'For us, it's good enough that children are accepted': Roma migrant mothers' views of their children's education post-migration

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Abstract

The discrimination of Roma groups across Europe has been highlighted by several international organisations. For many, poverty, racism and their children's systematic exclusion from education are 'push' factors when deciding to migrate. This study explores Roma mothers' views of their children's education post-migration and attitudes to education more broadly, by adopting an intersectional framework and examining issues of difference and belonging as experienced by Roma mothers and their children. While Roma mothers recognised the value of education for social mobility, they remained aware of the limited resources they could draw upon, in the absence of desirable economic and cultural capital, and as a result of their ethnicity, social class, gender and 'undesirable migrant' status. There was a perceived hopelessness in relation to the chances that Roma children have to overcome their marginalisation through schooling, pointing to the need for dedicated policy interventions when working with Roma families.

Key words: Roma, social exclusion, parental engagement, intersectionality, Roma mothers, inequalities in education

Introduction

Despite the gradual inclusion of the ex-Communist countries into the European Union, Roma people have experienced few benefits from the expansion of democracy. With estimates of between 10-12 million, Roma remain Europe's largest and most impoverished ethnic minority. Centuries of migration and persecution have made them a very heterogeneous group (European Commission, 2012). In 1993, the Council of Europe's Rapporteur called for immediate action across Europe to tackle Roma people's low life expectancy, lack of basic sanitation and general lack of opportunities (O'Nions, 2007). More recently, Amnesty International (2010) denounced the deprivation of rights suffered by Roma, while the *World Report* from Human Rights Watch (2012) has condemned the forced evictions that they experience, and the rhetoric of crime used to justify violent attacks on Roma communities. Centuries of discrimination faced by Roma, in terms of education, employment, housing and civic rights, have led to the '*Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015'*, a programme involving 12 European countries united in the commitment to break the cycle of Roma marginalisation. However, in 2011, the *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020* emphasised that, despite some progress at EU level, little has changed for most Roma, with ongoing inter-ethnic tensions and widely-spread media vilification.

Increased mobility has led to significant numbers of Roma moving from Eastern and Central European to the West, as a way to (potential) prosperity and to escape discrimination. Their arrival has sparked intense debates, centred around stereotypes of collectivist, anti-social behaviour and criminality (Nacu, 2011; Clark, 2014). Western countries have since deported large numbers. In many states, new immigration laws ensured that mainly groups deemed as racially desirable were favoured (Fox *et al.*, 2012). Such policies of exclusion from the labour market and civic rights have allowed segments of the media to racialize Roma migrants and perpetuate their image as 'undesirable'. Many media stories referred to Roma families' use of children in unsavoury and exploitative activities, such as begging, petty theft, trafficking and benefit shopping (Cylkowska-Nowak and Nowak, 2011; Clark and Campbell, 2000; Fox *et al.*, 2012). These discourses portray Roma parents as negligent, uncaring and cruel in exploiting children's innocence to raise money or through practices disguised as 'cultural', such as early marriage. By contrast, research on migrant Roma families has reported the central role of children in the migration process. Families often move together and family separation, if occurs, is only temporary (Grill, 2012), partly the result of a traditional way of life, which favours communal living, but also due to a history of persecution, where communities represent a safety-net. This often results in the concentration of Roma in specific neighbourhoods across the West, as communities pave the way for other families to move, reducing the risks associated with migration while maximising benefits (Pantea, 2012).

In the absence of significant parent-centric research that examines Roma parents' attitudes, expectations and concerns about their children's education, the present study aimed to explore the extent to which Roma mothers think of education as a social mobility strategy for their children. Given the significant discriminatory practices that Roma people experience, we examine the extent to which access to a more equal and inclusive education system post-migration influence parents' attitudes to education. While acknowledging that Roma migrants live as structurally marginalised minorities across borders, we explore the extent to which Roma communities are in a position to invest in their young people's education and long-term prospects. Drawing on a qualitative study conducted with Roma families recently migrated to Scotland from Romania, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, this article explores intersections of race/ethnicity, gender, social class and migrant status, to shed light on the structural inequalities which Roma experience. We draw on debates about multiple discriminations, and use the concept of 'intersectionality' to theorise the relationships between different social categories, by also acknowledging the transnational aspect of Roma people's marginalisation.

Roma children's access to education

Evidence suggests that the marginalisation of Roma is exacerbated by their systematic exclusion from education, with underlying factors, such as family poverty, poor education of parents, perceived discrimination in schools contributing further to their limited opportunities (Open Society Foundations, 2007). The low attendance levels of Roma have also been reported (Peček *et al.*, 2008; Roma Education Fund, 2011 a). In Romania, only 64% of the Roma school-aged children attend school (compared to 99% in the overall population) and about half of those do not continue to secondary (Roma Education Fund, 2012). In Slovakia, there is no data on Roma children not in education and from those who attend, about two thirds drop out before secondary (Roma Education Fund, 2011 b).

Roma children's academic performance is also considerably worse than of all other ethnicities (Council of Europe, 2006; European Commission, 2010). The overall levels of attainment of Roma children are much lower that the OECD average; most leave school illiterate and with no qualifications. Despite decades of campaigning for Roma rights and fair treatment, a recent study (Andrei *et al.*, 2014) reports segregation practices of Roma children across Europe, through refused enrolment, overrepresentation in special schools and poor quality schooling. A study of Roma migrant children in the UK showed that 85% had been in a special school or class, although, post-migration, only 2-4% were assessed as requiring additional support (Roma Education Fund, 2011 a). Across Europe, social patterns of racism against Roma families are reproduced in schools. Roma pupils are marginalised by teachers, who ignore incidents of bullying and racist attacks or use physical punishment (Macura-Milanović and Peček, 2012; Roma Education Fund, 2011 a, b; 2012). Their unequal treatment is also

manifested in teachers' lower expectations and lack of interest in their well-being if children do not attend (Open Society Foundations, 2007; Peček *et al.*, 2008). These behaviours are enforced by professionals' wide-spread beliefs that Roma children's poor attendance and achievement reflect families' inherently negative attitudes to education (Luciak and Liegl, 2009; Macura-Milanović *et al.*, 2013).

The systematic discrimination experienced by Roma children in schools goes some way towards explaining families' reluctance to engage. There is little critique in the literature of how schools tend to be assimilationist of Roma culture and discriminatory, aspects likely to influence parents' attitudes. The handful of studies which exist on Roma parents have reported their reservations about formal schooling, with concerns that children will suffer racist attacks from peers, teachers and other parents, and wariness of discriminatory policies and practices (Pećek *et al.*, 2008). Girls especially have been reported as dropping out, as parents worry they will be exposed to values incompatible with their culture (Cahn and Guld, 2010). Parents often see schools as attempting to control their parenting and family life in ways which contravene community beliefs about childhood, parenting and what counts as useful learning. Inequalities in access to education have made Roma self-reliant on community-based learning to skill the young. Significant informal learning takes place through 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) developed over centuries, where children acquire practical skills and knowledge which prepares them for jobs routinely available to them. Some have argued that such communal knowledge construction perpetuates the marginal position of Roma through cycles of poverty and no access to better employment. Women are often seen as oppressed by their own patriarchal communities which discourage them from engaging in formal education, to focus on early marriage and motherhood, with complete withdrawal from the labour market (Pantea, 2012; Kóczé and Popa, 2009). This makes the intersections of gender, ethnicity and social class significant when analyzing the wider social contexts which configure Roma women's everyday lives and attitudes to their children's education.

Intersectionality and its applications to the study of Roma: a theoretical perspective
Intersectionality as an approach has generated debates about the nature of privilege and exclusion, with a challenging research agenda to investigate individuals' and groups' complex identities (Anthias, 2008; Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis 2006). Originally coined by Crenshaw (1994), intersectionality addresses the fact that singular analytical categories cannot account for complex experiences of discrimination and marginalisation. While axes of oppression such as class or gender may be seen as different social structures, people experience them simultaneously, making it impossible to separate one from the 'political and cultural intersections in which it is inevitably produced and maintained' (Butler, 1990: 3).

Intersectionality poses thus certain advantages as a 'handy catchall phrase that aims to make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it' (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006:187). By moving away from assumptions of identities as fixed, essentialised and homogenous, an intersectional approach is an alternative to 'arithmetical frameworks' (Prins, 2006) which add or multiply inequalities that people experience. The focus shifts thus to examining the complex processes through which categories influence each other, in infinite combinations and dependent on social, historical and political factors, acknowledging their interdependent nature in configuring inequality (Valentine, 2007).

Researching the relationship between these complex axes of identity raises however complex issues of theory and methodology. According to Prins (2006), while US scholars have developed a *systemic* approach to intersectionality, where systems of domination and marginalisation are at the root of the formation of identities, the UK-based researchers have focussed more on a *constructionist* perspective. In the systemic approach, oppression is seen as occurring not just at the level of category, but through systems of subordination and discourses of disempowerment. By comparison, the constructionist approach emphasises individuals' agency and resources to challenge discourses of oppression. One way of unveiling the multi-layered axes of inequality and the ways in which individuals or groups challenge axes of difference which position them as oppressed or as 'social problems', is the adoption of a 'single-group study' or 'personal narratives' (McCall, 2005). By exploring in depth the intersections of specific dimensions of categories influencing individuals across times and places, one can uncover inequalities as experienced and internalised.

To clarify further how distinct theoretical readings of intersectionality may be applied, McCall (2005) proposes a spectrum from *anti-categorical* (completely rejecting categories) to *intra-categorical* (provisionally accepting categories) and, the *inter-categorical approach* (using categories strategically). The *anti-categorical approach* sees categories as artificial and unfounded in reality, often constructed by language which leads to perpetuating stereotypes and inequalities, while the *intra-categorical approach* proposes a new practice of ethnographic representation which is 'critical of broad and sweeping acts of categorization' (Mc Call, 2005: 1779). An exploration of the finer intersections of categories can account for the lived experiences at 'neglected points of intersection' (Mc Call, 2005: 1780) and unveil intersections between dimensions *across* rather than *within* categories. By examining how singular dimensions configure individual experiences and emphasise the social location where dimensions of categories intersect, one can unveil intersections that are not otherwise obvious when exploring categories alone. Dimensions of categories intersect to produce experiences of inequalities which can be reproduced, acted upon or rejected by individuals. In order to explore the complex, often unpredictable intersections of categories and reflect individual

experiences, this paper adopts an *intra-categorical approach* and examines intersectionality in relation to individual women's experiences as constructed by them, while acknowledging wider structural inequalities.

Roma are at the crossroads of multiple systemic inequalities, with direct consequences for their lives. Their experiences of inequality can only be meaningfully explored by eliciting in-depth accounts of everyday experiences, to identify the ongoing struggles of a community exposed to multiple systems of oppression. An intersectional analysis of these inequalities poses key challenges due to the infinite intersections. While axes of difference could be desegregated conceptually by using categories, in practice, individuals may find it hard to explain which categorical dimensions are at the root of their marginalisation (Ludvig, 2006). A Roma girl, for example, could be experience discrimination on the basis of her gender, age, disability, ethnicity or her migrant status. The difficulty posed by an intersectional approach thus lies in identifying when particular differences are given explanatory significance in relation to experiences of oppression. As Ludvig (2006) summarises it: 'Who defines *when, where, which* and *why* particular differences are given recognition while others are not?' (2006:247). In this study, we aim to reflect on 'personal narratives' (McCall, 2005) from Roma mothers to study intersections across multiple categories of difference.

Govanhill neighbourhood

The paper draws on a study on Roma families' engagement with services in an urban neighbourhood in Glasgow. Govanhill is Scotland's most ethnically diverse community, with over 50 nationalities represented among its 14,000 residents, now home to about 4,000 Roma, most settled here after 2004. While the area has historically attracted Irish and Eastern European Jewish migrants at the end of the 19th century, and South Asian workers during the 1950s and 1960s, its racial composition has been dramatically altered recently. Previous migrant groups are moving to other areas in Glasgow, while Roma families are moving in, attracted by the cheap rents available from private landlords (Clark, 2014). The area faces significant economic, social and environmental challenges, and has recently been prioritised by the Scottish Government through its 'regeneration status'.

Roma families in general experience high unemployment rates post-migration, in comparison to other European migrants, with inactivity particularly high for women (Crkon, 2012). In Govanhill, many men work in low skilled, poorly paid jobs, such as seasonal farming, food factories and building. The precarious work seems the norm, as most Roma adults have low education levels, with estimates of illiteracy rates as high as 90% among some groups. After years of high mobility in Govanhill, many Roma families are now settled and known to local

services. Other research has also reported that the wish to escape ill-treatment and discrimination means that Roma are more likely to settle permanently in their receiving country (Cook *et al.,* 2010), although they may move internally to chase employment. Onward internal migration, often seasonal, was also reported by services in Govanhill (Bynner, 2010), with families transiting or leaving without notice.

Despite families' precarious work conditions, only 15.7% of Roma children in primary schools in Govanhill were receiving free meals in 2012/13, compared to 35.3% of all primary pupils in Glasgow. This was a state benefit available to families with income below an agreed poverty threshold (now a universal benefit in Scotland), however many families were unsure of their entitlements, did not know how to claim or could not fill in the forms required. They also suffered from other administrative inefficiencies that limited their access to welfare and social support, with significant repercussions (Paterson *et al.,* 2011). Limited English put many at risk of becoming victims of self-appointed brokers giving financial advice and support. The increase in Roma families led to added pressure on local provision of nursery and school places and for family welfare services. However, service providers were satisfied that many Roma residents were now engaging with provision, after an intense local campaign of gaining Roma communities' trust, and overcoming years of negative experiences in their homeland (Glasgow RomaNet, 2013).

Methodology

Overcoming the wariness of Roma participants towards institutional figures can be challenging (Chan and Guild, 2010). Initially, we interviewed eight local services providers (teachers, social worker, charity worker, nursery manager, church pastor) and then asked them to act as 'trusted gatekeepers' and approach families. Through schools, we interviewed 10 children, 3 boys and 7 girls, between the ages of 8 and 14. All had lived in Scotland for between 1-6 years and attended school, apart from one girl. Slovak children choose to have their interviews in English, while Romanian Roma children were interviewed in Romanian (by the first author). The 22 parents interviewed included 14 Slovak women and 2 Slovak men (interviewed in Slovak, through an interpreter), 2 Czech (interviewed in English) and 4 Romanian women (interviewed in Romanian). In the absence of Romani interpreters, the languages we used were not the participants' home languages, symbolic in itself, as Majority languages can be tools of oppression. Edwards (2013) discusses the tensions in the relationship between researcher, interpreter and interviewees. Power and trust are exercised in the research interaction and manifest themselves as multiple and fluid. In the case of Roma participants, the interaction mediated by an interpreter can often reproduce power inequalities and trigger lack of trust they experience in interacting with services which might interview them for

immigration, housing or social work purposes. Interpreters may themselves hold negative attitudes towards Roma, as these are prevalent in many European countries, and may use their power in the interaction to change meanings, abbreviate or edit replies, or summarise participants' answers. For the researcher, gaining the participants' trust is also made more difficult by the mediated interaction. In our study, we used fully qualified interpreters who were briefed on the study and the importance of translating participants' words accurately, as well as treating participants with respect. We were also aware that, given the small locality, some interpreters were well known to the participants from previous interactions, and this may have influenced the narratives participants decided to share in the interviews.

Given Roma families' experience of marginalisation, we were aware that talking about their circumstances may be stressful and we emphasised the participants' right to not answer questions or withdraw at any time. Most meetings were held in schools, lasting between 30-60 minutes, and while some participants did not turn up, others brought along family members. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed using a grid analysis approach and thematic coding and retrieving methods (Boyatzis, 1988). Relevant sections of the transcripts were assigned appropriate codes and refined sub-categories emerged and were allocated to text in transcripts. While this is not an entirely representative sample, due to the localised nature of the study, recruitment and mainly female participants, the data provide abundant evidence that Roma women's everyday lives feature constant struggles and negotiations, experienced at the crossroads of axes of social difference and inequality. Names throughout the paper are pseudonyms.

Roma families' life post-migration: Sites of marginality

Previous research has highlighted the extreme poverty, lack of employment opportunities and racism experienced by Roma as a 'push' factor (Ionescu and Cace, 2006; Sigona and Trehan, 2010). In supporting this economic argument, many Roma women in our study cited the availability of employment as key reason for migrating:

> Mother 1: There are no jobs, back home, that's the problem.
> Mother 2: We are better off here.
>
> Researcher: So it's better here, even after the economic crisis? Have you noticed any changes? Are there less jobs…
>
> Mother 1: Here? There's always work. Whether you work in a carwash or hotel.

<div align="center">(Focus Group 1, Slovak Roma)</div>

In addition to the economic factors, the opportunities for children's education were a reason for migration, similar to other Eastern European groups (Sime and Fox, 2014). Julieta

explained how the migration of Roma is not different from previous migratory groups, relating to her gender identity through her role as mother:

> We came here for our children's future. Like everybody else. For example, Pakistani people, they had some issues back home, so they came here. And it's finally a normal life: you go to work, you live your life, and you're happy here. (Czech Roma)

Pantea (2012) points to the social dynamics factors that position individuals at different degrees of closeness from the networks that enable them to migrate. In 'migration-rich' communities, networks are developed with clear routes which enable others to move. Several adults in our study had joined relatives living in Scotland, and talked about other family members arriving after them:

> Researcher: So what made you choose Scotland?
> Mother 1: My brother was here already.
> Researcher: Did all of you have other people here?
> Mother 1: This is my sister in law [points to another person], so…
> Researcher: So are you all related?
> Mother 1: Yes. They're my cousins.
> Researcher: Do you all live in Govanhill?
> Mother 2: Yes.
> Mother 3: It's better because if you've got to work or… when we are family, we go together to the park or… at school, we are meeting up.
> (Focus Group 2, Slovak Roma)

In addition to the emotional and moral support family members could give each other, practical aspects, such as help with finding work and accommodation, a rotational system of childcare, pooling and sharing of income and other everyday needs were mentioned. Paid work was done mainly by men, while women's main occupation was childcare and home making. The confinement to the domestic space meant that women had few chances to meet people of other linguistic backgrounds:

> Researcher: Is it mostly Slovak women that you're friends with?
> Greta: Yes.
> Researcher: Have you managed to make any Scottish friends? Other mothers…
> Greta: At school, yes, we would say 'hello' to one another, but apart from that… I would like to talk to them, but…can't speak [English]. (Slovak Roma)

Language becomes thus a significant barrier to Roma women's networking and their perspective as located in the closed, mainly kinship-based relationships, is configured by their migratory situation, with diminished opportunities for networking outside their community. Their autobiographical narratives often mentioned women's position in the Roma culture, describing a conservative pattern of family life, with men taking major decisions in relation to family mobility, education of children and level of engagement with services. Many had experienced this exclusion from decisions since childhood, when families kept them away from

education, and were now experiencing it as wives, as they often had to get their male partners' permission before making commitments for their own or their children's benefit. Some women seemed to accept this as a feature of the culture, while others struggled and tried to negotiate different roles post-migration:

> Yes, of course I need to ask my husband, he's the boss (laughs). That's normal in our culture. (Bella, Romanian Roma)

> I have three children, we came here two years ago, with my in-laws…and we live together, it's not great, sometimes I don't like what they say, other times, they don't let me do the things I want. I said I should then get to go to college, if my husband gets to have his parents here. (Raluca, Romanian Roma)

Raluca articulates a strong form of gender role consciousness: an acute awareness that women like her may be perceived as controlled and lacking freedom. Scotland could be the time and place for her to return to education, after being excluded from education in Romania, as her parents decided she should look after her siblings. She had discussed this with her husband, yet uncertain of her chances.

Women's isolation preoccupied service providers and several interviewees acknowledged that the patriarchal culture of Roma, in many ways protective of women and children, was also an obstacle to engagement and a source of exclusion:

> The women don't have access to English, not working and are kept socially isolated in their homes. I've got certain mums coming in, if they are not back home promptly, the phone will go 'where is my wife?'. They are like tagged and kept very much on a very short leash. (Mary, Early years practitioner)

Limited English and the unspoken rule of 'safety in numbers' meant that women rarely ventured outwith the local area, as they worried about getting lost on public transport or being attacked. As they did not drive, depending on men for transport, their everyday lives were restricted to the local neighbourhood, somehow recreating the villages they left behind. Anthias (2008) has coined the concept of 'translocational positionality', which considers location as 'a social space which is produced within contextual, spatial, temporal and hierarchical relations around the "intersections" of social divisions and identities of class, ethnicity and gender (among others)' (2008: 9). In the case of Roma women, their positionality post-migration re-created sites of marginality, through exclusion from opportunities available. Language/literacy classes for adults or leisure activities for children were rarely taken up, unless provided locally.

Other authors have shown how Roma internal networks of support can have a demotivating effect for seeking employment, as resources are shared with all, and also because of the strong social expectations, especially for women (Ionescu and Cade, 2006; Pantea, 2012).

The difficulties of negotiating well-established responsibilities cannot be ignored, as compliance is conditional to being recognised as good mothers, wives or daughters. When women challenge roles, consequences can be severe and lead to exclusion, leaving them in a precarious situation and vulnerable to exploitation. Irina, who initially migrated with her husband to Italy, had convinced him that getting herself a job would bring them more money and allow them a quicker return to Romania, to build a house. While she was working as a waiter and fruit-picker in Italy, Irina's marriage fell apart, mainly, she said, because of her husband's insistence that she gave up work. Irina was now a single mother, with a 5 years old daughter, living with a Pakistani fiancé she had met over the internet. Her fiancé had funded her trip to Scotland and was now finding her cleaning jobs paid through cash-in-hand and below minimum wage. Aware that she had escaped a culture which had exerted unrealistic expectations upon her, she did not see it as problematic that she was now in a precarious relationship, depending on her new partner for an income.

These accounts reflect the multi-layered and often contradictory nature of the ways in which experiences of gender, ethnicity and class intersect and play a constitutive role in Roma women's migration trajectories and everyday lives post-migration. They also show that not all counter-narratives are empowering (Yuval-Davies, 1997: 59) and that, often, struggles to challenge inequalities that stem from intersections within the expected roles and community boundaries can make women more vulnerable, by exclusion from networks of support.

'They treat you with respect': Roma children's experiences of school post-migration

The role of children in Roma families' migration is significant, their future often mentioned as driver for families' decisions to migrate. 'Change' was a major theme running through children's post-migratory experiences. There were numerous discontinuities caused by repeat migration, moving from rural to urban areas, changes in families' circumstances, poverty before and after migration. Under these circumstances, schools were for many a constant, giving them a sense of normality:

> Researcher: What is the best thing about Scotland?
> Klaudia (8, Slovakia): School.
> Veronika (11, Slovakia): Yeah, school.
>
> Martina (14, Slovakia): I didn't feel great [on arrival] because I didn't know anything, I didn't know the places and stuff. I had my gran in Slovakia and I said, 'I don't wanna go', but I had to because my mum was coming. And then going to school, everything became normal.

Schools were also 'spaces of encounter' (Leitner, 2012), where children could forge friendships with other ethnicities and nationalities, and where they felt valued by teachers, some for the first time:

> Researcher: Where are your friends from?
>
> Martina (14, Slovakia): Some of them are Scottish, some are Muslim, but it's mostly Slovakian.

Children who had experiences of school in other countries emphasised the differences in curriculum, in approaches to teaching and learning, and also in teachers' attitudes:

> Researcher: What are the differences between school here and in Slovakia?
>
> Kristina (14): The language, it's hard at the beginning.
>
> Researcher: Of course! Anything else?
>
> Natalia (12): The teachers teach differently.
>
> Researcher: Is there anything that was better in Slovakia?
>
> Kristina (14): No, less subject choice.
>
> Researcher: What about Maths?
>
> Kristina (14): It's easier here.
>
> Martina (14): The teachers are nicer here, they treat you with more respect, even if you are Roma.

A key finding of the study was that many Roma children relied on schools for access to other services, either to provide them with information or to mediate their physical access:

> Researcher: Have you been to the cinema?
>
> Veronika (11): We went to the cinema once with the school.
>
> Researcher: What about with your family or friends.
>
> Veronika (11): No, never.
>
> Researcher: Do you ever go to the sports centre.
>
> Klaudia (8): We go to the gym in school.
>
> Researcher: And outside the school, do you go to any gym or pool?
>
> Veronika (11): No, there's not many here.

Roma children often constructed themselves through *difference*, from children of other ethnicities, and also difference in terms of activities they could afford or which were culturally acceptable. Some commented on a recent phenomenon in the area, where children of other

ethnicities were gradually removed from schools with an increased intake of Roma children, leading to the *ghettoization* of certain schools, which became almost entirely Roma, and the racialization of the entire neighbourhood. Many were aware that their families could not afford to pay for leisure activities, or were restricting access because of concerns over safety, where clubs were in places perceived as 'too risky', where Roma might be seen as 'undesirable'. In general, children were aware of spaces that became racialized through other groups' social positionality and territorialism, with strong place identities developing at street and neighbourhood level.

Mothers' low education and impact on aspirations for their children

Difference was also a key feature of Roma mothers' narratives when they spoke of their low levels of education, due to the wide-spread discrimination in their homeland. Structural racism may have, over time, influenced parents to keep children, especially girls, at home, in addition to the economic factors which made many families rely on older children for childcare and housework. Women were frustrated at how illiteracy got in the way of their opportunities:

> Fahima: I only did four years [of school] in Romania, my parents kept saying it's better if you don't go to school. Romania was different… but now, of course you struggle to read, and you think, it would have been better to go to school. I am booked to start a language course at the library.
>
> Bella: I finished 10 years in Romania. I'd like to do something like cooking.
>
> Raluca: I haven't done anything [any formal schooling]. My parents used to work and they would take us with them to the fields, forget school.
>
> Fahima: My parents would leave me with my siblings, to look after each other, and they would go to work. They'd say, you'll take care of your own children later on, so why go to school? (Focus group, Romanian Roma)

All women recollected poor experiences of schooling, mainly centred around their ethnicity and poverty, when they were treated as different 'because we are Gypsies'. Greta talked about the routine segregation of Roma into special needs schools:

> You know, for us it's good enough that children are accepted as they are, not put into special schools like it happens back home, just because we are Gypsies. I was concerned they will do this here and I was at the school everyday, checking, not trusting them, but now, I'm more relaxed. (Greta, Slovak Roma)

Service providers were aware of parents' negative experiences of schooling and how these had affected their attitudes to education for their children:

> One or two parents have said, 'I want my child to be educated, I want my child to have better opportunities than I had' and we were blown away by that, they fully appreciated and understood the benefits of an education. Unfortunately, the majority don't even dream of their children doing well. (Mary, Early Years practitioner)

Mothers' negative experiences of schooling had a clear impact on aspirations for their children. Most talked about the importance of literacy and numeracy and how they supported their children's attendance at school. However, when asked what they wanted their children to do later on, many said they had not thought about their children's education long-term, reflecting the precarious nature of their situation (Nacu, 2011). Some said that, in the context of a more inclusive and fair system, they started for the first time to think that their children could do better:

> You know what things are like for us in Romania, you can't do much. So I'd like her to have a chance here, see how she gets on, then depending what she wants to do, we'll see. (Irina, Romanian Roma)

> Here, it's free higher education, they could learn more, they would get more qualifications, if they wanted to. Back home, there wouldn't be a chance to get qualifications. (Danica, Slovak Roma)

Service providers were of the view that Roma women were mainly powerless over their situation and their children's future and had developed a sense of 'learned helplessness' (White, 2008), where the idea of overcoming disadvantage through education was not even contemplated. While families were compliant with school requirements and attendance had improved over the years, parents were still uncertain about the possibilities their children had long-term. This was also reflected in the tensions between teachers' expectations and parents' engagement with schools.

Roma parents' engagement with schools

While family involvement is a key factor in children's academic success, initiatives promoting parental involvement are often based a compensatory ideology, which focuses on inadequacies in parenting and the need to readdress these (Crozier and Reay, 2005). New approaches to parental engagement are required. In the case of Roma parents, there is no question that parents' negative experiences of schooling and their low education and self-esteem act as barriers. While Roma men were seen by staff at registration, when decisions were made about enrolment, the day-to-day engagement with the schools was mainly a women's responsibility. Reflecting cultural beliefs that children need protecting, mothers were worried to leave children in the care of staff, especially in early years:

> Who else can look after my boy better than me? Send him to nursery, when he needs to sleep in the afternoon, and he needs his mother if he falls over or something. What would I do if he goes to nursery? (Raluca, Romanian Roma)

These beliefs reflected expectations on the role of women and childrearing practices distinct from Western beliefs. Staff talked about parents being overprotective and not valuing early

years provision as much. As legislation asked staff to treat cases of 'missing children' as a child protection issue, social workers would get involved, leading to resentment from families and enhancing fears of oppression and control of family affairs:

> They don't come, so I have to send the names to social work and the health visitors and they go and visit and say 'are you not going back, what's the problem?' and try and facilitate them coming back. (Mary, Early years practitioner)

In addition to cultural barriers, staff talked about the difficulties families had to cover additional costs, such as snacks, uniforms and school supplies, and which forced many to drop out. While early years education is not compulsory in Scotland, children are offered a free place, usually 2 ½ hours each day. When families did not receive a place in the local nursery, they did not take their children to nurseries further afield, for fear of racism. Lack of places was considered by Roma mothers as a reflection of their un-deservingness and 'undesirable migrant' status:

> Well, who would want us [Roma], they say they don't have places, and then you have a place a mile away, where all the children are white, they are not going to want our children there, so I'm not going there, to be spat on (Zozia, Slovak Roma)

In schools, families had low expectations of their involvement with learning, and felt they could not help their children due to their illiteracy. The fact that children were accepted unconditionally and treated in an inclusive manner was key to their positive views of schools and they were less concerned with the opportunities adults had to get involved:

> We like it here. They show an interest in my child, although we've not been here long, they accepted her straight away, they show an interest in getting her ready for school. I can't help much, but her teachers can. (Irina, Romanian Roma)

At the same time, schools were under pressure to actively engage parents, as required by current education policies in Scotland. Practitioners talked about the ways they tried to encourage families to get involved, putting on events such as school plays, exhibitions, open mornings, parents' meetings, translated newsletters, and curriculum-related activities. Although parental engagement was increasing, many practitioners felt that more needed to be done, as parents lacked confidence to engage and were also suffering from a defeatist attitude in relation to their children's education, with limited conviction that education could act as a social class propagator. Heather, a senior teacher, saw the role of schools as crucial in engaging parents in the sort of conversations that would make them think of education as a way to counteract their marginalisation:

We've never really had that kind of dialogue with the [Roma] families 'what do you think schools should be about? And maybe now we should.

Intersecting marginalisations and their impact on Roma attitudes to education

Our data has highlighted the complex ways in which dimensions of Roma mothers' gender, ethnicity, social class and 'undesirable migrant' status intersect in relation to their attitudes to children's education. Traditional gendered labour divisions within the Roma communities have a clear impact on women's everyday lives, often by restricting their involvement with outsiders, by limiting their roles to the caring of children and home making. Associations with the 'outside world' as a space of danger and risk draw on dominant discourses emanating from past experiences of inter-racial conflict which families carry with them transnationally. Collective culture and history is shared in the form of individual and amalgamated stories of fear and anxiety that Roma are likely to be victims and women and children need protection. This translates into restrictions and allocation of responsibility for decision making, and expectations that men are best positioned to interact with the outside world. The idea of Roma women making decisions for themselves or their children's future does not fit in with expected gender arrangements and attempts from women to challenge cultural rules are rejected or lead to moral sanctions (Pantea, 2012). At times, these identities and inequalities may be claimed, denied or rejected, depending on specific contexts. Dimensions can become relevant or salient depending on how Roma mothers and children are treated by others, for example by the school staff and other groups. We have reflected in the analysis some of the circumstances in which Roma mothers' identities may become salient or come to the limelight depending also on how categories, such as gender, ethnicity or community-specific roles are experienced.

In the case of Roma women, their gendered and marginal position within their own communities are not however the only categories relevant. Their systematic exclusion from education and work, combined with their poverty, makes their experiences of inequality more intermeshed and harder to overcome due to complex interferences. Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that, in certain historical situations or in relation to specific people, 'some social divisions are more important than others in constructing specific positionings'. Roma women's marginalisation comes from systematic exclusion, imposed on them from outwith and equally from within their communities. As children, they had been excluded from education by their families' poverty and fears of racism, or discriminated against by schools. As adults, they find themselves with low skills and qualifications, not being able or allowed to secure work and overburdened with domestic roles. What could be seen as a defence mechanism by an oppressed people becomes, in time, a self-perpetuating mechanism for the oppression of

women. While this may confirm women's role as good mothers within their communities, if they comply, it may stir uncertainty and doubt when faced with less hostile environments, where their opinion and involvement is sought and valued. Based on our data, it appears that migration has an element of empowerment created through schools and other community-places as positive 'spaces of encounter' (Leitner, 2012), where Roma women find themselves questioning their position as 'outsiders' and their rights to better opportunities.

However, the exclusion of Roma continues after their migration to fairer, more inclusive societies. Their marginalisation is reinforced by limited networks of support before arrival, which does not allow them to derive social capital from these in ways that other migrant groups can (Anthias, 2011). While Roma families migrate to partially compensate for their lack of economic and cultural resources, starting from a position of disadvantage means that, ultimately, they end up on the margins of their new societies, where they are already perceived as 'undesirable'. Their unequal location, often displacing disadvantaged groups who had come before them, means poorer opportunities for building social capital, limited access to resources in the form of employment, housing or services, and an acute sense of being undesirable or not belonging. In the case of Roma in the UK, their marginality has been further exacerbated recently by the Brexit referendum, where debates on Britain's position in the European Union were mainly framed in terms of border control and limiting rights to access labour for undesirable migrants. A post-Brexit surge in reports of racist attacks on migrants and ethnic minorities (CERD, 2016), fuelled by a 'divisive, anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric' (p.4), more widely reflects the precarious position of Roma in the UK. Unlike other Eastern European migrants who may 'blend in', Roma are more vulnerable and visibly different, through their skin colour and traditional clothing. Further marginalisation in racialized ghettoes constructs their spaces as exclusionary, since other ethnic groups, tend to leave areas in which Roma arrive. Racial prejudice and racism remain thus persistent problems, although the nature of the experiences may change post-migration.

Under these circumstances, Roma women's narratives and children's positive experiences of school suggest that there might be possibilities to tackle the marginal position of Roma groups through services. Although services often reflect Majority values in their expectations, whereby conditions of belonging are expressed through expectations of conformity with the Majority norms. there was some sense in our data that services could bridge cultural differences. On the premise that parents want a positive future for their children, services were beginning to chip away at families' inherent beliefs that Roma children will be treated as different or undeserving. Indeed, evidence showed that concerted efforts of supporting parents to engage with their children's education may, in time, gain Roma communities' trust and help them discover valuable benefits from formal education. Convinced that their families' economic

precarious situation would not allow children to continue in education long-term, and systematically excluded from education themselves, many women expressed a sense of helplessness when it came to supporting their children's learning. They said they lacked the confidence and knowledge to engage and found themselves at the crossroads of wanting to help their children, but also keen to minimise interference of services in their family life. In line with other non-Roma marginalised groups (Sime and Sheridan, 2014), power relationships drive home-school interactions, where Roma mothers have to fend off on occasions requests for involvement from their children's predominantly white, middle-class, non-migrant teachers. The tension between external pressures to engage and adopt Majority values and inside pressures to stick to traditional norms and roles remained an ongoing struggle for the women in our study.

Conclusion

Historical marginalisation of Roma has led to a deeply ingrained belief that education is useful at a basic level to avoid illiteracy, but it brings weak economic benefits later on (Sigona and Trehan, 2010). Keeping children away from education can thus become a self-protective mechanism. In interacting with schools, Roma women often find themselves at the interface of their communities' and teachers' expectations. While children's education may be seen as a route out of poverty by teachers, and possibly by Roma mothers at times, further tensions in cultural values need to be considered, to successfully engage Roma families. The multiple and complex levels at which disadvantage is experienced, reflected in individualised narratives of marginalisation, means that Roma mothers' decisions about their children's future and their own when apparent opportunities arise are more complex than may appear. They are often constrained by collective practices of negotiating risk and involvement with outside agencies, which often minimise women's role in decisions and adopt a position of caution and suspicion of Others. In these circumstances, Roma women's attitudes to children's education and educational aspirations can only be understood by reflecting on the multiple intersections that configure their attitudes and behaviours.

The findings and the earlier discussion around the complex intersections around ethnicity, class, gender and 'undesirable' migrant status point to the importance of developing a more nuanced approach to delivering services aimed at Roma groups. While their experiences are far from homogenous (Vermeersch, 2011), given their complex experiences of inequality, approaches to encouraging Roma parents' engagement need to counteract these impeding factors. These might include opportunities for Roma parents to experience the education system in their new country, for example through volunteering, to address fears of potentially negative treatment of children and build their confidence to engage in more proactive roles. It

is clear that empowering women through their own access to education requires a more concerted effort, perhaps by working with Roma community groups to tackle attitudes to women's education and by paying attention to the ways in which gender-based relations and class positions affect Roma women's opportunities. This could involve dedicated home-link workers or Roma mediators, perhaps recruited from the Roma communities, who can help women overcome their concerns and their communities' worries about the influence of formal education on their cultural values. Initiatives could also include activities in schools to involve parents using their home language or through local voluntary organisations or diaspora-led groups, to support family-based learning.

From a theoretical point of view, by using an intersectional framework, we have reflected more critically on the relations between the multiple categories that impact on marginalised groups' everyday experiences of exclusion. Intersectionality has allowed us to recognise the multiplicity of categorical dimensions which impact on individual behaviours and attitudes towards school and education. By acknowledging and disassembling these multiplicities, an intersectional approach moves the analysis beyond individual categorisations which may be taken as causal and explore unpredictable intersections. Through this process, our study moved beyond treating Roma mothers as a homogenous group, to explore different aspects of individual life experiences from the past and present which shape individual decisions. This means that the issue of tackling Roma people's marginalisation needs to be more centrally located within the wider debates on intersecting multiple experiences of disadvantage, as experienced at individual and group level, but also in relation to the social processes and structures that place certain groups on the margins and perpetuate systemic inequalities. While dominant anti-discrimination policies may provide useful legal background, these might not be sufficient in addressing the various intersecting inequalities that certain groups experience, requiring specialist and targeted social policy interventions. An integrated policy of inclusion with Roma groups at its core would ensure communities which receive Roma migrants were supported with human and material resources to empower migrants to overcome long-standing barriers to engagement brought by centuries of experienced discrimination.

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