improvement from earlier figures, compared with other ethnic minority groups in Australia, it is disturbing.

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1 J. Smolicz & M. Secombe, *The Australian School Through Children's Eyes*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981, p. 114, quoted in J. Jupp (ed.), *The Challenge of Diversity: Policy Options for a Multicultural Australia*, AGPS, Canberra, 1989, p. 85-86.

2 Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, *Poverty and Education in Australia*, AGPS, Canberra, 1976, p. 15 - 17.

3 B. Kurda & R. Young, Illiteracy: An Australian Focus. Results of the Survey conducted by Romani International - Australia nc, Adelaide, July, 1995.

The traditional attitude of the Rom themselves towards mainstream education, their suspicion of intentions and the anticipated consequences of assimilation/integration with mainstream cultural values have frustrated efforts to rectify their disadvantaged position. Education has been offered, encouraged and in many cases forced onto the Rom with only limited success. The concerns expressed by many Rom about entering the mainstream education system have been summed up concisely by Jean-Paul Liégeois, (a world-renowned researcher into Romani culture) when he wrote:

> School is an institution which is exclusively and totally part of an environment perceived by Rom as coercive, it cannot but be experienced by them as yet another imposition, a sort of tentacle grasping their children towards assimilation: for a long time, school has been a means for the implementation of forced assimilation, and, seen from this perspective, it confronts them as an entirely alien institution.[4]

School provision is the only aspect of Romani life that has undergone real scrutiny and has been the focus of many proposals and projects, at least in Europe, since the early 1980s, (at the initiative of the Council of Europe and European Community). Very little progress has been made however, and the same figures are still being quoted. Claims are also being made that 'up to now, school provision for Traveller [Romani]

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[4] J. Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, trans. S. ní Shuinéar, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1994, p 207.

children has been a failure for all concerned.'[5] These claims are made on the basis of figures which show that figures indicating high attendance in some European states has no connection with the achievement of the Rom community to adapt to its environment. Liégeois expresses this as more of an 'expression of self-congratulation and a desire to vaunt the supposed benefits of current policy'. The figures he quotes are from a 1985 survey of the ten states of the Community which was extended in 1988 to cover two new member states. Of the total seven or eight million Gypsies and Travellers in Europe, half are of school age, approximately 30 - 40% of these children attend school with 'a degree of regularity', 50% never go to school at all, a very small percentage of them get as far as, or enter into, secondary level. Results, particularly as regards the attainment of functional literacy, are not in keeping with the amount of time spent in school, and adult illiteracy is 'generally above 50%, and in some places is as high as 80% or even 100%'.[6]

In Europe, there is an 'ambiguous medley of projects' being offered, these projects combine both successful and failed strategies. The losers in this are the Romani people who are struggling to come to grips with mainstream education, whilst trying desperately to hold on to their sense of identity, all the time being pulled further and further into the lowest strata of Western society. School attendance only rarely paves the way to economically viable skills, or even useful ones. On the contrary, school attendance can disadvantage the Romani child in two ways. It is unlikely that the skills

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5 Liégeois, pp. 203-4.

6 Liégeois, pp. 203-4.

learned in school will be used, a part of the economic advantage for the Rom lies in being able to find a service not being offered and filling the gap. The child is kept away from vital years of in-home learning of survival skills and participation in the community. The child therefore, is relegated to the status of an outsider in two communities.[7]

In Australia, there are many Roma who are suspicious and even hostile towards what they see as Gajé institutions, especially the school environment. They feel that the education of living the Romani way of life provides life skills much more vital to survival than a school-based education. The Romani people may not be an educated people, but they are a learned community. Learning is considered to be a community-based exercise, controlled by the women and overseen by the family. The motivation to learn is provided by the desire to be a competent and productive adult member of the community. Most of the older Rom, raised in this way have not even seen the inside of a school building let alone spent time within its walls.

Those Rom who are uneducated are generally unconcerned about their lack of education and on the whole unconvinced of the value of attending mainstream schools. In particular, the stories they hear about the experiences of others in mainstream education strengthen their resolve not to send their children to these institutions. As the children of these parents generally adopt the same attitudes from a young age, there is a great necessity to define their needs in this area. Part of this

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[7] Liégeois, p. 205.

definition needs to be an exploration of why these children do not want to attend school, and reasons for their lack of success at school.

The Researcher's Dilemmas and Sensitivities Addressed

Participant observation was used in this research to gain information about other groups within the cultural milieu, but outside my own particular sphere. There are fundamental similarities between Romani groups and their beliefs all over the world and justifications for their actions can be considered to be the same. The major differences are in their practice of these beliefs.

As the researcher, the greatest difficulty was to be able to write objectively about the incidents I had witnessed and taken part in. Over time with practice, this became easier, although there were several times when I had to walk away from my writing and note taking, in order to regain this sense of objectivity. This was accomplished by writing notes in the third person, as if I had been just a 'fly on the wall' in someone else's life.

Ethical considerations were a major limiting factor and these are discussed fully in Chapter Five. Because the Roma face so many challenges in dealing with mainstream society, retaining their sense of self worth and identity as Roma is seen to be dependent on the maintenance of the differences between Romani and Gajé society. The Roma are extremely protective of all the factors upon which their sense of being

and identity are dependent, and this has resulted in a tendency toward total exclusivity. This need to camouflage oneself formed the basis of the dilemma which I as the researcher, a Romni, faced when deciding whether to pursue this research. On the one hand, this research was initiated and is still being driven by the need to improve the educational status of the Romani people in Australia. On the other hand, there is the possibility that my people will not thank me for this exposure of the culture which we hold so close to our hearts.

An area of deficiency in this research, not easily remedied, lies in the fact that no illegal immigrants were included. It is believed that a large proportion of Romani people in Australia, even second and third generation residents, do not have Australian citizenship, and while this may be available to them, they would never seek to remedy their situation for the fear that they would be responsible for the deportation of a parent, grandparent, or close relative.[8] Whether these children also have the right to attend Australian schools is a question that needs to be addressed.

Finally, it was decided that if this research was to be completed, it must be done thoroughly. It must present not only the views of the mainstream culture, but also those of the Romani people. As the researcher, I faced another specific challenge in the determination of the approach adopted. Some of the more intricate, personal aspects of Romani culture which are more difficult to explain have perhaps still not

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[8] M. Morrow, *Good Luck on the Road: A Portrait of the Romani People in Australia*, (radio broadcast), ABC Radio National, 25 August, 1996.

been as fully elucidated as this would have taken many more years of ethnographic research even given my Romani background.[9] Within the confines of this research, as full an explanation of the cultural heritage of the Rom as possible has been given, without compromising the need to protect forbidden information peculiar to the Romani people.

Unfortunately, without such elucidation, prejudices and stereotypes will persist. Consider, for example, the following excerpts written by a journalist on the Internet. He describes an incident that happened in Philadelphia in April, 1996. It provides a graphic illustration of the type of misinformation being propagated about the Rom and the need for better information about the Romani people and their culture. It describes a talk given by a Philadelphian Police Officer, a member of several law enforcement groups focused on confidence crimes. It illustrates how the Rom are commonly perceived. The talk was about criminal aspects of fortune telling and other crimes. It needs to be said that the journalist himself had some of 'them' try to rip him off in Dublin in a 'massive' driveway repair scam.

> Officer Lou quickly narrowed in on just the ancient race of people known as Gypsies. He said they constitute the majority of fortune tellers and use a rather standard con to take advantage of people who have fallen on tough times or are lonely. He reported that this group

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[9] Born and educated in Australia, the researcher is the daughter of Marni Morrow, who has been President of Romani International - Australia Inc. since 1980.

of uncounted people are not merely 'banjo playing buffoons but people raised from a young age believing that it is their God-given mission in life to cheat the rest of us.' Although it didn't sound politically correct, he went on to say that unlike the rest of us they don't obey laws, or attend more than 7 years of school. He reported they are inbreed [sic], loaded with money, constantly move, frequently jump bail, attempt to bribe their way out of jail (sometimes with phoney bonds) and are involved in far more crime than the Mafia ... Although Lou has put many Gypsies behind bars including a Gypsy policeman who tried to bribe him, he said it is very difficult to hold them responsible for their crimes because they have thousands of years of practice, change names, move around, hide behind the practice of religion, and speak a language only they know. Lou says they try to rationalise their crimes since they don't use violence - however the deep hurt that people go through is very severe. Some people caught in faith healer scams have ended up losing both their vision and tens of thousands of dollars .. Speaking of open-minded skepticism, I personally don't know for sure one way or the other if the majority of Gypsy people are dishonest. I'd like to explore the question farther ... Sometime I would actually like to investigate a group of Roma people to be able to publicly document if a large group of them is perfectly

law abiding. Please let me know if you have additional ideas on this question.[10]

Prejudice of this type is rarely openly expressed in Australia, and one of the questions I had to ask myself was whether the research would, by virtue of the higher profile of the Rom, become a part of the promotion of a new underclass in Australia, open to prejudice such as described above. There have been few incidents in Australia where Romani people have been implicated and although most publicity is bad, it is infrequent.

The Research Questions

The following key research questions provided a strong directional focus for the study. They address the key issues causing the barrier between the Rom and education as well as exposing approaches that may assist with achieving a higher literacy rate for the Romani people.

1. What customs, beliefs and values of the Rom in Australia help to provide a deeper understanding of their attitudes towards formal education?
2. What attitudes and beliefs do the Rom have of formal schooling in Australia?
3. What specific educational needs of the Rom need to be addressed?
4. How might these needs best be addressed?

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[10] E. Krieg, http://www.voicenet.com/-eric/pract/gypsy.htm, April, 1996, p. 1.

5. Which government education policies best suit the needs of Roma in Australia?
6. How can the participation of these Roma in key aspects of Australian culture, such as education, be improved, whilst at the same time ensuring the preservation of their heritage?

Administrative Significance of the Study

This research is particularly significant as it is the first to examine the extent of the educational problems faced by the Romani people in Australia. It should provide administrators, teachers and policy makers with clear statements of the needs of the Romani people, as identified by the Rom themselves. It is hoped that the information gathered and the conclusions drawn from the research conducted will provide a reliable and realistic policy platform for the provision of education of the Romani people in Australia. This research could also assist with improving both the quality and scope of education of all non-Anglo-Celtic Australians.

The approach to this study in educational administration draws substantially on the traditions and concepts of the disciplines of sociology and political science. These being concerned with policy development in multicultural education. It looks at the ways in which multicultural education policies have been developed and applied, and the effects, both intended and unintended of the application of these policies on the provision of education for minority groups.

It was beyond the capacity of this study to provide more than a brief look at comparable international literary works in the field of Romani education. There is however, a complete lack of studies either underway or completed in Australia. It is hoped that this study will provide one more localised study for inclusion in some future major international review.

The Research Method

The ethnographic case study methodology used in this study was chosen due to the need for current cultural information about the Rom in Australia, their attitudes towards education and the need to first identify the prevailing conditions in an Australian context. This position of current knowledge will provide a practical basis for future policy decisions for the Romani people. Ethnographic descriptions of two groups of Roma, one Lovara, the other Ganeśti, living in Australia are provided. This insider's perspective is based on fourteen months of participant observation and a lifetime of experience.

The research comprised three interlocking phases: data collection to address the research questions posed; analysis of these data to address the research questions; and development of recommendations for improving the access to and utilisation of educational facilities by Roma in Australia.

Data collection to address the research questions was done through case studies of two typical Romani families in Australia. These mini case studies focused on relevant aspects of cultural heritage and the experiences of the Rom in mainstream education. They provide an insight into the social customs, expectations and rules that govern their lives and the beliefs by which the Roma appear to justify their lack of education as being appropriate according to their perceptions about their cultural heritage. The main body of data for this initial phase of the study was generated by regular participant observation over a period of fourteen months, complemented by data taken from interviews with members of both families.

The data analysis phase consisted of interviews and oral surveys with key informants - Romani elders and other Rom in Australia. The interviews focused on issues or events that were highlighted during the initial observation phase, complemented by a selected review of literature on education of the Rom in Europe, America and the United Kingdom and analysis of the researchers' own experience as a participant observer in Australian Romani culture.

Drawing out the findings and their implications resulted in the comparison of the areas in which the educational needs of the Rom and their needs as perceived by the Rom themselves correlate with the opportunities presented by current policies. The recommendations for improving the access of Roma in Australia to education using strategies acceptable to the Rom which were workable in practice and sustainable by

government resources, were suggested and interviews with Romani elders and other members of Romani society were held to validate the findings.

Overview of the Research Report

This chapter provides an introduction to the study and the research questions to be investigated. It outlines the objectives of the study and their significance, its limitations and a brief introduction to the methodology. In addition, this chapter outlines the traditional attitudes of the Rom to education, in particular, mainstream education and sets the scene for the rest of the report.

The following chapter introduces the Rom and Romani society and lay the groundwork for a more complete understanding of the people and their way of life. The imperviousness of the 'Gypsy' way of life has long been a closely guarded secret. The Rom have successfully barricaded their true selves from the prying eyes of the outside world for many generations. The nature of their lifestyle has evolved over the centuries, and there are hundreds of specific variations of their folk culture, although the basic tenets remain the same. Particular attention will be paid to those sociological and cultural aspects of behavior which are considered to be of most relevance to this study. It will take a brief look at the history, language, social organisation, traditions and cultural heritage of the Rom. While scholarly interest is relatively recent, there has always been an air of the mysterious surrounding the 'Gypsy' lifestyle. This chapter will explore the effects of these often romantic, but sometimes destructive,

misconceptions on the modern Rom. In addition to these aims, this chapter will provide the definitions of terms and key concepts central to the meaning and interpretation of the study.

Chapter Three examines the general characteristics and philosophical bases of Australia's pluralistic society and its implications for multicultural and Romani education. It considers one definition of the term multicultural education and highlights how different interpretations may be taken from that definition. The assimilationist policies of the 1940s to the 1960s impacted profoundly on both Australian society and its educational system and were followed by the ideology of integration, which provided the bridge to pluralism and multiculturalism. Around these central ideologies, there are a number of peripheral concepts that need to be considered in order to fully grasp the current situation. Separatism, deprivation, cultural capital, and social control will be discussed with a view to evaluating their impact on the education process.

Chapter Four reviews comparable literary works on the topic of education of Roma as found in books, periodicals and articles. It contains a selective review of literature on the education of Roma in Europe, the United Kingdom and America. There is however a total lack of any major study in education and the Rom to date in Australia. Studies with a clear focus on 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 Rom 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[11]. There have been a number of studies conducted in the United States, mainly in the 1970s. An evaluation of these works will also be undertaken, giving an indication as to the strengths and weaknesses of the literature in the Australian context.

Chapter Five undertakes a discussion of the methodology. It discusses the research paradigms used and the relationship between the methodology and the objectives of the study. Much of the discussion in this chapter will focus on the limitations and advantages of the chosen methodologies. Given that a fundamental reason for conducting research is to determine the causes and solve the problems and conundrums of the world in which we live, 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[12]. This chapter 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

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[11] Liégeois, p. 203.

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

application of rigour, definition of the question and a systematic investigation to find the solutions.[13]

Chapters Six and Seven contain the main findings of the research and fieldwork stages of the study. Chapter Six describes Romani society and the rules which govern it in an Australian context, and defines the sociological and cultural aspects of their behavior relevant to this study. It brings to light much needed current and topical information about the Rom and the prevailing conditions in an Australian context through ethnographic description of two groups of Roma, one Lovara, the other Ganeśti, living in Australia. This chapter builds on the general information given in chapter four by providing an Australian perspective. It provides the background information on the Romani society needed to understand fully the attitudes of the Rom towards education and what they perceive to be mainstream institutions. This subject is explored further in chapter seven.

Chapter Seven outlines some of the experiences of Roma in Australia and their experiences with the Australian education system. In particular, this chapter describes the experiences of three key informants in mainstream schools, as related during interviews and participant observation during this study and discusses the different strategies used to deal with these encounters.

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

A detailed consideration of the conclusions and recommendations of this study can be found in Chapter Eight. It draws together all the threads of this study and responds to the questions raised in this study. Discussed here are the outcomes of the research, together with a look to the future. It details the recommendations for improving the access to education of Roma in Australia. It outlines the techniques by which the recommendations were reached and traces the emergence of the solutions to the research questions from the case studies. This chapter also examines the implications for the future of education of the Romani people in Australia and discusses the applicability and usefulness of the recommendations in the Australian context. A comparison of the expected outcomes with the actual outcomes, areas for further research and a look to the future conclude the report.

Chapter 2

The Rom: Origins and Way of Life

Introduction

This chapter introduces the Rom and Romani society and attempts to explain specific aspects of this complex and least understood community. The imperviousness of the "Gypsy" way of life has long been a closely guarded secret as the Rom have successfully barricaded their true selves from the prying eyes of the outside world for many generations. Roma exist in nearly every country in the world, but there is no country from which they have all recently dispersed. The nature of their lifestyle has evolved over the centuries, and there are hundreds of specific variations of their folk culture, although the basic tenets remain the same. This means that to give a very

generalised view, encompassing every one of the Roma groups would be a distortion of the facts.

Most groups require almost individual research. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, broadly-based studies of the Rom, covering all aspects of ethnographic, philosophical, sociological and historical research, were being written in Western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although many of their 'facts' are now disregarded as romantic notions or at least mis-information.

In this chapter, particular attention will be paid to those sociological and cultural aspects of behaviour which are considered to be of most relevance to this study. It will take a brief look at the history, language, social organisation, traditions and cultural heritage of the Rom. While scholarly interest is relatively recent, there has always been an air of the mysterious surrounding the 'Gypsy' lifestyle. This chapter will explore the effects of these often romantic, but sometimes destructive, misconceptions on the modern Rom. In addition to these aims, this chapter will give the definitions of terms central to the meaning and interpretation of the study.

Who Are the Rom?

Who are the Rom?[1] The word 'Gypsy' is the word most commonly used by Gajé.[2] It is not a word of Gypsy origin, so whilst it is accepted as the title most well known and used by the Gajé, Gypsies themselves (particularly in Australia) prefer to refer to themselves as Roma. The term Gypsy is considered by the Roma to be racist slang. Internationally amongst Romani-speaking people, 'Rom' is the word most commonly used to 'identify another Gypsy or express one's own racial or cultural identity.'[3] At the First World Romani Congress, held in London in April, 1971, delegates from 14 countries and observers from many others elected to adopt the term Rom as the one which could bring a sense of unity to the world of the Gypsy.[4]

The Romani people have a distinct language, culture, religion and a flag of their own. In 1968, they received consultative status to the United Nations. They also have a world recognised anthem, their own dance forms, and several music styles. Even today, they are steeped in age-old traditions handed down from mother to daughter and father to son. They have all of this without a country to call their own, preferring the relative freedom 'of the open road'. Romani identity stems not from a place of origin, but from their ethnicity - geographical location, current or previous, is merely

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1 Rom (pl. Roma, fem.: Romni, Romnia), from which comes the word 'Romanes'(the language of the Roma).

2 Gajé is the term used by the Rom to describe *all* people who are not Rom. Other common spellings of the word include Gauje, Gadje, and Georgio.

3 T. Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1974, pp. 60-2.

4 J. Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, trans. S. ní Shuinéar, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1994, p. 258.

incidental. Because of this lack, they are considered by many countries, including Australia, to be a social group rather than an ethnic minority.[5] In August, 1972, the United States Government declared the Gypsies an official minority and this was considered to be the beginning of a new era for the Rom of America.[6]

The Rom face many challenges in mainstream society and many are experiencing difficulty in retaining their sense of self worth and identity. There is therefore, a perceived need to be extremely protective of all the factors upon which their sense of being and identity are dependent, resulting in a tendency toward exclusivity. Anonymity has always been the preferred state and individuality and freedom are clung to with a fierce determination. Added to this is the fact that much of what is known about the Rom has been subject to distortion and misconception, usually caused by the Rom themselves. Most of the books written by Gajé are based not on fact, but rather on what each author 'perceives' to be the truth from the information that informants have given.

Even now, with the increase in studies being conducted, there are a number of misconceptions propagated by the Rom themselves. This almost compulsive hiding of the truth, together with the use of the Romanes (the common language), a largely unwritten language known only to the Rom, has effectively discouraged many ethnographers from working in the field of Romani studies. In fact, at least one

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5 Minutes of Meeting held June 21st 1989. Comment made by the Hon. Mr Hand, then Minister for Immigration in a conversation with Mr R Young of Romani International - Australia Inc.

6 A. Sutherland, *Gypsies, The Hidden Americans*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1975, p. 315.

American author, Kent, has been compelled to write of her initial failures in this field because of this very issue. One of the difficulties described by Kent was that the vast majority of the Rom maintain a very low profile, admitting their heritage only when it suits their purpose.[7]

With the recent realisation that the world has a need to know about some aspects of Romani life, there has been a gradual increase in the number of Roma writing about their own culture.[8] It has been felt that some of the prejudices and racism against the Romani people could be reduced by education of other people, schools and students. This has taken rise in the hope that by opening the doors a little on the traditional life of the Rom, there will develop a greater understanding and therefore tolerance of the Romani people.

History and Language

Due to the wide dispersal of the Romani people it is impossible to tell one history. What is known is that the Rom are scattered and diverse, with no territory and few written records of their own. There are many theories and much embellished stories about the origins of the Rom, a significant proportion of which are probably no more

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7 L. Kent, 'Fieldwork That Failed', in *The Naked Anthropologist: Tales From Around The World*, ed. P. DeVita, Wadsworth, California, 1991, p. 20.

8 Jean-Pierre Liégeois has written and edited many of these studies and papers about the Roma. Much of the published literary works are published through the Gypsy Research Centre, at the Université René Descartes in Paris. This centre is also used by the Commission of European Communities to publish information about the Rom in Europe.

than the stories that the Rom have spread about themselves. Other theories have grown out of linguistic studies:

> Most authors called it an incomprehensible jargon, a kind of perverted slang. Sebastian Münster, an early geographer, got interested in the Gypsies' knack for languages ... but he saw their language as nothing more than a mish-mash: They have created a jargon of their own, yet they draw on all the languages of Europe.[9]

One of the first scholars to recognise that there was an actual Gypsy language (Romanes) and to take an active interest in it was linguist, Bonaventura Vulcanius. Modern linguistic studies have built on his work. For a long time, and this belief is still held by many Roma, the Rom were believed to originate in Egypt. However, there now appears to be solid evidence that Romanes is an Indian-derived language and that this is therefore the most likely origin. 'Like the languages currently spoken in northern India - Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujerati, Rajasthani - it is descended from Sanskrit' and its closest relation is considered to be Hindi.[10]

Recent research suggests that Romanes originated in Central India and similarities have been found between the Rom and the Indian Dom caste. Examination of the

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[9] S. Münster, *La Cosmographie universelle de tout le monde, augmenté, ornée, et enrichie par François de Belleforest*, Paris, 1575, quoted in J. Liégeois, *Gypsies: An Illustrated History*, trans. T. Berrett, Al Saqi Books, London, 1986, p. 29.

[10] Liégeois, *Gypsies: An Illustrated History*, p. 36.

vocabulary and grammatical structures of Gypsy dialects has given us some idea of the paths taken during the dispersion. The further away from India, the more marked is the loss of basic Indian vocabulary and the corresponding increase in the number of words borrowed from other languages. The number of borrowed words is an indication of the likely length of stay in each country the Rom passed through on their travels.[11]

Fraser follows historical writings of the Rom, tracing their movements through Persia, and Armenia into the Byzantine Empire and the Balkans and from there into the rest of Western and Eastern Europe. The history of the Rom in Europe, from around the fourteenth century is saturated with accounts of widespread discrimination.[12] There were hundreds of laws introduced in Europe and England with the intent of ridding each country of Gypsies. If these laws had ever received the full support of officials and inhabitants and been fully enforced, even for a short time, the Rom would almost certainly have been eradicated from most of Christian Europe well before the middle of the sixteenth century.

It seems that the Rom had some friends or at least quiet objectors to their treatment, for they are still very much in evidence today. Every European country has good

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[11] Liégeois, *Gypsies: An Illustrated History*, p. 36.

[12] D. Kenrick & G. Puxon, *Gypsies Under the Swastika*, Interface Collection, Gypsy Research Centre, Hertfordshire, 1995, pp. 7-8.

reason to be ashamed of their historical treatment of the Rom.[13] It is beyond the scope of this study to delve more deeply into the history of the Rom.

The works of both Fraser and Liégeois are comprehensive and universal works on this topic, but many other authors have conducted country specific analyses.

Social Organisation

For the Rom, there are only two types of people, 'us' and 'them', the Rom and the Gajé. This very ethnocentric view of their culture is the result of many hundreds of years of persecution.[14] Being Rom is not determined by race, but rather, a complex combination of linguistic, social, economic and cultural values.[15] These values include strict observation of the rules of family and social structure, rituals and customs, styles of dress, types of occupations, language, and the degree of nomadity.[16] Conduct is regulated by a system of prescribed behaviour practised by each member of the community and enforced by the application of *marimé*.[17] The concept of *marimé* is further developed later in this chapter.

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13 A. Fraser, *The Gypsies*, The Peoples of Europe Series, 2nd edn, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992, p. 130.

14 Liégeois, *Gypsies: An Illustrated History*, pp. 78 - 141.

15 Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, p. 22.

16 J. Liégeois, *Gypsies and Travellers: Dossiers for the intercultural training of teachers*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1987, Section 1, pp. 5 - 75.

17 Fraser, p. 245.

In Rom society every individual knows their place, and feels secure in this knowledge. Their identity is defined by the *natsia*, *vitsa*, and *familia* to which they belong. Jean-Pierre Liégeois describes how one would assess their place in Rom society:

> Over the course of any meeting, each individual judges and is judged, gauges himself and those around him, identifies himself and presents himself for identification, affirms his connection with his extended family and identifies the other's in relation to his own, endeavours to emphasise their connections or their differences, and adopts behaviour suited to the circumstances. Any perspective is therefore relative, defined by the place in society of the individual in question, and by the situation of the given moment.[18]

The largest grouping to which one would belong is the first unit of identification, that of the *natsia*, (this is actually a loan word from Rumania and its closest English equivalents would be tribe, nation or race). These *natsia* include Baśalde (noise makers), Bojaś (gold-washers), Ćurara (sieve makers), Kalderaś (coppersmiths), Lovara (horse-dealers), Maćvaya (from the Maćva county west of Belgrade), Rudari (miners) and Ursari (bear-leaders). Each *natsia* may exhibit differences in dialect, customs and appearance, but they recognise each other's right to be considered as Roma, and may intermarry.[19]

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[18] Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, p. 67.

[19] Fraser, p. 238.

Each *natsia* is further divided into *vitsi* (pl of *vitsa*, translatable as clan). The *vitsa* is in effect the largest 'family' group, each has its own Romani name, often derived from an ancestor, (for example, the Frinkulesti descend from Frinkulo Mikhailovitch) but sometimes from an animal or a defining characteristic.[20] Members of the same *vitsa* are relatives and are expected to give each other aid and protection in time of need. It is generally thought wise, particularly in more modern times, to marry within one's own *vitsa*, but outside the *familia* and there are quite strict rules about who can or cannot be married, the general rule is another Rom more distantly related than a first cousin.

Each *vitsa* will have its own elected leader, officially, this person is always male and they cannot place themselves in this position, rather they must earn the right to claim this privilege. To be a leader requires the man to have the respect of his peers, be intelligent, show respect to his peers, have a large family, some degree of wealth, which depends both on family position and on a combination of luck and skill in work and business, and an ability to speak effectively so as to stand out in meetings.[21] It is interesting to note here, that whilst it is extremely rare for a woman to be elected leader, there are many times when a woman can hold the balance of power. Women are the keepers of spiritual power. A woman can use this power to manipulate her position to one where, although she is seen to be in a neutral and powerless position in a physical sense, she can wield the unassailable power of *marimé* over every male.

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[20] Fraser, p. 226.

[21] Liégeois, *Gypsies, An Illustrated History*, p. 62.

The major functional subdivision of the *vitsa* is the *familia* or extended family which traditionally includes married sons and their wives, children and grandchildren. Each residential unit or household within the *familia* may be known as a *tséra* (a Lovara word, which literally translated means tent). Members of a *familia* have a very strong sense of loyalty towards each other. Many generations may co-reside and there is rarely any evidence of inter- or intra- generational conflict. The eldest living member of the *familia* is generally considered to be the head of the family, although the actual running of the household may be left to a younger adult who is generally the unofficially elected leader.

Every aspect of Gypsy life revolves around the *familia*. The individuality of the people and couples who make up each *familia* is always secondary to the whole entity called the *familia* and each individual is dependent on the group for survival.[22] The *familia* provides economic security, education and protection for each individual. The strong social cohesion provided by the *familia* is essential if disintegration of the Romani culture is to be avoided, it is reinforced by a range of factors including travel, hospitality, language, clothing (especially when conspicuous and distinctive), economic organisation, the reputation of the group, relative endogamy and controlled exogamy, and young people's respect for the family.[23]

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22 J. Okely, *The Traveller Gypsy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, p. 66.

23 Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, pp. 75, 83 and 84.

Economic Organisation

Another functional subdivision, the *kumpánia* is not necessarily a family grouping. It may be comprised of people from more than one *natsia* and from several *vitsi* and *familia*, it is a temporary community of people bound together by economic necessity for work purposes. All proceeds gained from work performed are divided equally among its members. In some countries, such as Europe and America (but not as evident in Australia), the *kumpánia* is headed by a *baro Rom* who provides leadership and acts as a link with the Gajé. The *kumpánia* may also be the basic political unit.[24]

The *baro Rom* will usually be the wealthiest and most influential (with the Gajé) man in the locality. This wealth and influence is not dependent on the level or type of educational achievement, but a host of other factors discussed earlier in this chapter:

> One fairly affluent traveller told me 'you don't have to be able to read and write to earn a penny or two', a sentiment that is consistent with Okely's findings that the most affluent travellers in her sample were the least literate.[25]

Wortacha are small groups of men or women who work together on a particular job. They work as equals and as such will also divide the profits equally. They will

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[24] Fraser, p. 239.

[25] B. Adams, J. Okely, J. Morgan & D. Smith, *Gypsies and Government Policy in England*, Heinemann, London, 1975, quoted in D. Sibley, *Outsiders in Urban Societies*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1981, p. 75

sometimes include the older children in a community who are learning the skills of the adults. These groups are flexible and membership of a given group is dependent on the skills required to complete a job. They will often comprise members of one *familia*.[26]

Traditional Family Roles

The customary role of women is the maintenance of the physical and spiritual welfare of the *familia*. Traditionally the main money earners, the women provide the clothing and food for the family. The women are responsible for educating the children and keeping the traditions of the Gypsy culture alive, passing the knowledge of their ancestors on to their daughters. They are responsible for the education of their sons only until they are old enough to start working with the men. This is significant because this informal imparting of knowledge will usually be the only education the children will receive. Girls are not encouraged to leave the *familia* or mix with other Gajé children. From the age of about twelve, the young girls perform many of the same roles as the older women including the raising of the smaller children.

From a young age the males in each *familia* perform the manual tasks, the young boys learning the skills handed down by the older men. Some of the common trades practised in modern times, include wood crafting, metal smithing, car-body work,

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[26] Sutherland, pp. 67-8.

fruit-picking, gold work, and (circus) animal training. Men represent their *familia* at all community gatherings, and are answerable to the community for any transgressions against the community rules. The men are also responsible for the physical protection and maintenance of the social standing and prestige of the *familia*. The money brought in by the men will go towards extravagances likely to increase the prestige of the *familia* within the Romani community.

The income generated by each family member is shared amongst the whole *familia*, therefore finding work is still the paramount concern in the eyes of the Rom. The traditional means of earning a living based on a highly mobile lifestyle has meant that accommodation or rather, preventing the lack of it, was the next priority. The gaining of an education through mainstream education institutions, which, by its nature, necessitated the cessation of travelling and therefore a forced loss of income has therefore, been low on the list of traditional priorities for the Rom.

Travel

Whilst travel is an essential part of Romani life, not all Roma travel and not all travellers are Romani people. There are two main aspects of travel, one is social and the other economic. There are many factors that will have a bearing on the amount of travelling a group may want or be able to accomplish. Some will travel more often than others, the time spent on the road varying considerably. The distances travelled will vary considerably as some Roma only travel around their particular country of residence, or general area, whilst others will travel long distances in relatively short

periods of time. Travel will provide different things to different groups. For some it may be a time to get back in touch with old stamping grounds and people, for others it is a time to bring back an awareness of the unity of the *familia*, and for others still, it is a means of breaking ties in one place and forging new relationships in another. When work dries up in one place, or when there are too many Rom working one area, there is always another source of income, just around the corner, where the opportunities are better.

Travel is also a time-honoured way of resolving differences of opinions and is a type of social control. A person who is causing trouble may be forced to leave and not return until the difficulties are solved. A person who has caused disgrace and shame to his family or *vitsa* may also be run out of town. Internal and external demands being placed on the family, such as attention from a well-meaning, but unwelcome social worker, attendance officer from the local school, police, any government authorities, irate neighbours or landlords may result in a mass exodus of the group, either permanently, or until the storm abates.[27]

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[27] A. Sutherland, 'The American Rom, A Case of Economic Adaptation', in *Gypsies, Tinkers and Other Travellers*, ed. F. Rehfisch, Academic Press, London, 1975, pp. 18-9.

Travel is also necessary for important occasions such as a *pomana*, *kris*, *zinnia*, marriage or when a relative is sick [28] Most importantly though, travel is freedom, being able to, or having a feeling of being able to, get up and go is psychologically important to the Romani people. Even those who are sedentary, see their dwellings as temporary. Travel is symbolically associated with health and good fortune, whereas settling is associated with sickness and bad luck. 'To lose the possibility and the hope of travel is to lose the very reason for living'.[29]

Social Control - *Marimé*

By far the most powerful dictator of social control amongst the Rom is the concept of *marimé*. The word *marimé* comes from the Greek verb meaning 'to dirty'. *Marimé* is to the Rom a concept of pollution (both morally and physically), cleanliness and purity. Most of the rules and prohibitions governing Rom social behaviour are based on a dichotomy between pure and impure persons and objects.[30] Other words that may be used to express the same concept are *Matsuda*, (England and Wales),

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[28] A *pomana* is a traditional feast held three and nine days, six weeks, six months and one year after the death of a relative. The six month and one year feasts may be held in different cities to allow relatives unable to travel, the opportunity to respect the dead.

A *kris* is a trial to decide guilt or innocence. It is presided over by the adult males of a community and often a phuri dai (wise old woman) Long distances may be travelled by members of a *vitsa* to show support for the person on trial.

A zinnia is a 'table' set for a wedding, party, or any other important occasion.

[29] Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, p. 79.

[30] Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, p. 73.

magerdó (Poland), *prastlo* and *pale ?ido* (Sinti).[31] It is a core element at all levels of Rom culture, used to reinforce the differences between the Rom and Gajé, being declared *marimé* results in a kind of social death. According to Fraser, 'the terminology varies, the code itself, despite differences in particulars shows a considerable degree of consistency.[32] This consistency is illustrated in the following:

> Gypsies apply the rules of their own moral code with a severity we would sometimes do well to envy. ... Authors of picturesque literature evoke at every turn the dreadful promiscuity in the lives of Gypsy men and women, fathers and daughters, brothers and sisters. It so happens that the prohibitions which govern the sexual life of these nomads are extremely exacting.[33]

Four theoretical categories have been identified into which *marimé* can usually be placed, although in actual practice, any such incident or entity may fit into more than one of these categories. The first category refers to those taboos directly or indirectly related to a fear of contamination by or for women. The second category deals with matters related to sexual restrictions, the third deals with those actions or things which

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31 Fraser, p. 244.

32 Fraser, pp. 55, 245.

33 J. Clébert, *The Gypsies*, trans. C. Duff, Harmondsworth, England, 1964, p. 175.

are considered to be dirty or unhygienic. The fourth category refers to socially unacceptable behaviour within the Romani community.[34]

Cleanliness restrictions demand that strict washing regulations should be enforced, such as separate basins, towels and soaps for the two body zones. A bowl in which clothing has been washed must not be used for washing facecloths, and table cloths, cooking utensils and crockery, and a woman's clothes should be washed separately from others. The bodily concepts of *marimé* are largely, but not only applied to women, the lower body of both sexes is considered *marimé* and everything associated with it is potentially defiling - genitalia, bodily functions, clothing touching the lower body, and allusions to sex and pregnancy.[35] Miller describes *marimé* in relation to the life cycle:

> At birth, the infant is thought to be entirely *marimé* ... owing to the polluting nature of the site of recent origin. The mother, owing to her intensive contact with the infant, is also thought to be dangerously impure. Both are isolated for a period of time that varies from three days ... to several weeks ... Subsequent to this period, the infant and later the child, is not *marimé* at all ... children are believed to be

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34 E. Trigg, *Gypsy Demons and Divinities: The Magic and Religion of the Gypsies*, The Citadel Press, New Jersey, 1973, p. 55.

It should be noted that Trigg's work has attracted some criticism as it draws mainly from the early works of the Gypsy Lore Society, an association of Gajé who write about the Rom. The information used here has also been sighted in other works of note.

35 Fraser, p. 245.

> blameless to sin, including defilement, because they are new and innocent, and not yet aware of the consequences of their deeds. Their purity tends to ameliorate defiling contacts ... Innocence ends with marriage which properly activates the full capacity for pollution ... Innocence is gradually regained, in some measure with old age [for both men and women], ... as the powers of purity increase, the powers of impurity would seem to decline. Because they do not menstruate, old women no longer have the power to *marimé*.[36]

The last category of *marimé* is that associated with punishment of socially unacceptable behaviour within the Rom community. Rejection from the community is the ultimate punishment for a Rom, it can be enforced by a number of means such as gossip, avoidance, or by declaration in a *kris*. A *marimé* pronouncement is not always permanent, but may be given a certain, generally agreed upon, time limit. It is effective because the society of the Rom revolves around close social interaction and the *marimé* stigma always includes the *familia*, and sometimes the *vitsa*, of the person concerned. Declaring a person *marimé* is never executed lightly as it results in a loss of respect from the community and a drop in status within the wider society, which may persist even though there is complete reinstatement.[37]

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[36] C. Miller, 'American Rom and the Ideology of Defilement', in *Gypsies, Tinkers and Other Travellers*, ed. F. Rehfisch, Academic Press, London, 1975, pp. 43-44.

[37] Sutherland, *Gypsies, The Hidden Americans*, p. 99.

The Gajé, being ignorant of the rules of the system and therefore lacking this sense of shame are considered to be *marimé* all over, from head to toe, and this characterises all contacts with the Gajé, whether they are for economic or (rarely) social reasons. This is one of the measures adopted to maintain the boundaries between the Rom and the Gajé. The Rom are generally aware that they live in a society that despises them and therefore erects its own, immovable, boundaries against them. Their sense of moral superiority is, therefore, not threatened by their relegated position in society or the attitudes of the Gajé towards them.[38] It has been suggested that this may form a part of the strategy of accommodation, widely used by the Rom in which they adopt those behaviours which enable it to coexist with the dominant group but at the same time retain those social norms and cultural values which permit the group to preserve its own distinctive identity.[39]

Religion

The religion of a group of Roma is another sphere where the Rom reflect the world of the Gajé around them. A group's religion and its contacts, past and present, are related. Much of the reason behind the taking of a religion can be seen as an

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38 Sutherland, *Gypsies, The Hidden Americans*, pp. 8-9.

39 M. Andereck, *Ethnic Awareness and the School: An Ethnographic Study*, Sage Series on Race Relations, vol. 5, in M. Salo (ed.), *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, Series 5, vol. 3, no. 1, February 1993, p. 49.

adaptation to the environment, a way of avoiding further intrusions and additional coercion, although it is rare for a Rom to accept the church or the Gajé religion in its entirety.

While certain elements of a religion may be borrowed, they do not always remain superficial and opportunistic. Some of the beliefs and rituals have been absorbed into the cultural complex of the Rom. Most of these have been borrowed and organised into a uniquely Rom configuration. For example, many Rom today will have their children baptised, sometimes more than once in different churches, such as the Church of England, Roman Catholic, Russian or Greek Orthodox, or Muslim Đamija. Not truly trusting the Gajé religions, they will have a final ceremony according to their own rituals and beliefs. The older Rom families often entirely forego the church ceremonies and turn their own ceremony into a three (or sometimes seven) day event with relatives coming from all over the country to join in the festivities. This is especially important for a long awaited first grandchild or great grandchild.

The religion of the Rom is based on a series of purification and prohibition rituals, many surrounding birth and death. Above all, a pervading belief in the power of the self can be found at the base of Rom religious beliefs. Pilgrimages of the Rom are used not only as outward showings of religion, but also as a time to socialise and to capitalise on the number of curious onlookers who also attend these occasions.[40]

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[40] Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, pp. 89 - 91.

The Status of Women

'The subordination of women in Gypsy culture creates a problem for mainstream non-Gypsy researchers who argue that it is ethnocentric to condemn sexism in someone else's culture.'[41] This narrow view is very much two-dimensional as it assumes that the Gypsy women are powerless in a male dominated society, and that they have little or no understanding of their own power and position within the society. This is the view of the ethnographer who although permitted small glimpses of how the society works, is not afforded an account of the view taken by those who live within the society. Sutherland perhaps came closest when she described the 'discrepancy between the male ideal and the actual practice of that ideal by women'. She goes on to say that although men do have some superior avenues of authority, particularly in the political arena, they are also aware of their dependence on their women for the economic and mystical bases of their power. And while women may be seen as subordinate, they are endowed with much more political influence than is at first observed.[42] Although the men are generally more vocal and up front with their display of power, it is the women who carry on, and are responsible for, the racial purity of the Rom.[43]

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41 D. Tong, *Gypsies: A Multidisciplinary Annotated Bibliography*, Garland, New York, 1995, p. 335.

42 A. Sutherland, 'Gypsy Women, Gypsy Men: Paradoxes and Cultural Resources', in *Papers from the Sixth and Seventh Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society, North American Chapter*, ed. J. Grumet, Gypsy Lore Society, New York, Publication No. 3, 1986, pp. 104-5.

43 Miller, p. 45.

In the 24th, 25th, and 26th (1996 and 1997) editions of Interface, there are descriptions of reports of meetings that have been held for women in Romani society and the 'Gypsy Woman's Movement' in Europe.[44] It is of note here, that these meetings are based entirely on Gajé perceptions and refer to the discrimination of women by Gajé on account of their race and sex. In 1995, the Council of Europe conducted a hearing of Roma/Gypsy women at the initiative of the Council of Europe Steering Committee for equality between Men and Women (CDEG).

> The Gypsy people is without doubt the group most exposed and vulnerable to racism and xenophobia ... And Gypsy women are doubly vulnerable in this regard : everyone knows that in addition to racial and ethnic discrimination, Gypsy women suffer additional discrimination on account of their sex.[45]

One of the areas discussed with a view to improving the situation of Roma/Gypsy women was education. It was felt that the education systems in most European countries fail to take into account the specificity of the Romani culture and that the requirements for 'genuine interculturality' were not being implemented. It was felt that these requirements include the introduction of teaching of Romanes and Romani culture into school curricula and measures aimed at overcoming the distrust of the

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44 J. Liégeois (ed.), *Interface*, trans. S. ní Shuinéar Gypsy Research Centre, Paris, nos. 24, 25 & 26, 1996

45 P. Imbert, Director of Human Rights, in *Interface*, vol 24, November 1996, p. 6.

other school children, caused by stereotypical images of Romani people. It was felt that education represented a major area of discrimination:

> Roma/Gypsy women are convinced that the illiteracy from which they suffer is one of the main reasons for their social and economic marginalisation. They considered it necessary to set up large scale literacy and training programs as soon as possible, not only to help them gain access to employment but also so that they can become mediators between the majority community and the Roma/Gypsy communities, as well as within the Roma/Gypsy communities themselves.

'The Gypsy Image'

> The word 'Gypsy' has brec a lot of prejudice and we are trying to build up an appreciation of our culture ... When people ask me "Are you a Gypsy? I say No, I'm a Rom."[46]

How many images does the word 'Gypsy' bring to mind? Are these images romantic or hostile, are there images of young girls dancing with wild abandon, dirty young men brushing with the wrong side of the law, road-side fortune tellers, exotic caravans or colourful scarves and beads? Can these images be related to a movie, book or article recently seen?

Many of the projected images of the Rom in popular literature come from the racist views of those outside the cultural circle of the Rom, neatly camouflaged as 'art'. When the Rom are portrayed in newspaper reports or in current affairs segments, it is rare to find a favourable report. Those considered newsworthy are the incidents where a 'Gypsy' has conned a Gajé and always, the actions of the one are laid upon the many.

The few positive reports are tinged with romanticism and folklore. For example, 'Hugo, in creating his Gypsy girl, Esmerelda from documents which are themselves very romantic, nonetheless released the Gypsy woman from the curses which the

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[46] M. Morrow, *Good Luck on the Road. A Portrait of the Romani People in Australia*, (radio broadcast), ABC Radio National, 25 August, 1996.

people had so long imputed to her.'[47] It has been suggested that some of this romanticism has its origins in the dreams of escapism that the nomadic lifestyle afforded to the jaded house-bound:

> The poets of the Romantic movement, from their homes and their own narrow world, have sung with a nostalgia inspired by the nomadic life. The love of freedom, the reaction against monotony and routine, the taste for novelty, for the unexpected, and for risk, inveigled not only authentic vagabond intellectuals, but the majority of studious writers into the quest of an inner new world.[48]

From the sublime to the ridiculous are claims of Romani beliefs such as this one:

> Sterility is the greatest misfortune that can strike a Gypsy woman. Central European Gypsies attribute it to a magical cause: 'A childless woman is pitied and despised, and her situation with her husband untenable, for, in the mind of the Gypsies she has had carnal commerce with a vampire, which causes her sterility'.[49]

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47 Clébert, p. xvi

48 Clébert, p. xvi

49 Clébert, p. 161.

One should not perhaps be so scathing of the many images of the 'Gypsy' that abound in popular literature, for doubtless, many like this one came from authentic Gypsy informants!

On a more serious note, manipulation of images of the Rom can be used in the battle for assimilation, providing those ignorant of true Romani culture with fodder for their imaginations, thus ensuring the continuation of prejudice and as always fear of the unknown:

> Outside of time, in a limitless, unstable, elusive twilight zone, scratching in the margin just beside the well-ordered official text, and leaving his mark there, the Gypsy symbolises a threatening counter-identity. He does not possess what others take for granted - but he has, and is, much that they have not and are not, and in so doing he corrupts, bewilders and threatens to subvert the whole thing. Such difference inspires an ambivalent response: attraction and resistance. The Gypsy's very existence is an act of defiance. And of arrogance. There are many who want to make him disappear.[50]

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[50] Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers* p. 199.

The Rom in Australia

The population of Roma in Australia comprise some 16,500 people. Of the 2404 *familia* who took part in the Romani International ~Australia Inc. survey, the number of people in each *familia* was between four and twelve (Average of 6.8).[51] The Rom in Australia comprise individuals and *familiyi* from a wide variety of national and ethnic backgrounds. Survival techniques mastered over the years include merging with the host society often to a point of invisibility to such an extent that they are not on electoral rolls, nor do they take part in Census Statistics which makes them difficult to identify and locate.

The Roma who participated in the survey were first, second and third generation in Australia. Almost every Western European (including England) and many Eastern European countries are represented amongst the Romani population in Australia. There are relatively few American immigrants and these include people from both the United States and South America. These countries include only those of residence immediately prior to arriving in Australia as most Roma can trace their heritage (verbally) back to Europe.

Most Rom have maintained their Romani customs, but also practice aspects of their country of residence. As discussed in Chapter Six, Roma newly arrived in Australia often have difficulty adjusting both to the Australian way of life and the inflexible

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[51] B. Kurda & R. Young, Illiteracy: An Australian Focus. Results of the Survey conducted by Romani International - Australia Inc, Adelaide, July, 1995, pp. 2, 4.

attitude of the Australian Rom towa ds the traditional customs and traditions. Further elaboration on the Rom in Austral a and associated statistical data are included in Chapter Six.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked briefly at m ny area.s of traditional Romani society. This has been carried out with the hope that with an increased knowledge of Romani culture and heritage, there will be a greater understanding of the need of the Rom to remain on the fringe of the mainstream, dor inant culture and acknowledgement of the need for participation in certain aspects of this culture whilst retaining an identity of its own. Rather than assimilating, or integrating and paying the price of acculturation, perhaps a newer concept of accor modation, in which 'the minority group adopts those behaviours that enable it to c oexist with the dominant group but retain those values and norms which permit the group to preserve its own distinctive identity' could be explored.[52]

Chapter Three provides the basis for consideration of the dilemma of education provision for the Romani people. It establishes the framework for how 'outsiders' are most likely to view the Rom. It discusses the concepts of deprivation and cultural capital and their effects on the likelihood of success in education and to some degree,

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52 M. Andereck, in Salo (ed.), pp. 48-4).

the likely success of the individual in mainstream society. With a focus on Australia, it traces the development of multicultural ideologies and their impact on education and society.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Considerations

Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of the general characteristics and philosophical bases of Australia's pluralistic society and its implications for multicultural education. It looks at one definition of the term multicultural education and highlights how different interpretations may be taken from that definition. A look at the ideology of integration, which provided the bridge to progressivism, pluralism and multiculturalism follows.

Around these central ideologies, there are a number of peripheral concepts that need to be considered, in order to fully grasp the current position of the Rom in Australia. Separatism, deprivation, cultural capital, and methods of social control are discussed with a view to evaluating their impact on education and the administration of this education.

These concepts are central to understanding the current context of the Rom because they provide the basis for consideration of the next step, future directions for research and the ground underneath the current position. Prevailing community attitudes determine individual response and these play a role in determining the success or failure of any venture.

In order to fully grasp the nuances of the current situation, it is necessary to look at its history as this provides the framework for definition of what is happening now, in the context of what has gone before. To neglect the history of the current situation:

> makes problematic the construction of general categories within which to situate those ethnographic and interactionist accounts of specific events. Hence it would be possible for a variety of social events to be portrayed and for their internal logic to be laid bare without getting any general understanding of why events differ and why what is common to certain events, recurs over time.[1]

Of particular interest here is the history of the current policies on multiculturalism in Australia, which lends a complex and subtle perspective. Modern history indicates that the assimilationist policies that were so prevalent in Australian community and government attitudes from the 1940s to 1960s may have been largely responsible for

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1 I. Goodson, 'History, Context and Qualitative Methods in the Study of Curriculum', in *Strategies of Educational Research: Qualitative Methods*. ed. R. Burgess, The Falmer Press, London, 1985, p. 124.

present day attitudes and polices These policies impacted profoundly on both Australian society and the management of its educational system.

Pluralism

Australia is now an ethnically and culturally pluralistic nation. This means that within this one land, there is a wide ranging cultural diversity amongst the people living here. Although it has been such since the very first days of white settlement, the current extensive cultural diversification has mainly been the result of large-scale immigration to Australia since 1947.[2]

> Australia has an enviable international reputation for being a racially tolerant and culturally diverse nation. On 30 October 1996, the Government formally reaffirmed its commitment to racial tolerance. The Prime Minister, Mr John Howard moved a Parliamentary Statement on Racial Tolerance, in the Australian Parliament's House of Representatives. ... The Statement was supported by the Opposition Leader, Mr Kim Beazley, and carried unanimously.[3]

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2 L. Foster & K. Harman, *Australian Education. A Sociological Perspective*, 3rd edn., Prentice Hall, Australia, 1992, pp. 37-8.

3 Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs, Migration Fact Sheet, No 8, Public Affairs Section, Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs, Canberra, Revised February, 1998, pp. 2, 3.

The relatively harmonious integration of so many people from different backgrounds requires a philosophy of acceptance of others. It is a philosophy that requires its proponents to encourage and embrace the philosophy that divergent cultures can and should be acknowledged and explored, rather than merely tolerated or pushed to one side. Pluralism requires one to acknowledge that different cultures can live side by side and that each person can benefit from the diversity arising from their presence. Cultural diversity refers to the cultural backgrounds of all people with some emphasis on their ethnicity, race, religion, culture, language, class, and sex.[4] Cultural diversity is seen as being crucial to the future of Australia and should be used to provide a new definition of the Australian national identity.[5]

The ideology behind a pluralistic society may in fact, be a difficult one to really accomplish in every sense that the word conveys, due to the still dominant Anglo-Celtic nature of Australian society and its strong roots in this culture. The days of 'White Australia' (1901 - mid-1950s), may be far behind us, but its effects are entrenched in our thinking and we still have a long way to go to reach the stated goal of multiculturalism in a pluralistic society.

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4 D. Gollnick, 'Multicultural Education: Policies and Practices in Teacher Education', in *Research and Multicultural Education: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, C. Grant ed., The Falmer Press, London, 1992, p. 228.

5 S. Castles & E. Vasta, 'Introduction Multicultural or Multi-racist Australia?' in *The Teeth are Smiling: The Persistence of Racism in Multicultural Australia*, eds E. Vasta & S. Castles, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996, p. 2.

> Each pluralist society has its dominant ethnocultural group, which controls power over the access other ethnocultural groups have to social rewards and economic resources. Part of this control is exercised through education, and in particular through the curriculum.[6]

This same is true even now, some seventeen years later, when we look at the struggle by the ethnic minorities in Australia for equality of outcomes in education and their second-citizen status in this Anglo-Celtic dominated society. Multiculturalism is one of the themes to emerge from this ethnic and cultural pluralistic society as it describes the attempts of Australian society to overcome these difficulties.

Multiculturalism in Society, Schools and Education

Multiculturalism has been defined as having three components:

- cultural identity: the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;
- social justice: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, including the removal of barriers of

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[6] B. Bullivant, The Pluralist Dilemma in Education, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1981, p. viii.

race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth; and

- economic efficiency the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.[7]

Whilst the definition may not engender strong feelings one way or another, the word 'multiculturalism' itself, has the ability to provoke responses from even the most reticent of people. It challenges the more traditional political views of a monocultural Australia that developed through each of the World Wars.[8] There are many perceived threats to the culture and identity of the mainstream that also need to be addressed.[9] These threats pose blocks to the acceptance of multiculturalism by the mainstream populace.

> [The term multiculturalism] raises questions over which there are important disagreements — questions, ultimately, about how different people are to live together in a single polity. It raises general questions about claims of indigenous peoples who are minorities within the wider community; about the rights and obligations of immigrants to a

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7 Office of Multicultural Affairs, *Multicultural Policies and Programs*, AGPS, Canberra, 1989, p. 3.

8 M. Clyne, 'Bilingual Education—What can we learn from the Past?, *Australian Journal of Education*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1988, p. 100-111.

9 S. Castles, 'The racisms of globalisation', in E. Vasta & S. Castles (eds), 1996, p. 40-41.

> host society; about the extent to which cultural variety should be tolerated (or promoted) within a society; and about the importance of ideas of citizenship and national identity. And it also raises more particular questions about government policy dealing with issues ranging from education to the composition of the armed forces.[10]

Most of these questions have not yet been answered, more specifically those addressing the issues of education and educational policy, the focus of this study. The implications of this for the Romani people and children of other ethnic minorities is an uncertain future with poorly identified guidelines within which teachers, administrators and policy makers will operate.

When faced with non-English speaking background children who are having difficulties expressing themselves in and understanding the English language, the existence of cultural differences are outwardly apparent. In these circumstances most teachers are able to take action, catering at least for some of the child's specific needs. It is more difficult to discern the needs of a child who looks like any other white Anglo-Celtic child and who appears to be orally fluent in English, but is from a different cultural background. In these cases, it is likely that without an understanding

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[10] C. Kukathas, 'The Question of Multiculturalism', in *Multicultural Citizens: The Philosophy and Politics of Identity*, ed. C. Kukathas The Centre for Independent Studies Ltd, 1993, p. 1.

of the students' cultural background and the influence of this culture on their response to the school environment that their individual needs will go unfulfilled.[11]

The diversity of appearance among Romani children is such that in one family, there may be children of quite dark skin colour and those of very pale skin colour. Although it is quite obvious from their appearance that some of these children belong to an ethnic minority, others appear quite Anglo-Celtic. As stated previously, it is not possible to identify a Rom on the basis of the country of residence as being Rom is determined not merely by race, but also by a complex combination of values.[12]

Such discrepancies have been recognised and certain changes in terminology which reflect the necessary changes in conceptions of multiculturalism have been made on paper. For example, in 1987 the National Advisory and Coordinating Committee on Multicultural Education made the following statement:

> *Migrant*, with its connotations of transience, and its inapplicability to the Australian-born, is being replaced by the phrase of *non English speaking background.*; but this may also be inappropriate for those of non-Anglo-Celtic descent whose home language is English but who remain culturally or racially distinct from the majority. At this stage,

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11 G. Partington & V. McCudden, *Ethnicity and Education*, Social Science Press, Wentworth Falls, 1992, p. 11.

12 J. Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, trans. S. ní Shuinéar, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1994, p. 38.

> it is appropriate to frame multicultural policies in terms of the needs of *ethnic minorities.*[13]

The Report goes on to give a definition of an ethnic minority which it describes as:

> those who have a "*real or putative common ancestry*"[14] and who share a common heritage defined in terms of language, culture and social attitudes, values and practices. Ethnic groups are to be distinguished in terms of whether ethnic boundaries are marked by physical (visible) or cultural characteristics and to the extent that these boundaries are maintained by social interaction, consciousness and group identification.[15]

By this definition, the Romani people of Australia constitute an ethnic minority group. There has however, been no official declaration of this by the Australian government, most likely due to the fact that government officials are largely unaware that there is a Romani population in Australia. The Roma in Australia are largely unaware of their status as an ethnic minority and are unaware of the rights and responsibilities that are

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13 National Advisory and Coordinating Committee on Multicultural Education, *Education In And For A Multicultural Society: Issues And Strategies For Policy Making*, (L. Jayasuriya, Chair), AGPS, Canberra, 1987, p. 18.

14 R. Schermerhorn, *Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research*, Random House, New York, 1970, quoted in National Advisory and Coordinating Committee on Multicultural Education, *Education In And For A Multicultural Society: Issues And Strategies For Policy Making*, (L. Jayasuriya, Chair), AGPS, Canberra, 1987, p. 18.

15 R. Schermerhorn, pp. 18-9.

commensurate with this place in society. In fact, most Ganeśti Rom in Australia are unaware that they have a place in Australian society; they are only aware of their place in Romani society.[16] Other groups of Rom assume their place as an ethnic minority as being attributed to them because of their migration recent or past from a European or other country.[17]

Multicultural education has been referred to as education that deals with human diversity.[18] Education policies still seek to promote the three major principles put forward in the *National Agenda For A Multicultural Australia* (1989). These state that multicultural education is about and should uphold:

- Cultural identity: the right of all children, students, families and employees to maintain, develop, and renew, and not merely preserve, their cultural and linguistic heritage.
- Access and equity: the right of all children, students, families and employees to equality of opportunity, ready and appropriate access to care and education services and equitable outcomes.

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16 Group Discussions, Melbourne, 19 September, 1997.

17 Group Discussions, Sydney, 10-12 May, 1996.

18 C. Grant & S. Millar, 'Research and Multicultural Education: Barriers, Needs and Boundaries', in *Research and Multicultural Education: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, ed. C. Grant, The Falmer Press, London, 1992, p. 7.

- Maximal potential: the right of all children and students to quality education and care that provides knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to participate effectively in culturally and linguistically diverse societies on a national and international level.[19]

Thus multicultural education policies are attempting, at least on paper, to redress some of the disadvantages of belonging to an ethnic minority in Australia. Whether they reach the children, adolescents and adults who need them is dependent on the extent to which the states enforce their own policies and whether adequate policies are being formed and put into practice at school level.

In spite of the age of the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, this document spells out very clearly the principles and values underpinning multiculturalism in Australia. There have been many reviews and reports written since, however they all refer back to the 1989 document. Bipartisan commitment to these principles has been reaffirmed as lately as 30 October, 1996. Multiculturalism as an issue saw a quiet period of relative inactivity and only since early 1996 has it returned to the fore of government and public thinking.[20] There are also a number of

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[19] Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia: Sharing Our Future*, AGPS, Canberra, 1989, p. vii, quoted in Department for Education and Children's Services, *Multiculturalism in Schooling and Children's Services: Policy Statement*, Adelaide, 1995, p. 2.

[20] Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, *Multicultural Australia: The Way Forward.* An Issues Paper by the National Multicultural Advisory Council, N. Roach, (Chairperson), Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 1997, p. 2.

limitations placed on multiculturalism as expressed in these earlier documents and these include: the need for 'an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia', acceptance of 'the basic structures and principles of Australian society', and 'a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values'.[21]

One of the earliest reports to espouse multiculturalism was the *Review of Post Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants* (The Galbally Report) in 1978.[22] It would appear that one of the major difficulties with the policies of multiculturalism and multicultural education, is the difficulty inherent in their implementation. Although one of the Galbally Report's central recommendations for achieving a multicultural Australia is a multicultural education policy, this is an issue with which few government documents have tried to grapple. The Galbally Report itself speaks of the *encouragement* of multiculturalism or a multicultural attitude, but it has little to say about the existing social structure and the differential stratification of the many ethnic groups in Australian society.[23] Foster and Harman state that:

> The Galbally Report implied that multiculturalism is not a fact with social consequences, but simply an attitude to be encouraged.

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21 Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, What is Multiculturalism,* Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Canberra, 1997, p. 1.

22 F. Galbally, *Migrant Services and Programs - Report of the Review of Post Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants*, Canberra, Australia, AGPS, 1978.

23 Galbally, pp. 3-4, quoted in Foster & Harman, p. 346.

The shortcomings of multiculturalism have been bluntly stated by Bullivant who partly ascribes these to the limitations of multicultural education and its role in the creation of a multicultural society:

> Multiculturalism, in all its confusion, may be a subtle way of appearing to give members of ethnocultural groups what they want in education while in reality giving them little that will enhance their life chances, because a great deal of mult cultural education emphasises only life-styles, in a safe, bland, politically neutral panacea.[26]

This statement concurs with the ideas of other sociologists who feel that the current Australian educational system is at once the product and a stimulator of the existing social and cultural structure. Where one is forever perpetuating the other, a vicious circle whereby social inequality is being transformed into educational inequality, which in its turn ensures the continuation of this same social inequality.[27] Both these views imply that whilst educational institutions can participate in the processes, they cannot be expected to assume sole responsibility for the successful implementation of a multicultural society. The role of other institutions, such as the family, the church, ethnic community groups and the media must also be recognised.

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[26] Bullivant, p. ix.

[27] L. Foster, *Australian Education, A Sociological Perspective*, Prentice-Hall, Sydney, 1981, p. 365.

Many commentators feel that the ideologies of social and cultural pluralism and with them, multiculturalism, have not completely displaced the ideology of assimilation either in educational policy and practice, or in general community attitudes.[28] For example, one of the original tactics of the assimilationists, the teaching of English, has never been abandoned altogether this concept has simply been broadened to incorporate bilingual education, the teaching of 'community' languages, 'multicultural' education, and education in ethnic schools.[29]

Progressivism

Although progressivism refers more to a style of pedagogy than a theory or ideology, it has a place in this discussion, because it has grown out of the theories of social and educational multiculturalism and pluralism. The schools are the organisations in society which have been charged with ensuring the transmission of the various shared values of Australian society, which includes the notion of Australia as a multicultural society in which ethnicity and equality are valued as complementary rather than mutually exclusive concepts.[30] Progressivism is a move towards a more school-based and independent curriculum which aims to allow schools more freedom to promote their local community values, reflected in the school population.

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28 J. Martin, *The Migrant Presence*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1978, pp. 136-7.

29 Foster, pp. 310-11.

30 J. Smolicz, 'Yes, Multiculturalism', in *Education News*, vol 17, no. 2, 1980, p. 16.

Traditional pedagogy is strongly grounded in the passing of 'facts' from teacher to student, with the understanding that these facts will be subsequently regurgitated by the student. There is no room in this pedagogy for acknowledgment of the possible diversity of cultures or ethnicities that may be present in a single classroom. The traditional curriculum dictates a single social narrative to students whose needs, cultures and interests are usually quite diverse. Being assessed in terms of acceptance and understanding of the dominant culture, means that many students are left baffled by the apparent irrelevance of the curriculum. It is proposed that formal examination of these 'fixed truths' using standardised tests and intelligence tests do not measure ability to learn facts as much as they measure a student's ability to master examination techniques and the degree of understanding of the school as a system that rewards one for the possession of cultural capital. Such a skill is very much based on class, language and culture.

The progressivist attitude is one which promotes a child-oriented 'inquiry' learning process, where the curriculum is often left open for determination by the teacher in accordance with the needs of students, ensuring that the old, singular story line of Australian identity is no longer imposed.[31] This method anticipates that if students are promoted as active investigators of their social world, it will become obvious to them that there is no single, true answer to any problem, but rather, that knowledge is a matter of one's own perspective.

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[31] For example, the social studies curriculum in N.S.W. since its revision in 1975, quoted in M. Kalantzis, B. Cope, G. Noble, S. Poynting, *Cultures of Schooling: Pedagogies for Cultural Difference and Social Access*, The Falmer Press, London, 1990, p. 32.

During the interviews from this study the respondents and I discussed education, our attitudes towards it and how the cul ure of the society in which we live shapes our thoughts. During one of these intervie ws, Bob, the interviewee, related two incidents to me. The first was from his days in primary school grade seven and the second was after he had left school and was talking to one of his past teachers. I have included them here as examples that extend fr om the arguments presented above:

> I was taught in geography tha Mount Lofty was the highest mountain in South Australia. The qu estion arose in my Q.C. [Qualifying Certificate obtained at the enc of Grade Seven], as it was called then, and I answered as I had been taught. I attained a mark of 100% for Geography. I have since lea ned that I was taught incorrectly, as probably my teacher had beer before me.
>
> I was teaching a class of prima ry school students and we were looking at the Universe and Earth's p ace in it. When I told them that Planet Earth was round like an ora nge one student disagreed. The child insisted that it was round lik a coin, which was accurate from the child's perception. I had to sh w the child by experiment - usually not included until later lessons - that what I was saying was feasible. In my mind that child was my smart st pupil.[32]

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[32] Bob, Personal Interview, Adelaide, 22 October, 1996.

Discussions with recently arrived immigrants reveal that many of the parents of newly arrived children in Australia, are baffled by the flexibility of the Australian education system.[33] They have no understanding of the meaning of a diverse or multicultural curriculum and are disappointed at the apparent lack of rigidity in Australian schools, such as they were used to back home. The debate still continues and many advantages and disadvantages of the system currently in place have been identified. Progressivism is by no means seen as the end of the road, it has many pitfalls and disadvantages, but it is one more step that can be taken in the search for equality of outcomes in education. This approach is seen by personnel in progressive schools to be additional to and corrective of many of the inadequacies in the cultural pluralist model.[34]

Assimilation and Integration

Immigrants, for the first twenty years of post World War II migration were expected to assimilate completely into Australian culture and life. The ideology behind this theory was that if these immigrants became 'Australian', then they could not challenge the existing cultural identity of Australian society or the existing class structure. Schools were organised to educate the immigrants in the 'Australian' way of life, away from their un-Australian traditions and toward the dominant Anglo-Celtic norm. It was widely affirmed and believed that the only culture and language worth preserving was the dominant one and the price that immigrants of this time faced was

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[33] Samara, Group Discussions, Melbourne, 25 October, 1996.

[34] M. Kalantzis et al., p. 220.

the surrender of their own cultural heritage.[35] In particular, it is still a common thought that immigrant women and girls are better off living under Australian society rules, rather than their own. That assimilating into Australian culture will provide them with better opportunities and a better way of life.[36] The pressure often reinforced by constant reminders of the 'reason why they came to Australia in the first place'. The main one being the need to give the children a better life than the parents were able to provide in their home country.

Looking back at the progression of history in this area, it may be plausible that assimilation was, at the time, considered to be the only possible first step to creating a multicultural nation.[37] Until relatively recently, Australia was an essentially racist society believing unquestioningly in the superiority of the white Australian. The last traces of the White Australia Policy were officially abolished in 1973.[38] The White Australia policy promoted the entry into Australia of only young, healthy, British immigrants.[39] The merit point system did not allow for the entry of citizens of most other nationalities.[40] It is possible that it was the only possible first step in the sequence of circumstances leading to the introduction of policies of integration and

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35 Foster & Harman, pp. 238-9.

36 G. Tsolidis, 'The Articulation of Ethnicity and Gender in Australia', *Voices*, Canberra, vol. 6, no. 3, Spring 1993, pp. 54 - 55.

37 Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs, Migration Fact Sheet, No 8, p. 3.

38 Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs, Fact Sheet, No 5, Public Affairs Section, Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs, Canberra, Revised December, 1997, p. 1.

39 M. Wooden, R. Holton, G. Hugo & J. Sloan, *Australian Immigration: A Survey of the Issues*, AGPS, Canberra, 1994, p. 281.

40 M. Wooden et al., pp. 281, 297.

pluralism. Whether this was the intention or whether this was just the way that history has unfolded is still a matter for debate.

There was a growing disquiet about the hegemony of the cultural and linguistic assimilationist policies towards the end of the 1960s as it was acknowledged that there was a large discrepancy between the stated goals of assimilation and the actual situation.[41] There was pressure from a growing number of groups, for a new look to be taken at the assimilationist policies with redefinition of the place and role of migrants in Australia and the difficulties they were experiencing as they attempted to become productive members of Australian society. Interestingly, much of this pressure came not from the migrants themselves, but from groups of people who were working with them, for example, one of these groups were the teachers who felt undermined and threatened in their work because the migrant students were not responding to their teaching methods. These cumulative pressures represented a challenge to the dominance of the Anglo-Celtic authority. There were loud calls for a broad structural change to Australian society, the development of a new ideology, a change in attitude, a move in fact, towards social and cultural pluralism.[42]

In general terms, this new ideology would be reflected in the capacity of new and established institutions to accommodate an ethnically diverse population, and acceptance of the fact that every ethnic minority has the right not only to participate

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41 Martin, pp. 209-11, quoted in Foster & Harman p. 239.

42 Foster, p. 238.

fully at every level of Australian society, but also the right to retain their ethnic cultural identity through the observance of their traditions, customs, religious beliefs and language if they so wished. Thus, the ideology of assimilation gave way to the ideology of integration, an ideology where people from different cultures could live side-by-side in harmony and still retain their own sense of identity. This view filtered through all levels of the community, through to the institutions that control society.[43]

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is about the value placed on different aspects of culture by any society. The aspects of culture that may be included are language, education, skills, knowledge, attitudes, economic diversity, values and ways of behaving.[44] Bourdieu explains the role of cultural capital in educational success in the following way:

> Those aspects of culture (knowledge, cultural style, and cultural 'skills', such as good taste) which have been legitimised as the dominant culture have an affinity with the academic culture which is upheld and transmitted by the schools.[45]

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43 Foster & Harman, p. 239.

44 Foster & Harman, p. 39.

45 P. Bourdieu, quoted in Foster, p. 322.

The difficulties arise because certain of these aspects of culture are unequally distributed among the social classes and their expression will vary between ethnic groups. As a result of this, some students will come to school with greater 'institutionally recognised' cultural capital than others. The school environment, by its very nature, will reward those who possess more 'recognised' cultural capital, at the same time judging the achievement of those with less or different capital by the same standard. It is not surprising then, that when the additional impediment of possible culture conflict is added to the difficulties of coping with daily school life, that these students do not achieve the same standard in education or later in the employment market.[46]

Care must be taken to ensure that cultural differences are not translated to cultural deficit. Such limitations are echoed by Sibley in his work on 'Outsiders in Urban Society':

> Without an understanding of the value system of the [Rom], it would be easy to confuse those features of material culture that are symptoms of poverty and those that are culturally specific and reflect preferences rather than need. If the functional requirements of the lifestyle and the role of material objects in [Romani] society are not recognised, however, such aspects of material culture might be taken as indicators of deprivation.[47]

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46 P. Bourdieu, in Foster, p. 322.

47 D. Sibley, *Outsiders in Urban Societies*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1981, p. 70.

Deficit Theory and Educational Deprivation

The concepts of social and cultural deprivation encapsulated in deficit theory and their influence on the education of minority groups have been discussed and argued at great length.

> Early European research on the intellectual performance of non-European peoples was ... premised on inferiority and was conceived as a search for qualitative differences, usually interpreted as deficits. Although this ethnocentric premise dates back to the earliest contacts between Europe and non-Europe, we find its echoes up to the present.[48]

Although this issue has been hotly debated for many years, genetic or racial characteristics have often been stated as causing qualitative and quantitative differences in cognitive skills, rather than cultural differences.[49] Therefore poor achievement on tests with a cultural bias was considered to be a racial deficiency.

An educationally deprived child is more likely to be from an ethnic minority background and may perform poorly in a test due to a lack of appropriate early experience of the kind that leads to the success experienced by mainstream Australian

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48 M. Segall, P. Dasen, J. Berry & Y Poortinga, *Human Behaviour in Global Perspective: Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Allyn & Bacon, Boston, 1990, p. 94.

49 M. Segall et al., p. 100.

children.[50] With the rise of the pluralistic and multicultural ideologies, these concepts are now coming under attack from many quarters.

Based on the belief about influence of ethnic background, educators held grave concerns for the educability of ethnic minority children. This resulted in the development of a number of programmes with a mandate to bring these 'deprived' children up to the standard of middle class children, to enhance the potential for these children to succeed at school by giving them experience in school culture and to give them the cultural knowledge that Australian children already possessed as a result of their upbringing. Whilst it can be accepted that there will be children in every group who suffer from real disadvantage, in the 1960s and 1970s, this label was applied to entire minority groups.[51]

The injustice inherent in this belief was perhaps best defined in relation to Aboriginal children who were classified retarded on the basis of Western models of cognitive development. It was felt that a deficiency of cognitive skills was the cause of educational retardation. The home environment of these children was considered to be the major cause of this cognitive deficiency, and education programmes were constructed with the aim of overcoming the disadvantages of the home environment. The aim of these programmes was to produce Aboriginal children who resembled their white middle-class peers as closely as possible.[52]

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50 Partington & McCudden, p. 259.

51 Partington & McCudden, pp. 259-60.

52 K. McConnochie, 'White Tests, Black Children: Aborigines, Psychologists and Education', in ed. B. Menary, *Aborigines and Schooling*, Adelaide College of the Arts and Education, 1981, p. 129, quoted in Partington & McCudden p. 259.

Although there has been an acknowledgment of the inaccuracy of these types of assessments when applied to ethnic minority children, cognitive tests are still being used today, and they are still showing the same results.[53] One major reason for the lack of accuracy seen with these tests is that whilst the child may be quite competent in their own cultural surroundings, they may be unfamiliar with the same concepts applied with a Western bias. That is, they bring their own cultural capital into the school situation, but possess little of the cultural capital of other children who are a part of the mainstream culture.

Another major drawback of these tests is that they are profoundly affected by the amount of schooling that the recipient has undergone. In the case of most Romani children, they are doomed to failure simply because of this lack. For example, Karen, an eleven year old Romani child was found in a Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children III (WISC Test) to display only borderline intelligence. Karen had attended formal schooling for about eighteen months to two years. Comments in the report included suggestions that her performance indicated a lack of opportunity in the home environment as well as poorly developed awareness of cultural values and standards, conventional standards of behaviour, and social judgements.

The dangers of classifying people as having this and other types of deprivation are being analysed and traditional views about deprivation and language impoverishment are also being challenged. In the United States, Labov conducted an in-depth study of non-standard English and social values prevalent among Harlem Afro-American adolescents in New York which lead him to conclude that:

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[53] Appendix A of this paper contains the *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children III* (WISC Test) results of Karen, one of the key informants in this study.

> The notion of verbal 'deprivation' is a part of the modern mythology of educational psychology, typical of the unfounded notions which tend to expand rapidly in our educational system ... But the myth of verbal deprivation is particularly dangerous because it diverts attention from the real defects of our educational system to imaginary defects of the child.[54]

Robinson theorises that there are two features of schools which do not promote the philosophy of equality in education. The first is that they promote the use of standard English more than other dialects of English, and second, that inherent in the nature of the educational process is that there will always be some losers. Therefore, children who do not start school with a solid grasp of standard English, and those who are repeatedly exposed to the conclusion that they are losers in the educational competition, may well decide to cease competing. These children may also deny the value of the knowledge or schooling system which has made this assessment and so the cycle is perpetuated.[55]

No matter whether it is called deficit or difference, the children of ethnic minorities confronted by an Anglo-Celtic dominated environment are at a disadvantage because in all levels of society, those behaviours valued by the dominant culture are rewarded by economic and social benefits Therefore, it is argued, remedial programs are needed to help these children learn those behaviours which will reap them rewards.[56]

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54 W. Labov, 'The Logic Of Nonstandard English', in *Language and Social Context*, ed. P. Giglioli, Penguin, 1972, pp. 179-80, quoted in C. Reiss, Education of Travelling Children, Macmillan, London, 1975, p. 2.

55 P. Robinson, *Language Managen ent in Australia*, George, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, Australia, 1978, pp. 92-5, quoted in Foster, p. 329.

56 M. Segall et al., p. 111.

Social Control

> Both socialisation and social control are required for individuals to learn acceptable modes of behaviour. The notion of 'acceptable' is derived from society's agreed upon values. Socialisation is a process that continues all of our lives, in which stimuli from our social environment impinge on us and are internalised by us.[57]

Traditionally, there have been two methods used in society to control and direct the behaviour of individuals and groups. One is the exertion of force such as occurs in war or revolution, and the second is the establishment of norms and values which set the 'acceptable' limits of behaviour. One of the most important factors in this second type of control is that it is set to a large extent by the individuals that make up a given society, because the setting of norms implies by its name that these values enjoy a certain level of consensus within that society. This method is much less visible, but very much in evidence as these norms and values become part of the taken for granted background of social life.

Types of social control which have been institutionalised include religion, law, custom, opinion and education. Social control also refers to the *means* by which the desired norms and values are to be transmitted and acquired.

Typical agencies for the transmittal and acquirement of these norms are the educational systems, the family, the political and judicial systems, and the Church. Understanding the workings of any society will involve analysis of the way in which

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[57] Foster & Harman, p. 12.

it controls its members and how this control contributes to the regulation of behaviour in the wider social context.[58]

It is now becoming increasingly obvious that education serves a purpose as both an agency and a type of social control. This has been particularly so since the advent of mass, compulsory education. Part of the reason for this is that it is strongly felt that in these times of increasingly complex technology, it is no longer possible for the family group to undertake the entire education of the young as is the case in other less technology-based societies. The Roma rely on the ability of the Gajé to take care of the technological aspects of life and utilise these in their daily living. They themselves, are not interested in active participation Socialisation of Roma, in particular the children takes place on familial basis and all instruction is transmitted by this medium, being mainly instilled and controlled by the mother.

The transmission of such a wide range of languages, religions, morals, customs and national values common to mainstream Australian society, as well as knowledge and skills, is only possible through the extensive network of schools, colleges, and universities. Educational organisations are designed to foster a broad range of socially valued abilities, mainly cognitive ones, but affective and motor abilities as well. Because this socialisation of young people is thought to be of greater benefit to society than to the individual, education can be seen as one of the most efficient methods of social control.[59] Adjustments to the cultural and linguistic policies of the Federal government have been translated into education policy and practice much more quickly and effectively than they have had an impact on other realms of life such as public opinion. In other words, education has been an important opinion leader, and

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[58] Foster, p. 290.

[59] Foster, p. 292.

a critical element in actively reshaping Australian society through transmission of its culture and identity.[60]

Separatism, Marginalisation or Structural Pluralism?

Does the concept of multiculturalism breed discontent as has been suggested by researchers of racism, ethnicity and class? There are those who believe multiculturalism engenders strong feelings of division within communities. That it works to separate and differentiate, not focusing on commonalities, but differences, therefore perpetuating racism in communities. Is multiculturalism racist? Does it contribute to inequality, discriminate against immigrants and cause the loss of mainstream culture?[61] Is this the heritage that we want to leave for our children? It is outside the scope of this paper to consider the answers to these questions. However, looking at these issues raises serious concerns about the type of schooling most likely to be successful for children of ethnic minorities.

It would seem that for a child to succeed in school, the best school would theoretically be the one that reflects most accurately their own cultural heritage, for example, ethnic schools. However, for this same child to succeed in a society where the dominant culture is not their own, then the school needs to be one that also reflects the culture of this dominant society. A policy of separatism may therefore not greatly benefit the adult that the child will ultimately become, an adult who must be able to move in the dominant society with relative ease in order to survive and succeed. All

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60 Kalantzis, et al., p. 15.

61 E. Vasta, 'Dialectics of domination' in E. Vasta & S. Castles (eds), 1996, pp. 52-69.

people must learn to function in the society in which they are residing, or they must withdraw from it.

Marginalisation of non-dominant cultures is maintaining the status quo of the current situation. Introduction of second language learning is of no benefit unless it is accompanied by the 'theoretical constructs, paradigms, models of viewing and seeing the world' in mainstream educational institution curricula.[62]

Bullivant discusses both sides of the pluralism argument under the ideology of integration and multiculturalism. On the one hand he states that in the United States there are some 'ethnic groups' who believe that maintaining a 'heterogeneous mix' in schools encourages learning among educationally marginal children, as research has shown that they try to emulate children in higher levels. On the other hand, he describes how a 'policy of positive discrimination that encourages separatism attempts to build up the various ethnic groups' pride, self-esteem and cultural worth'. He states that should these groups be initially encouraged to maintain their cultural, political, and social autonomy and groups awareness, once these are established as a base, ethnic groups could choose to enter the wider society from a position of strength rather than weakness.[63]

There are pitfalls on both sides of this argument. For the first, Bullivant fails to back up his arguments by not stating whose research he is quoting and whether this theory was a result of this research, or simply the wishes of well-meaning parents. On the second, it is unlikely that any group of people is likely to be static and therefore, with new arrivals and old departures, the group remain in a constant state of flux, never

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62 Grant, p. 29.

63 Bullivant, pp. 127-8.

reaching this highly desirable state. This debate is still ongoing in every multi-racial, multicultural society in the world, and may not be resolved in the foreseeable future. The answer possibly lies within all these arguments, as no one strategy will ever suit all people.

Structural pluralism, or separatism in its extreme, brings to mind the picture of two or more very distinct cultures co-existing within the same society, but in separate compartments, and with very little interaction. In this society one chooses to belong either to one culture, or the other. Those labelled as 'Australian', or 'Anglo-Celtic' would be required to speak nothing but English, and they would follow British cultural traditions. The other groups would consist of the various ethnic populations of which Australia is comprised. Each group, collectively speaking, would ignore the majority culture, they would maintain and develop their own heritages into second and future generations, thus perpetuating this extreme cultural division in Australian society.

This society could still be considered as pluralistic, although this would be at the level of society, rather than at an individual level, since each person is only given the benefit of one language and one cultural tradition. If the concept of structural pluralism was allowed to go to these lengths one could expect to see separate economic, political and legal systems and institutions set up by each group. It may be unthinkable, but this scenario could be labelled as multiculturalism and it could easily develop if the concept of separatism was allowed to multiply and develop to its full potential.[64]

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[64] Smolicz, p. 12.

Such a course of action may well see society revert to tribalism, a mode of living, which, whilst having certain advantages, cannot be sustained in the face of aggression by superior numbers possessing sophisticated means of waging war. David may have slain Goliath with a stone but it is not easy to be comfortable with the idea of tackling an armoured tank with club and spear.

Debate and discussion about the 'best' method for ensuring success in education and therefore society, is ongoing. Even amongst the Roma, there is no consensus of opinion on this issue and it may yet be found that the answer lies within the individual. Many of the Rom do want to remain separate from mainstream society, just as there are those who have completely and successfully integrated with it.

It is important while considering all the options available to society, to keep in mind the words of Lindblom, who held that finding solutions to policy problems, or achieving desirable change depended not so much on knowledge as political manoeuvring, often leading to ideas being used for quite different purposes than they were originally designed.[65]

Conclusion

This chapter discussed some of the pivotal concepts of multicultural education, the educational system and their place in Australian society with special reference to the Rom. This is an important chapter in this study as it lays the foundation for analysis of the fieldwork with the Romani people. Unfortunately, many Rom still feel that they are being forced to assimilate into the dominant culture due to the pressure being

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[65] C. Lindblom, *Inquiry and Change: The Troubled Attempt to Understand and Shape Society*, Yale University, New York, 1990, p. 5.

placed on them to educate their children within mono-cultural schools. Despite the many claims that Australia is a pluralistic nation, the education system continues to perpetuate the dominant Anglo-Celtic ideologies that hold the western culture together. One has to wonder if it would really make for a more divided nation if children were educated according to their social and cultural needs. Already, there are divisions, between the rich and the poor, the publicly and privately educated, and others. Perhaps if there were a few more categories, this would result in less of a divided nation.

However, this chapter shows the field of educational administration in Australia to be at the forefront of modern thinking with respect to education provision in relation to the true pluralistic society. Australia, in comparison to the rest of the world, has achieved such a relatively harmonious multicultural society comprised of such a wide variety of ethnicities. This is a credit to both the institutions making the policies and the agencies carrying out the wishes of these policies.

This chapter looked at the universal difficulties encompassing all ethnic minority communities. The Roma constitute an ethnic minority in every country in the world, there is no *Romanesthan* where they are the dominant culture to which they can return. Chapter Four focuses on the Roma in an international context. It describes the multitude of strategies employed in addressing the lack of education and 'disadvantaged position' of the Roma in other countries, most notably, Europe, the United States and England.