



**Changing relationships with the self and others: an
interpretative phenomenological analysis of a Traveller
and Gypsy life in public care**

Author: Daniel Christopher Allen

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Declaration

I declare that the main text of this thesis is entirely my own work. This work has not been previously submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature

Date

D. Allen

February 2013

Abstract

Background: The implementation of the *Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care* Green Paper (Department for Education and Skills, (DfES) 2006) and the subsequent *Care Matters: Time for Change* White Paper (DfES, 2007), witnessed the consolidation of a universal ambition to improve the opportunities for all children living in care. Arguably, the most important recommendation in this pursuit is reflected in the need to provide people who have lived in care as children with independent support, which enables them to discuss their experiences, and suggest ways in which the care system might be improved. However, whilst this recommendation has been implemented with a diverse range of care leavers, the impact of the experience of living in care and the associated disadvantage experienced by Travellers and Gypsies remains under researched, understated, and unacknowledged (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009).

Methodology: Guided by the philosophical assumptions of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), this study represents and constructs the experience of living in public care by focusing on the voices 10 Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children. Testimonies were collected through a wide variety of methods that included face-to-face interviews, focus groups, telephone interviews, blogs, emails, letters, song lyrics, and poems.

Findings: Following a considered application of IPA, six main themes emerged from the analysis. These were social intervention; an emotional rollercoaster of separation, transition, and reincorporation; a war against becoming settled; leaving care and the changing relationship with the self and others; inclusion and strength; and, messages for children living in care. In line with the tenets of phenomenology, these findings are presented in such a way to as to invite the reader to move away from their own personal understanding of the world in order to enter the '*lifeworld*' (Husserl, 1970, 1982) of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children. However, to assist in this sense making activity, this study also provides a discrete

interpretation of the findings before developing this knowledge to form a more detailed theoretical construct entitled 'the model of reflective self-concepts'. Taken together with the testimonies of each person who took part in the study, the thesis enables an understanding of how the experience of living in care is inextricably linked to a process of social and psychological acculturation. By staying close to the experiences provided, it reveals how a process of change is determined, more often than not, by a sense of personal resilience directly related towards a Traveller or Gypsy self-concept. In attempt to move towards service improvement, this thesis offers a series of recommendations and conclusions which aim to support social workers and carers empower Traveller and Gypsy children to develop a secure Traveller and Gypsy self-concept thus enabling them experience improved outcomes including those opportunities set out in Care Matters social policy agenda (DfES, 2006; 2007).

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my children Aiden, Grace, and Mollie.

Over the past three years, I have spent more time looking at this thesis than I have spent looking at you; and you are growing up so quickly. I devotedly wait for the opportunity to spend more time with you to teach you everything that I know – I think that Golf will be the first place to start.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

As the first chapter in this thesis, the primary aim of this introduction is to provide an understanding of what the study entailed, and to explain the rationale behind it. As such, it will provide some background information that will establish why the systematic inquiry into the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children was important, timely, and relevant. This will then be followed by an indication of what this study intended to achieve, and how it intended to achieve it. Once these aims and objectives have been made clear, it will provide an outline of each chapter contained in this thesis, detailing the structure and layout, thus providing a concise understanding of how the overall research process engaged with the research task.

1.2 Travellers and Gypsies

Growing evidence suggests that Gypsies and Travellers living in public care experience wide-ranging inequalities (O'Higgins, 1993; Pemberton, 1999; Scottish Parliament, 2012). Due a lack of specific recognition or inclusion, they are thought to experience cultural displacement and interfamilial and inter-community isolation (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). One reason offered for this situation is that Travellers and Gypsies continue to experience marginalisation within society, including those social policies on which it is based (Powell, 2011). Rather than being included, they remain marginalised by public perception, which dominates stereotypical representations that often have no legitimate basis in fact, or historical accuracy. As Travellers and Gypsies remain 'othered' in society (Richardson, 2006), they are thought to experience unequal treatment in health, education, criminal justice, social work and Looked after child service provision.

In an attempt to make sense of this inequality, this study aimed to uncover, amongst other things, the way in which the care system could be improved to include the

needs of Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Welsh Travellers, Scottish Gypsy/Travellers, New Travellers and Occupational Travellers including Showpeople. For ease of reference, the report will hereafter refer to these groups collectively as 'Travellers and Gypsies'.

1.3 Academic rationale for the research

It is widely acknowledged that the experiences associated with life in the public care system can have lasting negative effects on young people's outcomes (Richardson & Joughin, 2000; Richardson, 2002; Stanley *et al.*, 2002; 2003; and 2005; Social Exclusion Unit, 2003; Sinclair *et al.*, 2004; Pilgrim & Rogers, 2005; Jackson, 2008; Forrester *et al.*, 2009). Jackson (2010) for instance argues that for many of the 64,000 children who are in care at any one time, their childhood and adolescence is often characterised by insecurity, ill health, and a lack of fulfilment. As a result, Forrester *et al.*, (2009) explain that there exists a significant and widening gap between the outcomes of children who live in care and those who do not.

In terms of outcomes, the Department for Education (DfE, 2011b) have shown that in education, 13.2% of Looked after children who sat their GCSEs obtained at least 5 at grades A* to C, compared with 62% of all children. Attainment at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 was substantially lower for Looked after children, and they are seven times more likely to be permanently excluded from school. At the end of Year 11, 66% of children in care remained in full time education compared to 80% of all school-leavers. The report also notes that Looked after children are twice as likely as those children not living in care to be cautioned or convicted by the police for an offence.

Due to the challenges that are faced, the report showed that children who have been in care are over represented among teenage parents, drug users, and the unemployed when compared to other children with roughly comparable backgrounds and problems. In light of these findings, Jackson (2010) believes that the widening gap between the outcomes for children who have been in care described by Forrester *et al.*, (2009), means that the care system is failing those children who it is designed to protect.

In an attempt to tackle this concern, the Department for Education and Skills commissioned a significant consultation process that culminated in the Care Matters: Time for Change White Paper (DfES, 2007). This document intended to raise the achievements of Looked after children by providing them with independent support to express their views on the way in which the care system is managed and could be improved. In the same way that *Nothing About us Without Us* (James, 2000; DoH, 2001) acknowledged the need to include the views of people living with disabilities on service delivery, the Care Matters programme (DfES, 2006; 2007) acknowledged that the only way to develop Looked after services, and the outcomes for Looked after children, is to speak to those with an experience of being 'Looked after'. So essential is the drive for consultation in terms of service delivery, that the Children Schools and Families Committee (2009) reinforced these recommendations by asserting:

'Only by setting more store by children's satisfaction with their care will we get closer to finding out how cared about they really feel, how stable and secure their lives seem, and whether they have both opportunities and the support and encouragement needed to take them'

(Children Schools and Families Committee, 2009: 17).

Reflecting on this statement, Appleton & Stanley (2010) argue that the need to ascertain the views and wishes of those who have lived in care as children forms the basis of safe social work practice. Yet despite this declaration, a systematic review of extant literature demonstrated that the accumulated discourse regarding the reported experiences and outcomes of Traveller and Gypsy children living in public care is, and continues to remain rather weak.

Given the responsibility set out by the Children Schools and Families Committee (2009), few studies have focused on the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies. This is demonstrated in the National Children's Bureau report entitled '*Listening to Children in Care: A Review of Methodological and Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Looked after Children's Perspectives*' (Holland 2009). This systematic

review explored forty-four journal articles published between 2003 and 2008 that reported on the methodological approaches used to listen to the experiences and perspectives of children living in care. It is pertinent to point out that not one of these forty-four studies focused on, or included, the reported experiences of Travellers and Gypsies. Within a wider picture, Garrett (2004) argues that social work research and practice has failed to recognise the unique cultural needs of Travellers and Gypsies. What is more, Cemlyn (2000a), and Greenfields (2002), warn that this failure has led to a lack of understanding, and validation of their culture and experience.

In terms of foster care provision, Cemlyn (2000b) explains that there is no evidence of a proactive national strategy to recruit Traveller and Gypsy foster carers or adoptive parents. Instead, rather than promoting their inclusion in this area of social work, she found that local authorities were actively excluding Travellers and Gypsies as potential carers, deeming their transient way of life as inconsistent with theories of child development and welfare (ibid.). Reflecting on this position from a human rights perspective, Hawez and Perez (1996) argue that the failure of local authorities to recruit Traveller and Gypsy carers reinforces social exclusion, which becomes manifest as social workers apply their non-Traveller or Gypsy values to a community of people who are seen to subvert social convention. The fact that many of the perceived customs and traditions associated with these groups are protected under equality legislation and duty (Equality Act 2010), rarely comes in to play as the concept of equality hardly extends to include these cultural perspectives with any meaningful value (Cemlyn, 2000a, 2000b).

Evidence of the impact of inequality on the care system can be found elsewhere within the literature. Summarising the findings of a systematic review, Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) explain that Travellers and Gypsies living in care are likely to experience more cultural displacement and enforced interfamilial severance than any other child. Although they make a series of recommendations which highlight a need for culturally appropriate care, Fisher (2003) explains that the continued absence of a political motivation to promote the care of Traveller and Gypsy children means that there is a real danger that their experiences of dislocation will compound the challenges that all children growing up in care can face. Taking an alternative

position, Power (2004) argues that the cultural dominance exerted onto Traveller and Gypsy children by social workers can further increase their risk of cultural assimilation, or in the words of Hawez and Perez (1966), their complete 'ethnic cleansing'.

1.4 Philosophical Framework

The philosophical framework underpinning this research study was determined by the theoretical assumptions of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Following a process of critical appraisal, IPA was seen to be the most suitable approach to understand the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care as children. It was chosen over potential alternatives because of its positioning towards the significance of reality and the meanings ascribed to it through individual perception (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

To develop an understanding of the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care as children, IPA was used to draw on the ontological philosophy of phenomenology, including the pragmatic aspects of idiography and hermeneutics. Taken together, this study was able to apply the theoretical principles of IPA, and understand the meanings that Travellers and Gypsies attributed to their perceptions of the care system. With this information, this study was then able to produce the main themes which emerged from the testimonies provided, and shed some light on the acuties shared as part of the research process. These are presented in this thesis and organised in such a way as to illuminate the Traveller and Gypsy experience for the first time in the conscious mind of the reader.

1.5 Aims and Objectives

In order to develop an understanding of the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children, this study aimed to explore and explicate:

- The way in which Travellers and Gypsies make sense of their experience of living in public care;
- The extent to which these experiences impact on individual perceptions; and,

- How an understanding of these experiences inform the way in which social work practice should incorporate the needs of Travellers and Gypsies living in public care?

Guided by the subjectivist ontological paradigms intrinsic to interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), this study drew upon the philosophical assumptions of IPA, to represent, interrogate, juxtapose, and construct the experience of living in public care by focusing on the voices of Travellers and Gypsies. In doing so, it hoped that the understanding of the reported experiences of Travellers and Gypsies could be enhanced. Thus, the objectives of this study were to:

- Explore dominant discourse surrounding Traveller and Gypsy Looked after children;
- Explore the reported experiences associated with living in public care within the literature;
- Provide robust and credible evidence of the key features of life in public care as it is understood by Travellers and Gypsies living in England and Ireland.

1.6 Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. This first chapter provides a brief outline of the academic rationale for the study and its primary aims and objectives. Chapter 2 intends to develop this short introduction by presenting a systematic review of the literature. Highlighting the main themes which emerged from this appraisal, chapter 2 reflects on the apparent presence of benevolent and dissonant social work practice. Focusing specifically on the literature, this chapter shows how, without due regard, social work practice with Travellers and Gypsies living in care can lead to cultural severance, interfamilial displacement, and acculturation. This chapter concludes by strengthening the earlier claim that the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies living in care are under researched, and outlines the three research questions used to justify and support the need for further systematic investigation.

Chapter 3 presents a discussion on the research strategy used to guide and inform the study. It begins by evaluating the epistemological strengths and limitations associated with positivist and post-positivist paradigms by comparing these against the overarching research questions identified in chapter 2. This discussion is followed with a detailed exploration of potential research strategies that could have been used as a theoretical guide to inform the overall direction of the systematic inquiry. Taken together, the epistemological evaluation provided in the chapter validates the reasons why IPA was selected as the most suitable strategy to guide and inform this study.

Following a discussion on the research strategy, chapter 4 focuses on the specific issues surrounding the collection and analysis of each testimony within the IPA framework. The discussion on the methods employed during this chapter will be guided with full consideration of ethical practice, and its relationship to the research aims and objectives. As the drive for ethically sound and professional research was seen to permeate all aspects of the methodology, the guiding principles essential in the sensitivity of sample development, confidentiality, representation, and the inclusion of alternative testimonial collection methods will all be explored. The chapter will close by providing a detailed explanation of the process of analysis, thus showing how the study moved from interview transcripts to a position of analytical interpretation.

Chapter 5, the first findings chapter, provides details of the way in which Travellers and Gypsies make sense of their experience of living in public care. It presents the key themes derived from each testimony and uses quotations from each interview to support interpretation. In line with the theoretical framework of IPA, the analysis that this chapter presents will be discrete in the sense that the interpretative account provided represents a close reading of what Travellers and Gypsies said. As such, the findings will be presented without reference to extant literature. The six main themes presented in this chapter will be: social intervention; an emotional rollercoaster of separation, transition, and reincorporation; a war against becoming settled; leaving care and the changing relationship with the self and others, inclusion and strength and messages for those living and suffering in care.

Reflecting on the testimonies presented in chapter 5, chapter 6 builds on the reported themes to consider the extent to which these experiences influence individual perceptions. This chapter shows how the reported experiences presented in chapter 5 were used to formulate a conceptual framework entitled the 'model of reflective self-concepts'.

Chapter 7 provides a discussion on the findings, and where possible compares and contrasts these to extant literature so to enable the original contribution of the study can be made clear. Once considered, the chapter moves on to pay specific attention to the research process, and evaluates the methodology used. This section of the chapter also enables the researcher to focus on what has been learnt from the experience of conducting this study.

Finally, chapter 8 will provide the conclusions and recommendations of the thesis. It will reflect on the findings presented and summarised through chapters 5, 6 and 7 to consider how the testimonies presented could, and should be used to inform the way in which social work policy and practice could incorporate the needs of Travellers and Gypsies currently living in public care.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the Care Matters agenda (DfES, 2006; 2007) calls for increased social work support to empower people who have lived in care as children to describe their experiences and make recommendations on how it might be improved. However, a preliminary overview of literature demonstrated that Travellers and Gypsies are considered to be marginalised by both social policy and practice. Reflecting on this disparity, this chapter has also introduced the overall aims and objectives of the study and presented a concise overview of the entire thesis by summarising the content of each chapter. The following chapter will present the strategy used to conduct the systematic enquiry. An extended discussion will then follow to reflect upon the themes that this review revealed in order to show why the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies living in care were in need of further systematic investigation.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter introduced the thesis and presented an overview of its overall structure. It illustrated how the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in public care are reported to be hidden from dominant discourse (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). This second chapter aims to develop this preliminary discussion by summarising a systematic review of the literature to facilitate a fuller exploration of the key themes and concerns identified in the opening chapter. To achieve this aim, this chapter will be split into two sections. The first considers the marginalisation of Travellers and Gypsies within social policy, whilst the second examines the implications of this for Travellers and Gypsies living in care. Together, these sections reveal a reported inconsistency in social work practice, which can be seen to negate benevolent ambitions with examples of dissonant practice.

In light of these specific aims, it is important to state what this chapter will not do. First, it will not attempt to provide an historical overview that charts the development of child social care services throughout history. This has been achieved to great effect elsewhere (Barn, 1993; Hayden *et al.*, 1999; Lowe *et al.*, 2002; Barn, Andrew, & Mantovani, 2005; Cashmore & Paxman, 2006; Jackson, 2006 Kendrick, 2007; Cocker & Allain, 2008). Secondly, it will not attempt to critically engage with legal aspects of the care system, or advance propositions regarding this. Whilst a brief introduction might be important for contextualisation, a pragmatic decision was made not to venture into legal confabulations as may have undermined the overall ambition of the chapter.

By focusing primarily on lived experience, this review shows that although social work is largely orientated towards the pursuit of social justice, its particular orientation towards Traveller and Gypsy children living in care means that this ambition can often be seen to be bestowed at their collective detriment. It suggests

that this position, although driven by a theoretical commitment to promote cultural identity and positive social self-concepts (Higham, 2010), can disenfranchise holistic social work practice, and ultimately fail those Traveller and Gypsy children who are living in care. Once this argument is advanced, it is hoped that such a delineation may enable the presentation of evidence as to why this study is needed in line with social policy (Department for Education (DfE) 2003; DfES, 2006; 2007) and the social work commitment to anti-discriminatory practice (Thompson; 2006; Dominelli, 2009; Fook, 2012).

2.2 The process of the literature review

To promote the tenets of reliability, Flick (2009) explains that a systematic review should be continuously employed throughout the duration of a study. For this reason, once the initial review was completed, it was repeated at monthly intervals, commencing in October 2008 and concluding in August 2012. In line with the combined advice of Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009), the aim of this continued engagement was to identify predominant themes in current knowledge. This included substantive findings as well as those theoretical and methodological contributions regarding the ontological perspectives of a life in public care.

In order to conduct the systematic review, a number of electronic databases were used. These are detailed in Table 1, and were accessed via the Library at De Montfort University.

Table 1: Databases used for the systematic review

• Academic Search Premier	• Scopus
• Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)	• Social Sciences Citation Index
• LexisLibrary	• ZETOC
• Research in practice	• Websites, including the Department of Health and the Office of National Statistics
• Social Care Online	• Library databases

To promote consistency in the method of review, the same search strategy was applied to each database listed in Table 1. Table 2 provides a summary of the information of the electronic databases that yielded results according to the search terms used.

Table 2: Electronic database searched and key terms

Search terms and Database	ZETOC	Scopus	Research in Practice	Lexis Library	ASSIA	EBSCO
Travellers and Gypsies ≥1989	61	116	1	713	131	11444
Travellers and Gypsies social work ≥1989	2	26		0	0	39
Travellers and Gypsies looked after children ≥1989	0	1	1	0	0	0
Looked after children ≥1989	358	974	142	1249	400	482
Children in public care ≥1989	905	28678	134	76	24	180
Traveller and Gypsy children in care ≥1989	0	2	0	0	0	13

As Table 2 shows, the initial search was limited to research published in, or after 1989. Research published prior to this date was not included in the search methodology as it was seen to be unable to take account of the current legal frameworks established under the Children Act (1989) and subsequent amendments. Therefore, research published prior to the ratification of this Act were seen to be invalid to the current review.

The application of broad search terms such as ‘Travellers’ and ‘Gypsies’, enabled literature to be identified across many disciplines. These included health, social work, education, and housing. However, when the search terms were limited to specific phrases, such as ‘Looked after children’, ‘children in care’ and so forth, there appeared to be a paucity of materials related to the specific area of focus.

The determination of the papers included in this review was based upon a criterion reflecting the suitability to the aims and objectives of the study. However, once the

initial search had been conducted, it became apparent that very few primary sources were available. Although some searches revealed a high number of publications against the terms used, a good deal were not relevant to the disciplines of social work, social policy, or the ontological position of Travellers and Gypsies living in care. This applied specifically to articles where keywords were located in the abstracts, but where association with the public care system, or Travellers and Gypsies, was not fully discussed in the body of the paper. As an alternative, limited sections were given to this topic within a fuller consideration of dissonant social care services. The majority of the literature presented in this chapter was obtained from these sources.

The systematic review of literature using the search terms 'Travellers and Gypsies' refined with 'Looked after children' yielded two positive results. The paper identified through Scopus related to the aspiration and access to higher education of teenage refugees living in the United Kingdom (Stevenson & Willott, 2007). The second paper identified through Research in Practice, was a link to a Joint Committee on Human Rights (2009). Neither addressed the position of Travellers and Gypsy children and young people living in care. Although the search term 'Traveller and Gypsy children in public care' generated 11 results, only one, published by Kiddle (1999), was applicable to the views of Traveller and Gypsy children, but did not extend to the experience of living in care.

To develop the scope of the review, search terms were extended to contain secondary, tertiary, and grey literature sources. This comprehensive search included literature that was published in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. A selected number of these have been included in this chapter as it was understood that the generic issues identified, particularly those relating to the Shared Rearing Service in the Republic of Ireland (O'Higgins, 1993), might also have been relevant to the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies living in England.

After reviewing the citations and analysing the selected publications, the literature was systematically separated into themes. The process of dividing the literature in this way enabled the exploration of additional literature not immediately identified

during the initial review. These included, for instance, works on the theoretical principles of personality development (Giddens, 1991), institutional racism (Barn, 1993), normalisation (Wolfensberger, 1980) and the paradigm of acculturation (David, Berry & Berry, 2006). The latter two philosophies were included in the review as contextual examples to support the theorisation of the dominant themes regarding the position of Travellers and Gypsies living in public care.

2.3 Part One: Travellers and Gypsies

Travellers and Gypsies have lived and travelled in this country for at least 500 years (Clark & Greenfields, 2006). Most now live in bricks and mortar housing (Greenfields, 2006a), and the majority of those living in caravans are on authorised public or private sites (Brown, 2010). A number of families who are unable to access authorised sites live on unauthorised encampments or by the roadside (Greenfields & Smith, 2010).

Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) report that while the provision on a minority of sites is of good quality, the majority can be poor and compound health risks through decayed sewage and water fittings, poor-quality utility rooms, and failings in fire safety. They go on to explain that as a direct result of the non-implementation of the Caravan Sites Act (1968), and the restrictive processes contained within the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994), many Travellers and Gypsies are caught between an insufficient supply of suitable accommodation and the insecurity of unauthorised encampments. As families struggle to find suitable and sustainable accommodation, they can also face a cycle of evictions, typically linked to violent and threatening behaviour from private bailiff companies (Halfacree, 1996; Clarke, 1997; Greenfields & Home, 2006c; 2007; Johnson & Willers, 2007; Johnson, Ryder & Willers, 2010).

In order to cope with the stresses and anxieties that this can create, many families attempt to avoid what Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009: v) describe as a 'the eviction cycle' by reluctantly moving in into brick and mortar housing. However, when this decision is made, families can be also be exposed to more direct and immediate forms of public hostility focused on their ethnicity or lifestyle. As the decision to escape the eviction cycle often involves dislocation from their wider communities, culture, and support

systems, families are reported to encounter further cycles of disadvantage, oppression, and marginalisation (Lau, & Ridge, 2011).

The many challenges being faced by Travellers and Gypsies within British society are generally representative of the way in which their human rights have been violated by the waves of social, political and historical persecution (Acton, 1994). For many families, the experience of disadvantage, oppression, and marginalisation have often been a result of strategies of enforced settlement including the systematic removal of their children into care (Fraser, 1995; Cemlyn & Briskman, 2002; Vanderbeck, 2005) justified on the basis that nomadism is perceived as a threat to dominant economic and political interests (McVeigh, 1997). Reflecting on this position Cemlyn (2008) explains that the political hostility towards Travellers and Gypsies is more acceptable than that towards other groups because it is fuelled by a hostile media, with a third of the population admitting to such prejudice (Stonewall, 2003). However, this organised denial of rights also involves substantive policy areas and socio-political exclusion. They are frequently denied the status of a minority ethnic group (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000) for example, and neglected by racial equality strategies within the process and product of social policy.

2.3.1 Social policy

Social policy refers to guidelines and interventions which aim to change, maintain, and create certain living conditions that are conducive to social well-being (Titmuss, 1974; Donzelot & Hurley, 1997). This includes the concept of social equality that permeates the design and implementation of the driving principles of contemporary society. In short, the term and practice of social equality aims to reinforce the normalised principles that no individual, no matter how disenfranchised, or for whatever reason, should be further disadvantaged by unequal access to public services including social care support (Blakemore & Giggs, 2007). This intention, particularly in relation to more recent social history, aims to realign a Victorian division between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving poor' in a move that has been motivated by principles of egalitarianism, literally the creation and conservation of universal social equality (Barr, 1993).

Whilst social policy aims create and maintain high standards of social well-being, the representation of Travellers and Gypsies with the literature suggests that although the ambition of social equality might attract support from the majority, the pragmatic determination of the constituent parts remain highly contested. If the universal commitment of social policy to social well-being is considered, it seems that most people would agree that society should protect the young, elderly, and vulnerable from exploitation and abuse, and because of this, social policies to this end are generally uncontroversial. However, on reflection of the recent Dale Farm evictions and the representation of this in the literature (Richardson & Ryder, 2012), it becomes apparent that the idea that society should protect Gypsies and Travellers in their pursuit of their traditional mores is far more controversial.

Political commentators such as Bentham (1987) have endeavoured to theorise the controversial nature of social policy. Based on the overarching concerns of structural inequality, he suggests that the social policies that societies produce can be understood by the way in which any particular society recognises, and gives expression to, the autonomy and ultimately the importance of its members. Although the underlying ideology of social policy aims to restore social equality (Bellamy, 1993), material examples of prejudice experienced by Gypsy and Traveller groups continue to reinforce social stereotypes and compartmentalise them within relegated social categories (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). For Bentham (1987), the fact that social prejudice and discrimination plays such a significant part in the value of social equality (one person is entitled to equality whilst another is not) reveals that, as standalone documents, social policies have little significant value in the world.

In support of Bentham (1987), Blakemore & Giggs (2007) believe that social policies are nothing more an aide memoire, or a series of recommendations, for social intervention. Their power, they argue, only becomes manifest when their words and recommendations are observed and interpreted in the conscious mind of a social policy consumer. If, for illustration, the politically advocated *nimbyism*, which Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) position as being a significant threat to the provision of sustainable accommodation for Travelling communities is considered, it is possible to substantiate Blakemore & Giggs (2007) concern by arguing that these resistant

actions are supported under the auspices of anti-Traveller interpretations of social policy (McVeigh, 1997).

In the case of the frequent enforced evictions of Gypsies and Travellers from land and property, Garret (2005) argues that the potential influence of social policy in the unequal provision of social accommodation does not rest within the pages on which it is written, but within the subjective social bureaucracies that interpret it under the jurisdiction of overarching socio-economic and political structures. As shown in the Somerset Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment conducted by Richardson *et al.*, (2010), local authorities will build or procure social housing, but they are less likely to build or procure social campsites. In this example, Richardson (2007) explains that much subjective interpretation of housing and accommodation policy is based upon the divisional power inequalities that have positioned Travelling communities as undeserving of equality in the provision and maintenance of social accommodation. Here the apparent decision *not* to live in a house is perceived by the majority to represent a lifestyle choice which subverts social convention and compounds the undeserving anti-Traveller stereotype (McVeigh, 1997). For Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) the continued differentiation between deserving and undeserving citizenship endures to suppress the driving principles of social policy, whilst negating the need for specialist services based on cultural need.

Pervasive inequality

As Gypsies and Travellers are reported to experience inequality across the fields of health and social care (Van Cleemput, 2004), a series of detailed recommendations have been made which call for the development of specialist and localised support teams (O'Dwyer, 1997; Cemlyn, 2000; Mason, Plumridge & Barnes, 2006; Matthews, 2008; Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). Yet, as with the call for sustainable accommodation, the vast majority of local authorities and Primary Care Trusts continue to overlook the unique needs of Travelling communities by only providing services within the mainstream (*ibid.*). The reason for this rests on the fact that the creation of such specialist provision would require the allocation of additional resources which may be seen by the majority as being disproportionately unjust (McVeigh, 1997).

Notwithstanding the inclusion of equality legislation and duty, anti-Travellerism continues to determine the argument that specialist resources would be incorrectly allocated to a Travelling person who experiences inequality because of their own lifestyle choice, rather than by the consequence of structural inequality which McDonagh (1994) and Van Cleemput (2010) report to operate around them.

These examples square with Bentham (1987) concern presented above. Even though social policy may 'recommend' the development of community based services and increased accommodation provision, the pragmatic materialisation of these resources depend entirely on an accurate, unbiased and inclusive understanding of the unique challenges faced by Gypsy and Traveller people in the first place. Where this consideration is misplaced, the value of social policy can only really apply, and in many respects be justified, to those people who are publicly perceived to be deserving of social care and health support.

2.3.2 Normalising social work

A predominant portion of social work practice is rendered by generic agencies. According to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfCSF, 2010) they are orientated towards the betterment of multifaceted social conditions (Coulshed & Orme, 1998). For this reason, social workers working within these agencies are positioned as enablers of human well-being (Titmuss, 1974; Valocchi, 1989; Donzelot & Hurley, 1997). By applying egalitarian paradigms, social workers are simultaneously positioned as social advocates for those marginalised through structural inequality in an attempt to challenge inequality arising from socio-economic deprivation (DfE, 2009).

In order to realise this endeavour, social work is embedded within prevailing social policies (Department for Education (DFE), 2008; 2010) and professional codes of conduct (Health and Care Professions Council, 2012). According to Higham (2010), these overriding practice-permeating principles are in place to guide and inform the way in which the social work task is operationalised and meted out. Not only do they regulate the contextual function of social work practice (Smith, 2010), such as the need to respect individuality and autonomy, they also embolden the eligibility

thresholds for the people who are, or are not entitled to it (Cree, 2011). In other words, social policy requires that social work practice should respectfully centre its efforts towards those people, who are seen by the public, or at least large sections of society, to be living in, or experiencing unequal social conditions.

Whilst this rhetoric exists, the presence of eligibility thresholds, literally the standardised measures which determine who is entitled to social work and who is not, have been, and continue to be, subject to contentious and continuous political debates (see for example Tomlins & Raithby, 1881; Titmuss, 1974; Valocchi, 1989). Reflecting on this position, Donzelot & Hurley (1997) state that many of the solutions, or at least agreements to these types of social deliberations continue, in good part, to be determined by the ethnocentric political ideologies which shape and inform the socio-political driven vision for the maintenance of a capitalist social structure. For Birnbaum (1953) and Beckett (2006), these political ideologies can be extremely powerful forces which become manifest in developing legislative duty and evidence based practices that reflect developing knowledge regarding social development and sustainability (Brown & Smith, 1992), including those social policies used to achieve them.

The five outcomes

The main political ambition which underpins current social policy for children and young people represents what are commonly known as the 'five outcomes' (DfE, 2003). These principles, enshrined under the rhetoric that 'Every Child Matters', reflect a universal socio-political aspiration for all children and young people, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, social background and economic profile, should achieve agreed standards in social, educational and human development including economic independence (Children Act, 2004, Laming, 2003; 2009).

By focusing on these factors, social policy requires all children to be physically healthy and socially proficient so that they can achieve a successful transition into adulthood (DfE, 2003). The success of adulthood is then measured by normative standards such as employability, and the socio-economic contributions that an individual is able to make to enable the sustainability of a politically and economically

successful society. Similar to those described by Donzelot (1977) in his text *The Policing of Families*, The Every Child matters agenda (DfE, 2003) recognises independent taxpaying adults as the primary resource of social capital. Therefore, the political ambition for children to achieve self-determined and autonomous success indicates why policies such as Every Child Matters (DfE, 2003) are given so much focus. However, when this policy is considered against the social-economic position of Travellers and Gypsies, the paradigm of normalisation within a concept of social control begins to hold great significance.

Normalisation

Originating in Scandinavia, normalisation embodies the aim that all people should conform to patterns and conditions of everyday living which are as close as possible to the norms and patterns of the mainstream of society (Nirje, 1969; 1970). Where, for example, the perceived actions of Travellers and Gypsies are not acknowledged by society as being mutually conducive to the concept of social conformity, normalisation theorises the way in which society perceives them as being subversive (McVeigh, 1997). According to the writings of Wolfensberger & Thomas (1983) and Emerson (1992), this prejudicial judgement then determines the types of racist stereotypes which Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) state have been placed upon Traveller and Gypsy children, families and communities throughout history.

Applied to the institution of social work, normalisation reflects those social structures which are seen to engage Traveller and Gypsy individuals, families and communities so to encourage the pursuit of a more acceptable social standard of living (Powell, 2011). As transience, and the social conditions generally perceived to accompany this are socially constructed as being detrimental to the pursuit of and social capital (Power, 2004), the principle of normalisation represents an important aspect of social policy for Travellers and Gypsies (Cemlyn & Briskman, 2002; Cemlyn & Clark, 2005; Greenfields & Home, 2007).

One aspect of this implication can be identified in the delivery of social work services. Although the tradition of 'Travelling' is recognised to form part of a cultural heritage for Romany Gypsy, Irish Traveller and Scottish Traveller communities,

which should be protected under equality legislation and duty (Equality Act, 2010), recognition of this fact rarely impacts on the provision of social work services (Goward *et al.*, 2006). Rather than designing and delivering social work services which can make reasonable adjustments for Traveller cultures, non-Traveller or Gypsy agencies continue to operate within defined geographical areas confined by localised procedures. Where families are seen as requiring support, their cultural heritage is often forced to give way as the principles of normalisation subverts their cultural perspective and dictates where and when services can be accessed (Greenfields, 2002). Here it is important to affirm that social policy enables the delivery of services to be *offered* in some circumstances (Children Act, 1989: Section 17), but *imposed* in others (Children Act, 1989: Section 47). According to Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009), the latter position is reported as a more typical form of intervention for Travellers and Gypsies particularly when the cultural more of 'Travelling' is not seen to be consistent with standardised beliefs of conventional social behaviour, child development, and child welfare. In these cases, 'Travelling' is perceived as a 'lifestyle choice' and considered to increase risk. For Greenfields (2002), this approach highlights institutional cultural blindness which undermines the resources, skills, and resilience that many families have developed in the face of continued marginalisation and social judgement.

2.3.3 A consequence of normalisation

The existence of normalisation in British society has seen the sustained persecution of Travellers and Gypsies throughout social history (Okley, 1997; Maynall, 2004; Van Cleemput, 2004; Parry, *et al.*, 2004; Bancroft, 2005; Belton, 2005). As a direct consequence, Traveller and Gypsy children and young people are considered one of the most marginalised and oppressed groups living in British society (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2006). Although contemporary social policy is embedded in the concept that 'Every Child Matters' (DfE, 2003), the specific needs of Traveller and Gypsy children are often overlooked (Bhopal, 2011).

In direct relation to social work, Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) contend that because no meaningful social policies exist for Traveller and Gypsy children, social work practice

is unable to consider their cultural needs. They argue that the promotion of social justice, including the five outcomes detailed in *Every Child Matters* (2003), would require more robust examples of evidence based practice. Due to an institutional sidestepping of cultural relativism, Hawes and Perez (1996) explain that if a Traveller and Gypsy child is perceived as being vulnerable, the models of social work intervention used to support them often fail to recognise the unique challenges that might be encountered. Where this is the case, some children are seen to be in need of saving from a Travelling lifestyle so that social workers can enable them to achieve the standards of social capital laid down in social policy (Holloway, 2005).

In a clear example of this, Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) suggest that when the vulnerability of Travellers and Gypsies become identified, the typical response of social work practice is to recommend that they move into a house because non-Traveller or Gypsy social structures under which social work operates cannot be easily transferred to include 'Travelling' diversity. In a further example, Acton (1974) suggests that the social prejudice projected towards a Traveller or Gypsy caravan and the associated standard of living, means that these stereotypes often reinforce a judgement of vulnerability. The fact that vulnerability might have been caused by those social policies, including the Criminal Justice Public and Public Order Act (1994), which have deliberately legislated against customary Traveller and Gypsy traditions, or in the case of the Communities and Local Government 2012 paper, omitted their social care needs altogether, rarely features in the social work assessment.

For Cemlyn (2000a), the case is clear. In a comprehensive commentary, she argues that social work intervention with Traveller and Gypsy children fails to include the universal ambition of social policy and limits intervention within the confines of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994). She states that whilst this Act focuses on a local authority's power of eviction towards social control, it negates the assessment of social care needs of Traveller and Gypsy individuals, families and communities under more welfare-orientated legislation. Here, the departure from social work convention is seen to disregard cultural diversity and compound cultural assimilation. The impact of this then translates into the serious and constant threat of

criminalisation (Greenfields, 2006b), and the more controlling aspects of social work intervention (Cemlyn, 2000b).

2.3.4 Competing demands of social work practice

Evidence regarding the damaging effects of social policy appears in a number of sources. Concluding the findings of a quantitative study, Powell (2011: 471) argues that social workers in the United Kingdom construct perceptions of a Traveller and Gypsy culture as 'subordinate to the dominant Westernised concept of civilisation'. He suggests that social workers perceive the stereotyped resistance of Travellers and Gypsies to achieve social integration as legitimate grounds for imposing normalising social work models of human management. In the conclusion of this paper, he calls for a 'top down' review of contemporary social ideologies so that the normalising impact that they have on Travellers and Gypsies can be understood (ibid.).

While this recommendation, in the light of growing evidence of institutional racism towards Travellers and Gypsies appears reasonable for the purpose of reflective academic practice, the difficulty in achieving this suggestion in practice, is that it appears to take a rather essentialist position towards Traveller and Gypsy people themselves. At no point, for instance, does Powell (2011) attempt to justify the need for a macro social review based on active consultation and community liaison. Even if the proposed reflective evaluation of social policy could be advanced, Richardson, (2006) argues that full inclusivity could never be achieved in the type of reflective philosophical isolation that Powell (2011) appears to recommend.

A difficulty in achieving social equality in this way stems from the fact that like most diverse cultural mores, different normative social perspectives conflict (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). For instance, although Cemlyn (2000b) argues that a normative understanding of Traveller and Gypsies children's rights is vitally important, she also explains that they must be considered within that child's own and unique cultural context. She raises concerns to indicate that the application of social work must be flexible enough to recognise diversity and the presence of separate cultural mores. What is more she argues the point that to judge Traveller and Gypsy children's rights

from any other perspective can reinforce negative social stereotypes and discriminatory social work action (ibid.).

While the assessment of Traveller and Gypsy children requires the social worker to apply cultural intelligence in the way that Cemlyn (2000b) describes, there is a clear caveat that such thinking can lead to social work practitioners operating within a framework of the 'rule of optimism' (Dingwall, Eekelaar, & Murray, 1983), literally the belief that cultural mores can override a dominant perception of child discipline and parental capacity. In line with this concept, Williams & Soydan (2005) explain that when too much reverence is given to a family's cultural rights and self-determination, social workers judgments can become clouded heightening those concerns which might pose a risk to the child. It is important to note that such non-intervention on the part of one or more agencies can have disastrous consequences, as witnessed in the Victoria Climbié tragedy (Laming, 2003).

Cemlyn's (2008) paper on Traveller and Gypsy human rights contextualises the dilemma by further highlighting the unattainable recommendation by Powell (2011). For equality to be realised in social work practice, social work must first work to ensure that the relationship between a majority dominant normative culture and an undervalued minority one can become equal. However, as Thompson (2006) argues, the ability to manage this is problematised by those structural mechanisms which are seen to create social division within in the structural, cultural, and individual social fabric of society. According to this argument, the ability of social workers to remodel normative social policy that is able to suit all people at all times cannot be achieved in academic isolation (Thompson, 2006).

For Richardson (2006a), the argument is obvious; no matter how much social thought is given to the attainment of social inclusion and justice, equality for Travellers and Gypsies can never really be achieved until their undervalued position within British society is over turned. For this reason, she believes that the active involvement of Traveller and Gypsy people and their accurate representation in good quality social research is essential. Until this is enabled, she believes that individual prejudice is likely to propel cultural disparity and reinforce structural inequality.

Commensurate with Powell (2011), Richardson (2006b), does suggest that the general representation of the mores associated with Travellers and Gypsies are seen to represent a departure from what is seen as generally accepted social behaviour. However, rather than calling for a 'top down' review of contemporary ideology, she bases her recommendations on a more transparent and cooperative approach that calls for the normative mores of Travellers and Gypsies to be considered. She advocates that these should be acknowledged by social research in a way which promotes, and respects the autonomy and active participation of Traveller and Gypsy people. Not only is this recommendation in keeping with core social work values of respecting individuality and autonomy (Shardlow, 2004), but it also recognises the importance of social inclusion as a primary action for social justice as determined by social policy (Llewellyn, Agu, & Mercer, 2008).

Further emphasising this importance, Greenfields and Home (2006) call for a renewed focus on the centralised involvement of Travellers and Gypsies in social research so that an accurate individual understanding of their marginal position. Comparable to the principles of contact theory (see Whitley and Kite, 2010), and optimised in Thompsons (2006) model of anti-discrimination, they argue that social prejudice can only be reversed through mutual exchange, and deconstructed through an understanding of the perceived social differences that reinforce social conflict. Whilst these recommendations are important in universal pursuit of equality within social work practice and the attainment of Every Child Matters and the related five outcomes (DfE, 2003), the recurrence of findings relating to institutional racism highlights oppression as a continued threat to the achievement of social policy with Travellers and Gypsies (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, Cemlyn & Briskman (2002) advise that without sustained consultation or contact with Travellers and Gypsies, social research will continue to operate discriminatively. This in turn consolidates the barriers that prevent the type of critical reflection and analysis that is so essential to the social work task (Higham, 1996, 2009; Smith, 2004a, 2004b; Smith, 2010).

2.3.5 Direction of social work practice

The literature presented in this brief review shows that the empowerment and inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers in social work practice presents a challenge for the attainment of equality. Whilst social work is orientated towards the pursuit of social justice Fook (2012), the discrimination and injustices experienced by many Gypsies and Travellers remain socially constructed (Richardson, 2006a). For this reason, and Heatherington (2000) and Power (2004) argue that when these injustices are emphasised, the challenges faced by Gypsy and Traveller communities are often attributed to individual lifestyle choices, rather than to the structural forces that exist around them.

As the meanings attributed to social work practice can often contain a high degree of prejudicial value distortion (Smith, 2008), Bentham's (1987) concern over social policy implementation is crucial to understanding its potentially detrimental role with Gypsies and Travellers. The fact that there is potential for the (mis) interpretation and implementation of social policy to be contaminated by personal, cultural, and structural prejudice, highlights a point of unequal social power. Underlying the ambition of social work is the critical social theory that inequality is inevitably bound up within unequal relations which in turn makes the implementation of social policy for people experiencing social inequality inevitably contested (Foucault, 1972). Whilst social work aims to promote the theoretical concept of social well-being, the pragmatic attainment of it remains a highly complex process (Bradford, Morales & Scott, 2011). For this reason, not only can the users of social policy fail to achieve the ideological underpinnings of social work practice, but also seriously undermine them.

2.4 Part Two: Dissonant social work practice with Travellers and Gypsies living in care

It is possible to argue that one of the most important aspects of the social work task relates to the support of children and young people who live in the care of the local authority (Children Schools and Families Committee, 2009). In this case, social work assumes the role of a 'corporate parent' (Children Act, 1989), put plainly, a child's

primary carer. In this instance, social policy understands that a sensitive approach to the unique needs of each child living in care is essential if the legal duties of social work are to be discharged effectively (Jackson, 2010). Not only does social policy recognise this as an indispensable duty (Department of Health, (DoH) 1999; 2002), but also under the Care Matters agenda (DfES, 2006; 2007), it requires that every social worker should aim to support children living in care as if they were that child's actual parent.

The rationale that social workers should have the same aspiration for children living in care as any reasonable parent, becomes an important factor in the way Traveller and Gypsy children living in care are cared for (Fahlberg, 2008). This distinction suggests that even though a social worker may acknowledge the mores and customs of Traveller and Gypsy children and young people, they are still permitted to apply their own non-Traveller or Gypsy values which may undervalue certain Traveller and Gypsy mores as evidenced by those examples of prejudice already described. Where this occurs, social work theory, method, and substantive practice, may continue to determine a relationship that reflects the personal values of the state, potentially negating the values, aspirations and cultural identity of the Traveller or Gypsy child (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). Consistent with this concern, Cemlyn (2000a; 2000b) and Greenfields (2002) warn that the systematic failure of social work policy has also led to an institutional blindness, which can lead social workers to negate the individual needs of Traveller and Gypsy children by reinforcing the anti-Traveller ambitions of wider social policy.

2.4.1 Social work policy and the care system

The experiences associated with life in public care have lasting negative effects on young people's outcomes and emotional well-being (Jackson 2008). Care Matters (DfES 2006, 2007) show that for many of the 64,000 children who are in care at any one time, childhood and adolescence are often characterised by insecurity, ill health, and lack of fulfilment. Consequently, there is a significant and widening gap between the outcomes for children in care, and the outcomes for all children. Presenting a

summative overview of the current care system, the Children, Schools, and Families Committee (2009) explain:

‘For those children who come into care, it will always be a distant second best to growing up happily and safely in their own family. Time in care is generally seen by professionals and the wider public as something to be avoided at all costs. Despite the dedication and perseverance of social workers and carers, the outcomes and experiences of young people who have been looked after remain poor’.

(Children, Schools, and Families Committee, 2009: 13)

In this report, the Children, Schools, and Families Committee recognise that society is failing young people living in care. However, they do not offer a reason for this. Such a concern is highlighted by Barn (2007) who registers the apparent failings in the care system to a general inability of social workers to enable children and young people living in care to experience a sense of normality in their own daily lives.

To promote a sense of normality that Barn (2007) describes, the Care Matters (DfES, 2006) Green Paper recommends a prerequisite to centralise the individual values and mores of children, including a need to place their views and wishes at the heart of all care planning and decision making processes. The introduction to the Green Paper, written by Alan Johnson, the then Education Secretary emphasised the importance that social care departments should place on the centrality of the child’s welfare and rights:

‘The Green Paper aims to transform both the way in which the care system works for children and the quality of experience they and others on the edge of entering or leaving care actually receive. And in doing this, we are determined to put the voice of the child in care at the centre both of our reforms and of day-to-day practice. It is only by listening to these children that we can understand their concerns and know whether or not we are meeting their needs.’

(Department for Education and Skills. 2006: 4)

These principles are considered so important to the success of the care planning process, that they formed part of the Children and Young Persons Act, which received Royal Assent in November 2008. Building on the recommendations of social policy that began with the Children Act (1975), this Act, emphasises a statutory duty to consult with children living in care and act upon their views and wishes. In support of this recommendation, The Children Schools and Families Committee (2009) declare that:

‘Only by setting more store by children’s satisfaction with their care will we get closer to finding out how cared about they really feel, how stable and secure their lives seem.’

(Children Schools and Families Committee, 2009: 15)

For Bassett (2010), this commitment reflects the ambition of the Children and Young Persons Act (2008) to extend the statutory frameworks which aim to ensure that all young people living in care receive high quality care with services that are focused on and tailored to their needs. Based on the ambition to identify the unmet needs of a number of hitherto hidden and marginalised groups, Jackson (2010) explains that the clear move of the Care Matters agenda (DfES, 2006 & 2007) and the Children and Young Persons Act (2008) towards an active consultation position is both progressive and universalistic.

Despite this accolade, specific reference to the welfare needs of Traveller and Gypsy children have been omitted from both the Care Matters policy (DfES, 2006; 2007) and subsequent Act. The deliberate action to exclude the position of Travellers and Gypsies undermines its otherwise universalistic rhetoric. Since the words ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Traveller’ are absent from this policy, their actual position and reported experiences remain rather opaque. With the notable exception of Cemlyn (2000a; 2000b), Cemlyn & Briskman, (2002), Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) Fisher (2003), Garrett (2004; 2005) and Greenfields (2002; 2006a; 2006b), few empirical studies have focused on the experiences or the implementation of specific and tailored social care services.

Reflecting on the shortage of research and the exclusion of the terms 'Traveller' and 'Gypsy' from social policy, Cemlyn (2000a, 2000b) states that when Traveller and Gypsy children enter into care they can be placed in foster placements or residential homes away from their own culture. Where this occurs, Traveller and Gypsy children are often alienated from their community networks, identity, and sense of autonomy. Supporting this claim Father Gerard Barry, a Chaplain at HM Prison, Full Sutton, summarised in Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) reported that:

'There is evidence that if a decision is made to have a Traveller child taken into care, then no effort is made to find a Traveller family to care for them - quite contrary to the normal practice of trying to find a family best suited to a child's cultural background'
(Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009: 128).

The normal practice referred to here is enshrined within the Children Act (1989) and the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which require any decisions concerning a child to take into account their religion, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background. This suggests that although the recruitment of foster carers from minority ethnic communities remains high on the political agenda (Jackson & Thomas, 1999; DfE, 2011a; Scottish parliament 2012), no such strategy is currently being consistently applied to Traveller and Gypsy communities. On this basis, Cemlyn (2000b) considers the fact that because Travellers and Gypsies remain marginalised in social policy, social work continues to overlook the recruitment of Traveller and Gypsy foster carers. This, she argues, increases the danger that the placement of Traveller and Gypsy children will negate their own religion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background.

Failed by social policy?

Reflecting on the literature presented in this chapter, it appears that the failings in social work practice and the resulting marginalisation of Travellers and Gypsies living in care might be directly linked to failings in social policy. As the words, 'Traveller' and 'Gypsy' are consistently used inconsistently, the extent of their inclusion and

recognition in social policy is unclear. Some commentators have blamed the (deliberate) exclusion of these words on the basis of institutional racism (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). Others have argued that the systematic failure to recognise Travellers and Gypsies reinforces their social invisibility (Powell, 2011; Scottish Parliament, 2012). However, whilst the words 'Traveller' or 'Gypsy' are missing from key policies such as the Care Matters agenda (DfES, 2006, 2007), it is important to point out that so too are the words 'Indian', 'African', 'Chinese' and in fact any other word which identifies any individual group.

What social policy does do, by way of mutual inclusion, is recommend that all local authorities develop a 'pledge for children in their care', to make sure that 'services are provided which recognise the diverse ethnic and cultural needs of [all] children' (DfES, 2007: 22-23). Although recognition of specific groups is avoided, including the terms 'Travellers' and 'Gypsies', *all* children are incorporated on the basis that they are children with unique and specific needs. The responsibility to them then falls to each local authority and each social worker to assess, plan and implement services which can be delivered to ensure that they are appropriate and specifically tailored to those individual children being supported (*ibid*). However, consistent with the themes introduced above, clarification of this principle in practice is problematic because little reliable information is available on the numbers of Travellers and Gypsies living in England as well as in care. The question raised by this concern is how can a local authority develop a pledge for Traveller and Gypsy children when no credible data is available to state how many Traveller and Gypsy children might live within a specific geographical area, or in care? Of course, this is a rhetorical question, because the simple answer is that they cannot.

2.4.2 The numbers of Travellers and Gypsies in care

National statistics regarding the numbers of children living in public care have been maintained under legislative direction by various inter-governmental organisations since 1969 (Children Act, 1968). The Department for Education are the current governmental body responsible for undertaking this duty. According to their findings,

there were 65,520 children living in care in England on 31st March 2011 (DfE, 2011b).

The national survey shows that children enter care for many different reasons. In 2011, it reported that fifty-four per cent of all children living in care had experienced some form of abuse or neglect. Twenty per cent due to an experience of family 'dysfunction' or 'acute stress' including absent parenting, a parental illness or disability, or 'socially unacceptable behaviour'. Four per cent were Looked after because of interfamilial experiences related to disability, and six per cent are living in care because they have experienced traumatic experiences in their country of origin and have arrived in England as unaccompanied asylum-seekers (DfE, 2011b).

Commentating on the advantages offered by these studies, Ward & Skuse (2001) explain that these annual surveys enable the evaluation of social policy regarding child protection (Children Act, 1989: S47) and family support (Children Act, 1989: S17). Following the concerns raised by Bebbington & Miles (1989) they argue that these studies further enable social research to evaluate how many children and young people may be at risk, thus providing allocated resources required to support them in line with the policy determined 'pledge for children in care'. However, whilst the advantages have been made clear, the limitations are more numerous, and rest within its limited approach to inclusivity and accurate representation.

Despite being used as an evaluative measure, the census does not include any statistical information regarding the frequency with which a child may move between placements. It does not provide the ability to cross-reference a child's ethnicity to their age, or information regarding entry into care and placement type. What is more, the ethnic categories used to compartmentalise children and young people have been criticised as being ineffective (Barn, 2007; (Appleton & Stanley, 2010). Instead of enabling each child's ethnicity to be recorded, as outlined by Dominelli (1996) and others in anti-racist social work research, those children who do not fit into the predetermined boxes are labelled as 'other'.

The experience of being 'othered' has been a particular concern for Travellers and Gypsies as it reflects the general lack of importance that has been placed on them

since their ethnic minority status was formalised under equality legislation and duty (Richardson, 2006a). Regardless of the fact that Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers and Scottish Travellers are formally protected under equality legislation and duty (Race Relation Act, 1976; Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, now superseded by the Equality Act, 2010), in 1989, 2000 and 2008 retrospectively, Table 3, overleaf, shows that statistics regarding the number of Travellers or Gypsies have only been maintained since 2009.

Even though Travellers and Gypsies are now included in this return, any attempt to present a comprehensive understanding of the number of Travellers and Gypsies living in care in the United Kingdom is problematic because the constituent parts do not coordinate their data collections. At the time of writing, the DfE in England was the only organisation that referred to Traveller and Gypsy children. The move to include Travellers and Gypsies in the current census methodology was prompted Children and Young Persons Act (2008). Whilst this is a positive move towards social equality, the terms used for their ethnic compartmentalisation, 'Travellers of Irish Heritage', and 'Gypsy/Roma', do not accurately reflect the diversity of communities that may, or may not identify with them.

The compartmentalisation of Traveller and Gypsy children in these two groups demonstrates that although 'Travellers with Irish heritage' or 'Gypsy/Roma' are now identified as being separate within 'Looked after' discourse, the opportunity to comment with any accuracy on the numbers of Traveller and Gypsy children living in care according to their own identified 'identity', is still not available. What is more, this census also assumes that people will voluntarily identify themselves under these terms, but we know that Gypsies and Travellers may often choose not to do so, against a background of public hostility to their identity (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009).

Table 3: Numbers of Travellers and Gypsies living in care 2007 – 2011

Ethnicity	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Ethnic Origin	59,970	59,360	60,890	64,410	65,520
White	46,410	45,580	46,200	48,990	50,340
White British	44,590	43,810	44,510	47,170	48,480
White Irish	410	420	390	390	370
Any other White background	1,410	1,360	1,250	1,350	1,390
Traveller of Irish Heritage	x	x	10	30	30
Gypsy/Roma	x	x	20	50	80
Mixed	5,310	5,220	5,260	5,590	5,620
White and Black Caribbean	2,000	2,000	1,900	2,000	2,150
White and Black African	470	480	480	520	600
White and Asian	800	760	740	840	950
Any other mixed background	2,000	1,900	2,000	2,100	1,920
Asian or Asian British	2,330	2,780	3,190	3,380	3,090
Indian	300	300	300	320	300
Pakistani	640	660	670	740	770
Bangladeshi	270	310	350	410	420
Any other Asian background	1,120	1,510	1,880	1,920	1,610
Black or Black British	4,720	4,450	4,400	4,570	4,520
Caribbean	1,640	1,600	1,570	1,660	1,640
African	2,320	2,150	2,090	2,110	2,050
Any other Black background	750	710	740	800	840
Other ethnic groups	4,720	4,450	4,400	4,570	4,520
Chinese	1,640	1,600	1,570	1,660	1,640
Any other group	2,320	2,150	2,090	2,110	2,050
Other	750	710	740	800	840
Unknown	4,720	4,450	4,400	4,570	4,520

An added limitation of this survey is evidenced in the terminology used to compartmentalise Travellers and Gypsies. Whilst the categories of some other ethnic groups have been split, no such care has been taken to include this principle with the terms 'Gypsy' and 'Roma'. It is clear from the census that the terms 'Gypsy' and 'Roma' are seen as being synonymous with one another. According to the survey, a

'Gypsy' child is the same as a 'Roma' child, and a 'Roma' child is the same as a 'Gypsy' child. The fact that both groups maintain their own sense of identity and separateness from one another is not represented. Not only does the act of joining of these two terms highlight the inability of the DfE to recognise the importance of the separate identities of 'Roma' and 'Gypsy' children, but it also substantiates the concern of a general institutional blindness - failing as it does to place any significance on the importance on individual representation. The clear inadequacy presented is in the failure to include English or Welsh Gypsies, Scottish Travellers, Showmen and Circus People, Boat Dwellers and New Travellers, all of whom are indigenous groups within the United Kingdom.

Given the reported importance of these surveys in the identification and evaluation of resources for children living in care (Dickens *et al.*, 2007), it could be argued that the inability of the DfE to accurately represent the numbers of Travellers and Gypsies has a serious implication the attainment of equal opportunity required by social policy (DfES 2006; 2007). Therefore, the marginalisation of Traveller and Gypsy children within this methodology reinforces the concern that Traveller and Gypsy children are at risk of cultural assimilation stemming from institutional ignorance, cultural displacement, emotional isolation, and placement instability (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009).

2.4.3 Placement stability

The importance of carefully matching children to carers, according to race, religion, and language, is known as an essential component in the development of secure attachments for all children living in care (Rhodes, 1992; Howe *et al.*, 1999; Rittner *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, attachment theories have long been recognised as an essential component in social and emotional development (Goldberg, Muir, & Ker, 2000; Golding, 2008). As such Monck *et al.*, (2003) identify:

'The early development of secure attachment with primary carers is the foundation of the child's ability to optimise what he or she can subsequently gain from new experiences and relationships'

(Monck *et al.*, 2003: 19).

For this reason, the identification and support of 'the right placement', literally the best environment for a child to live, is essential to the social work task with all children living in care (DfES, 2007). It is well known in social work theory and practice, for instance, that whilst placement stability engenders attachment, placement instability not only reduces it (Leathers, 2002; Cocker & Allain, 2008), but also compounds existing difficulties which further reinforce insecure patterns of attachment in later life (Golding, 2008). Where insecurity is apparent, children living in care can develop an internal working model that impairs their ability to reach and maintain key social and human development milestones (Howe, 2005). Children with insecure attachments, for instance, may be less likely to attempt to establish relationships with others and may be more likely to display behaviour that keeps people emotionally distant (Fahlberg, 2008). Such coping techniques can then become communicated by the child through behaviours that may lead to placement breakdowns and the pursuit of further rejection (Jackson, 2010).

As well as leading to transitory relationships (Cocker & Allain, 2008), placement instability can cause a lack of knowledge about a child's past and sometimes lead to cultural denial (Barn, 2007), which, for Traveller and Gypsy children may amount to greater confusion and a lack of social identity (Cemlyn & Clark, 2005). As young people living in care are known to experience high levels of placement instability (Fahlberg, 2008), they are also found to have the poorest levels of social adjustment in terms of employment (Children Schools and Families Committee, 2009), social relationships (Smith, 2008b), financial management (Jackson, 2010) and mental health (Biehal *et al.*, 1995). Where children are cut off from their family and community, psychological research determines that they can experience significant emotional distress (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1969) and anxiety (Richardson & Joughin, 2000), caused by a process of acculturation. Used in this systematic review to drill down into the evidence presented above, acculturation is a term that could be used to theorise the psychological and emotional effect that normalisation might have on Travellers and Gypsies living in care (Curran, 2003).

2.4.4 Acculturation

Acculturation grew from research carried out in countries where minority populations were seen to be at risk of social and cultural assimilation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Crocker *et al.*, 1994; Arbona, Flores, & Novy, 1995). Various indices have been examined as outcomes of the acculturation process, such as psychological distress (Sidanius, 1993), reduced mood states (Rogler, Cortes & Malgady, 1991), low feelings of acceptance (Krebs & Pitcoff, 2006), the acquisition of culturally appropriate behaviours and skills (Bornstein & Cote, 2006; Dallos & Nokes, 2011), academic performance (Montgomery, 1992), and transitions into adulthood (Goffman, 1963).

Although the acculturation of Traveller and Gypsy children living in care has not been investigated in contemporary research, it is still nonetheless a term that has been increasingly accepted by anthropologists and psychologists as a label to reflect the cultural assimilation of children from Black and minority ethnic communities (David, Berry, & Berry, 2006). It has been included in this literature review in direct response to the evidence which suggests that social policy and social work practice places little or no value on a Traveller or Gypsy culture.

Applied to the emergent themes identified through this review, acculturation proposes that Travellers and Gypsies living in care may be at an increased risk of the more damaging aspects of cultural assimilation because, as in schools, the essential social and emotional support needed to maintain a positive Traveller and Gypsy self-concept might not be available (Bhopal, 2011). Moreover, by placing Traveller and Gypsy children with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers in a house, might fail to maintain and create the living conditions that are conducive to a Traveller or Gypsy child's sense of normality (Greenfields & Smith, 2010). Within the paradigm of acculturation, this all adds to the risk of assimilation.

Cemlyn (2000a) has raised particular concerns about Traveller and Gypsy children who have been moved from campsites into bricks and mortar accommodation, particularly when this arrangement has been made by social workers. This concern stems from the fact that decisions made on behalf of the child can overlook their

internalised mores, or sense of self. Making this point more strongly, Greenfields & Smith (2010: 410) suggest that many Traveller and Gypsy children moving into brick and mortar accommodation can experience significant psychological difficulties particularly when an emotional aversion to 'bricks and mortar' accommodation may exist. Based on a study of housed Travellers and Gypsies, they found that the feelings of separation and loss, caused by cultural alienation from a Traveller way of life, could lead to the breakdown of physical and mental health (ibid.). When this sense of change is combined with cultural alienation, social stigma, hostility, and prejudice from the public, Greenfields and Smith (2010) argue that the experience of cultural separation reinforces a growing sense of dependence on attachments to traditional kin based networks that may have also been lost. According to Cemlyn (2000b) and Greenfields (2002), this may present particular problems for Traveller and Gypsy children living in care who have been nomadic for much of their lives as the experience of moving into a house, and the need to readjust to the mores associated with non-Traveller or Gypsy communities, might be perceived as an unwelcomed 'culture shock'.

Greenfields & Smith (2010) explain that the experience of 'culture shock' can lead to depression, substance abuse and the feeling of isolation which can often accompany the sense of social marginalisation. Drawing comparison to Tatz's (2004) work with aboriginal children in Australia, their paper suggests that the experience related to the concept of cultural displacement may have a significant impact on the emotional, physical, and mental well-being of many Traveller and Gypsy children. Although their research focus lies elsewhere, Cashmore & Paxman (2006) support this claim and argue that if child experiences separation and their feelings of loss, blame, and cultural confusion are not acknowledged, then their opportunity to overcome this sense of shock may never be realised.

Although these points cannot be easily validated in light of the paucity of research regarding Traveller and Gypsy children and young people living in care, tentative comparisons can be drawn to the experiences of those groups of children, who have been the focus of detailed systematic enquiries.

2.4.5 The acculturation of children in care

Social policy asserts that a strong sense of identity and a positive self-image is fundamental to the emotional and physical well-being of all children and young people (Giddens, 1991). However, there is still considerable misunderstanding about the nature of identity and its central importance to children living in care (Richardson & Joughin, 2000). One of the reasons for this is that identity is most often spoken about in relation to Black and minority ethnic children (Barn, 1999) and as such is seen as being important only to this group.

Identity is difficult to define, yet it is central to every person's sense of individuality (Giddens, 1991). In line with the acculturation paradigm, definitions of identity range from spiritual or religious (Teske & Nelson, 1974), through to psychodynamic (Meltzer *et al.*, 2003), and behavioural mores (Richardson & Joughin, 2000) that reflect social and structural interpretations (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Within most societies, identity fulfils two useful functions. It allows individuals to understand and conceptualise themselves as distinct from others and it allows an individual's identity to develop and form (Giddens, 1991).

Individual identity is the 'internal model', which allows each person to have a perception of themselves (Heidegger, 2005). Consistent with the phenomenological roots of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986), this theory proposes that all people are members of numerous social groupings, but that they are also distinct in their own individuality away from any other members of a given group to which they belong. For identity to develop, a complex interaction takes place between the elements of a person's personality and the world in which they live. This is because each individual interaction is processed into an individual experience. According to Giddens (1991), these sets of individual experiences contribute towards the development of a whole personality.

Instability and multiple placements are strongly associated with the 'poor outcomes' that are seen to characterise the care experiences of acculturation or Black and minority ethnic children in care (Barn, 2007; 2010). According to Fulcher & McGladdery (2011), the placement of Black and minority ethnic children with carers

that do not share, or understand, the normalised mores of the child can significantly contribute to placement instability, transitory relationships, lessened emotional well-being and cultural denial, of which all can be included within the concept of acculturation (Bornstein & Cote, 2006). Understanding these experiences is important as they are shown to create psychological confusion (Cocker & Allain, 2008), and a lack of secure social identity (Golding, 2008). Together, they can directly impact on a sense of resilience and emotional adjustment (Barn, Andrew & Mantovani, 2005), employment (Barn, 2007), social relationships (Bassett, 2010), financial management and successful independent transition to adulthood (Richardson & Joughin, 2000) all of which run contrary to the universal ambitions of social policy (DoH, 2003; DfES, 2006; 2007).

Reflecting on this situation, Appleton and Stanley (2010) argue that the placement of Black and minority ethnic children must be considered within the wider social context of normalisation and acculturation, so that the principles of anti-discriminatory practice (Thompson, 2006), and anti-racist practice (Fook, 2012) can be fully realised. They identify the importance of considering the continuity of contact with birth parents, where appropriate, alongside the identification of carers who can recognise and nurture the positive normalised mores that the child living in care has grown accustomed. This, they argue, can only be achieved if a child is empowered to live with carers of the same ethnicity and race, and who share a commonality in terms of language and religious beliefs.

Lived experiences of acculturation

Reaffirming the detriments of cultural displacement and acculturation, Sinclair (2005) summarises evidence to show that Black and Asian children living away from their families and communities feel a tremendous sense of grief, separation and loss, compared to those children who are provided with the opportunity to maintain contact with their families and other Black and Asian people. Those children who have experienced severance from their families felt mentally isolated and physically separate. Some young people spoke about the strains of being cared for by a 'White' family and described a growing sense of alienation from their sense of self and from

the people around them. They described how these feelings created difficulties with social and personal relationships, as well as their mental health and educational attainment.

Reflecting on similar findings, Sinclair (2005) and Bullock *et al.*, (2006) support the recommendation that Black and Asian children need extra help to make sense of their identity and history if they are placed with White carers. Furthermore, they argue that this arrangement should only be considered as a last resort, and only if the identified carers are aware of their own sense of socialisation and normalisation, so not to oppress potentially diverse normative mores on the children they work to support.

Compounding inequality

In light of the reduced outcomes of Black and minority ethnic children living in care, considerable attention has been given to the instability caused by societal dissimilarity between the child and their identified carers (Barn, Sinclair and Ferdinand; 1997; Ward, Munro & Dearden, 2006; Bassett, 2010; Stevens, *et al.*, 2011). Dumaret, Donati & Crost (2011), for instance, argue that social policy fails to recruit suitable carers who are able to understand and nurture a Black and minority ethnic child's sense of cultural or religious autonomy. In a similar vein, Barn (2007) argues that a Black child growing up within a predominantly White society receive negative messages about being Black. She argues that they need a positive internal model of a 'Black' identity to counteract negative stereotypes. Yet, the opportunity to develop resilience can remain problematic. Despite the call of evidence based practice to place children with suitable carers who can recognise and promote cultural, linguistic, and religious needs and concepts of self-identity, Black and minority ethnic children still experience displacement and cultural severance (Barn, Andrew, & Mantovani, 2005). This concern provides a further example of how social policy can be overlooked within dominant processes of institutionalised normalisation for all Black and minority ethnic children including Travellers and Gypsies.

2.4.6 Barriers to inclusion

A particularly difficult barrier preventing the recruitment of Traveller and Gypsy carers has been constructed by the government's decision to remove financial ring fences from key services that could target this. Although the removal of specific funds aims to give local authorities more flexibility on how their childcare budgets are managed (Charlesworth, 2010), Holmes & Soper (2010), propose that any reduction in spending in terms of foster care recruitment may make the care system more unsustainable than it already is.

Notwithstanding the key messages from research that call for placement stability based on the shared values and mores, a recent press notice from the DfE (2011a), stated that:

‘The relationship between the carer and the child is far more important than whether the child and carer share the same religious beliefs, cultural mores, or ethnicity’.
(DfE, 2011a: 78)

The clear rhetoric behind this statement reflects government's ambition to reduce the need to recruit carers from minoritised communities (Hennessey, 2011; Loughton, 2011). Whilst culturally matching children to carers has long been custom and practice in British fostering and adoption policy (Goldberg, Muir, & Ker, 2000; Richardson & Joughin, 2000; Meltzer *et al.*, 2003), the apparent shift to resurrect the ‘colour-blind’ approach to racism developed in the 1990's (Barn, Andrew, & Mantovani, 2005), forms equivalence with the American Multi-ethnic Placement Act (1994). Prohibiting delay of the placement of children on the grounds of ‘race incompatibility’, this Act radically changed the laws and policies in America which had traditionally engaged in ‘race matching’, literally the placing of children, as far as possible, with same-race foster and adoptive parents.

For political commentators in the United Kingdom, (see Bloxham, 2011, Garboden, 2011 and Hennessey, 2011), the deliberate move away from this evidence based practice once more negates the centrality of the child over simple economics. For

this reason, Bassett (2010) argues that the dismissal of such evidence-based practice could further relegate the religious, racial identity and cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Black and minority ethnic children.

As this chapter has already established, although the terms 'Roma/Gypsy' and 'Traveller of Irish heritage' have only recently been acknowledged in Looked after census data, these groups are still compartmentalised within a White categorisation. For Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009), this action demonstrates how dominant discourse has failed to incorporate a Traveller or Gypsy dimension into anti-discriminatory practice. Yet for Garret (2004), the compartmentalisation of Traveller and Gypsy children as 'White' might lead service providers to assume that the individual needs of Traveller and Gypsy children living in care can be promoted by 'White' carers. In practice, this could further challenge the need to recruit Traveller and Gypsy carers.

Although the DfE census now includes the terms 'Roma/Gypsy' and 'Traveller of Irish heritage', the clear dearth of research concerning the experiences of Traveller and Gypsy children living in care suggests that the complexities of social policy, normalisation, and acculturation have not been fully acknowledged or factored into current social policy and practice. This position is further evidenced in the literature regarding those leaving care.

2.4.7 Traveller and Gypsy young people leaving care

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfSCF, 2011) indicate that in 2010, 7,500 young people left care at the age of 16 or over. Commenting on this finding, Appleton & Stanley (2010) explain that overall, social policy requires young people to leave care at a much earlier age than may be typical for normalised interfamilial mores. Based on a large-scale qualitative study that interviewed a number of care leavers, they found that many young people were attracted to the idea of independence from the care system, and would push to leave care as soon as they could, particularly if placement instability had been a core feature of their experience. For those young people, the desire to leave care was influenced by a number of factors, including placement breakdown, limitations in the supply of supportive placements, and carers own problems in managing perceived challenging

behaviour that may have been manifest as a direct result of instability (ibid.). Consequently, Schofield, Beek & Ward, (2012) argue that since young people leave care early, the main elements of transition to adulthood tend to be compressed.

For many young people leaving care, the experience of learning to manage a home, gaining employment, and starting a family, tends to overlap in the immediate period after leaving care (Broad, 1999; Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2004). In light of the concerns regarding normative disparity (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983), many young people will have received inconsistent preparation for adulthood that makes the transition into adulthood that much harder (Biehal *et al.*, 1995). As a result, Falhberg (2008) argues that the particular needs of certain groups of care leavers such as young parents, Black and minority ethnic young people, and young people with physical or sensory impairments, have not always been consistently met by those social policies designed to protect them. Stein, (2006) for instance, has demonstrated that the importance of developing a secure self-concept is a primary factor that facilitates the move towards independence for all young people. Yet, because this is not always available to those living in care, Ward (2011) explains that the lack of opportunity is further exemplified through instability. He goes on to rationalise that:

‘The added constant experience of placement instability acts as a barrier to the establishment of a sense of self-continuity which can increase the likelihood of leaving care becoming a transitional flashpoint during which difficulties in moving on to adulthood increase the propensity for young people to lose sight of the thread that connects their past to their future, and engage in self-destructive behaviours’.

(Ward, 2011: 2512)

These claims are substantiated by detailed research summarised by the Children’s School and Family Committee (2009), who clarify that many of the young people who leave care are seen to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation, abusive relationships, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health problems and unemployment.

In addition to this, they report that care leavers are overrepresented within prison and probation services, and as teenage parents. However, as with previous sections, confirmation of the actual experiences of Traveller and Gypsy care leavers is problematic because it has been given a low priority in current research. Based on the scarcity of research in this area, Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) propose that social services in the United Kingdom are not equipped to make any successful transition plans for Travellers and Gypsies living in, or leaving care. For an example of how the social policy can include the needs and normative mores of Traveller and Gypsy children and young people, one must turn to research regarding the development of the Shared Rearing Service, and subsequent publications in the Republic of Ireland.

2.4.8 Traveller and Gypsy children in public care in Ireland

The Child Care Act (1991) represents the basis for the most significant changes in childcare services in the Republic of Ireland. This Act focuses on the rights of the child and the promotion of the child's welfare (Hill, Lockyer & Stone, 2007). Similar to the Children Act (1989) in England and Wales, it places a specific duty on the Health Service Executive to identify children who are not receiving adequate care and protection, and in promoting their welfare, provide childcare and family support services.

In 1992, growing social concern over the lack of importance given to Traveller children and young people living in care in Ireland led to a study by O'Higgins (1993). Based on statistical analysis of information available, she shows that Traveller children are overrepresented among those placed in substitute care. Multiple regression analysis showed that 'almost 90 per cent of Travelling children living in the care system had spent one year or more in care, compared with 83 per cent of other children in the care population (*ibid.*: 171). In a later study, Mc Keown (2001) found that 14 per cent of all children living in care in Ireland were from the Travelling community.

In terms of historical care provision, O'Higgins (1993) explains that Travelling children living in care used to be placed in three streams of placement provision. These included, a specialist Traveller residential home, local residential homes, or

with foster families from the settled community. Although the specialist Traveller residential home was specifically used for Traveller children, it was staffed by non-Traveller or Gypsy staff. Because of these three streams of placement, she explains that nearly all of the Travelling children living in care at that time were experiencing a serious identity crisis that stemmed from acculturative stress, and the experience of being normalised by non-Traveller or Gypsy carers:

‘Traveller children growing up in care develop the settled values. Their only contact with Travellers is with their own parents who are frequently angry and powerless at the dominant culture, which has taken their children. Under these circumstances, a positive experience of a Traveller family life is frequently lost to these children. When they attempt to establish an independent life, they have been prepared for the settled way of life and have little positive sense of themselves as Travellers, but find themselves ostracised by the settled community and treated as Travellers and outsiders. This ‘limbo’ existence easily leads to ‘isolation, alienation and a drift into a culture of alcohol, drugs, and offending’.

(O’Higgins 1993: 178)

Summarising this finding in a later study, Pemberton (1999) points out, that the ‘limbo’ existence meant that Travelling children living in care were unable to manage the experience of living in, or leaving care easily. She reports, that of the fifty-six Irish Traveller children who left care in Ireland between 1981 and 1988, less than ten appeared to have managed the transition from state care to independent living with any degree of success. ‘Thirty-five’, she reports ‘had spent time in jail, for offences often involving serious alcohol abuse, violence to others and robbery’ (ibid: 179). Resonant of the findings identified in this systematic review, she explains that these outcomes were positively correlated to the general lack of understanding about the ethnic status of Traveller children living in Ireland, and an institutional ignorance of understanding and validation of their culture.

In response to these findings, the Eastern Health Board (now Health Service Executive) realised that one important factor contributing to poorer outcomes for Travelling children in care was the lack of any significant connection between social policy and the normalised mores of Traveller communities. In light of this deficit, serious consideration was given to the outcomes and opportunities for Travelling people living in care. By reflecting on this exercise, agencies responsible for safeguarding the needs of vulnerable children were able to see that social policy regarding non-Traveller or Gypsy childcare was not always suitable for Traveller children. The outcome of this review enabled the 'Shared Rearing' fostering service to take shape (Pemberton, 1999).

The Health Service Executive and Traveller Family Care Service established the Shared Rearing Service as a specialist fostering service for Traveller families. Under this scheme, a Traveller child, who cannot be cared for by their own immediate or extended family, is placed with another Travelling family who is able to provide foster care for them. Pemberton (1999: 171) reports that the advantage of this approach enables 'Travelling children to be 'Looked after' within their own culture; that is to say, the Travelling community, and Traveller carers are able to take employment as professional carers'.

The move to develop this unique scheme did not come about easily. In light of strict fostering laws, (Child Care Act, 1991) trailers (the caravans in which many Travelling families live), were, and indeed still are, generally considered inappropriate foster homes because they did not conform to the principles laid down in social policy. Pemberton (1999) explains that although Traveller foster carers are required to live in houses, the children in their care are able to maintain contact with family members living in trailers. On this basis, she suggests that placements are seen to be flexible because Traveller carers can also accommodate large groups of siblings in a way that might not be practical in a trailer. What is more, they are able to support contact arrangements with parents, the Travelling communities, and a Traveller way of life. According to Pemberton (1999), the Shared Rearing Service continues to enable a much greater understanding of Traveller children's socialisation and normalised

mores because it places value in providing Traveller children with role models who can help them learn how to handle anti-Traveller discrimination.

Based on the reported success of the Shared Rearing service, there is now a broad agreement that the negative experiences associated with life in public care is the root cause of difficulties associated with acculturation (O'Higgins, 1993). These include low levels of educational attainment; high risk of substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, an over representation in youth offending and mental health services and unemployment. However, despite the clear advantages enabled by this development in the Republic of Ireland, no such social policy, or research focus, has been transferred to the United Kingdom.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has laid the foundation for an understanding of the experience of Travellers and Gypsy people who have lived in care as children. In the light of the existence of institutional ignorance, the concern that a large amount of social work is meted out on the basis of non-Traveller or Gypsy assumptions, which fail to include the normative mores of Travellers and Gypsies (Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009), highlights a particular need to develop some understanding of what this consequence might entail.

Contemporary discourse in the United Kingdom has demonstrated that institutional ignorance towards the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies living in care has resulted in poor communication and consultation. The lack of reasoned and balanced discussion, and an absence of effective research that includes the voices of Traveller and Gypsy children, has led to their cultural marginalisation. Conversely, research regarding the Shared Rearing Service in the Republic of Ireland, has highlighted that services could, and should, be implemented to meet the needs of Traveller and Gypsy children and young people if the political impetus is given to their socially subordinated position in the first instance.

The conclusion drawn from the main differences between these two findings suggested that the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies living in care in the United

Kingdom is under researched and understated. To address this concern, three research questions were designed to reflect the principles of participatory consultation (DfES 2007). The three research questions that this study aimed to address were:

- How do Travellers and Gypsies make sense of their lived experience in public care?
- To what extent do these experiences influence individual self-concepts? and;
- How can an understanding of these experiences inform the way in which social work practice should incorporate the needs of Travellers and Gypsies living in public care?

The need to focus on the reported experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care as children suggested that the study could have been implemented in a number of different ways using various methodologies, sample groups, testimonial collection tools, and varying levels of analysis. In order to demonstrate how the specific methodology was chosen, a more detailed rationale of the study's methodological approach is needed. It is to this exact discussion that this thesis now turns.

Chapter 3

Research Strategy

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter provided a systematic review of the literature. It identified a deficit in knowledge and outlined the need to provide further insight into the experience of Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care as children through the positioning of three research questions. In order to respond to the research questions identified, this chapter outlines the decision-making processes used to inform the selection of a research strategy that was able to engage with the deficiencies identified through the review process.

This chapter provides a brief evaluation of the epistemological strengths and limitations associated with positivism and post-positivism paradigms set against the three overarching research questions presented in chapter 2. Intrinsic in this evaluation was the considered exploration of potential research strategies that could have been used as an overall theoretical guide. Once the preferred contribution of post positivism has been expounded, a discussion on the related research strategies that were evaluated against ethical methodological criteria will be advanced. Taken together, this discussion will show how this evaluation validated the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as the most suitable strategy to use in this study.

3.2 Research paradigm

Broadly speaking, Grinnell & Unrau (2005) explain that there are two approaches for collecting information in a systematic enquiry. The first, commonly known as quantitative research, is centred upon positivist principles of epistemology (Crossan, 2003). The second, known as qualitative research, centres upon post-positivist principles (Dyson & Brown, 2006). To advance the potential role of each of these positions within this study, a brief discussion will follow to demonstrate key decision-making strategies in the evaluative implementation of the selected paradigm.

3.2.1 Positivism

The term positivism originated within the work of Auguste Comte (1798-1857), who advanced an epistemological position that advocates the application of research methods of the natural sciences. According to Bryman, Bell, & Teevan (2009: 13), Comte believed that the social world closely resembles the natural physical world, and argued that there exists 'a hierarchy of scientific subjects with sociology'. In other words, that both the social and natural worlds are made up of objective facts, which are independent of human individuals, waiting to be discovered (Dyson & Brown, 2006). The emphasis of the positivist paradigm is based upon the understanding that there exist fundamental laws governing the natural sciences. For this reason, Bryant & Christopher (1985) clarify positivism to consider that:

'Genuine knowledge can only be founded on sensory experience, such as knowledge emanating from the postulation of theories through precise scientific methods, and that this acquired knowledge should be confined to the natural, physical, and material worlds'.

(Bryant & Christopher, 1985: 65)

Extrapolating from this argument, Crossan (2003) explains that all true knowledge comes from individual observation of objective reality. These observations then become 'true knowledge', as they are considered objective, value free, and most importantly measurable. He goes on to suggest that only knowledge obtained through objective observable reality should be used to generate a hypothesis that can be tested, thereby allowing explanations of the laws governing the social world to be assessed. Consistently, Richie and Lewis (2005) state that positivism makes a clear distinction between scientific statements and normative statements which can never be confirmed by the objectivity of the senses, and should therefore be rejected as credible knowledge. By prioritising the ambition of generating theory, positivism entails elements of a deductive approach that provides a basis for understanding the laws of natural sciences within an inductive strategy (Crotty, 2003).

The dismissal of subjective evidence highlights a sharp distinction between research and theory. For Bryman, Bell & Teevan (2009: 38), the role of positivist research is 'to test theories and to provide materials for the development of laws'. For this reason, social phenomenon such as class, politics, society, communities and so forth, are not amenable to positivist social research because they are not considered genuinely scientific by positivist observational standards.

The idea that some aspects of social theory are not amenable to the rigours of positivism does not sit comfortably with Kuhn (1996). He argues that the connections between social theory and research carry the implication that it is possible to conduct social research in a manner not influenced by positivist concepts. Nevertheless, the caveat for him is that epistemological theory cannot be easily defended due to the greater or more objective status that is given to the actual and physical observation of experience, rather than to the theoretical concepts of them (ibid.).

Notwithstanding the existence of an epistemological hierarchy, which Smith (2009) describes in particular detail, Lincoln & Guba, (1985) criticise the canons of the positivism in its ability to study social reality. For them, the types of situations that social research is likely to focus reflect individual lived experience. As lived experience is seen to be externally determined 'beyond the cause or company of natural sciences' (ibid: 35), they state that individual perceptions of reality cannot easily be observed, or explained in a purely objective and normative manner. On this basis, it could be argued that the objective truth about the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care, for instance, cannot be consistently confirmed by the senses alone (Reichardt & Rallis, 1994). The primary reason for this is that different experiences may hold different meanings for different people (Giddens, 1991).

Bryman, Bell, & Teevan (2009) point out that when social science has attempted to take the methods that are generally seen as being commensurate with positivist traditions, and applied them to a pursuit of understanding in social reality, their results are often heavily criticised for epistemological and methodological inadequacy. Positivist studies on lived experience (see Muntaner, Lynch, & Davey

Smith, 2001; Mahutga, 2008) for example, have also been criticised for lacking adequate control. Accordingly, Dyson & Brown (2006) explain that social scientists who value the importance of understanding lived experience have developed an awareness of the individual differences associated with reality, including the variance in human thoughts, feelings, and actions. The move away from complete objectivity includes a general recognition that a positivist hypothesis is not practical to the explanation and experience of social phenomena (Smith, 2009).

As the aim of this study was to gain insights into the experience of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children, these limitations were recognised and made subject to critical reflection. As experience is thought to be relative to each individual (Goffman, 1959), and specific to their own individual social context (Giddens, 1991), it was understood that a Traveller or Gypsy's experience may include differences in thoughts, feelings, behaviours, mores, and aspects socialisation. As the positivist approach may not be able to deal with the potential variance of results (Thyer, 2009), it was seen as an unreliable paradigm for the attainment of the aims and objectives of this study.

A further limitation, related to the measurement of Travellers and Gypsies experience, exists as individual experience cannot be explored, or understood, in terms of positivist scientific statements or quantitative form. For many social scientists such as Sartre (1957), Goffman (1959), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Husserl (1982), Giddens (1991), Crotty (2003), and Heidegger (2005), human experience is not objective, but rather embodied in the behaviour, feelings and perceptions which include the attitudes and lived influences which positivism rejects. In order to understand these factors then, what was required instead, was an approach that gave richly detailed descriptions of the experiences by analysis of their own subjective words, rather than by way of objective investigation. The paradigm explored in response to these concerns was post positivism.

3.2.2 Post-positivism

Post-positivism is a term given to a contrasting epistemology to positivism. Bryman and Becker (2005) explain that it includes the views of writers who are critical of a

positivist approach to the study of the social world. According to Martin (2000), the emergence of post-positivism found expression in the advocacy of Weber (1947), who found value in the opportunity of *Verstehen*, literally an individual's understanding and articulation of the world in which they live.

By placing importance on individual experience, post-positivism requires research practice to exercise and demonstrate ethical considerations as key drivers in the pursuit of data and its collection (Schratz & Walker, 1995: 125). Its inception as a credible research paradigm, which promotes ethical practice, shifted away from the positivist position, and in doing so, accused it of objectifying the people who it aimed to study (Martin, 2000). The resultant emphasis on humanistic post-positivist principles adequate for working with people in a way that included their social and psychological value, led to a philosophy that requires all research, its procedures, techniques, and methods, to always be subject to ethical scrutiny and critical reflection (Bailey, 1994).

One of the most common forms of post-positivism is a philosophy called critical realism. According to Bhaskar (2010), critical realism asserts that there exists a reality independent of human thinking or scientific measurement. The main difference from positivism is that critical-realism recognises that all human observations are fallible; therefore, not all theoretical principles derived from them are credible (Bailey, 1994). In other words, critical-realism is *critical* of the ability to claim knowledge with self-assured certainty.

Other post-positivist theories include constructivism (Twomey Fosnot, 2005) and interpretivism (Crotty, 2003). The former believes that knowledge is constructed based on human perception, whilst the latter refers to approaches emphasising knowledge based upon an on-going participation in social and cultural life (Richie & Lewis, 2005).

Reflecting on the advantages of each approach led to the adoption of a post-positivist approach that could focus on the subjective accounts of Travellers and Gypsies experiences. By selecting this paradigm, the study became more concerned with experiential accounts, and less concerned about 'testing preconceived

hypotheses' (Creswell, 2009: 67). Whilst this approach squared with the recommendations for active consultation proposed through social policy (DfES, 2006; 2007), its selection revealed a further implication in the need to adopt a suitably aligned methodology.

3.3 Choosing a Methodology

Smith (2009) suggests that there exists a diverse range of research strategies which align with post-positivist paradigms. The three research strategies evaluated for this study consisted of grounded theory, ethnography, and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). At the outset, all three were considered relevant to the study and the overarching paradigm given their collective aim to understand experience. However, the need to apply one strategy posed a number of pragmatic challenges that related to the strengths and limitations of each. In order to make the processes that led to this decision transparent, a discussion regarding the decision to use IPA in preference to grounded theory and ethnography is now given.

3.3.1 Grounded Theory

The primary ambition of grounded theory is to develop theoretical conclusions that are based upon data, systematically obtained through 'social' research (Glaser, 1978). Its development, Strauss & Corbin (1990) argue, was representative of the social reaction against positivism, or 'Grand Theory', which Mills (1959) uses to refer disapprovingly to those social theories that are applied at very abstract or conceptual levels of understanding.

Glaser & Strauss (1967) explain that a core feature of grounded theory relates to sampling procedures. According to this framework, sampling is not usually determined at the beginning of the study, but is directed by an emerging theory that is discovered in the data. This is known as 'theoretical sampling', which supports the process of data collection for generating theory. In this case the researcher 'jointly collects, codes and analyses the data and decides what data to collect next, and where to find it, in order to develop the theory as it emerges' (Glaser, 1978: 38).

An additional feature of grounded theory pertains to analysis. Applied to this study, it would require data collected from Travellers and Gypsies to be analysed simultaneously alongside on-going data collection. According to Denscombe (2007), this would involve utilising particular coding procedures, which normally begin with open coding, and the application of the constant comparative methods. If applied, it would also involve the comparison of experience by identifying emerging patterns and themes in the data.

Comparison, as a further key theme in grounded theory, explores differences and similarities across, and within the data, which in turn provide the guidelines, or indicators, for collecting additional data. This process, according to Glaser (1978), then facilitates the identification of concepts, which could be used to progress from descriptive representations of lived experiences, to more conceptual analysis that account for the relationships between and across reported experiences. For this process to be effective, Glaser & Strauss (1967), call for a more sophisticated coding technique that is commonly referred to as 'axial coding'. This method involves the process of abstraction at a theoretical level. Once achieved, findings may be seen to have theoretical significance, particularly as they can be traceable through the data. This point withstanding, a theory is usually only considered valid if the researcher has reached the point of 'theoretical saturation' (ibid.). This involves the continuation of research until no new evidence emerges from subsequent data. It must also, as Glaser (1978) explains, be based on the assumption that a full interrogation of the data has been conducted, and negative cases, where found, have been identified and accounted for.

The clear focus on a theoretical development positions grounded theory as a potentially useful strategy, not least because the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care as children has been hitherto ignored in the literature. However, as the primary aim of this study involved an endeavour to understand experience, rather than to provide an explanatory framework for it, grounded theory was rejected. Despite the advantages presented, this study required a methodology which allowed the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies to be explored first, before explaining them through theoretical abstraction.

3.3.2 Ethnography

The second research strategy to be considered was ethnography. According to Hammersley & Atkinson (2007), this approach is best applied when the primary aim of a study is the immersion in a particular social setting. This level of engagement is used to gain more knowledge of the mores, beliefs, and practices of specific cultural groups. In order to apply this strategy to this study, Okley (1983), an avid supporter of ethnography, explains that the researcher would be required to interact with Travellers and Gypsies in their own social settings during the study period.

Ethnography emphasises the importance of the researcher's immersion in the lives of Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care as children through sustained fieldwork and observation (Denscombe, 2007). It would require the researcher to interpret the data, resulting from people's viewpoints, and represent them by using Traveller and Gypsy language and terminology (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). For this reason, data collection methods call on participant observations, and in-depth interviews, which LeCompte & Preissle (1993) describe as being time-consuming as they depend upon prolonged interaction with the subject. However, for Hammersley & Atkinson (2007), the benefits gained from this approach enable a cultural description that can only be achieved from a lengthy period of intensive study, usually enabled by the researcher living within peoples social settings.

To be effective, Bogdewic (1992) suggests that investigators using this methodology must observe and participate in at least some of the activities that occur in that social setting. Applied to this study, ethnography may focus on how the experience of living in care as a child might have affected the way in which people live, and how they interrelate within the wider Traveller community. In light of the necessity to spend long periods of time observing the potential effect of these factors, it was decided the development of safe social work research could not be easily guaranteed based on the notion of passive or unwitting acquiescence, which is so often associated with ethnographic works (Butler, 2002; Denscombe, 2007). Furthermore, it was understood that the on-going presence of a researcher in the lives of people who had lived in care as children could procure undue levels of stress resulting from the

intensive observations, and the assumption that childhood experiences may somehow be affecting a person in a way that could be observed through on-going social interaction. As this hypothesis could not be easily justified for the purpose of an ethically sound research proposal, ethnography was rejected as a potential research strategy. This systematic appraisal, and subsequent elimination of ethnography and grounded theory, led to the eventual selection of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

3.4 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA is the name given to the research strategy developed by Jonathan Smith, Professor of Psychology at Birkbeck University of London. IPA is the study of human existence and the way in which things are perceived as they appear in the consciousness (Smith, 1996; 2004; 2007). Applied in this study, it was used to focus a deep understanding of an individual's perception of the care system.

IPA draws on Husserl's, (1982; 1999) phenomenological perception but develops this further by including the works of Heidegger (2005), Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Sartre (1957). Separate to Husserlian phenomenology, IPA argues that it is important to view each person taking part in research as being embedded, and immersed, in a world of objects and relationships, language, culture, projects and concerns. By including this view, Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) explain that in contrast to the phenomenological practices of Husserl (1982):

'IPA enables the research study to move away from the descriptive commitments and transcendental interests towards a more interpretative, and worldly position, with a specific focus on understanding the perspective of the individual's involvement in the lived world'

(Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 5)

Thus, through the work of Husserl, (1982), Heidegger (2005), Merleau-Ponty (1962), and Sartre (1957), the existential aspects of IPA provide a basis for the development of a structure, or Gestalt, of a particular experience (Smith, 1996; 2004). The

methods for achieving this will be developed over the course of the following discussion, but for now, the central aim is to demonstrate how the work of four major existentialist philosophers, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, provide the basis for this study, thus demonstrating why IPA was best suited to overall research aims and objectives.

3.4.1 Husserlian phenomenology

The driving principle of IPA, owes its life to a German born mathematician and philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). In spite of being criticised as an often ‘serious and inaccessible philosopher’, (Vandenberg, 1997), Husserl’s progressive approach to scientific knowledge laid the foundations for disclosing presuppositions about human experience and conceptualising their invariant elements (Macann, 2008). Husserl is most famous for rejecting the positivist orientation towards empiricism in a continuing and continuously revised effort to develop a method for grounding scientific knowledge in subjective truth (Sokolowski, 2000). According to Moustakas, (1994: 24) and Moran (2000: 65), Husserl saw positivism as ‘second order knowledge’, which he believed depends ultimately on a first order subjective understanding of lived experience. He was critical of science’s privileged knowledge claims, and argued that engaging with the ‘*lebenswelt*’, or lifeworld, of an individual is the only method capable of providing the experiential grounding of what may be called the objective scientific world (Husserl, 1982).

Langdrige (2008) suggests that the phenomenological aspect of IPA owes its fruitfulness to the far-reaching and profound consequences that Husserl drew from Franz Brentano’s theoretical perception of ‘intentionality’. Here intentionality is not being used in the usual sense, by ‘*intending to visit the dentist*’, for example. Instead, it refers to the fact that whenever a person is conscious, or aware, they are always conscious, or aware, of something (Husserl, 1970; 1982).

3.4.2 Intentionality

In *The idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl (1999) introduces intentionality as a correlation between the principles of noesis and noema, which can be illustrated by

example of the research focus. Consider, the scenario of a Traveller girl seeing a children's home for the first time and feeling scared by it. Husserl would argue that when this young person saw the children's home for the first time an intentional relationship, facilitated by the process of noesis and noema, occurred. Noesis, the actual experience of seeing of a children's home, led to noema, the feeling of being scared.

The correlation between noesis and noema is important for IPA. According to Husserlian phenomenology, before the girl perceived the children's home, it was nothing more than a meaningless object in the world; a simple organised pile of ceramic materials. However, when the girl saw it, and ascribed meaning to it, it ceased to be meaningless, and became a real object in the world with real value. The reality, or essence, of the children's home only became known to her through her perception of it. Consistent with this example, Husserl (1999) argues that all objects in the world are meaningless until they are given status through the individual interpretations of the individual consciousness. Once the object has been given meaning, intentionality is used to describe the relationship between a person and the object that they perceive.

An important aspect of intentionality is the fact, like in most correlations, the relationship that the girl may have towards the children's home is reciprocal, and therefore susceptible to change (Husserl, 1970; 1982; 1999; Langdrige, 2008; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Therefore, if the girl was asked to describe the experience of seeing the children's home a number of years after the event, Husserlian phenomenology would reason that whilst she may be able to recall a memory of it, the shape of the building, the number of windows, the colour of the front door, and so on, she may only be able to accurately remember how it made her feel when she first perceived it, through a series of well-chosen and considered questions. The formulation of these questions and the interest in original noesis noema experience is the precise focus of IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Intentionality in IPA

The concept of intentionality and the relationship between the noetic and noematic correlation, determined a predominant interest in finding a means by which a Traveller or Gypsy person might be enabled, by a researcher, to identify the essential qualities, or essence of their own experiences of living in care (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). However, the introduction of a researcher, in the understanding and representation of Traveller and Gypsy's experience, introduces an additional aspect of IPA.

Husserl assumes that intentionality is not only correlated but it also unique to the individual observer (Moustakas, 1994). Whilst the Traveller girl from the above example may be enabled to describe her experience, intentionality holds that the researcher would naturally develop his or her own intentionality towards her response (Husserl, 1999). Whilst listening to her experience, the researcher may naturally begin to create a unique noetic picture of what her experience was like, and consequently develop a noematic interpretation of it (Bernet, Kern, & Marbach, 1999). Husserl's (1982) writings warn that if this occurs, the girl's description of seeing the children home could lose its significance because of the biases attached to her experience by a researcher.

In an attempt to reduce this risk, Ricoeur *et al.*, (2007) explain that Husserl developed a number of '*anti-intentionality*' principles. He believed that if these were implemented with due care and reflective eminence, a researcher might be able to understand the essence of another's experience, away from the pressures and prejudices of their own noematic interpretation (Husserl, 1999). The foremost theoretical principle that Husserl describes to achieve this type of objectivity is known as the epochè.

3.4.3 The Epochè

The epochè is used to describe the process by which a researcher may be enabled to ensure that both they, and the person describing an experience, can abstain from applying any presuppositions, or preconceived ideas that might distort the essential

features of it (Bernet, Kern & Marbach, 1999; Langdrige, 2008). The core aim of epochè is doubt (Ricoeur *et al.*, 2007), not a complete doubt about everything that is in the world, but a doubt about the natural attitude or biases that may influence everyday knowledge (Siles i Borrás, 2010). Although a common misconception, it is important to appreciate that the epochè does not mean that the taken for granted world must disappear. Instead, Moran (2002) explains that Husserl wanted the epochè to enable the researcher, and the person taking part in the research, to be as objective as possible (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Most existential phenomenologists agree that the epochè is not an easy thing to achieve (Moustakas, 1994), and some writers question if it can be accomplished at all (Smith, 2009). Nevertheless, the challenge of the epochè, for both researcher, and the person describing the experience, is to let the things that are being described appear in their own consciousness as if it was for the first time (Langdrige, 2008). Although Husserl describes many methods to achieve the epochè, the majority, particularly in his later writings, are philosophically abstract and often contradictory. Consequently, variations in phenomenological methodology flourish as seen in the works of Ashworth, (1996; 2006), Ashworth & Ashworth, (2003), Todres, (2005; 2007), Halling, Leifer, & Rowe (2006), Van Manen (2007), Smith (2007) and Dalhberg, Dalhberg & Nyström (2008), although most adhere reasonably closely to Giorgi's framework based on the reduction and imaginative variation commonly known as the 'eidetic reduction' (Giorgi, 1989; 1994; 1997; 2008a; 2008b).

3.4.4 Eidetic reduction

Many writers have tried to describe how eidetic reduction works in practice (Moran, 2002; Ricoeur *et al.*, 2007; Bernet, Kern & Marbach, 1999; Siles i Borrás, 2010), but the one generally accepted technique is known as 'free imaginative variation' (Giorgi, 2008a). It is widely held that the purpose of this technique aims to enable people taking part in research to consider different possibilities of their original noetic experience, and epochè any potential influences that may have distorted this over time (Husserl, 1999). If achieved, IPA believes that the original intentionality of a

person's consciousness towards objects in the world can be understood and then communicated to others (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

For a researcher, the preliminary aspect of eidetic reduction requires the careful consideration of the essence of an object in the world so to be able to bracket his or her own presuppositions towards them (Husserl, 1999). If this technique were applied to the example of asking the Traveller girl to describe her initial impression of a children's home, Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009: 14) suggest that the researcher would do well to epochè their own perceptions of a children's home. If achieved, they would be better able to attend an interview with certain openness, ready to learn from the reported experience. By isolating their own beliefs, or prior knowledge, the researcher can then move towards the epochè demonstrated by the questions that they ask (Langdrige, 2008). Using 'free imaginative variation' an example of a typical research question, acknowledging epochè, may be: "*What made the children's home a children's home and not a hospital?*" The aim of this question would be to help establish the essential features of the children's home, that is, to establish its essence from the viewpoint of the person with that experience.

Through the process of eidetic reduction, the researcher achieves an epochè of his or her own preconceived idea of a children's home. By asking how it was different to a hospital, the person's own consciousness of the children's home can be explored. Husserl (1999) argues that this process is also likely to attend to what meaning the children's home holds in the lived experience, and what the practical and emotional features of it are. The question, "*what is the difference between the feeling of being safe and the feeling of being scared?*" is one further example of how this could be achieved. Although the researcher may think they know what the difference between these experiences means for themselves, this question shows that they are not assuming the difference in the unique lives of others (Macann, 2008).

This clear focus upon experience demonstrates Husserl's influence on IPA. Another influential philosopher was Martin Heidegger. His work was concerned with establishing the truth about the ontology of human existence.

3.4.5 Heideggerian phenomenology

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (2005) sought to examine the objects that exist in the world. In terms of the example of the Traveller girl, Heidegger would argue that phenomenological inquiry would become erroneous if it only sought to focus on the essence of her conscious experience. Instead, he believed that her 'relatedness-to-the-world' is a fundamental part of the phenomenological constitution and is therefore an essential feature of interpretation. Consequently, Heideggerian phenomenology reasons that experience must be seen in an historical and cultural context (Morran, 2002).

While this approach is concerned less with the universal discovery of the essence the girl's consciousness of the children's home, it is concerned more with interpreting the meaning of it from a position that is always grounded within cultural understanding (Langdrige, 2008). By taking this stance, Heidegger's approach problematises the ability of phenomenology to adopt a 'presuppositionless' view, and insists that the systematic inquiry must be more focused on a person-centred position in relation to whatever it hopes to understand (ibid: 35). This move away from the Husserlian belief that experience can be classified through perception (Heidegger, 2005), awareness and consciousness (Moustakas, 1994), introduces the first concept of Heidegger's approach to phenomenology, namely that of Dasein.

3.4.6 Dasein

Dasein represents Heidegger's preferred term for the uniquely situated quality of people in the world. For Heidegger, a person is thrown into a pre-existing world of people and objects, language and culture, and the aim of phenomenology is to understand how experiences are created within socio-economic systems that may include amongst others, poverty, racism, disablement, marginalisation, homophobia, patriarchy, social exclusion, domestic violence, social control and so forth. By affording primacy to Dasein, Heideggerian phenomenology would assume that these factors have a direct impact on the lives of people in the world and shape and inform their construction, or intentionality towards objects within it.

If the example of the children's home were considered again, Heideggerian phenomenology would suggest that a person from the settled community, who, through the process of socialisation, believes that all people should live in a brick house, may interpret the elements that make up the object of the children's home with some sense of familiarity. They may recognise the doors, the windows, the roof, the garden and so on, and, because of past noematic experiences, they may associate the object known as a children's home with their intentional consciousness of a house. Conversely, a Traveller girl, again through the process of socialisation, may be less able to associate the object known as a children's home with their intentional consciousness of a home. In fact, the object known as a children's home may hold other significant meanings for her because of the external social systems that have maintained the physical separation between Travelling and settled communities throughout history (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009)

For Heidegger, these factors become manifest in an original emotional and physical response of being scared (Heidegger, 2005). For this girl, the children's home may represent wider experiences that reinforce her disenfranchised position as a Traveller. Therefore, in order to understand the impact of this, Heideggerian phenomenology may also ask the person "*What did the children's home mean to you as a Traveller?*" By focusing on the self as a Traveller, this question acknowledges that the children's home and the girls' self-concept as a Traveller are inextricably linked. By presenting this type of question, IPA is able to use this developing understanding to expand areas of knowledge that may otherwise be hidden behind the original commitment for Husserlian phenomenology (Smith, 1996).

A further feature of IPA expands the focus on a person's cognitive and social intentionality towards an object in the world by moving towards the physicality of an experience of it. The most notable contributors to this development are Jean-Paul Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

3.4.7 Sartrean phenomenology

Jean-Paul Sartre (1957) emphasised the empty nature of consciousness in *Being and Nothingness*. For him, there are no essential qualities of consciousness and

human freedom itself. In this view, humans are not objects, things, to be studied and measured as subjects are measured in the natural sciences (Morran, 2002). Sartre's (1957: 26) famous expression 'existence comes before essence' corroborates the Husserlian noesis noema correlation and underlines the phenomenological premise that humans are always becoming conscious of objects in the world.

As with Heidegger, Sartre would emphasise that the Traveller girl being asked to describe the object known as a children's home is situated within her own social and cultural context. However, he also argues that whilst she is an individual that is self-conscious, she also seeks meaning as she engages with the world. Similar to Heidegger's notion of Dasein, Sartre describes how consciousness is not owned or predetermined, but is instead being constantly created and recreated through lived experience (ibid.). Whilst the Traveller girl, on seeing the children's home for the first time may feel scared by it, Sartrean existentialism would argue that she has a power to fight against that feeling (Sartre, 1957). His theory suggests that the girl is in a position to make sense of her experience, consider the aspects of it, and potentially overcome the anxieties that result within the facticity of her own existence, literally those external social factors that exist to maintain structural discrimination. Thus as her experiential noematic relationship with the children's home develops, so would her sense making intentionality of it. This rationalisation is an additional feature of IPA and forms a core feature in the determination of experience (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Applied to this example, the Sartrean question might be summarised as "*How did you overcome the experience of being scared?*" By responding to this question, the person's motivation to change could then be seen to demonstrate the nature of her consciousness, which Sartre argues is a driving desire for her being (Sartre, 1957). If explored fully, Sartrean existentialist phenomenology could be used to understand more about the experiences that led up to, and preceded the experience of seeing the children's home, and thus understand more about the values that the girl thereby projected onto it (Langdridge, 2008). Even though the reiteration of Heidegger's emphasis on the worldliness of the human experience is significant to IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), Sartre extends this by developing the point in the context of

personal and social relationships and arguing that human experience is contingent to social relationships. Consequently, while IPA will usually focus on a range of differing topics, this type of questioning recognises that people are engaged with objects in the world that embody the interpersonal, affective and the moral nature of those encounters in a similar way to that explored by Merleau-Ponty.

3.4.8 Merleau-Ponty

Merleau-Ponty was a French existentialist who shared Husserl's and Heidegger's commitments to understanding the experiences associated with 'being-in-the-world' but developed this to include the position of the physical self (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

In terms of trying to understand the way in which a Traveller girl may describe her experiences, Merleau-Ponty would use questions in such a way that emphasises the role that her physical perception plays in her understanding of the world as well as her engagement with it (Langdrige, 2008). This acknowledges the fact that people are unique, and as such see themselves as different from everything else (Morran, 2002). Merleau-Ponty rationalises this by arguing that all people are engaged in looking at the world, rather than being subsumed within it. As a result, in order to understand a person's intentionality, he focuses on the 'embodied relationship to the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:106).

For Merleau-Ponty, the intentional quality or essence of an experience of the children's home would always be personal to the person who perceives it (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). He argued that no two people could interpret objects in the world in exactly the same way (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Consequently, the girls feeling of being scared would be the significant focus of the experience of seeing the children's home as it represents a unique interpretation. The consciousness of the girl describing her experience is embodied in her world as Heidegger and Sartre would suggest, but equally, for Merleau-Ponty her body is also infused with consciousness.

Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) explain that for all IPA researchers, the view that the body is the fundamental character of an experience is crucial. By applying this

rationale, IPA is concerned with the physical responses that are attached to an experience, and the descriptions that are used to communicate them (Langdrige, 2008). This requires the place of the body to have a central element in experience. According to this principle, IPA may then be used to demonstrate this commitment through the question *“What did the experience of being scared feel like?”* Although IPA recognises that a person’s physical lived experience may never be entirely captured or absorbed, it believes that physicality must not be ignored or overlooked if any attempt to understanding the lived experiences of others is to be made possible (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

3.4.9 The impact on of phenomenological thought on IPA

Husserl’s work establishes, first of all, the importance and relevance of a focus on experience and perception. In developing Husserl’s work further, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, contribute to a view of the person as being embedded in a world of objects and relationships, language and culture, projects and concerns (Langdrige, 2008). They move away from the descriptive interests of Husserl towards a more interpretative and worldly position with a focus on understanding the directedness of human involvement in the lived world. Something which is particular to everyone, but which is a property of a relationship to the world rather than to the self in isolation (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Thus, through the work of these writers, the complex understanding of Travellers and Gypsies experience in public care invokes a lived process, an unfurling of perspectives and meanings which are unique to each person and embodied in their unique relationship to the world (ibid.).

3.5 IPA sampling assumptions

The focus on a person’s uniqueness means that IPA takes a critical stance towards a nomothetic enquiry (Smith, 1996). A nomothetic enquiry is one where data is collected, transformed and analysed in a manner which prevents the retrieval or analysis of the individual who provided the data in the first place (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This is typically the stance taken in positivist measurements, which include aggregation and inferential statistics, and which aim to turn social phenomena into numbers (Bryant & Christopher, 1985). Mainstream social work

research used to, and to some extent still does, subscribe to the nomothetic enquiry (Shaw, 2010), yet, both epistemological and practical considerations within IPA point towards a modification of this approach.

Smith (2009) argues that a crucial concern is how to improve the chances that social work research will be used, since if it is not, there is no point in doing it. Over the past two decades, social work research development has suggested that the nomothetic model can be inadequate since the facts do not speak for themselves (Bhaskar, 2010). In these cases, where the findings of research do not bear a single obvious interpretation, or contain vague implications for practice, they can be overlooked. If they are overlooked, they remain useless (Smith, 2009). Since IPA is understood to be a useful tool to uncover the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children, it assumes that a collective experience is not really a property of one individual per se (Smith, 1996). However, it does believe that a Traveller or Gypsy could offer a personally unique perspective of their relationship to, or involvement in, their experience of the care system, thus speaking directly to social work practice. Consequently, IPA is amenable to an idiographic approach which has important ramifications on the sample size and the tenets of generalisability (Rafael, Engel & Schutt, 2005).

Ideography refers to those methods, which highlight the unique elements of the individual subjectivist phenomenon. IPA adopts an idiographic qualitative approach for theoretical sampling procedures, which attempt to understand the lived experiences of a small number of people rather than generating survey data from a large sample (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This demonstrates IPA's concern with the particular, and the aim to reveal something about the experience of each individual, whilst also being able to say something in detail about the whole. On this basis, Smith, Flowers & Larkin, (2009) describe that IPA's commitment to the particular operates at two levels. First, there is a commitment to detail, and depth of analysis, secondly is the focus on individuality:

'IPA is committed to understanding how particular experiential phenomena (an event, process, or relationship) have been

understood from the perspective of particular people, in a particular context.'

(Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 29)

The aim of IPA therefore is not to generalise about larger populations, but rather to arrive at more general claims cautiously, and only after the analysis of individual cases based on a relatively small sample size (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Smith (2004: 42) cites Warnock (1987) as having made the point that by using phenomenology, IPA should be seen using a sample that enables the researcher to 'delve deeper into the particular' in such a way that enables research to 'take us closer to the universal' which, he argues, can only really be achieved with a small group of people.

The final aspect of IPA is analysis. The way in which IPA aims to understand a topic with depth and clarity is through a systematic application of hermeneutics. The application of hermeneutics within IPA is developed in the following section.

3.6 Hermeneutics

The interpretation of research data operates largely within the framework of positivism (Dilthey, Makkreel, & Rodi, 1989). It tends to presuppose, for instance, that data is simply 'out there' in the world, essentially independent of its inquirers. Consistent with this, Caldwell (1994) suggests that one's perception of data is considered separate from the data itself, and the task of literary interpretation is often orientated to speaking about the data itself. The tremendous fruitfulness of such a framework shows itself in the highly developed ability of established methods of data analysis (Smith, 2010). However, IPA offers an alternative position.

IPA is firmly rooted in the fact that information provided has a human voice, a voice that must somehow be brought to life in textual form (Smith, 2004). For IPA, the interpretation of information is regarded, not primarily as objects of analysis, but as humanly created texts which speak (Palmer, 1969). As such, Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) argue that IPA should always be stamped with a human touch; the word itself suggests this, for IPA is always the understanding of the human

consciousness (Smith & Osborn, 2003). To use the word 'data' in reference within this study therefore blurs an important distinction, for one should see lived experience, not as data, but as a unique 'testimonial' (Thiselton, 2009). As rigorous research needs to identify a method specifically appropriate to decipher the human imprint on another person's testimonial (Warnock, 1987), this deciphering process, this understanding of meaning, is achieved in IPA with hermeneutics.

Friedrich Schleiermacher was one of the first to write about hermeneutics in a generic form (Gadamer & Linge, 2008). According to Palmer (1969), hermeneutics is the study of the cognitive processes of the author. Used in IPA, hermeneutics requires information about a person's experience to be collected in such a way so that the speaker's words can be transcribed, or written down accurately (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The importance of being able to analyse written text, highlights IPA's hermeneutic commitment to the grammatical and the psychological aspects contained within the transcript provided by the author, or speaker (Seebohm, 2004).

The relationship between grammatical and psychological interpretation, recognises that people impress a unique form of meaning upon the information that they provide through an interview, or documentary accounts (Thiselton, 2009). In *Ontology: the hermeneutics of facticity*, Heidegger (1999) explains that the analysis of a transcript, or written narrative, can demonstrate the conventions and expectations of a person's mores that enable a clearer understanding of their own lived experience based on the language that they use. By engaging in this type of analysis, Heidegger (1999:14) suggests that the researcher should not 'separate themselves from people describing an experience'. This follows the phenomenological claim that through the shared state of being, a person's lived experience can be articulated so that a mutual understanding can be achieved (Langdridge, 2008).

In its application to the example of the Traveller girl, a shared understanding of the experience is obtained by focusing on the linguistic and psychological aspects of her narrative. This enables the researcher to identify the specific words, patterns, or metaphors within a text that make this experience real (Thiselton, 2009). For this

very reason, hermeneutics provides an important tool for IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Hermeneutics in IPA

Applied to IPA, a successful interpretation is one which is principally based on a reading from within the terms of the text, which the researcher has produced. Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) believe that the process of analysis is geared to learning both about the person providing the account and the subject matter of that account. Thus, IPA requires a combination of phenomenological and hermeneutic insights (Smith & Osborn, 2003). It can be phenomenological in attempting to get as close as possible to the personal experience of Travellers and Gypsies, but recognises that this inevitably becomes an interpretative endeavour for both the speaker and researcher (Warnock, 1987). In this way, IPA become rather like a two-stage interpretative process, or a double hermeneutic (Gadamer & Linge, 2008). Travellers and Gypsies are trying to make sense of their experiences, whilst the researcher is trying to make sense of what is being said, all managed through the process of eidetic reduction (Seifert, 1987).

It could be argued that the analytical assumptions on which IPA are based share similarity to those used in discourse analysis (Johnstone, 2002) and narrative inquiry (Wells, 2011). However, hermeneutics offers primacy in this study as it is concerned with an emphasis towards the understanding of conscious experience (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith, 2004; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In contrast to common analytical theories which compartmentalise a testimonial in accordance to something that is already known (Caldwell, 1994), the hermeneutic understanding of a person's experience includes the wider context in which the transcript or written narrative was originally produced (Palmer, 1969; Heidegger, 1999) and understands that this should not be weighed against current knowledge. As this study is involved in trying to 'acquire the essence' (Seifert, 1987: 69) of what it means to be a Traveller or Gypsy living in care, the phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic aspects of the methodology aim to enable a full and rich description 'that inspires awe and

astonishment in the reader' (Moustakas, 1995:125). For this to be effective, testimonials must be presented in their own terms.

In light of IPA's commitment to interpret the way in which people make sense of lived experiences it is being used with increasing frequency within the disciplines of health, education, social work and criminology. A short overview of the breadth of IPA in its various applications is explored below.

3.7 Research that uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Dallos & Nokes (2011) used IPA to map the experience of fathers following the birth of a child. Implementing an IPA methodology, they affirmed the constructs of transition in revealing powerful emotional themes regarding loss and difficulties with adjustment. These are explored within the context of contemporary fathering, relational patterns, and male identity. The findings suggest that men's experience of distress may be linked to prevalent yet contradictory discourse directly linked to expectations about their roles following childbirth. They also suggest the clinical importance of this area, as men's well-being appears to influence that of the mother and baby.

In the *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, Judge *et al.*, (2010) use IPA to understand the experiences of people with sensory impairments who no longer meet the criteria for day care. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 adults and the resulting transcripts subjected to hermeneutic analysis. Five themes which emerged from the analysis showed that people placed great value on participation in daytime activity and on attendance at local authority-run day centres. They also revealed that people wished to remain active well into old age and wished to contribute to their local communities.

Using IPA in a study with an adolescent Gypsy male, Meek (2007) presents a case study to explore the experience of serving a sentence in a Young Offender Institute and of the transition from custody back into the community. The case study reveals that issues of culture and identity are of particular relevance when seeking to understand the experience of a Gypsy adolescent serving a custodial sentence. This

is partially demonstrated with the tension between perceived autonomy and the role of social factors. These themes are also of importance in exploring desistance from crime after release from prison. Issues surrounding negative attitudes from within the community, the police and the prison are also explored.

Though IPA is being used in a number of social science enquiries, it is not without its critics (Pringle & Drummond, 2011). For them, IPA is too closely related to grounded theory to warrant individualised status.

3.8 Limitations of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Pringle & Drummond (2011) are critical of the reliability and the interpretative nature of IPA. They suggest that there is a high risk of variance in potential interpretation of the themes emerging from the text. This variation, they explain, may cause each reader to interpret findings differently as they themselves are interpreters, and may not accept, or share, the researcher's interpretation (*ibid.*). In addition to this, Finlay (2009) highlights IPA's weakness by suggesting that the discussions and conclusions that emerge from the testimonials may never be credible as a researcher's interpretation of the testimonials may also change over time.

A further criticism of IPA is found in the body of writing concerning grounded theory which accuses IPA of possessing too much flexibility in terms of the overall methodological process (Giles, 2002). Overall, however, IPA shares the commitment of grounded theory in that it is seen to take a broadly inductivist approach to the enquiry (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

In contrast to grounded theory, the researcher believed that IPA was likely to offer a more detailed and nuanced analysis of the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children with clearer 'emphasis on the convergence and divergence' between the testimonies provided (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 202). Although a more constructivist approach was considered to push towards a conceptually explorative study based on a larger sample (Giles, 2002), confidence in the ability to develop the type of sample needed to validate this type of strategy was circumscribed. This concern stemmed from the fact that no accurate details were

available on the numbers of Travellers or Gypsies that may have lived in care at the time of research design. The caveat associated with the choice of IPA, amongst these criticisms, was that IPA was able to include a more constructivist approach, but only after full interpretative analysis.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the relevance and advantages of applying IPA to the study of Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care as children. It achieved this, in part, by evaluating the potential application of grounded theory and ethnography and providing substantiation why these alternative strategies were rejected in favour of IPA. It presented research that has applied IPA, and considered the main criticisms of it within the literature. On reflection of these factors, it was decided that IPA would be the most appropriate research strategy to implement as it stays close to the understanding of lived experience. Before presenting the findings of the study the following chapter will provide details on how IPA guided the systematic enquiry with specific focus on ethics, testimonial collection, and analysis.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a rationale for the choice of philosophical framework, research strategy, and the broad analytical approach that was used throughout this systematic enquiry. This chapter will deal with the more pragmatic issues surrounding testimony collection and the process of analysis.

The discussion on the methods employed throughout this study will be guided with full consideration of ethical practice, including its relationship to research aims and objectives. As the drive for ethically sound research was seen to permeate all aspects of the methodology, the guiding principles essential in sample development, confidentiality, representation and the inclusion of alternative testimonial collection methods will be explored.

In setting out the overall methodology, this chapter will give a detailed explanation of the process of analysis, and define the way in which this study was able to move from an interview transcript to a position of analytical interpretation all within the tenets of ethical social work research practice. Before describing the methods used to conduct this study, it may be helpful to restate the research question in light of the developments outlined in the previous chapters.

Based on a systematic review of extant literature, the research question emerged from a concern regarding the apparent marginalisation of Travellers and Gypsies in care. The research questions proposed to address this was:

- How do Travellers and Gypsies make sense of their lived experience in public care?
- To what extent do these experiences influence individual self-concepts? and;

- How can an understanding of these experiences inform the way in which social work practice should incorporate the needs of Travellers and Gypsies living in public care?

The previous chapter made clear why IPA was applied as the most suitable strategy to engage with these questions. However, as experience is seen to be unique to the each individual (Giddens, 1991), great care was taken to ensure that the people who felt able to take part in this study did not experience harm because of it. This was the starting point of this study, and it should be made clear that ethical practice represented a centrally permeating concern throughout each stage of the systematic research process described in further detail below.

4.2 Ethical considerations

Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009: 53) describe ethical research practice as a 'dynamic constant process which needs to be monitored throughout testimonial collection and analyses'. Although this study achieved the minimum ethical standards required by the 'start up criteria' of De Montfort University, it was also undertaken with sustained critical reflection, to ensure that it promoted the highest possible ethical standards.

In an attempt to create social research that was rigorous and ethical, Shaw's (2008) recommendation that this cannot be achieved by a superficial appeal to an existing code became very important. For him, general discourse regarding research ethics, such as those proposed by Butler (2002) and Dominelli & Holloway (2008) are guilty of implying an impression that ethical practice is essentialist, and as such, should only be applied to social work research in a fairly standardised and prescriptive way. He suggests that many social work researchers are guilty of restrictive ethical rhetoric usually as a preface to the research task which becomes isolated within a separate subheading as an afterthought to a methods chapter. Shaw (2008: 401) therefore challenges this approach and asserts that ethical considerations can never be said to have been 'sorted and settled', by a tokenistic gesture. Instead, he argues, that the only way to deal with, and demonstrate ethical quality, is to ensure that ethical awareness is 'contextualised in distinct forms' throughout the whole methodology. In recognition of this recommendation, ethical practice was

demonstrated as an entwining coalescence that informed each stage of this systematic enquiry, and ultimately, in the mind of the author, enabled its success.

4.2.1 Designed through consultation

When conducting research with Travellers and Gypsies, Greenfields & Home (2006) advocate the need for an approach that is based on a relationship of collaboration. They call for the inclusion of Travellers and Gypsies as 'co-researchers' or co-producers in the research process, which, in contrast to other forms of social research, should work with people to enable full participation in all operational decision making aspects of the study. If achieved, they advise that the research task can become more ethically sensitive in a way that promotes equality and reduces discrimination.

In light of this advice, the task of establishing the focus of this research began in 2008, twelve months before a research proposal was submitted for ethical appraisal. The work undertaken during the first twelve months of this project, involved visiting (under invitation) Traveller and Gypsy community groups, fairs, conferences and other social events. The purpose of these visits was to engage with members of the Travelling community so that the intended research focus could be explored. On reflection, these visits were essential to establish people's views and opinions on the research idea, including the methods for collecting information. This constant interaction also enabled the development of essential networks with individual community members who took a keen interest in the project.

On a number of occasions, the researcher was required to justify the research aims and objectives. Although no claims could be made with regard to the outcome of the study, it was essential that the project be seen to be working for the community. At the outset, a number of people were highly sceptical about the researcher's intentions and motivations. Echoing McDonagh's (2002) concerns regarding the use of social research, they explained that research was often seen as being oppressive, and for this reason suggested that it gave minimal motivation for participation. Expediently, sustained face-to-face contact during community events provided an

opportunity to allay some of these apprehensions in a way which may not have been possible in any other way.

Reason (1994a; 1994b), Heron (1996), Greenfields & Home (2006) and Levinson (2010), assert that co-produced research usually requires a researcher to work alongside 'co-researchers' who are involved in the research process. For them, the effort to engage the community on the research focus should be just the start. Once these networks have been established, they advocate that the researcher should then design the set procedures that may be used to investigate, analyse, and present the findings in complete and open collaboration. Similarly, Brown & Scullion (2010) suggest that co-production with Travellers and Gypsies needs to be meaningful and mutually acceptable if it is to be ethical.

Reflecting on a systematic review of research that has been co-produced with Travellers and Gypsies, Brown & Scullion (2010) argue that studies which treated community members as research assistants tended to have less success, and fewer benefits, than those studies where community members were able to guide and inform the whole research process. Reflecting specifically on co-production, Temple & Steele (2004) comment:

‘...research has shown that when engagement with communities is based on the long-term, is adequately resourced and leads to observable change, communities become less hard to reach and less antagonistic towards future research. Such positive moves have been based on community development and capacity building rather than on parachuting in outsiders with pre-defined, often inappropriate, measurement tools and objectives’.

(Temple & Steele, 2004: 553).

Clearly, the case being made for co-production here is very strong particularly as it advocates partnership and participation throughout the entire research process. Nevertheless, although a number of researchers that are readily established in the Traveller and Gypsy community champion this approach, including Traveller and

Gypsy community representatives themselves, the full attainment of co-produced research in this project created a significant ethical deliberation particularly in relation to the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. Although Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that confidentiality and anonymity can never be fully guaranteed in a qualitative study, Thompson (2002) states that every researcher should consider the potential risks that a breach of anonymity may produce. For Eisner (1991: 219) the point to be made between these two arguments is that 'researchers have an ethical responsibility to foster fair treatment of those they observe.' For this reason, 'fairness' was of particular concern for this study, aiming as it did, to uncover personal and potentially sensitive information.

Balancing co-production with confidentiality

The necessity for fair treatment became particularly apparent during the first twelve months of the project. The researcher was able to acknowledge, with the support of the developing community network, that people often wished to conceal the fact that they lived in care as children. For this reason, a number of people warned that convincing those who had lived in care as children to talk about their potentially traumatic experiences would be very hard. Some felt that it might be unfeasible. They explained that the apprehension concerning sensitivity and confidentiality would be overriding, potentially consolidated by the researcher's identity as a non-Traveller or Gypsy male.

The fact that the research was not a Traveller or Gypsy presented initial challenges that raised significant barriers in terms trust and acceptance. Rooted in this disquiet was the most commonly reported concern that he would not be able to speak to women in a private interview setting, or ask them questions about private aspects of their lives, as to do so could be perceived as a breach of social mores and personal integrity. A number of community representatives suggested that the researcher would not usually be permitted to speak to a Traveller or Gypsy woman on his own without a chaperone. This concern included certain mores, described by Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009), and reflects the fact that some women might not feel comfortable speaking to a man, particularly a non-Traveller or Gypsy man, on their own. The

potential solution to this dilemma corresponded with the advice of Temple & Steele (2004), Greenfields & Home (2006), Reason (1994a; 1994b) and Heron (1996), which highlighted the need to include Travellers and Gypsies as co-researchers. Accordingly, the study incorporated the assistance of a female Scottish Traveller as a potential interviewer.

In addition to the support gained through sustained collaboration, the co-interviewer became a key component in the research process because she was available to interview people should they have requested it. However, although time was taken to ensure that she was aware of the ethical and methodological requirements of the study, her involvement presented additional ethical concerns of confidentiality and personal privacy. Once more, it was commonly reported that the ethnicity of a Scottish Traveller interviewer, for instance, might exclude non-Scottish Traveller women from taking part in the study. In addition to this, it was explained that some people might feel reluctant to speak about their own private affairs to another Traveller and Gypsy person if they are concerned that their private life may become publicly exposed. In addition to this, personal privacy was particularly important for men who explained that whilst they thought that the research might be useful, it would not attract their involvement if it meant them having to talk to another Traveller or Gypsy person. Therefore, it was clear that they would not become involved in research if it required talking about sensitive and potentially harrowing experiences to another Traveller or Gypsy person due to personal concerns that their confidentiality might be jeopardised. Not only did this concern have far-reaching implications for the interview method, but it also began to problematise the notion of co-production.

The solution to this dilemma was found within reflective ethical deliberation, which, together with the advice of Smith (2009: 156), reasoned that the attainment of co-production should come second to 'ethical considerations which are overriding'. Therefore, rather than doggedly sticking to the notion of co-produced research, a deliberate move was taken to develop the networks established in the early stages of the research to move away from the focus of co-production, and more towards active consultation described by Levinson (2010). By focusing more on the practice of

consultation, the researcher was able to develop a working relationship with a number of 'critical friends' within the Traveller and Gypsy community who were able to offer continued support and advice, but who would not become involved in interviews or analysis. This level of consultation was essential to the overall research design and implementation and squared with the advice of Cicourel (1964), who advocates close and continued consultation with the research population, as it enables the proposed methodology to be scrutinised and tested.

The first outcome of this period of consultation led to a decision that each person who took an interest in taking part in the study would be informed of the choice to be interviewed by the researcher or a female Scottish Traveller. Whilst this opportunity was available, it was decided that the researcher should never assume that individuals would have a particular preference either way. The second outcome concerned research terminology and academic convention. Although the researcher used some academic words unwittingly, they were perceived by some community members as being threatening and potentially dehumanising. Based on this concern, deliberate care was taken to avoid academic jargon when referring to people who lived in care. Consequently, within the information sheet and any corresponding literature, including this thesis, the words 'participant', 'interviewee', 'contributor', 'service user' and so on were supplanted with words such as 'Traveller and Gypsy', 'people', 'person' or 'individual' wherever necessary. It was hoped that the pragmatic decision to omit the words usually associated with academic convention helped to reduce objectification, and increase ethical awareness.

4.2.2 The interviewer effect

In addition to the revised use of academic language, critical reflection was required in terms of the researcher's social identity. During consultation, the researcher attended events in trousers and shirt, carrying a brown briefcase. Once people felt comfortable to talk to him, they accused him of looking like a "*Tax Collector*" and advised that if he intended to visit people's homes to interview them, he would do well to dress down as his formal appearance could be perceived as intimidating and threatening. It was suggested that if he were to enter some sites dressed so formally,

he might also raise serious suspicions within the community as to why he was visiting a particular person. In order to reduce any intimidation caused by his perceived human agency, it was suggested that he exchanged his briefcase for a rucksack, his shoes for trainers and his trousers and shirt for jeans and a t-shirt. By considering these requests, the researcher was able to respect cultural mores and appreciate how his perceived identity may have influenced the ability of people to engage in the research process. For Clandinin & Connelly (1998) the ability of the researcher to reflect on their own human impact on the research process is a core principle of ethical awareness.

4.3 Identifying appropriate ways to gather information

The need to identify an appropriate way of gathering information from people who had lived in care as children shaped the overall aim of the study. The researcher acknowledged Clark's (2006b) advice that people need to feel safe to talk freely about their experiences. Resultant consultation with Travellers and Gypsies, highlighted the importance of selecting testimonial collection methods that enabled flexibility and accessibility. Consequently, it was recognised as problematic for the researcher to assume that a prior set of categories, or a fixed research schedule, could be used to cover all that was relevant to a person's experience of living in care. Similarly, in line with the advice of Clark (2006a) and Dominelli & Holloway (2008), it was seen as being potentially unethical to apply rigidly controlled methods. Instead, consultation with the Traveller and Gypsy community highlighted the need for a high degree of flexibility that could enable people to raise issues spontaneously, rather than through coercion. Consequently it was agreed that questionnaires should be avoided. As an alternative, the use of interviews were seen as the most favourable way to collect information as they could reflect a centralised value on orality as the preferred method of communication. Nevertheless, having chosen this avenue, a decision was needed concerning the type of interview that would be used. Interviews that adhere to IPA framework, for instance, are differentiated either as unstructured, or semi-structured. For this reason an evaluation of the potential variation between them was required.

4.3.1 Unstructured interviews

Bailey (1994) explains that the unstructured interview is non-directed. Accordingly, it places no restriction on the questions asked, and remains completely flexible in the interview process. Being unstructured, Flick (2009) points out that no formal interview schedule should be used as people must be encouraged to give as much, or as little detail as they wish in response to the questions that the interviewer asks. Denscombe (2007) warns that the type of flexibility required to conduct an unstructured interview necessitates established and well-practiced interviewing skills, as well as a core understanding of the topic being discussed. For Grinnell & Unrau (2005), this core knowledge is essential to ensure that the interview remains focused on the task and does not digress from the primary research question. However, although Denscombe's (2007) critical appraisal of the unstructured interviews suggested that this method may have been sufficient flexibility to enable Travellers and Gypsies to describe their own experiences in their own terms, it was not a method chosen for this study.

The unstructured approach was seen to present significant challenges in terms of validity and credibility because as shown by Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte (1999) it cannot easily be applied consistently by a researcher and the co-interviewer. The fact that this method could have been used by two people at two separate time, created a concern within the consultation group that the focus of each interview may not be dependable. It was felt that the explorations of themes and experiences of each person may have been based upon individual subjective interest or the level of importance that may have been separately placed on specific and divergent topics. By rejecting unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews were subsequently considered.

4.3.2 Semi structured interviews

The semi-structured interview is the most widely used interviewing method in social work research (Smith, 2010). According to Flick (2009), it requires broad questions that are asked in such a way to support the development of a conversation. When used, he argues that experiences can be developed and explored through the

application of well-chosen prompts that facilitate the examination and clarification of important topics.

To enable this process, Marlow (2010) explains that the researcher should base the interview on a series of carefully chosen questions that are consistent with the research strategy, to frame and focus the interview conversation. As the interview focuses on lived experience, Smith (1996) also suggests that there should be no set ordering or wording of questions which may be developed through a research schedule; rather, they should serve as an 'aide-memoir' to cover similar experiences with each person.

In terms of a research schedule, Smith, Flowers & Larkin, (2009) explain that questions should usually be thematic, and due to the potential variance of domains described by Cicourel (1964), be sufficiently flexible to enable the adaptation of wording to acknowledge the centrality, and understanding, of the person being interviewed. This ambition, according to Flick (2009:135), demonstrates that semi structured interviews should be reciprocal as they engage in a discourse so that 'a rich and thick understanding of the reported life experience' can be obtained. Although the semi-structured interview requires that more questions are predetermined than with unstructured interviews, Marlow (2010) explains that they should also remain sufficiently flexible to allow the person speaking to maintain control over the information that they choose to provide.

In support of the opportunities provided by this method Lincoln & Guba (1985) believe that semi structured interview can develop the spirit of consultation, or participation, eluded to by Greenfields & Smith (2010) in the previous section, with less emphasis being placed upon the prior assumptions of the interviewer, which may, for IPA, be seen to contaminate the accuracy of the reported experience. According to (Shaw, 2008) this can be effective in allowing the interview to take, as far as possible, the form of a conversation in which both parties can begin to feel comfortable. Furthermore, this approach is also reported to enable the traditional and potentially oppressive role of the researcher to be acknowledged (Sen, 1995). This was particularly important within this study, as it required the interviewer to approach

the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies as a presuppositionless learner. In light of the opportunities afforded, a semi structured method was chosen for this study as it appeared to enable the interviewer to be involved in the discussion, whilst enabling the person taking part to emphasise and describe experiences that were important to them (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Recognising the risk of potential harm

Whilst a semi structured method was chosen for this study, consultation with the Traveller and Gypsy community showed that consideration had to be given to the potential harm that might have been caused by asking people to describe their experiences with the type of reflective depth that IPA requires. This consideration included the fact that some people may have felt uncomfortable during a one to one interview, and recognised those concerns over anonymity, gender mores, and passive acquiescence. Consequently, the semi-structured method was extended to include a number of alternative testimonial collection methods.

Based on enduring consultation within the Traveller and Gypsy community, the semi structured method was transferred to guide and inform the inclusion of one to one interviews, group interviews, telephone interviews, blogs, emails, and the invitation to send the researcher poetry, song lyrics, reflective journals and letters. The inclusion of these alternative methods was seen to empower people to choose the system of communication that was most suitable to them. This, according to Dominelli & Holloway (2008) represents a further core feature of ethical research practice.

The decision to offer people the option to be interviewed over the telephone, or in groups, reflected the concerns regarding anonymity, confidentiality, and a person's potential anxiety. Both telephone interviews and group interviews were included as a method of testimonial collection for this study because of the sense of security that they were seen to offer. Consequently, in addition to the offer to be interviewed by a female Scottish Traveller, people were also encouraged to nominate the location, and method, from which to describe their experiences.

The application of a research schedule to the invitation for poetry, song lyrics, reflective journals, and letters, however was more complicated. In these examples, it was agreed that the people who expressed an interest in participating in this way, would be posted, or emailed the research schedule to help guide the information that they provided. All testimonial collection methods were guided by the same semi structured interview schedule, which was tailored following critical reflection on the results of a pilot study.

4.4 Pilot study and interview schedule evaluation

Once ethical approval had been obtained, a pilot study was conducted with a critical friend enlisted through consultation. The aim of the pilot study linked into the advice of Cicourel (1964) and Dyson & Brown (2006) and served to ensure that the research questions, and associated interview schedule, were understandable. In line with the requirements of IPA, the questions were directed to meaning. Thus, questions were asked about the person's understandings and experiences.

Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009: 126) warn against research questions that impose too many theoretical constructs upon the phenomena being discussed. With this in mind, the pilot study implemented an interview schedule to facilitate a comfortable interaction between the researcher and the speaker, which in turn, enabled the speaker to provide a detailed account in response to the questions that were asked. Open-ended questions were prepared so that they were encouraged dialogue and reduced verbal input from the interviewer. Consistent with Smith & Osborn's (2003) advice, the researcher attempted to steer the interview from sequences that were primarily narrative or descriptive, to those which were more analytic or evaluative in search of the phenomenological essence of the experience being recalled.

To establish the focus on the analytical and evaluative nature of the interview, the pilot study started with a broad question which allowed the speaker to recount a broadly descriptive account of lived experience. In this way, it was hoped that the speakers were enabled to feel comfortable whilst talking about their own memories. Once the broad description had been accounted, the research provided the speaker

with a number of invitations to be more analytical by using a series of follow up prompts that aimed to frame and specific focus the interview conversation.

In terms of the number of questions used during the interview, Smith, Flowers & Larkin, (2009:60) point out that 'ten to eleven open questions will tend to occupy 'between 45 and 90 minutes of conversation, depending on the topic'. Consistent with this framework, eleven open-ended questions, along with possible prompts, were used. To ensure that a sufficient amount of questions had been included, the pilot study also enabled the researcher to redraft, as necessary, develop, or drop questions. The final interview schedule that was used to guide all semi structured testimonial collection methods, following an evaluation of the pilot study, is provided in Table 4, overleaf.

To enable a more considered review of the suitability of questions asked, the results of the pilot study were analysed in full (as per the description below) and critically reviewed for limitation.

4.4.1 Contacting people who lived in care as children

The generally accepted term for contacting people and inviting them to participate in research is known as sampling (Flick, 2009). It refers to the practice of selecting people from a specific population for the purposes of research (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Denscombe, 2007). In qualitative research and in IPA in particular, the sampling procedures are often determined by the paradigm and research strategies used to guide and inform the enquiry.

The dominant sampling strategy for IPA is known as purposive sampling (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This method looks for people who are able to provide information that can be studied in-depth within specific categories such as age, culture, and experience; it is not thought to be random. Flick (2009) states that purposive sampling requires a deeper critical evaluation concerning population parameters that the study is interested in, and that sample cases are chosen carefully on this basis. Smith (2010) also indicates that the decision to use purposive

sampling generally influences the geographical locations in which information is collected.

Table 4 Final interview schedule

Semi Structure interview schedule	
1. Can you tell me why you had to live in care?	<i>Possible Prompts:</i> How old were you? What do you think brought it about? Can you describe how you felt at the time?
2. Can you describe what it was like living in care?	<i>Possible Prompts:</i> What happened? How did you feel? How did you cope?
3. Can you tell me about your most memorable experience of being in care?	<i>Possible Prompts:</i> What happened? How old were you? How did you feel? How did you cope?
4. Can you tell me how life in care different was different to life with your family?	<i>Possible Prompts:</i> What was different? How did you feel about that? How did you cope?
5. What does it mean to be a Traveller-Gypsy in care?	<i>Possible prompts:</i> Identity, sense of self, separation, and loss.
6. Have your relationships with other people been affected by your experiences of being in care?	<i>Possible Prompts:</i> partner, family, friends, and work colleagues.
7. Do you think your experience of living in care has affected you as an adult?	<i>Possible Prompts:</i> in what ways? Does anything help? Does anything make you feel worse? How do you feel about these changes?
8. Do you think that you have been treated differently because you have been in care?	<i>Possible Prompts:</i> partner, family, friends, and work colleagues.
9. How would you describe your experience of leaving care?	<i>Possible Prompts:</i> What happened? How did you feel? How did you cope?
10. Has you experience of being in care changed the way you think of feel about yourself?	<i>Possible Prompts:</i> do you see yourself differently now than before you lived in care? In what ways?
11. What would be an alternative to the current care system?	<i>Possible Prompts:</i> What could be done differently? What help and support should you receive? What advice would you give to a child living in care now?

The main advantage of purposive sampling is that it can remain flexible, developing as the study progresses, and continues, as with grounded theory, until a point where a sufficient amount of information has been gathered to answer the research question (Glaser, 1978). Reflecting on this method, Marlow (2010) suggests that it

may therefore be impossible to specify the number of people required to achieve this aim at the outset of a study.

The key feature of purposive sampling is that it requires the researcher to know where people may be contacted, yet, within the present study, this type of determination could not always be guaranteed. To overcome this, the sampling strategy used to contact people who lived in care as children moved away from the paradigm of purposive sampling, and followed instead, an unorganised method known as snowball sampling.

Snowballing

The snowball sampling method was used to obtain information about people who might like to take part in the study from existing and developing networks. It is referred to metaphorically as '*snowball sampling*' because as relationships are developed through consultation, more connections can be made through those new relationships, thus enabling the numbers of people who might like to take part in the study to grow organically over time (Hammersly, 2000; Thompson, 2002).

Babbie (2010) reports that the main advantage of this sampling strategy is that the accumulation of numbers is likely to be quick. Added to this, he explains that the researcher could approach new people, having been, in a sense, sponsored by the person who has named them. In terms of trust, this was seen as an advantage because the researcher was able to use the nominator as a reference, which Smith (2009) implies may have also enhanced his credibility, including that of the study.

The snowballing sample used in this study developed by contacting a number of Traveller and Gypsy support groups who work to advocate for Traveller and Gypsy rights (see appendix D and E). Eight of the people who took part in this study became involved via snowballing and were referred to the researcher from independent organisations and opportunities related to the researchers own contacts. As the snowball sample was widely focused, the study was not geographically based or limited to a prescribed location. The people who took part in the study were from England and Ireland. Although this process initially identified

nineteen people at the outset, after an initial discussion about the aims of the project, nine people felt that they were unable to describe their experience as it made them remember parts of their life that they would sooner forget. It was the author's view that to pursue this point to encourage participation would indeed have caused significant harm.

Limiting the sample to people aged eighteen and over

As chapter 2 has shown, there was little evidence to suggest that the social, emotional, and developmental needs of Traveller and Gypsy children are being recognised in the current care system. Consequently, the researcher made the conscious decision to limit the study to those who were aged eighteen and over, and who were no longer living in care. Notwithstanding the age limit, the criterion for inclusion was broad in that it included Irish Travellers, Romany Gypsies, Scottish Gypsy/Travellers, Welsh Travellers, and Occupational Travellers.

As news of the research project began to spread within the community, Travellers Times approached the researcher and ran two adverts for the study. Traveller Times is a quarterly publication which reports on news and events within the Traveller and Gypsy community. It has a reported readership of 300,000 people. The first advert was published in the 2010 spring edition of their magazine, and the second advert, which contained more information on the author (including a photograph), was reported in the 2010 autumn edition. Two people who took part in this study became involved via the Travellers Times magazine. Basic information on the people who did take part in the study is presented in Table 5, overleaf. To enable anonymity, real names and specific ages have been omitted. The inclusion of Mary's disability has been added to this table at her request.

With regard to sample size, the previous chapter has shown that the primary concern of this study is to provide a detailed account of individual Traveller and Gypsy experience. The concern therefore was not given to the amount of people who took part in the project, rather the depth, and amount of information that they were enabled to provide (Hammersly, 2000). Acknowledging the complexity of human experience which has been described in detail by Giddens (1991), Smith & Osborn

(2003) recommend that this study should be idiographic concentrating on a small number of people. In the light of IPA's requirement to focus on detail and depth of knowledge, the sample size is considered as being appropriate for the research strategy.

4.4.2 Collecting information on lived experience

The primary concerns regarding the collection of information were based on the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. In ethical research literature, confidentiality is commonly viewed as akin to the principle of privacy (Butler, 2002).

Table 5 Information regarding the people who took part in the study

Pseudonym name	Length of time in care	Age Range	Accommodation before care	Placement Type	Ethnicity	Geographical location of placement	Approximate dates of care experience
Mary (Mary has cerebral palsy)	17 years	40-50	Trailer Roadside	Residential Home	Irish Traveller	Ireland	1970's – 1980's
Helen	8 months	30-40	Trailer Campsite	Residential Home	English Gypsy	England	1980's
Ruth	5 years	20-30	Trailer Roadside	Foster Care	Irish Traveller	England	1990's
Josephine	Adopted as a baby by non-Showmen	30-40	Trailer Campsite	Adoption	Showman	Hong Kong	1980's
Peter	11 years	18-20	Trailer Campsite	Residential Home	Irish Traveller	England	1990's - 2000's
Michael	3 years, then adopted by Traveller carers	20-30	Trailer Roadside	Foster care	Irish Traveller	England in foster care then adopted in Ireland	1990's
Laura	4 years	30-40	Trailer Campsite	Foster Care and Residential Home	Irish Traveller	England	1980's
Lisa	15 years	20-30	Trailer Campsite	Foster Care with Traveller carers	Irish Traveller	Ireland	1990's - 2000's
Emma	16 years	18-20	Trailer Campsite	Foster Care with Traveller carers	Irish Traveller	Ireland	1990's - 2000's
Sarah	13 Years	18-20	Trailer Campsite	Foster Care with Traveller carers	Irish Traveller	Ireland	1990's - 2000's

This principle is integral to social work research and the values of empowerment and private autonomy, because, as Shaw (2010) explains to ensure confidentiality might mean that what will be discussed as part of an interview or research endeavour will not be repeated, or at least, not without permission.

Reflecting on this position, Smith (2010) argues that in the research context confidentiality makes little sense. For him, confidential research cannot be conducted because researchers report on the findings of their research. Research cannot do this, he contends, if the testimonials collected cannot be revealed. Instead, what researchers can do, according to Smith (2010), is ensure they do not disclose identifiable information about the people who have shared their experience and so to protect their identity through various processes of anonymisation. In this respect, Thompson (2002) and Van den Hoonaard (2002: 8) explain that confidentiality can never be guaranteed. Consequently, considered care was taken to ensure that the people who took part in the study were not identified by their true name, or any other identifying information within this thesis.

In terms of informed consent, Thompson (2002) and Flick (2009), highlight the importance of ensuring that the people invited to take part in a study were enabled to understand what the research would entail. This included why they were being asked to participate in it, what would be done with the information they provided, and who would have access to it. For Thompson (2002) and Clark (2006a; 2006b), it is only after this information is provided can people willingly give informed consent whether to be involved or not.

In the pursuit of informed consent the researcher was able to visit eight people in the days leading up to the interview so that information about the study, including the opportunity to be interviewed by a Scottish Traveller woman could be presented, and any potential concerns regarding this discussed. Despite being offered the opportunity to speak to a Scottish Traveller, this invitation was not taken up by any of the people who took part in the study.

The researcher spoke to two people about the research project at a restaurant, four in their homes, one person at a park and another at a train station. The two people

who the researcher was unable to visit were spoken to over the telephone. During these meetings, the researcher provided each individual, in person or via post, a copy of the research schedule and invited them to look at it again prior to the interview, or prior to providing a written response. In order to include the point of confidentiality, the researcher explained that the information they provided might be used within the final report, either in the form of direct quotations, or by way of the inclusion of their stories or poems. He explained that although direct quotations would be used, pseudonyms would be used to protect identity. He also explained that anonymisation of the extracts used in future published works would extend to specific geographical locations, dates, ages and any other features which may potentially yield a breach of confidence.

The pre-interview meetings were managed in this way because Thompson (2002) advocates that speaking to people prior to the interview could enable a relationship to be developed in a way that could potentially reduce anxiety. This close collaboration was also seen to enable people to nominate the location for their interview. Based on the request of those taking part in the research, three interviews were conducted in people's homes, whilst the others were conducted in open public places such as parks and hotel reception areas.

Pre-interview planning

Prior to each interview, the researcher was aware of the growing evidence that the issue of continued informed consent could take on an added significance when conducting research with Travellers and Gypsies (Okley, 1983; Hawes & Perez, 1996; Kenrick & Clark, 1999; Acton, 2000; Cemlyn, 2000b; Richardson, 2006a Greenfields & Smith, 2010;). This was particularly significant since there has been little consideration given to the implications of interviewing Travellers and Gypsies in social work research (Brown & Scullion, 2010). To overcome this, the researcher incorporated the advice of Steele & Hunt (2008) and Hunt, Steele & Condie (2008) who argue that when conducting research with 'hard to reach groups' such as Travellers and Gypsies, the traditional role of researcher as an 'expert' can expose issues such as power, difference, gender, and status. If perceived, Yates (2002) and

Jordan & Brown (2007) argue that this can lead those being interviewed to develop a strong impression that something specific is required of them, thus potentially distorting their accounts of their situation or positioning themselves in passive acquiescence. If accurate, this could suggest that some people might feel obliged to suppress feelings of anxiety or concern regarding the in-depth nature of IPA in order to humour a researcher. The risk of the perceptions regarding power differentials within an interview environment was understood to pose a significant ethical challenge.

For Eisner (1991) this dilemma could only be absolved through unending reflective research practice that required the researcher to assume a dualistic role of investigator and moderator:

‘...researchers have an ethical responsibility to serve in a dual role: first, as researchers with a project aimed at satisfying their research purposes, and second, as advocates...raising questions that the researchers know should be raised in order for (people) to make a competent assessment of the risks’.

(Eisner, 1991: 217).

Taking this position was important as, Clark (2006b) argues, the potential to be insensitive to wellbeing of the people taking part in the study could have been compounded with the additional responsibility of the researcher to produce a study in order to attain higher degree status. However as the advice of Eisner (1991) was taken seriously, the personal ambition of the researcher was offset by the emotional welfare and safety of the person being interviewed. This took precedent at all times.

Conducting the interview

Prior to each interview, the researcher informed each person again why he, or she, was being interviewed, and what aspects of his or her experience the researcher was interested in. The researcher made clear that their contribution to the study would be anonymous in accordance with data protection legislation (Data Protection Act, 1998) and explained there are no right or wrong answers. The researcher

reassured every person that they should only answer questions that they felt confident, and comfortable, to answer. He reminded them that a digital Dictaphone would be used to record the interview, with their consent. People were also advised that they could stop the interview at any time. For those people interviewed via the telephone, permission was sought to put the conversation onto 'loudspeaker' for recording. As literacy was never assumed, once each person stated that they were happy to commence the interview, the researcher started the digital audio and read aloud the information sheet (see appendix A) and the consent form (see appendix B). Each person was then asked to state that they had understood the information sheet and that they had given consent to be interviewed.

The one to one interviews, group interview, and telephone interviews commenced with the researcher completing a set questionnaire with each person (see appendix C). As the interviews were semi structured, the questionnaire enabled the researcher to gather the same basic level of information regarding each person. This, according to Flick (2009) was also important to help people adjust to the interview process. Once the questionnaire had been completed, the interviews and focus groups commenced with a broad opening question: "*Can you tell me why you had to live in care?*" The interview began this way as Smith, Flowers & Larkin, (2009) point out that a good opening IPA research question evokes memories of events that have been lived through, rather than asking questions directed at particular thoughts about a particular experience. With this in mind, the researcher then developed a series of follow up prompts, or topics, to frame and focus the conversation.

Maintaining informed consent

Although informed consent was given at the beginning of the interview, reflexivity and awareness of the risks of continued consent were considered to ensure that this was not a preliminary endeavour. As shown above, by only seeking to obtain informed consent at the outset can be seen as unethical. In the words of Eisner (1991: 214), 'it implies that the researcher knows before the event...what the event will be and its possible effects'. Consequently, Shaw (2008) and Smith (2009), maintain that a researcher cannot possibly know what the outcome of an interview is

likely to be, or how it might affect the person being interviewed. In order to acknowledge the fact that informed consent remained a high priority throughout the research process, even after consent had been given, the researcher maintained a continued responsiveness and adaptability to the mood of the person being interviewed. To achieve this, the researcher attempted to be sensitive to non-verbal communication that may have indicated experiences of anxiety or feelings of coercion. Where this was suspected or observed, the interview was stopped so that informed consent could be revisited and permission to continue the interview could be given. The ability of the researcher to respond to non-verbal communication was enabled by his extensive social work training and interviewing experience. Being aware of non-verbal communication was aided by the maintenance of field notes which enabled the researcher to include non-verbal communication and the general impressions of the tone of the interview and people's responses within the transcript. This information also became helpful when interpreting the data.

The duration of each interview lasted between 1 hour, and 3 hours. In each case, the duration was determined by the person taking part. Some people were interviewed on a number of occasions, whilst others only wanted to be interviewed once. Each interview was informed by the same semi structured interview schedule. Follow up interviews required the researcher to listen to each recorded interview to identify areas that may have required additional exploration. Where the researcher identified a need for additional clarification to a specific question, permission was sought based on the explanation of why additional information may be useful. The methods used and the number of interviews undertaken to complete this study are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Interview methods used

Pseudonym	Method	Number of interviews
Mary	Face-to-face interview	3
	Letters	1
	Emails	1
Helen	Telephone interview	2
Ruth	Face to face interview	1
Josephine	Letter	2
	Poem	1
Peter	Face to Face interview	1
Michael	Face to face interview	2
Laura	Telephone interview	1
Lisa	Group interview	1
Emma	Group interview	1
Sarah	Group interview	1
	Emails	2
Total number of interviews		13
Total number of documentary correspondence		7
Total number of interviews and documentary correspondence		20

The information collection process was completed in eleven months. The first interview was conducted in January 2010, and the last in November 2010. To ensure informed consent was enabled after the contribution, each person was assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time during testimonial collection and analysis. This proposal extended until January 2011 when the process of drafting the final report began. Up to this point, all people were given the opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy and to withdraw any particular comments that they might not want to appear in the public domain or in the main thesis. On completion of testimonial collection, there were no requests to see transcripts or withdraw contributions.

To maintain the relationships that were developed as a result of this study, the researcher maintained contact with each person by email, text, or telephone. The way in which this continuing contact was maintained has, as always, been determined by the person who took part in the study. In respect of the time that they

provided for this study, and the friendships that have developed as a result, the researcher was keen to show that the initial work was not driven by self-interest and advancements which McDonagh (2002) suggests could have been perceived if this contact was lost.

The fact that the researcher was not a Traveller or Gypsy did not present the types of difficulties that were considered during the initial stages of the study. Of course the authors background as a non-Traveller or Gypsy male higher degree student, played a role in the study, but the conscious effort made to demonstrate a genuinely and respectful interest in people's lived experiences enabled these potential barriers to be deconstructed. This focus, this reverence and respect, situated the researcher in a position of privilege where he was ready to learn, and more importantly, be taught about peoples own lives and their traumatic lived experiences at the hands of other settled people.

4.4.3 Responding to experiences of abuse and neglect

An important ethical consideration was identified concerning a disclosure of an experience of abuse that may have been unreported prior to the interview. In terms of confidentiality, Shaw (2010) states that although this must be discussed as part of informed consent, it is also important to consider whether all of the people taking part in the study have equal rights to confidentiality; and whether this commitment covers all circumstances.

Prior to each interview, the researcher explained that if a disclosure of abuse was made, he had a legal responsibility under the Children Act (1989) to report it to the police as the perpetrator may still be working within child care settings. However, the researcher was assured that all safeguarding procedures had taken place, and that each person who described an experience of abuse had reported it to the relevant authorities.

As well as the sensitive and compassionate approach demonstrated by the researcher, additional details of supporting organisations who could be contacted after the interview were provided. As disclosures of unpleasant and upsetting

experiences, such as physical and sexual abuse, became common, the researcher took specific time, prior to each interview, to identify specific sources of support which are available within that person's locality. The intention was to highlight potential areas of support that could be accessed at their discretion.

4.4.4 Testimonial protection and storage

After each interview, the researcher listened to the interview recording to reflect on the outcome and process. This procedure was informed by the work of Arksey & Knight (1999) and enabled the researcher to identify potential gaps in information and consider further lines of inquiry that could be developed in subsequent interviews. Subsequent to this, the researcher transcribed the interview verbatim and ensured that any information which may have identified the speaker was removed.

The original interview recording was saved onto the researcher's University computer and access to this was protected by a password known only to the researcher. Although the computer is linked to an external network, the University has strict policies on access that ensured the integrity of testimonials security at all times in line with data protection legislation and duty.

To aid the process of cataloguing, each interview was assigned a code, for example 'Person 1, 11 July 2010'. When more than one interview took place on a specific day, a separate alphabetical character was used to identify the interview tapes and transcripts, for example 'Person 1B, 11 July 2010'. Each interview was recorded on a separate sound file, and each sound file was assigned with the interview code in this way.

During the study, transcribed interviews were only available to the supervisory team, the person who provided it, and the researcher. Hard copies of the interview transcriptions were identified only by the code described above and contained no personally identifiable information. At the end of the fieldwork period, all raw testimonials, including transcriptions and audio recordings, were deleted from the hard drive of the University Computer.

4.5 Analysis

Typically, the analysis stage of IPA has been described as an iterative inductive cycle (Palmer, 1969), which proceeds by drawing on the strategies outlined in Table 7 overleaf.

Although hermeneutics was employed as per the process outlined in Table 7, extant literature on IPA does not prescribe a single 'method' for working with testimonials. Consistent with many other approaches in qualitative social work research, the essence of IPA lies in its hermeneutical focus (Heidegger, 1999). As shown in the previous chapter, IPA's focuses the researchers attention towards the grammatical and psychological aspects of the transcripts in order to make sense of a reported experience (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Using the hermeneutic circle, IPA can be characterised by a set of common processes and principles that are applied flexibly, according to the analytic task.

Within the repertoire of strategies outlined in Table 7, there appeared considerable room for manoeuvre. Therefore, in order to focus the on the specific method of analysis used in this study, the following sections provide a description of how this framework was applied. Given IPA's idiographic commitment (Smith & Osborn, 2003), this study followed each step of the analytical procedure with each case in isolation before moving to the second, and so on. Choosing the first case to be analysed in the way that is described followed the advice of Smith (2009), and was based on the researcher's assessment of the transcript that appeared to be the most detailed, complex and engaging.

Table 7: The IPA iterative and inductive analytical cycle

1. The close line-by-line analysis of the experiential claims, concerns, and understandings of each person.
2. The identification of emerging patterns within this experiential material, emphasising convergence and divergence, commonality and nuance, usually for single cases, and then subsequently across multiple cases.
3. The development of a 'dialogue' between the researchers, their coded testimonials, and their social knowledge, about what it might mean for people to have these concerns, in this context leading in turn to the development of an interpretative account.
4. The development of a structure, frame, or Gestalt, which illustrates the relationship between themes.
5. The organisation of all this material in a format which allows for analysed data to be traced back through the process, from initial comments on the transcripts, through initial clustering of thematic development, into the final structure of themes.
6. The use of supervision, collaboration, or audit to help test and develop the coherence and plausibility of the interpretation.
7. The development of a full narrative evidenced by a detailed commentary on data extracts, which takes the reader through the interpretation, usually theme-by-theme, and is often supported by some form of visual guide (a simple structure, table or diagram).
8. Reflection on one's own perceptions, conceptions, and processes.

(Adapted from Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 79-80)

Step 1: Reading and Re-reading

The first step of IPA analysis required the researcher to 'actively engage' with the testimonial selected (Smith, 2007: 82). This process involved the repeated reading of transcribed interviews and regular reflection on the recorded interview. The aim of this process enabled the researcher to enter the reported '*lifeworld*' (Husserl, 1999) of the speaker, and understand how the narratives were being used to bind certain sections of the interview together. This close reading also facilitated an appreciation

of how a sense of rapport and trust was building across an interview , thus highlighting the location of richer and more detailed sections, or indeed contradictions and paradoxes. Finally, the researcher was enabled to reflect on his interview techniques more generally, and consider how the general flow or rhythm may have contributed to the overall interview process in order to develop his skills for subsequent interviews.

Step 2: Initial noting

Step 2 was the most detailed and time-consuming aspect of analysis. It examined the semantic content and language used on an exploratory level. This required the researcher to epochè presuppositions whilst noting anything of interest within the transcript (Palmer, 1969; Bailey, 1994; Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). This process ensured that the researcher developed a growing familiarity with the transcript, and began to identify a specific Gestalt (Heidegger, 1999), by which the speaker was seen to reflect, understand, and think about their experience of being in care. In recognition of the advice of Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) that a person's lived experience is a complex and dynamic phenomenon, this stage of analysis was carried out with each separate transcript three times over a period of twelve months. Each time, analysis started off with a blank sheet. On completion of each analytical stage, notes were compared to previous analysis to develop an understanding of the core features of the transcript.

The systematic method used in the analysis was close to Heidegger's (1999) description of 'free textual analysis'. As there are no prescribed rules for this, only the aim to state what was going on in the text (ibid.), an attempt to stay close to the meaning inherent in the text, and that of the speaker, became paramount. Care was taken to avoid making conclusions, or value based judgements about what the speaker was saying or inferring, or not saying or inferring. In order to achieve this, analysis was conducted by using three different types of font to identify discrete focuses with each testimony. These focuses were:

- ***Descriptive*** comments focused on describing the content of what the person has said and the subject of the narrative within the transcript (Normal font);
- ***Linguistic*** comments focused upon exploring the specific use of language (Underlined font); and
- ***Conceptual*** comments focussed on engaging at a more interrogative and conceptual level (*Italics*).

(Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 84)

What follows in Table 8, is a brief and curtailed extract of this stage of the analysis process. As the left hand column of Table 8 shows, each page and line of initial noting was formatted with a separate number to enable clearer referencing and coding. The hard copy of the transcript was also formatted with wide margins for initial comments on the descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual content of the transcripts to be made.

Once the transcript had been analysed and coded, a comprehensive exploratory commentary was made on similarities and differences that were identified in an attempt to recognise potential amplifications or possible contradictions in what the person was saying. This required reflective analytical dialogue with each line of transcript, asking what each word, phrase, and sentence meant. Whilst Flick (2009) recommends that this stage could also be completed with the speaker through a process of 'member checking', this option was not available to the researcher as each person declined the invitation to be involved in this process.

Table 8: Stage two of analysis: initial coding

Exploratory Concepts	Original Transcript	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Handing Mary over, <i>their precious jewel</i>, and then parents dismissed. Attachment, separation and loss at the age of 4 2. <u>she would be given a better life</u>? Did they feel guilty about their own way of life. Their skills as parents. What about their position within the community. Were they successful and acting in Mary's best interest? 3. <u>Scrubbed</u> 4. The act of being <u>pushed</u> into a bath, <u>against her own wishes</u>? What would be the impact on mental health? 5. Being told she needed a <u>wash because she was culturally/spiritually/politically/socially dirty</u>. How does this impact on mental health? 6. Carers cut off her cultural identity. <i>Severing her ties? Cutting her out?</i> 7. Being told her hair was dirty because it made her stand out as a Traveller. <u>Being made to feel dirty about herself and Traveller people?</u> 8. Nuns, God's servants on earth making her feel like they were right and she was in the wrong. Nun's saving you from your culture, because your culture as a Traveller was wrong. Was offensive to God. <i>How could this have <u>conflicted</u> with her own religious mores as a Traveller female?</i> 9. <u>Being saved</u> from herself as a Traveller. How could his make her feel about herself? <i>In need of <u>saving</u>. The development of attachments.</i> 10. <u>Going to make you settled</u>. Turning her into something else. What was she before? 11. <u>Proud</u> of the fact that the nuns were not able to achieve their aim of making her a settled person 12. <u>Times when I could have</u>. Was Mary in charge of this decision? Exercising the only bit of power she had. Meeting families <i>but what about keeping contact with her own family.</i> 13. <u>Meeting lots of different families</u>. <i>Feeling unwanted, masqueraded, as a chattel for settled people.</i> 14. <u>Buying a dolls house</u>. <i>Being given gifts, or being bought by settled people</i> 	<p>I remember as soon as they were gone I was pushed into a bath and scrubbed because they told me I was dirty because I was from a Traveller family...I had beautifully thick, long Black hair. If you stood me in a line with the other girls you could tell that I was a Traveller because of my hair. The care workers cut it all off, as short as yours, because they said it was dirty. The house was run by nuns and care workers, but the nuns were in charge and they made you feel like they were doing you a favour, and that they were saving you from and awful life because you were a Traveller, and they were going to make you into a settled...But they weren't able to. They weren't able to. There were times when I could have gone to live with a foster family. I met with a lot of families. I remember one family that I could have lived with buying me a large dolls house.</p>	

Step 3: Developing emergent themes

Although the interview transcript retained its central place in terms the human voice, the comprehensive exploratory commenting of stage 2 meant that the amount of information and analysis grew substantially. In developing emergent themes, the researcher attempted to reduce the volume in detail whilst maintaining complexity of the testimony by mapping the interrelationships, connections, and patterns that were seen to exist between the stage 2 exploratory noting. This involved an analytical shift to working primarily with initial notes rather than the transcript itself. However, the exploratory commenting completed in stage 2, enabled all notes to be closely tied to the original transcript.

In line with the advice of Clandinin & Connelly (1998), the main task during this stage was to turn notes into emergent themes in an attempt to produce a concise statement of what was important in the various comments written in the left hand margin. Themes were expressed as phrases, which reflected the psychological and social essence of the reported experience by focusing on the need to capture what was crucial, not only to each specific part of the text, but in relation to the whole testimony. This process was closely linked to the hermeneutic circle described by Heidegger (1962), where parts of the transcript are interpreted in relation to the whole. A working example of this is shown in the right hand column of Table 9.

Table 9: Stage three of analysis: Developing emergent themes

Exploratory Concepts	Original Transcript	Emergent Themes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Handing Mary over, <i>their precious jewel</i>, and then parents dismissed. Attachment, separation and loss at the age of 4 2. <u>she would be given a better life</u>? Did they feel guilty about their own way of life. Their skills as parents. What about their position within the community. Were they successful and acting in Mary's best interest? 3. <u>Scrubbed</u> 4. The act of being <u>pushed</u> into a bath, <u>against her own wishes</u>? What would be the impact of this on mental health? 5. Being told she needed a <u>wash because she was culturally/spiritually/politically/socially dirty</u>. How does this impact on mental health? 6. Carers cut off her cultural identity. <i>Severing her ties? Cutting her out?</i> 7. Being told her hair was dirty because it made her stand out as a Traveller. <i>Being made to feel dirty?</i> 8. Nuns, God's servants on earth making her feel like they were right and she was in the wrong. Nun's saving you from your culture, because your culture as a Traveller was wrong. Was offensive to God. <i>How could this have conflicted with her own religious mores as a Traveller female?</i> 9. <u>Being saved</u> from herself as a Traveller. How could his make her feel about herself? <i>In need of saving. The development of attachments.</i> 10. <u>Going to make you settled</u>. Turning her into something else. What was she before? 11. <u>Proud</u> of the fact that the nuns were not able to achieve their aim of making her a settled person 12. <u>Times when I could have</u>. Was Mary in charge of this decision? Exercising the only bit of power she had. Meeting families <i>but what about keeping contact with her own family.</i> 13. <u>Meeting lots of different families</u>. <i>Feeling unwanted, masqueraded, as a chattel for settled people.</i> 14. <u>Buying a dolls house</u>. <i>Being given gifts, or being bought by settled people</i> 	<p>I remember as soon as they were gone I was pushed into a bath and scrubbed because they told me I was dirty because I was from a Traveller family...I had beautifully thick, long Black hair. If you stood me in a line with the other girls you could tell that I was a Traveller because of my hair. The care workers cut it all off, as short as yours, because they said it was dirty. The house was run by nuns and care workers, but the nuns were in charge and they made you feel like they were doing you a favour, and that they were saving you from and awful life because you were a Traveller, and they were going to make you into a settled...But they weren't able to. They weren't able to. There were times when I could have gone to live with a foster family. I met with a lot of families. I remember one family that I could have lived with buying me a large dolls house.</p>	<p>Precious jewel</p> <p>Washing away identity</p> <p>Washing away human rights</p> <p>Self-perception</p> <p>Cutting away identity</p> <p>Verbal abuse</p> <p>Ridiculed</p> <p>Penalty of Philanthropy</p> <p>Conflict of Values</p> <p>Religious confusion</p> <p>Power over the nuns</p> <p>Power in self</p> <p>Power over potential foster carers.</p> <p>Power over other children</p>

Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

By reaching stage 4, the analytical process established a set of themes within the transcript. Once established, these themes were ordered chronologically, that is in the order that they emerged from the transcript.

The next stage of analysis involved the development charting and mapping of how the researcher saw the themes fitting together (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Reflecting on these themes, the researcher attempted to identify any common links between them, and then re-order them in a more systematic way using 'analytical and theoretical reflection' described by Langdridge (2007:111).

During this process, some themes, which closely followed the questions on the research schedule, appeared to cluster easily together, whilst others required additional review and consideration. In the case of the latter, themes that appeared to be subordinate, or subsuming others, were not cast aside, but used throughout the process of analysis to re-order and re-code themes. An example of the resultant table of emerging themes is presented in Table 10, overleaf.

This process also required the researcher to reflect repeatedly on the original testimonial to check the emerging analysis and the accuracy of interpretation. Langdridge (2007) describes this stage of analysis as the point when the researcher is able to produce a table of themes in a coherent order. As shown in Table 10, the themes that appeared through analytical and theoretical reflection were appropriately named and each theme linked directly to the originating text through reference to specific key words highlighted through page and line numbers.

Table 10 Emerging superordinate themes and themes from one person's interview

Themes	Page/Concept No	Key words
1. A Rite of Passage		
Separation		
Ceremonious preparation	4.26	getting ready
Washing away identity	5.27	scrubbed
Cutting away my identity	5.30	cut it all off
Isolation	7.41	didn't know your family
Transition		
Internalisation of stereotypes	8.50	embarrassing
Loss of self-esteem	7.41	settled values
Ashamed	7.42	no expectations
Powerless	4.21	unable to make a choice
Complete vulnerability	13.75	dog's life
Dependency on abusers	13.75	humiliated
Blame	10.63	Systematic abuse
Incorporation		
Loss of Traveller Values	7.41	making a fool of myself
Diluted identity	17.113	losing culture
Shame	10.61	crying to go home
2. A Will to Power		
Fighting incorporation		
Power	6.35	smashed it up
Self-sacrifice	12.70	I was bold
Choice	11.68	I wouldn't talk
Unity in Adversity		
Hope	14.85	with other children
Relationships	14.88	close friends
Identify	14.87	feel normal
Love	15.92	love
Mental health		
Power of identity	17.110	nobody wants you
Being a survivor	16.100	difficult to live with
Self-Harm	16.100	I cut my breasts
False promise of education	13.77	supposed to educate me
Vindication		
Stoical resilience	18.120	Fuck them
Independence	15.94	Make choices

Step 5: Moving analysis to the next testimonial

As this study collected information on the lived experience of ten people, the next step of the analytical process involved moving to the next testimonial, by repeating steps 1 to 4. Here, Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) advise that within IPA it is important to treat all cases in their own terms in order to do justice to their own sense of individuality. This meant as far as possible, analysing each testimony separately so that the ideas and themes that had emerged from the preceding analysis did not influence the hermeneutic process (ibid.).

Step 6: Looking for patterns across testimonials

Once every transcript, letter, email, and poem had been analysed, the next stage of analysis involved looking for patterns across all cases (Heidegger, 1999). This required the researcher to reflect on the connections between the lists of themes identified in stage 4, including those that appeared to be the most powerful. This was achieved by identifying the themes which could illuminate different cases (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Table 11 shows this process in the form of a 'table of themes' by illustrating the themes for each person. Here secondary questions became useful to enable the researcher to recognise, for example, themes or super-ordinate themes, which were particular to individual testimonials, but which were also representative of higher order concepts that people shared. In order to establish a set of individual superordinate themes that could be representative of the whole, analysis was not completed in a linear process, but rather a hermeneutical circular one (Palmer, 1969). The researcher achieved this process by moving backwards and forwards through the text and continually reflecting on the original testimonial.

Table 11 Recurrent Themes

Super-Ordinate Themes	Pseudonyms										Present in half the Sample
	Mary	Josephine	Michael	Sarah	Emma	Lisa	Helen	Ruth	Peter	Laura	
Social intervention	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
An emotional rollercoaster of separation, transition and reincorporation	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
A war against becoming settled	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Leaving care and the changing relationship with the self and others	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Inclusion and strength	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

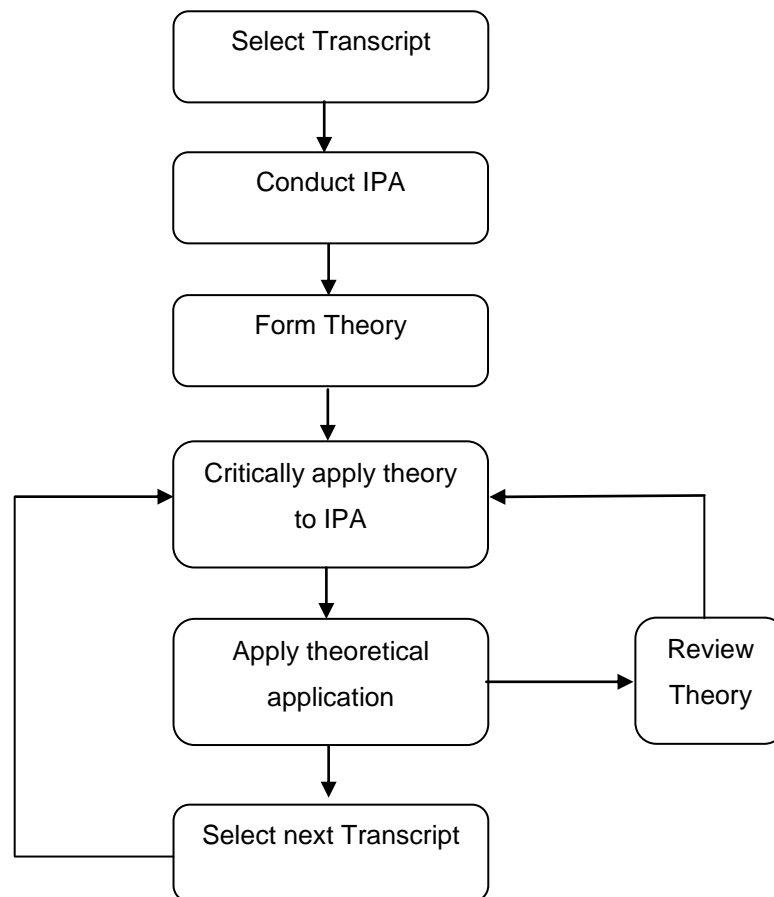
Through entering and re-entering the hermeneutic circle, the researcher reflected on the primary research questions. To answer these questions assuredly, the researcher continuously followed the advice of Smith (2004) who encourages the researcher to read, and re-read the testimonials and resultant analysis. The aim of this technique serves to ensure that the answers provided to the questions were in keeping with peoples own experiences and articulations of their meanings as honestly as possible. By remaining committed to this advice, the analysis process allowed the researcher to access deeper levels of the hermeneutic circle, and

presented the opportunity to develop an understanding of the meanings that people attributed to their own lived experiences (Warnock, 1987). As interpretation and understanding began to form so did the construction of the rigorous phenomenological account of the original testimony (Heidegger, 1999).

Stage 7: The development of a theoretical model

Once the recurrent themes had been established through the 6 stages of analysis, the researcher engaged the findings through a process similar to that of analytic induction (Cassell & Symon, 2005) and cross-case similarity analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) detailed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Framework for analytic induction within IPA



(Developed from Miles & Huberman, 1994)

The objective at this point was to pursue a conceptual explanation of the individual testimonies of a life in public care. This level of analysis enabled the progressive redefinition of a theoretical model of reflective self-concepts.

To ensure that the causal explanation was true for all cases, individual transcripts were continuously inspected to locate common factors and provisional explanations. As new cases were examined and initial hypotheses were contradicted, the Framework for analytic induction detailed in figure 1 enabled the developing theoretical model to be reworked so that it could accurately represent each reported experience. The definition of the conceptual model was continuously redefined so that divergent explanations became consistent with the commonly recurring themes (Cassell & Symon, 2005). The subsequent model derived from this process is included and described in detail in chapter 6.

Stage 8: Presenting the Findings

Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) explain that the presentation of the research findings is by far the most important part of an IPA study. The concern in this stage was how to move from analyses to presentation in a compelling way. The attainment of this included, in part, the advice of Schleiermacher, (1998) who stresses that there is no division between analysis and writing up. For him, analysis continues throughout the entire research process.

Additional lessons were taken from Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) who encourage the results section to be much more substantial, and much more discursive, than the results of most other typical qualitative reports. Substantiating this recommendation, they suggest that access to the '*lifeworld*' (Husserl, 1999) of the people who took part in this study depends solely on the understanding of the testimonies they provided. Consequently, they suggest that a large proportion of the findings should be constituted by transcript extracts, whilst the remainder should consist of detailed analytic interpretations of the text. According to the IPA strategy, the purpose of the findings section is rather pluralistic. To achieve this endeavour, the researcher should first attempt to give an account of the testimonial so to communicate a sense of what the testimonial looked like, before attempting to present a detailed

interpretation of the testimonial within the context of the overall study. As with hermeneutics, Heidegger (1999) recommends that this process should begin with an overview, a concise summary of what was found, before going into detail on the related theme.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has identified the methods used in this study. These included those used to contact people to take part, interview techniques, testimonial analysis, and the advancement of analytical rigour, which were all guided by the pursuit of ethical excellence within the wider framework of IPA. A fuller critical appraisal of the methodology, in terms of the tenets of reliability, validity, and generalisability will be presented in chapter 7. In the meantime, the thesis will move from the methodology to the core focus of the study – the experiences of Traveller and Gypsies who lived in care as children.

The following chapter presents the key themes and components derived from IPA using quotations from each interview to support interpretation. As these commentaries are based upon reflections and consequences of real lived experiences, some are sensitive and may be considered harsh in content. Since IPA aims to develop commentaries that are based upon reflections and consequences of real lived experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), the reader is invited to reflect upon their own reactions to them, including their own perceptions and prejudices in order to fully understand and appreciate the messages that are contained within them.

Chapter 5

Changing relationships with the self and others

5.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters provided a detailed explanation of the systematic enquiry, including the philosophical, strategic, and methodological frameworks used in an attempt to bring these experiences to the fore. The epistemological position of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was introduced alongside the ethical considerations, sampling strategy, testimonial collection methods, and analytical procedure. Where possible, a detailed explanation of the way in which the philosophical framework of IPA influenced the conduct of the research was also provided. This chapter will move away from the methodological frameworks to explore the key themes that emerged from the study in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the reported experiences of life in public care.

In line with the theoretical framework of IPA, the analysis presented in this chapter is discrete in the sense that the interpretative account provided is a close reading of what people have said. It is presented without reference to extant literature as to do so could dilute or minimise the reported experience further suppressing the voices of those marginalised in dominant discourse (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Later, in chapter 7, the focus of testimonial analysis will change to allow these experiences to be placed within a wider social context. In the intervening time, this chapter will focus solely on the way in which Travellers and Gypsies make sense of their experiences of living in care.

In order to assist this process and the narrative coherence of quotations, any editorial elision by the researcher is indicated by three dots (...). Repeated words and utterances such as “erm”, and the original field notes regarding non-verbal communication have also been omitted for the same reason unless specifically relevant to interpretation. Significant pauses are indicated using bracketed numbers; for example, '(3)' would indicate a three-second pause. In the extracts of the group

interview, the forward slash (/) indicates where a subsequent speaker cuts off the preceding discourse. All information that could potentially identify the people who took part in the study has been omitted, as have geographical locations, dates, the names of children's homes, foster carers, and social workers.

Following a considered application of IPA, six main themes emerged from the analysis. These included social intervention; an emotional roller coaster of separation, transition, and reincorporation; a war against becoming settled; leaving care and the changing relationship with the self and others; inclusion and strength, and, messages for children living in care. Each of these themes have been organised into a series of sub-themes. The complete thematic analysis of the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children is shown in the Table 12.

Before moving on to the findings section and thus developing an understanding of the way in which Travellers and Gypsies make sense of their lived experiences in care, a point needs to be made concerning some conventions which will be used towards the end of the chapter in order to avoid confusion at a later time. The final subtheme, 'messages to those living and suffering in care' is presented as a standalone section. It has not been subjected to the rigours of hermeneutics. For this reason, the final theme enables the voices of those Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care as children to dominate the final section. This centralises and respects the requests of those people who wanted to speak directly to those who may still be experiencing oppression because of their experiences in care.

Table 12: Themes and Sub themes of the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children

Theme	Subtheme
Social intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming socially separate • At the mercy of the system
An emotional rollercoaster of separation, transition and reincorporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My last supper • Harrowing realisation • Washing away my individuality • Making it alone • Feeling and becoming different
A war against becoming settled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A battle between my heart and my head • Unity in adversity
Leaving care and the changing relationship with the self and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living with myself, in public and in private • Experiencing social stigmatisation • Silenced by humiliation • Feeling like a jigsaw but with pieces missing
Inclusion and strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of belonging • Resilient strength • The importance of Traveller and Gypsy Carers
Making it alone	

5.2 Social intervention

The superordinate theme of 'social intervention' refers to the processes by which people reported the risks associated with social disenfranchisement and their perception of social care intervention. Those people who took part in this study described in great length, and detail, how the actions and behaviour of their parents led to their isolation and ostracism from their wider Travelling community.

The reported experiences of ostracism were seen to represent a significant factor in the weakening of the family structure and the supportive ecological systems on which it was reported to depend. Once the bonds of social attachment had been seen to break down, the difficulties experienced by each person became acute. In some cases, this led to the intervention of social services due to the risks presented. For each person who shared this experience, the formal involvement of social workers signified a shift in power. In order to explore the theme '*social intervention*' in more detail, it has been divided into two sub themes. These are entitled 'becoming socially separate' and 'at the mercy of the system'.

5.2.1 Becoming Socially Separate

The testimonies provided for this study indicated that Traveller and Gypsy communities represent a significant protective factor in the pursuit and survival of traditional customs. The collective and unified strength that can be procured by community cohesion was seen to ensure the safety and social welfare of its members. This included assistance in accommodation difficulties, childcare, employment opportunities, and wider social integration. However, continued membership within this protective system was not described as being automatic or absolute. Reflecting on her memory of her own family, Laura remembered how she was rejected by the community because of her parent's involvement with substances and domestic abuse:

Laura: You see in my culture you have to do things a certain way or you'll be ruined. My ma and da were on the drink. My da didn't

work and he hit my ma. The others came to our trailer one day and told us to go our own way.

Interviewer: Why did they tell you to go your own way?

Laura: Because you are seen as trouble. That you will bring the Travellers a bad name. Now people don't want to be associated with that kind of thing do they? Life for us Gypsies is hard enough (5) A lot of what goes on is very hush hush (2), but with me da not working and being arrested for hitting are ma, and me ma being arrested for stealing the drink when she should have been minding us, they didn't like that, they seen us as trouble and told us to go off on our own. No one wanted us. Ok it might be your ma and da that are acting up that but that doesn't matter, it's family - it's the name.

Interviewer: How did that make you feel?

Laura: Like there was something wrong with us. Like I was different. Like no one cared. (3).

Laura's description of a community turning its back on a family enables a wider appreciation of some of the mores that may govern the social functioning of some Travelling communities more generally. Within this testimony, she explained that in light of the hardships faced by the family within the community, the added pressure of outsider involvement, in this case police, can influence the wider functioning of the group. This appeared to suggest that where the behaviour of some 'in-group' members is seen as being unwanted, they can be told to leave so that they do not bring further unwanted attention from 'out-group' agencies.

This concern was further explored by the apparent caveat that some things that go on within some families are “*very hush hush*”. Read in this context, it appears that whilst domestic abuse and substance dependency might be experienced, it may only become socially ‘problematic’ for individual families if it is visible to individuals external to the community. Operating therefore on a process of internal regulation, this suggests that any involvement from outsiders such as police and social work could bring a sense of unwanted attention onto a family and the wider community, thus potentially threatening opportunities for self-determination. In terms of child protection, this concern could be seen to create a difficult ethical dilemma for social workers and the justification of intervention for any child or family if a potential consequence of ‘out-group’ support could result in internal social rejection.

A further important note to make is concerning the way in which Laura referred to the Travelling community in the third person. The use of the word “*they*” suggests the collective strength of the community from which she was separated. This also signified the complete social rejection of her family based on their unwanted behaviour, as opposed to the involvement of one particular person. In her experience, the whole community turned its back on her. Rather than offering her the protection she needed as a child, she was associated with her parent’s antisocial behaviour and reputation, and marginalised in the same way.

Consistent with this theme, Peter remembered the reaction of his family when his mother decided to move into a women’s refuge in order to escape domestic abuse:

Peter

My mother and father had been into the drink, drugs and raging [fighting] ever since I remember. My mother took us one day to a place for women and children and we stayed there for a few days. I remember my aunty coming in to see her and telling her that she was a disgrace on the family and that no one would want her anymore. Me fathers friend saw us in the

street and spat on us. (5) I suppose that they expected my mother to just deal with the violence and get on with it. She went to that place because she couldn't cope. She would have been dead else but they didn't care. She was his wife and that was the end of it. That was the end for us all.

This testimony shares some similarity with the experiences described by Lisa above. However, rather than bringing unwanted attention from 'out-group' agencies, Peter explained that his mother was seen to subvert cultural mores based on her decision to escape domestic abuse. Regardless of the abuse and injuries that she may have sustained, she was criticised by some community members for abandoning her perceived duties, and perceived position within the confines of the 'in-group'.

The descriptions of interfamilial and community exclusion are vital to understand the way in which some communities may respond to domestic abuse and substance misuse more generally. They also provide some sense of a particular Traveller and Gypsy culture. Whilst people described the experience of encountering challenging situations, they did not question the motives of the community to reject their family. This suggests that the internal regulation of the 'in-group' served as an important element in the pre-care experiences described. Becoming socially separate was not defined by an experience which marked the symbolic differences between 'in-group/out-group' memberships, but did more accurately, reflect the removal or the rejection of the self from an 'in-group' status:

Ruth: Some families bring scandal on themselves by fighting, drinking or taking drugs. If this happens the community will turn its back on you. This is when the trouble starts and when the social become involved. Like when a baby animal is

*separated from the herd that's when the
Lions strike.*

Interviewer: What do the Lions do?

Ruth: Take children into care

In this extract, Ruth compared the Travelling community to a protective band that ensures the interests of its members. Using the analogy of a defensive herd being attacked by a predatory Lion, she explained that it was not until helpless families lose the protection that they become susceptible to the jaws of social care intervention. In this context, she described a perception that social workers lie in wait for Traveller and Gypsy families in case they begin to experience the type of separation and cultural severance that can compound their vulnerability and isolation.

Set against the backdrop of cultural mores already described, this perception revealed the impression that social work might extend further than the context within which it is referenced, and offers some suggestion as to why the 'in-group/out-group' distinction might exist. Where it has become a concern that any social work involvement was likely to be unwanted on the basis that it *'take[s] children into care'*, the reported motivation to keep family matters *'hush hush'* becomes a little more transparent.

In order to protect the privacy of the 'in-group', and avoid the perceived unwanted attention of social work, or 'fatal' interference if the lion analogy is used, these testimonies showed that some 'in-groups' can conceal interfamilial hardships and instances of abuse as a measure of self-protection. The possibility that children might remain victims of abuse then appears to become a lesser concern to that of cultural privacy. Not because the child is devalued, but because of the possibility that social work intervention could destroy the opportunities for 'in-group' autonomy and threaten those values of independence which some communities hold dear. A crucial connection to make here is that through the process of socialisation, the reported 'in-group' perception of social work was clearly understood and communicated by those people who took part in this study. Even as children, each person remembered being

aware of the expectation that they would stay away from 'out-group' agencies of social control, or risk becoming socially separate.

5.2.2 At the mercy of the system

Six of the people who took part in the study reflected the messages contained within the previous theme as they described the experience of being powerless against the assessments and recommendations made about them by 'out-group' social workers. Mary's description of this process provided a good representation of the whole:

Mary: The social workers would have said that living on the road was unsuitable. [Settled] families are given a house, but my mother and father were only given the choice to put me in a children's home. Because of my disability, my parents were under enormous pressure, they were trying to look after me but they were at the mercy of the system. (3) They were bullied into saying yes. My parents, they wouldn't have questioned why or (4). They couldn't read or write and normally they were sat down and they were blamed [for my disability] because of interfamily marriage. They didn't know that they were able to make a choice; they didn't know that they could say no and to my parents, it was so alien. It was so beyond their culture and reality.

The term '*mercy of the system*' is a powerful summary of the wider metaphors used to describe social work intervention. The most important point to note here is that social work was portrayed as an intrusive 'out-group' agency which sought to challenge the way in which the 'in-group' was seen to operate and function. Whilst

this might be an accurate depiction for children and families in need or at risk, the point being made here was that the social worker made an assessment that the families 'caravan' was unsuitable, and on this basis alone judged Mary to be at risk. Compounded by the fact that she has a disability, the social worker seemed unable to transfer the most basic elements of the social work task to provide culturally competent care to the family, by recognising the strengths that they were able to exhibit. Rather than exploring more sustainable or permanent accommodation options which could be fitted with suitable aids and adaptations, Mary explained that her family were given no alternative other than to send her to live in a children's home. Not only does this suggestion flout the core values of social work, but it adds further substance to the perceived need to protect against 'out-group' interference on the basis that social work *'take[s] children into care'*.

In light of the information included in chapter 4, and table 5 in particular, it is important to note that the experiences being described by Mary occurred sometime in the 1970s. On this basis alone, it could be argued that the detail of the experience being described, the judgemental attitudes involved and the coercion tactics used, may be unlikely to occur today. To suggest, however, that Mary's experience, and indeed all of those testimonies contained through this thesis can be dismissed as being valid on the basis that that are outdated, serves only to place over optimistic faith in the structure and organisational context of modern Looked after children services. As shown in some detail in chapter 2 and discussed further in chapter 7, contemporary social work policies and organisational practices continue to fail all children living in care, including Travellers and Gypsies. As the power exercised by social workers in the assessment of risk, including the constituent parts of formalised assessment, continue to place children living in or at risk of entering into care in a position of relative powerlessness, by way, ipso facto, of the situation that they are in, it makes sense that the experience of being *at the mercy of the system* remains as tangible now as it was then. Indeed this point is further emphasised by Helen who described how, a decade after the events described by Mary, her parents were also placed at the mercy of social intervention. Like Mary, this had a significant impact on her ability to rationalise or come to terms with her position in care:

Helen: [During a home visit] I remember begging them please, please, please, don't send me back [to the children's home], and again through their own naivety they didn't think that we could come out. They thought they had to wait until we were released.

Consistent with the experience of being at the mercy the system described by Mary in the 70s, this extract shows how Helen's parents in the 80s also felt defenceless to challenge the social workers decision to take their children into care. Helen's suggestion that her parents assumed that they had to wait until she was released signifies the potential extremes of power differential that served to render the family powerless to the significant decisions being made.

5.2.3 Summary

This superordinate theme has shown how some Gypsies and Travellers who have lived in care as children viewed social workers, and the social care system as an oppressive 'out-group' force that manipulated those who were disenfranchised through structural and social inequality.

5.3 An emotional rollercoaster of separation, transition and reincorporation

The superordinate theme '*an emotional roller coaster of separation, transition and reincorporation*' refers to the process by which interfamilial separation, developmental transition and the social reincorporation of culturally located expectations and influences exemplify the experience of living in care. In order to explore this theme in specific detail, it has been divided into five sub themes. These are entitled: 'my last supper'; 'harrowing realisation'; 'washing away my individuality'; 'making it alone', and 'feeling and becoming different'.

5.3.1 My last supper

This sub theme addresses those times when people talked about the memory of being at home in the hours before they were taken into care. Although those people who are able to recall this experience provided unique and separate testimonies, the collective accounts were united by some very strong similarities and connections. For eight people, the memories associated with the hours leading up to their accommodation were happy ones. They were happy because instead of being told that they would be leaving home to move into care, they were made to feel special and loved by the increased attention and special treatment that they experienced from their parents.

Mary described the memory of the hours leading up to her accommodation by explaining how she was prepared to leave home by being told that she was going to a new school. Her experience of getting ready to leave home, the careful packing of belongings and the buying of new clothes, reinforced her perception of her valued position in the family. Overall, the hours leading up to her reception into care helped her to feel special:

Mary:

My parents told me that I was would be going on to a special school for people

with disabilities...I was happy at first because I remember getting a lot more attention than normal...The day before I went, I remember my mother and her friends washing me and getting me ready. I had a walking frame and a new little pink dress. My mother had no money to buy things but she had still managed to buy me a new dress. They all fussed over me.

Interviewer: How did that make you feel?

Mary: Special, and excited. It was as if I was the most important person in the world. I felt loved....

In this extract, Mary's description demonstrated her heightened sense of emotional excitement by the prospect of going to a new school. The school appeared to represent an opportunity for her to feel that her position in the family had developed, or become different, reinforced by her parents apparently over compensatory actions. The level of attention she received from the family strengthened this perceived position and helped her to feel valued. The symbolism contained in the imagery of the dress helped Mary to feel loved, and central to the affection of her parents. It is almost as if the act of giving of a new dress represented a certain newness, or a reinvigoration, that consolidated her sense of self-worth strengthening her sense of self.

Helen's description drew parallels with Mary's because she was led to believe that she would be leaving the family home because she was being treated to a special holiday. A further parallel can be drawn here to the distinct omission, or lack of recall, regarding any dialogue about what was actually happening:

Helen: We were led to believe that we were going on holiday. A special mini break. It was arranged through the Catholic school and

we were told to keep it a secret...The day before I remember spending the whole day with my Mam packing my bag. I was given new underwear and vests and my Da gave me some pocket money. In the morning, I remember having a fry [cooked breakfast] and the holiday men coming for us in their fancy car. I went with my sister and my brother and we were taken from our parent's trailer, kind of excited but kind of frightened as well. I had never been away from my parents before. I felt good though – really important – I thought to myself the others [children] would be dead jealous if they could see me.

Helen's recollection of what happened is vivid and painted a very positive picture. The material benefits that she received compensate for the experience of anxiety, and added to the sense of excitement that she remembers. In addition, Helen described her understanding that the trip was going to be a short one off occasion with a caveat of "a special mini break" as the "holiday men" came to her trailer. Even at this stage, Helen described the sense of pride and achievement that she felt at the prospect of going on holiday unlike other children. Even as the social workers came for her, she did not know that she was going into care.

Overall, there was a tendency for the experiences of special and increased affection to be interpreted as an expression of interfamilial solidarity, unity, and love. Peter contextualised his memory of affection from his mother in the hours that led to his accommodation as making him feel safe and protected - a feeling that he reported was unusual:

Peter: The mother was like a new person. She started to love us and that and tell us stories and sing us songs at night. My brother said she had gone mad in the head with all the drink but I remember feeling like a child again. It's strange because I was 8, but I missed that. I suppose I wanted it to stay like that forever...

Peter's description illustrated how he perceived his mother's actions as being liberating from an experience of domestic abuse. He saw his mother become different, or new, and described how this 'newness' became manifest in loving, attentive, and affectionate behaviour. This change also initiated a process of self-reflection that enabled him to adapt.

Peter described how the stereotypical maternal actions that he had not been accustomed to for some time were interpreted with an increased feeling of attachment. His concern that he perhaps should not have felt this way because he was eight, suggested that this potential transition from his former (childhood) self, to one that could experience affection at this age, was not easy. Whilst his brothers remained sceptical to their mother's behaviour, Peter wanted to trust her, to feel closer to her. The fact that he remembered finding these feelings strange, suggested that he might have felt vulnerable by his mother's 'newness' in a way that questioned his sense of independence and emotional detachment. Despite this confusion, Peter did, for a short time, remember feeling like a child who could be loved and protected. Of further interest is the use of the phrase "*the mother*" as it signifies how Peter's relationship with his mother changed over time, suggesting that as an adult he has emotionally distanced himself from her.

The description of feeling special and loved is crucial to understanding the way in which the people who took part in this study were prepared, or not, for the experience of going into care. At times, it was almost as if the actions of the parents

spoke louder than words, or expressed things that words could not. There almost seemed to be a deeper symbolic connotation to the actions of the parents which suggested that they may have believed that their child entry into care was appropriate. Like a rite of passage, it was as if each person who described these experiences were being prepared for a new and potentially better life in care. There was no reported fight, no reported resistance. Instead, families were seen to submit to the 'out-group' and allow their child to go onto care under that direction:

Ruth: A few hours after the social left, my father called us into the trailer for supper. I should have realised something was going on then and I went inside and Ma was sitting at the table with a big fruitcake that I think she had made. I sat down and they gave us a big slice of cake and I thought that it was great and we sat in silence and Da made some tea and Catchphrase was on the telly. My Ma had tears in her eyes.... She told us that she loved us and that she always would and she told us a story about a magic fiddle and got us all to sing to her and promise that we would always look after one another. We never really did anything like that you know and I remember thinking that something (4) I suppose I thought we were having a treat. We only did things like that on special occasions (2) I didn't think the cake was for us (Sobbing 5) I didn't think that it was going to be our last supper. I wouldn't have eaten it otherwise.

Ruth's memory of the supper represented a special and sad occasion. She explained that storytelling, singing, and eating cake were not common occurrences in her life. For her the hours leading up to her accommodation were separate from what she was used to. Reflecting on her memory of the cake, Ruth associated it with the last supper, which, according to Christian belief, was the final Passover meal that Jesus shared with his Twelve Apostles, and closest friends, in the hours before being sentenced to death. For Ruth, recalling the memory of the cake conjured a powerful symbolic image that represented her last memory of being at home with her family before being betrayed by her parents and sent into care.

5.3.2 Harrowing realisation

This sub theme refers to the experience of interfamilial separation and provides an understanding of the way Travellers and Gypsies make sense of their journey into care and the feelings of severance and loss that accompany this experience.

Eight people described how the experience of going into care came as a complete shock because it had never been spoken about in their family. Two thought that they were going away for a break, whilst six others had no reason to think that they were going to be taken into care at all. For these people the realisation that they were going to live in care came as a complete shock. In this short extract, Helen described the day when the social workers came for her:

Helen: At first, we thought it was the holiday people coming to collect us but it turned out to be social workers and instead of going on holiday like me mammy had said, we were going in care. (2) I remember them coming for us in their fancy car. I went with my sister and my brother and we were taken from our parent's trailer. And then as soon as they got us in the car, they were shouting at us to shut up

and stop making a noise. You know, stop the crying and the tears (4).

Interviewer: How did that made you feel?

Helen: We were devastated, betrayed and humiliated. I will never forget that feeling as long as I live (3).

Interviewer: Why do you think that your parents told you that you were going on holiday?

Helen: You mean lied. I know why they lied. In the traveller community, family is the most important thing. No one would never let your child go into care because it would be a sign that you were no good as a parent. You would be humiliated for life. We came from a domestic violence background and everything was kept quiet. Out of sight out of mind. As far as everyone knew, we were going on holiday, but that wasn't to be. It was very misleading.

Helen described the complete shock at the realisation that she was going into care. She had been led into a false sense of security which made her feel that she was being rewarded. The feelings of nervous excitement were replaced by feelings of humiliation and betrayal.

Reflective evaluation enabled Helen to justify her parent's actions by suggesting that they lied to her to protect the family's reputation. Helen rationalises this by explaining that if the wider community had known that her parents were sending her into care, their social standing may have been further scrutinised. However, this appeared to offer little consolation as Helen remains humiliated by this experience and her parent's actions.

The sense of humiliation was also evident in Ruth's account. The cake she had been given and the promises that she made to her parents remained vivid. Ruth's perception of having no prior knowledge of what awaited her is graphically described:

Ruth: I remember the police coming with the social and knocking on the door and my Ma flying out and screaming and shouting and I didn't know what was happening. And I got my sister and ran out and saw Ma hitting the police so I did it too and they tried to lock my Ma in the van and put me and my sister in the car and came out of the trailer with our things in Black bin bags and I wanted to fight and get my Ma, the woman [social worker] was telling us to calm down, I scratched her face and she called me wild, the car drove off, and the police were left fighting with me Ma. (5) I didn't know that that was the last day I would see my Ma.

Interviewer: What did you think was happening?

Ruth: I had no idea. I suppose I thought they were stealing us (4) the memory is making me feel sick (3) I can't get it out of my mind (3) I dream about it you know (Sobbing 5) me ma loved us but she couldn't mind us.

Ruth's memory clearly shows how she felt a duty to fight against the 'out-group' agencies of police and social work in order to help her mother and keep the promises that she had made. Ruth makes sense of this experience by explaining that she thought she was "being stolen". The imagery associated with this

experience is important because it represented her emotional condition, well-being, and perception of the 'out-group' at the start of her life in care. The fact that her belongings were put into bin bags is a further crucial aspect of this experience as it signified the impact this had on her feelings of value and self-worth, and presented an image of her own self-concept as being 'rubbish'.

For each person who shared this experience, the perceived lack of preparation or discussion about the fact that they would be going into care remained profoundly distressing. Peter provided a further example of this. Rather than being told that he was going to be taken into care he remembered how his mother took him from the women's refuge to social services:

Peter: The next day [after moving into the refuge] the Mother took us into the social services reception and told us to sit on a chair whilst she spoke to a woman about getting some money. We sat there and waited, but she never came back, so we went to look for her, you know what I mean? My brother stole a bottle of whisky from some shop and we climbed up onto the roof of a bank and started drinking it. I'm ashamed to say it now, a bit embarrassed really, but we all got drunk and started pulling the tiles off the roof and throwing them into the street. I was only 8 you have to understand. The police came and we got arrested. We spent the day in cells. My older brother got sent to a prison and we got sent to a children's home.

Interviewer: Do you know where your mother went?

Peter: Ah you know, she probably went off for the drink and drugs. She had no intention of

getting us from the social...she wanted us in care as she couldn't mind us on her own. She never came back. We had to make it on our own.

The memory of being abandoned followed his description of being made to feel vulnerable by his mother's unusual, maternal behaviour. He had remembered how on the previous night, his mother had started "to love us and that and tell us stories", an experience which helped him to feel cherished. However, his presumption that his mother had left him with social services to purchase drink and drugs suggested that as a child he was more accustomed to this type of behaviour. Climbing on the roof and drinking whisky suggested a defiant response, which, when carefully considered, was due to elements of fear, and an attempt to escape the reality of his situation of abandonment and the alienation of being alone amongst the 'out-group'. Running 'away' was clearly not an option, so he ran 'up', above the places where non-Traveller or Gypsy people generally are, to seek isolation and security. However, when he started to damage the roof, he was arrested and brought back down into the 'out-group' world. As his 'in-group' did not rescue him the ensuing sense of isolation and separation compounded his sense of independence as he realised that he had to "make it on his own".

5.3.3 Washing away my individuality

This subtheme refers to the experience of feeling different, and includes the measures taken in order to reduce this. It summarises all of those testimonies which described the process of moving into care and the subsequent loss of a Traveller and Gypsy identity.

Mary remembered vividly how her emotional transition into care began with her first day at the children's home. She recalled how her parents were keen to make sure that she would be well received, and looked after in the best possible way. However, rather than being welcomed, she described how the care staff shunned her parents and told them to go away:

Mary: They [my Parents] were very emotional people and the minute they went to hand me over they were dismissed and told to go away and I remember as soon as they were gone I was pushed into a bath and scrubbed because they told me I was dirty because I was from a Traveller family. I had beautifully thick, long Black hair; if you stood me in a line with the other girls, you could tell that I was a Traveller because of my hair. The care workers cut it all off...because they said it was dirty...they threw my pink dress away and gave me some other clothes to wear (4) they made you feel like they were doing you a favour, and that they were saving you from and awful life because you were a Traveller.

In this extract, Mary described how her experience of going into care was strongly associated with the memory of her parent's rejection and the feeling of separateness. By being pushed into a bath to be washed and by having her hair cut, Mary became engaged in the process of becoming separated from her family and her cultural roots. The action of throwing the new dress away, signified a throwing away of her Traveller identity. Furthermore, the picture that Mary created has particular regimental overtures, as if Mary was a new recruit in the armed forces. The rather cereal, and deliberate action of cutting her hair, washing her, discarding her clothes for the uniform of the children home all contributed the physical and emotional separation of the former self. This process signified both a physical and psychological shift from an Irish Traveller girl, to a child in care, and yet Mary, as a very young and vulnerable child, interpreted this to mean that the carers had her best interest at heart.

Ruth explained that she was sent into care and placed with foster carers from the settled community. She remembered being cut-off from her family and her community, and immersed in a culture that was completely separate to her own:

Ruth: The first memory I have of the foster home was how closed in it was. The house was dark and smelt of damp...there were stairs...I'd never seen stairs. I remember my bedroom being next to the toilet...I remember thinking to myself how dirty that was. It wasn't anything that I was used to...It was like unlearning what I knew was right...unlearning the Traveller way of life. The foster woman cried when she saw me and told me to get into the bath. She took my clothes and told me that she was going to throw them in the bin. They were the only things that I had. She gave me a pair of jogging bottoms and a t-shirt of the other girl that lived there... I suppose to her I must have looked different, but to me they were trying to wash away my Traveller identity.

For Ruth, the experience of moving into a foster home came as a complete culture shock. Used to living in a trailer which was light and airy with outside toilet facilities, she was faced with the humiliation of having to cope with a bathroom which was located next to her bedroom. The description of the foster carer crying the first time she saw her, further highlights the beginning of the process of change and the transference of potentially contrasting mores. A memory that was particularly salient for Helen:

Helen:

I remember pulling up and it was like a beautiful old-fashioned house, beautiful gardens and I remember these children being outside, playing on these lovely toys. We got inside the home and obviously got booked in, showed to your room. I remember going up the old-fashioned stairs. It was almost like an old-fashioned Tudor house, you know the high ceilings and that. And I remember a big book case on the right hand side as you go in and it was full of toys, dolls, cars, tractors, fire engines, everything. Then we went to our rooms and in the rooms, there was like aluminium beds? With dead thin mattresses and horrible bedding, and the weird thing I remember is that there were no toys in the room. So anyhow, as we got settled there we were taken to a dinner hall and you had, you know the old-fashioned long tabled with the benches and there was about twenty to thirty children? And you were given your dinner with no choice, slapped on a plate and if you didn't eat it you were made to sit there until you did eat it. I remember gagging because I couldn't eat it and I was crying for my sister to eat it because I couldn't eat it...I was terrified as well because if you didn't eat, they made you sit all day and you were tortured and bullied, and they would say dirty Gypsy children.

Interviewer:

Who would say that?

Helen:

The people who was running it. They treated us completely different to the other children. It was almost like. Looking at it from a child's point of view, that they didn't like us. They had made their minds up before we had even got there and I believe that was because we were Travellers. They were just horrible to us. We had to go to bed at like six o'clock and the other children were allowed to play downstairs. When we had a bath. They were like the old tin bath, and we all had to bath together with boys and girls. I mean I had never seen boy's bits before and although we had a brother, we never saw you know, bits! We just weren't use to that you know coming from a Travelling family you know we all washed separately you know, so it was like a culture shock for me to have to go through this. You were frightened to cry because you got punished and thrown upstairs in the bedroom. The toys that I thought you could play with in the big bookcase were only there for show. You weren't allowed to touch them.

Helen's descriptions of 'out-group' children highlighted amongst other things, the experience of being different, and the trauma of entering into care. Each aspect of her experience was at variance to her culture. The expectation that she would adapt to this new lifestyle without any form of resistance was enforced through emotional abuse and fear. No consideration was given to her social expectations or intimacy.

As she was physically stripped and exposed in her nakedness, she was also stripped of her sense of decency, integrity, and individuality further highlighting her vulnerability, and confusion:

Helen: The only time you were allowed to go into the garden was when there were visitors or when there was other children coming. You know when we landed there were children in the garden and then we were taken away. You weren't allowed to play out.

Helens recollection of her experiences which lay behind the facade of the children's home, were rigidity, bullying, and abuse which identified her as different to the other children. Highlighting the extreme anguish, and alarm that was shared across the whole group, Mary's memory of this remains deeply disturbing:

Interviewer: Can you describe what it was like living there on a daily basis?

Mary: (sobbing) Humiliating, degrading, disgusting, lonely, isolated. You feel your life was nothing; you were nothing (8). They used to beat us (5). They became random acts of violent racism, physical violence, sexual violence, emotional and psychological violence. They thought they could beat our ethnicity and cultural identity out of us.

In this extract, Mary's description of the way she was cared by those who are in a position of trust reaches beyond belief. Used as a method of purging her Traveller identity, it also highlighted how the weak and vulnerable can be targeted in order to conform or assimilate to non-Traveller or Gypsy convention. Throughout this experience, Mary was made to feel worthless, and was shamed. Those who were

responsible for her care exploited her isolation, her powerlessness, her disability, her vulnerability, and her trust.

In order to cope with a similar ordeal, Ruth described how she would try to hold onto her own cultural mores by remaining close to her sisters in a way which she considered important, but remembered how the carer would not allow her to do so:

Ruth: We were lucky because we got to share the same bedroom. I remember crying and crying and my sister getting into my bed to give me a cuddle before the foster carer came in and threw her out and called us dirty. We were not dirty; you have to bear in mind we were used to sleeping together in trailers. To me it was normal, but I was embarrassed, they made me feel dirty.

Interviewer: Can you describe what feeling dirty was like?

Ruth (3) Like I needed to wash away my Gypsy ways. Like I was not normal. (3) Like my skin hurt, but it would never go away. It was like they hated us and I could feel on my skin. (4) Like I needed to be sick to get rid of it.

The response of the foster carer signified a general lack of understanding towards the emotional needs of Traveller and Gypsy sibling groups who were brought into care. Whether the carer would have reacted in the same way to non- Traveller or Gypsy children is not known. However, the fact that she called Ruth and her sister dirty would suggest an inherent racist attitude and preconceived prejudices towards Traveller and Gypsy children. Rather than being acknowledged as a representation of need due to a culture or fear, it was labelled as being wrong, degrading, and unclean. The prejudice shown by the foster carer procured a deep and lasting sense

of embarrassment that left Ruth feeling like she needed to purge herself of who she was and what she valued – “*a feeling that could never be washed away*”.

In a further discussion, Mary explained how the determination of the staff to undo her identity as a Traveller girl became manifest in overt discrimination and emotional persecution:

Mary: They never understood why a woman with a disability at fifteen years old did not want to go to the youth club where there would be boys. They never got any of that and that was very hard. Not only was that wrong in terms of disability impairment but it conflicted with my own cultural values and that really damaged the very soul. When I told them why I didn't want to go I was told all sorts of things like, “you know you're never going to get married the way your sister did”. They would say “nobody wants you, not even your own”.

The staff at the home showed no insight or respect for Mary's wishes and feelings. From this extract we can see how Mary's social responsibilities concerning Traveller and Gypsy children were either not understood or simply ignored. Despite the fact that she was trying to maintain her sense of integrity as a Traveller female, her carers were attempting to separate her from her culture and family background whilst isolating her from theirs. This testimony reflects the experiences of six people who described the way in which no consideration was given to their physical and emotional well-being by those non-Traveller or Gypsy people who were responsible for caring for them.

5.3.4 Making it alone

The subtheme, '*making it alone*', refers to the way in which Travellers and Gypsies made sense of their cultural and interfamilial isolation. It describes the experiences associated with family, and highlights the effects of severance, and the apparent inability of care agencies to plan for, and include, the maintenance of relationships outside of the placement.

Four people in this study explained that they had no contact with their families or communities whilst they lived in care. Three people attributed this to constant child protection assessments, but for Helen the opportunity to see or talk to her parents whilst in care was simply not available:

Helen: *You weren't allowed any contact with your parents or phone calls or anything. It was hell.*

As with the discussion on transferability presented under the heading 'at the mercy of the system' above, and the specific point that some of the testimonies presented here could be dismissed by contemporary policy makers as being outdated, it is important to understand that the experiences being described continue to reverberate with the concerns being discussed and debated today. Whilst this argument will be advanced further in chapters 7 and 8, a brief illustration of these core themes here reveals that the power to facilitate contact arrangements remains weighed very much in favour of local authorities. What is more, transracial placements continue to cause emotional and acculturative distress for children as their feelings of cultural dislocation, separation and loss often remain unresolved. As shown in chapter 2, these experiences categorise the care experience for many and remain to determine and galvanise the yawning gap between those children who live and suffer in care and those who do not.

Consistent with the issues embedded in structural inequalities in wider social policy areas which will be presented in detail in chapters 7 and 8, the people who took part in this study also showed that the pragmatic arrangements required to facilitate

contact often failed to take into consideration the needs of the parent. For Travellers and Gypsies, this had a significant impact when family visiting was scheduled for specific times and days:

Mary: You know that with Travellers, when you are allowed visits, parent visits. Number one my parents were not able to read or write so they could not read the letters that the institute sent them. Number two they lived on the roadside so they did not have permanent address. I wasn't able to write them a letter. Number three, they were on the road with their own children. They had no money to drive to see me and when they would come [to visit me] it might be on the wrong day, or the wrong time. (Sobbing 6) They might have driven hundreds of miles to see me and when they arrived the staff turned them away when they got there because they had arrived on the wrong day and they would not see me. I remember crying as I could see them out of my window and hear the staff telling them to leave.

In this extract, Mary remembered the challenges associated with the arrangement of family contact. She described the barriers to maintaining family links and the unwillingness of the care staff to consider these. The rules of the institution did not reflect the needs of Travelling and Gypsy families or the importance of attachments and relationships between children and their parents. When contact did take place, Mary remembered how this experience was deeply upsetting. Mary described having mixed feelings and torn loyalties, her own wishes as a young person to see her parents and her concerns about them driving so far to see her:

Mary: When they [parents] came, I was just crying to go home and normally when they were going home, I didn't want... I hated it [contact] more than anything. It was too hard and I was glad when they left, but you have to understand that they were living in very difficult circumstances and they would have driven hundreds of miles. They wouldn't have had money and also they may have left the other children at home and when they got home the trailer may have been moved on. There might have been an eviction.

Interviewer: Did you ever tell your parents that the people at the institution were hurting you?

Mary: No, that would have killed them. That was something I had to deal with in my own way.

Whilst these testimonies reflected the experience of wanting to maintain contact with biological parents, they also indicated the challenges that the parents encountered as they attempted to resolve feelings of loss. Although each person made sense of their own experiences by blaming substantive social work practice for preventing contact, they do not account for the ambiguity that was communicated by their parent's apparent disengagement, or the fact that families were able to maintain contact, but instead chose not to do so.

The reports that some parents had been subjected to 'in-group' rejection for bringing unwanted attention from 'out-group' agencies, presents an important element which could have been compounded if the families were seen to cooperate with 'out-group' agencies. Not only had 'out-group' agencies intervened in Traveller and Gypsy family life, but they also set the terms and conditions of where and when the Traveller and Gypsy family could meet. Perhaps then, as parents tried to apply their own 'in-group'

power, they chose to boycott contact, and the applied power of the 'out-group', by attempting to organise contact under their own terms. However, rather than establishing 'in-group/out-group' boundary distinctions, their behaviour began to confirm the stereotypical view that Traveller and Gypsy parents were negligent and insensitive. The reaction of the parents and their perceived commitment to contact, created a further sense of confusion as each person who remembered this experience described a sense of unknowing in relation to their parents commitment.

Whilst some made sense of this experience by blaming the 'out-group' systems which were in place, Michael realised that his parents were to blame because they were unreliable and selfish. His testimony added a further nuance to the 'in-group/out-group' boundary distinctions by revealing that some Traveller and Gypsy parents might appear to be evasive because of they were unable to prioritise the needs of their child over their own negligence:

Interviewer: When you went to live with your foster carers were you still able to see your family?

Michael: I was yeah, and they kind of pushed for that to be fair because they wanted to keep that, they didn't want to give us a message that they were taking you away from your biological parents but I suppose that there were more let downs than anything like because (3) I suppose at that time at that age (5) there was a lot of let downs there. Say I was supposed to meet the mother and father in the morning for something to eat, there was times when they wouldn't show up and that was disheartening itself, you know and you kind of ask yourself the question why. There was definitely contact there but I

suppose due to let downs you kind of, you weren't too keen on pushing for visits then as much because as I said it was disheartening and as I said you didn't know if they were going to be there or not. More than likely, there was a good chance that they would not be coming all together because they were off too busy drinking or whatever and their kids were not important to them. That's the way I looked at it. It was disheartening.

Michael's overtures suggested that he had managed to cope with a constant stream of disappointment by becoming resilient to the feelings of loss and separation. Although there was the constant anticipation of seeing his parents followed by experiences of disappointment that compounded his feelings of rejection, this experience seemed to enable him to create some distance from his parents so that he could begin to integrate into his new life. This testimony is therefore very important because it shows the process of moving from a pre-care reality and into an in-care reality. As Michael became upset by his parent's behaviour, his carers were emotionally and physically available to comfort him and reduce his internalised feelings of rejection and isolation. It is here that the role of the carer was seen as the central element in the delivery of safe, secure, and effective care.

Of the ten people who took part in the study, Mary was the only person who described the experience of going home for family contact during her time in care. However, because of her parents own feelings of power and powerlessness, she explained that the opportunity to go home became trying until it eventually stopped altogether:

Mary: At first when I went home I loved it. I had a wonderful time and remember when my sisters used to hide me and my parents

would go mad because they had to take me back.

Interviewer: How often were you able to go home?

Mary: Mostly in the summer. Not really in the winter.

Interviewer: How long would you go home for?

Mary: I'd say up to three weeks. But as I got older, it was harder. You know going to the toilet and erm...my mobility and I was heavy and also Traveller accommodation is different.

For Mary, the lack of planning and support provided to her family to enable constructive family visits impacted on the quality of contact as she became older. As Mary required assistance with personal care and mobility, the lack of aids and adaptations in her home made the task of meeting her day-to-day care needs difficult and the experience of going home less enjoyable. For Mary, the lack of assistance, support, and recognition given in terms of the importance of family contact became a barrier to interfamilial cohesion and caused further feelings of separation and isolation that were compounded by the experience of living in care. Due to a lack of support, it was suggested that Mary's parents were eventually forced to accept the social workers suggestion that Mary would be better off living in care. Coping with the fear of bringing further unwanted attention onto the family from the 'out-group', Mary's family seemed to accept this decision and turn their attention (and power) from Mary and directed it towards her sisters who remained at home within the 'in-group'. The consequence of this realisation for Mary, and those other people who shared this experience, is presented below.

5.4.5 Feeling and becoming different

This sub theme '*feeling, and becoming different*' includes the experiences that made people feel different, in both positive and negative ways, and describes the processes and strategies that people employed to try to fit into their social structure.

For Michael, Sarah, Emma, and Lisa, their entry into care came as welcomed form of protection from their exposure to violence and abuse at home. Michael's description of being taken into care with his brothers and sisters provided an insightful summary of this and how it represented a welcomed change, which enabled him to re-evaluate his perceptions of family life and the role of the in-group:

Michael: It was happy I think pleasant. Different surroundings, change of scenery you know there wasn't fighting and arguing, there wasn't drink you know but the carers were just ordinary happy people. I kind of stood out a small bit in comparison to the family after what I was coming from you know.

Interviewer: Were they settled carers?

Michael: Yes, they were brilliant from day one. It started off as day trips you know a couple of hours here and there on account of my brothers and sisters staying with them and I used to think that they were happy go lucky people. I suppose at the time that was the surroundings I wanted to be in, I didn't want the whole er, the fighting the drink, you know all that side of things, I didn't like that surrounding so, I suppose when I was with my carers. It was a lot to take on but all credit to them for it. That kind of, yeah, I felt kind of loved, you felt loved, probably for the first time in a long time you know, there was peace of mind you know, different surroundings, different life.

Michael's experiences represented the opportunity to enjoy family life once more. To feel different and to feel loved. Although his carers were non-Travellers, Michael made affiliations with them because they were able to provide him with a sense of security, permanence, and love. He also described the respect he felt for them for taking him and his siblings into their home.

The concept of respect for foster carers, who are able to take in whole sibling groups on a permanent basis, was described by Lisa, Sarah, and Emma during a group interview:

Lisa: I thought it was good in one sense that I was going into a family that wanted a family that wanted three kids and that kind of, that felt nice/

Emma: Yeah/

Lisa You know what I mean like, deep down because you're going from different places here and there and you thinking in the back of your head, oh gosh, those people are only in it for the money, there is a few pound in it for them. If they loved us, they would take us on full time, where from day one my Traveller carers were fairly adamant that they wanted to keep the three of us together as well.

Sarah: (4) Yeah, normal life.

In this extract, Lisa, Emma, and Sarah explained how they made sense of their experience of being moved between foster placements as being indicative of the negative attitudes of foster carers. The narrative suggested that basic provision of a foster placement is not enough to engender feelings of attachment and security. Of significance is the message for the willingness of Traveller foster carers in particular to keep sibling groups together and to commit to Traveller and Gypsy children so

that the sense of identity and family security can enable them to feel valued, wanted and emotionally secure. What is clear from the following testimony is that without the sense of 'family', inclusion and love, Traveller and Gypsy children can feel worthless and marginalised:

Michael: I can remember one thing and this stands out to me till this day. My settled carers asked me what I wanted for Christmas and I asked for a racer bike. I wanted to be Lance Armstrong all the way and wanted a racer bike and no other bike would do and I thought that they were the best in the world and that they were genuine and I suppose that because I was a kid at the time I was vulnerable and they were probably putting up a false act. I didn't know whether foster care was something they liked doing or loved doing but at Christmas, I know this may sound stupid and silly and I shouldn't even be saying this and feel a bit selfish but. At Christmas I asked for a racer bike and something else, I think a pair of football boots, but erm. They had three kids of their own. Christmas morning one of the boys got a brand new mountain bike and all of the things he wanted. The other got Barbie dolls and prams and all of things that she wanted all brand new. But when I went to get mine, it was a racer bike which I wanted yes, but it was a second hand racer bike. I know that as I am saying this I may sound as if "oh that wasn't good

enough”, but that is not the case, I found the whole thing disheartening...It’s a bike yes, but it’s a second hand bike, but why did all the others get a brand new bike. These are the questions that I have been asking myself since I was a child. It has been confusing; do you know what I mean? And then you feel that you’re not cared for as much as the others. That’s the hardest bit in that sense.

This extract highlighted how Michael was made to feel different whilst living in care. The symbolism of the second-hand gift was indicative of the lack of understanding of his carers and his subsequent marginalisation by them. Notwithstanding any financial issues the carers may have had, this produced feelings of isolation, a lack of worth and sense of alienation from non-Traveller family. In this extract, Michael describes feelings of injustice, but also guilt, as he felt unwanted as a Traveller child in care. This type of experience was not unusual as it was shared across the whole group:

Helen: I remember that we didn’t have a lot but we were very clean we had white underpants and white vests, but there you got anyone’s knickers to wear, you got anybody’s socks. You were fighting for survival really and it made you feel like you weren’t human. It looked like me in the mirror but I didn’t feel like me.

Interviewer: Who did you feel like?

Helen: Like a shadow. (3) Hollow (5). Like I was see through. (2) Like I didn’t belong to no one.

In order to cope as a Traveller in care, Ruth explained that she attempted to change her accent in order to make her Traveller self invisible. However, she later reflected on the feelings of guilt because her actions meant that she was becoming separated from her family and the 'in-group', which she felt proud to belong:

Ruth: The kids at my new school picked on me because of my accent...I told my foster family but they didn't care...So I thought oh well, I won't speak with an accent anymore that way no one will know I am a Traveller. I wanted to make the Traveller me invisible.

Interviewer: Was that a difficult decision to make?

Ruth: (Sobbing) Yes because I loved my mum and dad....but it didn't work. The kids carried on picked on me anyway, saying I was just trying to be like them (5).

Interviewer: How did it make you feel about being a Traveller?

Ruth: (3) Dirty.

In this extract, Ruth used the term dirty. As mentioned earlier, she likened this to the experience of feeling that she needed to wash away her 'Gypsy ways', because she 'was not normal'. This further description of being made to feel dirty indicates the impact of cultural severance on the emotional well-being of all the people who took part in the study. In order to feel clean, Ruth tried to distance herself from the Travelling culture in order to feel "normal", to feel clean, so that she could fit in to her new life. However, over time, the impact of adopting the unusual 'out-group' mores began to impact on her ability to enjoy the contact that she had with her own family, an experience that was also shared by Mary:

Mary: When I was around other Travellers. I knew I was different. I had the smell of the

institution on me. I was losing my accent. I wasn't allowed to wear Traveller clothes anymore and that I was losing my Traveller culture and identity... You didn't understand when you went home. You didn't know your family. You had to relearn the Traveller stuff. I was bringing home certain settled values and then was making a fool of myself in front of my family. But also, what I really remember more than anything else, if there was anything in the news about Travellers, which invariably there was, everyone knew you were one of them. The news would be on television and I would sit there and the other children would resent you and if they saw a Traveller on the road, going by, the racism was unbearable and I felt embarrassed to be one.

In this extract, Mary explained the experience of feeling different and the deep sense of embarrassment associated with her Traveller identity. The experience of separation from her family caused a loss of identity. The need to relearn what it was like to be herself, as a Traveller, suggested that she had become emotionally and physically separated from her Traveller self. This presented a further paradox which was summarised by the desire to feel like a Traveller when she was at home, but at the same time coping with the problems associated with being a Traveller in care. Ruth encapsulates similar experiences with a description of coerced assimilation:

Ruth: You trust these people to look after children but they hated us especially the foster carers. They hated our culture. In the Traveller culture, girls get their ears

pierced at about three weeks old. They didn't understand the culture, they wanted to change it. You were an innocent child who didn't know what was going on and you were persecuted for having a culture. You have to accept who people are and where they come from. You can't try and change people it is wrong.

The concept of trust demonstrated the vulnerability of Travellers and Gypsies living in care who rely on their substitute carers to meet and provide for their day-to-day needs. In this extract, Ruth explained that rather than supporting her customary mores, the carers tried to change her belief systems because they perceived them as being different and unwanted. Not only did these experiences have a significant impact on each person's sense of identity, but it also isolated them from their peer groups and made them targets of racial hatred:

Helen: The other children never wanted to play with us. They heard what the care workers were saying. They treated us horrible.

And in some instances physical abuse:

Peter: One night the other boys in the home got into my bedroom and pulled me out of bed. They had been drinking and poured beer on me and pissed on me. They squirted my toiletries at me and called me filthy pikey. They barricaded the door and set about beating me saying that I would fight back if I was a proper Gypsy.

Interviewer: What did the care staff do?

Peter: Nothing. They said that I could phone the police (5). From that moment I just kept

myself to myself. I had to change. I thought that they (4) that they would somehow would leave me alone if I was quiet.

Interviewer: Did it work?

Peter: (Laughing 5) Did it fuck. Over time, I started dealing them the drugs and selling them the alcohol. A year or so later I got the lad that pissed all on me and broke his head with a brick. They sent me to secure for that one, but no one bothered me again. You see quiet didn't work on its own (3) do you know what I mean.

These testimonies revealed the traumatic experience faced by some Gypsies and Travellers in care. For four people, the act of describing these experiences brought back painful memories of the violence and malice, which they encountered at the hands of other non-Traveller or Gypsy children and non-Traveller or Gypsy care staff. Like Ruth, Peter attempted to minimise the targeted assaults by making a decision to become inconspicuous, however, it did not stop the torment that he was experiencing. Peter's attempts to survive, encapsulated the need to rebel or fight, in direct retaliation against the 'out-group' system. His determination to seek revenge suggested lasting and deep-rooted feelings of anger due to the grievous offences committed against him.

The description of premeditated survival strategies that enabled Travellers and Gypsies living in care to become different was shared across the whole group. Although three people described the need to become aggressive, four people described the need to become emotionally withdrawn. The experience described by Mary enabled a further understanding of this:

Mary: There were instances of hair being pulled, being pinched and humiliated in front of

other children or new staff. New staffs were trained by humiliating you.

Interviewer: Were other children humiliated?

Mary : Yes, but it was also due to a hierarchy of disability. If you had Spina Bifida where you were incontinent, they walloped you. If you were deaf, you were used by the carers because you could walk and you could mind small children. If you were from a single parent family you were...your life wasn't worth living. And if you were a Traveller they absolutely gave you a dog's life. It was harder for Traveller boys. Traveller boys were just humiliated. By the time I was eleven or twelve, I was having a biological assessment because I wouldn't talk, I wouldn't, and the institution blamed everything on to my family. But I know it wasn't because of my family, it was because of the way I was being treated by the institution.

In a sense, Mary's decision to become what may be termed 'a selective mute' highlighted the extreme trauma that some Travellers and Gypsies can experience in care. For Mary, the constant physical and sexual assaults that led to her social anxiety, became manifest in complete emotional and social withdrawal.

5.3.6 Summary

This superordinate has shed some light on the way in which Gypsy and Traveller children can be made to feel different in care and has described the behavioural tactics that were developed and used to manage this. It has shown that for many, the journey into care presented a real paradox. They were Gypsies or Travellers on the

one hand, and they were children who lived in care on the other, both from which there was no escape. For many, the separate treatment they received highlighted their difference and marginalisation thus reinforcing their isolation from both the 'in-group' and 'out-group' environments within which they were sent to live.

5.4 A war against becoming settled

The superordinate theme '*a war against becoming settled*' refers to the process by which Travellers and Gypsy children living in care described their struggle to maintain their sense of identity whilst purposefully rejecting the customs and values that were being forced, explicitly and implicitly, upon them. The description of the war was accompanied by a good deal of collective and individual confusion and anxiety. It was defined by physically striking out against the carers, feelings of alienation, loss, and stress. This theme is representative of a war against marginalisation, in which Travellers and Gypsies living in care described the experience of losing cultural and psychological contact with both their traditional culture, and the larger society, whilst remaining determined to maintain their own Traveller and Gypsy identity.

In order to explore the theme '*a war against becoming settled*' in specific detail, it has been divided into two sub themes. These are entitled '*the battle between my heart and my head*' and, '*unity in adversity*'.

5.4.1 The battle between my heart and my head

The subtheme '*the battle between my heart and my head*' refers to the psychological stresses that were experienced by Travellers and Gypsies who were isolated from their own family and community. Six people described the process of cultural isolation and explained that they had tried to make sense of it, and come to terms with it, by attempting to integrate into their new culture. However, for these people, the attempt to integrate was often barred due to experiences of racism and abuse. This not only reinforced their sense of separateness as Travellers and Gypsies, but it also contrasted with their 'in-group' self-concept that saw the determination to integrate as being offset against the simultaneous determination to resist the values and customs associated with the 'out-group'. On this basis, people who shared this experience described the process of losing touch with his or her Traveller or Gypsy self. This then led to a physical and emotional battle as each person attempted to

regain some sense of control over his or her internalised perception of what it meant to be a Traveller or Gypsy.

Mary explained how physical, sexual, and emotional abuse had categorised her experience of living in a children's home. Over time, the opportunity to escape abuse of the carers came with the prospect of being fostered by non-Traveller or Gypsy families. Reflecting on this experience, she described the occasion of being introduced to many different non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, but made sense of this as a further attempt by the settled community to take away her Traveller identity:

Mary: I was a bold [naughty] child. I didn't like them [potential foster carers], I was bold. I wouldn't do as they told me. I had no interest in what they wanted me to do. There were times when I could have gone to live with a foster family. I met with a lot of families. I remember one family that I could have lived with buying me a large dolls house. All the other children were jealous of me because they said the doll's house was so beautiful and the carers told me that was very lucky to have such a wonderful foster family, but I smashed it up. I smashed it up and no one could understand why. But I know why. I never wanted to live in a house; I never wanted a dolls house, I never wanted to be settled, I never wanted to be like them, the idea of that was alien to me. They were trying to take away my Traveller identity. But they weren't able to. They weren't able to.

In this extract, Mary's powerful analogy represented by the doll's house provided a clear sense of duty to her own culture and the need to rebel against the non-Traveller or Gypsy carers who she felt wanted to take away her sense of self and her identity as a Traveller girl. The experiences of Peter provided a similar picture and further contributed to the understanding of the war against becoming settled:

Peter: I didn't do anything that the care staff wanted me to do. I feel bad about it now because I used to give them real trouble. I think that I must have been restrained every day. But I thought that if I did what they said, I would become like them. Erm, yes that may have been an easier option and I knew that if I did what they said I would have got my pocket money and special treats and that, but I thought that I had to give them a fight. (3) I think I wanted to be with a foster family and when kids left the unit to go to foster carers I would rage, but I was so angry they told me no foster carer would have ever have me. No one wanted me. Yeah I could have done what they wanted but why should I? They never did anything for me. They never let me be a Traveller.

Peter's description encapsulated the views of all of the people who took part in the study. For them, the desire to feel like a Traveller or Gypsy was of paramount importance in the sustained development of identity. For the six people living with settled carers, the opportunity to feel valued as a Traveller or Gypsy was removed whilst conformity to non-Traveller or Gypsy values was expected.

5.4.2 Unity in adversity

This subtheme refers to the process by which Travellers and Gypsies experienced unity whilst living in care. For eight of the people who took part in this study, the ability to deal with the traumatic and harrowing experiences of living in care was enabled by maintaining a strong sense of self alongside developing relationships with other children. For Ruth, this sense of unity came from being able to look after and care for other Traveller and Gypsy children who lived in the same children's home:

Ruth: When other Traveller children came, even when you would gravitate towards them, an emotional and psychological gravitation, particularly if they were younger children, you would want to mind [look after] them, you know?

Interviewer: How did the emotional and psychological gravitation help you as an Irish Traveller?

Ruth: It was like I wasn't alone. In my culture there are women like matrons, who don't have their own children but mind other people's children. I was like that. I felt important because those children needed me (4) and I needed them. I looked out for them. I was like what I was meant to do. It made me feel good.

In this extract, Ruth described the physical and psychological attachments or affiliations with other Traveller children. This was due to the cultural mores and gender responsibilities, which enabled her to maintain the unity and understanding between herself and other Traveller children. This was important because it enabled her to promote and maintain their identity and sense of belonging. For Mary, the sense of unity was also established between herself and other abused children from

non-Traveller or Gypsy backgrounds. This is graphically described in the next extract:

Mary: On a personal level, I'd like to remember the settled children who often took the beatings for Travellers. In my own case two or three settled children who didn't need anti-racist training they just knew that Travellers were being targeted. These children and young adults had courage they took risks, they hid us in bathrooms, in cupboards, under beds all sorts of places...All of the other children knew what was happening and they tried to stop it. That was the only time I saw love between Travellers and the settled, you know. And also, because we were going to be leaving care we were not soft, we were independent. We knew how to make choices whether they were good or bad and we made them. Whereas other disabled people who were not put into care, who were left at home, became institutionalised by their parents. We always think that it is the ones in care that are docile. Not in my experience and even people with learning disabilities and other disabled people knew they were smart. It wasn't the care workers that did this. It was the other children.

There are clearly two complimentary and powerful components to the experience of unity described by Mary. First, is the ability of children to be separate from

institutional and personal racism when their sense of fairness was challenged. The unity described, suggested a commonality, which was due to, being children and being children in care. Taken together, the sense of solidarity which prevailed demonstrated how children living in care are able to work together in order to protect or preserve others. Secondly, it confirmed how Mary's resilience and sense of self-preservation enabled her to become more independent and self-reliant in later life.

Mary's personal accounts rationalised how disabled children who have lived at home with their parents can become very dependent. Her experience of survival, and the skills she developed to enable it, provided her with the ability to leave care with confidence. Coupled with her own determination and autonomy, she gained an ability to overcome social challenges usually associated with care leavers. These skills and coping mechanisms provided Mary, and those other people who also described the experiences of unity, with the determination to develop and achieve the sense of self that they had been fighting for so long to maintain.

5.4.3 Summary

This superordinate theme has described the process by which Travellers and Gypsies living in care way from their families and communities can develop mutually advantageous relationships with those around them in order to overcome and minimise the challenges that they face. On all accounts, the sense of independence described by the people who took part in the study was not enabled through the guidance and support of the carers, rather it was developed and realised through self-determination and resilience, including the unity and social cohesion of the children themselves.

5.5 Leaving care and the changing relationship with the self and others

The superordinate theme 'leaving care and the changing relationship with the self and others' refers to the experience of personal and social emotional change experienced in early adulthood. With the exception of the four people placed with Traveller foster carers, the experience of changing relationships with the self and others represents a narrative of psychological alienation and social marginalisation.

For the six people who grew up with settled carers, the experience of community ostracism was consolidated by the experience of living and suffering in care. For those leaving care, the opportunity to reintegrate to the Traveller or Gypsy community was made that much harder because they were, seen by some community members as being non-Travellers or Gypsies. For these people there was a growing sense that they did not fit into the settled community because they wanted to maintain their Traveller or Gypsy identity. However, at the same time, they also felt that they did not fit within the Traveller or Gypsy community, because they are seen by the 'in-group' as being part of the 'out-group'. For this reason, they were labelled with the generally negative stereotypes that accompany that view.

In order to make sense of this complexity, this superordinate theme is divided into four subthemes. These are; '*living with the self in public and in private*', '*experiencing social stigmatisation*'; '*silenced by humiliation*'; and, '*feeling like a jigsaw but with the pieces missing*'.

5.5.1 Living with myself, in public and in private

This subtheme described the way in which people related how, because of living in care as Traveller and Gypsy children, they had experienced deterioration in their sense of self, and were engaged in a struggle to manage that process.

Mary's account captured much of the reported experiences of despair in relation to the deterioration of the self, and the struggle to assimilate the experience of living in

care into their new in-care self-concept. The changes Mary reported were associated with significant distress, which at times outweighed the experience of being separated from her family, and compounded her sense of social rejection:

Interviewer: How has your experience of living in care affected you as an adult?

Mary: I am very institutionalised in some ways. I'm an adult that is not able to have any intimate relationships or any physical and that I find very difficult to understand and to live with and to manage. I had to live in a psychiatric hospital at times. I have had an eating disorder, I could not eat in front of other people, I cut my breasts. Really have assaulted myself. I can't escape the feelings of who I am and what they did to me.

In this extract, Mary's description epitomised the process of institutionalisation which was demonstrably very challenging for Traveller and Gypsy children. As this has had a profound effect upon her sense of human separation, Mary managed this, her painful memories and chronic social anxiety, by way of self-harm. Her description of not being able to eat in front of other people was a common experience for Travellers and Gypsies who had grown up in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers away from their families and communities:

Ruth: I still now have a problem with food. I still get now certain food that were in the home, I could never eat it again. It makes my stomach turn. The memories never go away.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Ruth: It's who I am. Damaged goods. People can't understand why I get so upset about eating certain foods. They say I should get on with it. I feel like I have to pretend that I am someone else to feel normal.

Interviewer: What is that other person like?

Ruth: Strong, confident, nice. Someone that people can love.

Interviewer: How is that person different to you?

Ruth: You don't want to know. I am too ashamed.

This extract highlighted a number of important points. Ruth's description of her relationship with food represented the precipitating factors of an eating disorder caused through the lack of an effective support system. For Ruth, the long-standing behavioural, biological, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, and social factors that dominated her experience of being in care, continued to impact upon her as an adult. Ruth continues to pretend and fantasise in order to feel normal. In reality, her relationship with food presented a significant social barrier in terms of empathy and understanding.

For others the memory of being in care remained a strong and influencing factor in their lives. As Helen explained, the impact of her experience in care as a child continues to impact on her emotional well-being as an adult:

Helen: I can still smell the smell there. Bloody mince and creamy chicken slops, semolina, skin on custard the crust on your bread, you never forget...We thought we were going on a holiday but you weren't. I'll never forget it. I can't even to this day go to where it is at. If anyone speaks about it, I freeze. It makes me feel sick. I

get a cold shiver. If you didn't eat your tea, you were made to sit for hours and hours and then they would force it down your throat 'waste not want not' they would say. And they would try to starve you the next day because you hadn't eaten. I do believe, and my doctor believes, that is why I have my problem. My weight goes up and down all the time from a 10 to a size 20 because I have such a problem with food and I just comfort eat. I drink sugary things and eat sweets. Things that I was never allowed, I gorge on. I think that is because I wasn't allowed it and its one of my ways of coping with it. It is horrible.

Helen's description of the memories associated with living in care presented an understanding of the way in which food was used by carers used as a form of punishment. Helen described poignant experiences of being in care. The memory of her traumatic experiences with food has had a significant influence which has left her with not only a physical phobia towards food, but also a tendency to over indulge in foods that make her feel happy but which are harmful to her health. This is a double-edged sword, as the effects of this continue to impact on Helen's emotional equilibrium as she struggles to maintain her weight and well-being.

Struggling to balance emotional well-being is a significant factor in the lives of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care away from their families and communities as children. For Mary, Ruth, and Helen, this struggle became manifest in eating disorders and other types of physical self-harm. During a telephone interview, Josephine explained how the struggle to cope with a life in care became represented in another less socially obvious ways:

Josephine: I have had problems with emotional issues throughout my life and my relationships have suffered. I sometimes fall out with friends. Being an adopted Showman has affected who I am as an adult because I haven't had proper support to find my family and I am finding it hard to communicate my feelings, or even find someone to help me. Because I felt that I have been sheltered from the Showmen world, I bought a trailer and took to the road to look for my parents, but the community didn't want me and the social took my children into care and now they live with settled people and they will never know the Traveller way.

Interviewer: What is the difference between a settled way and a traveller way?

Josephine: (6) I never know. But I am not sorry for what I have done. I lost my kids but at least I have been a Traveller in my own right.

Interviewer: What about your adopted parents?

Josephine: I never see them. They're not my own.

In this extract, Josephine explained how her experiences influenced her attachments and sense of identity. This has affected her adult relationships, and more significantly has meant that she has been ostracised and marginalised by other Showpeople. For this reason, Josephine's journey through her adult life has been far from easy.

The phenomena of history repeating itself, as her own children have been taken into care, has been rationalised by Josephine "*at least I have been a Traveller in my own*

right” and the need to place her identity as a Traveller, is the most significant driving ambition. In terms of self-harm, Josephine’s actions have severed her relationship with her children and adoptive parents. Not only is she ostracised from those people around her, but continues to take risks in pursuit of her dream of finding her own parents. There is a clear emotional struggle in Josephine’s search for a sense of self, which presented an anomaly due to significant sacrifice and being disaffected about her parental responsibilities.

5.5.2 Experiencing social stigmatisation

This subtheme represents those times when the people who took part in this study talked about social stigma. It characterises the experience of social disapproval, which Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care have endured, and the personal characteristics or beliefs that are perceived to be separate to ‘in-group’ mores. Within this subtheme the experience of stigma, which has been raised previously, was described in two forms. First, stigma for being a Traveller or Gypsy and secondly, shame for being a Traveller and Gypsy who had lived in care as a child. The first experience highlighted the way in which Travellers and Gypsies can be stigmatised by the care system due to cultural differences, and the second sheds light on the way in which the Travelling community can attach the dishonour to those who have lived in care. Both these forms of stigmatisation are due to a deviation from what is perceived to be consistent with the prevailing normative ‘in-group’ mores.

The stigma experienced by Travellers and Gypsies living in care was represented by the way that each person described a process of being treated differently by the social care system just because they were Travellers or Gypsies. For five people, the ability to describe their understanding of stigma came from the ability to read the case notes and files that documented their time in care. As Mary explained:

Mary: I found out that, in my file, they wrote terrible things about my family. Stuff that was absolutely racist, that they would not have been able to write about other

children. They wrote that my parents were alcoholics, that there was domestic violence and stuff that they didn't really know. My parents were humiliated. I was humiliated.

This extract described the experiences of stigmatisation through records and case files maintained by carers. On the one hand, there was a sense of empowerment as the right to information was afforded. However, this was replaced on the other hand by oppression, stigmatisation, and an assumed knowledge of a family who were experiencing social hardships, social rejection, a loss of power, and the risk of community ostracism.

For all of the women who took part in the study, the experience of stigmatisation linked to the fact that they grew up in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers. Understanding this is vital because it remains a significant barrier to their social reintegration into the 'in-group'. Ruth's description of social stigma provides a clear understanding of the experiences of the whole:

Ruth: When I left care, I tried to get back in with my family. My Uncle and Aunty took me on and let me live in their trailer for a while. When we went to fairs and that, all the boys would all look down at me and call me dirty. They knew that I had been in care and they all thought that I was like a settled girl. That I had been having sex, that I had been to nightclubs and that I had taken drugs. You see, the country people look at us and see what they think are Gypsies. The same way boys look at me and see a settled girl. Because what they have seen on the television, and that

they think that I am dirty, and because of this, no man in his right mind would marry me. If someone did, they would be outcast.

Interviewer: So where do you see yourself in five years?

Ruth: Oh Jesus, now you're asking! Where do you get these questions from? Five years (3) in five years I'll be here minding others children cleaning people's trailers. This is me now and forever, you have to understand that it won't be different in five years or fifty this is me and that is that. I'll still be seen as the dirty country girl that wants to be a Gypsy.

In this passage, Ruth explained how the fact that she has lived in care with settled carers jeopardised her opportunity to marry a Gypsy man. This remains true due to perceived prejudices and beliefs about non-Traveller or Gypsy girls and women whose actions, and conduct, become manifest in stereotypical perceptions of them. Ruth explains that some men interpret this stereotype to be representative of the 'out-group', and for this reason have accused her of being sexually promiscuous. On these grounds, she feels that she continues to be perceived as being contaminated by the 'out-group', and has recognised that for this reason no Gypsy man would marry her. In terms of the prompt to discuss future hopes and aspirations, Ruth recognised that her future has been determined by her past, and explained that she can never reverse the stigmatisation that she has experienced.

5.5.3 Silenced by humiliation

This subtheme refers to the experience of being silenced by the feelings of personal and social humiliation. For the women who lived in care away from their families and

communities as children, the experience of humiliating treatment was not contained within the period of childhood.

In light of an emerging understanding of the sense of shame associated with Traveller and Gypsy women who lived in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, post-care experiences were often described in terms of secrecy and taboo. For many female Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care, that part of their lives is often hidden from social view because of the resulting connotations and personal stereotypes that may ensue:

Interviewer: Do people treat you differently because lived in care?

Helen: I haven't told anybody. There is only my parents and brother and sister that know. Because of domestic violence, we were classed as social outcasts and none of our family knew that we were taken into care. I wouldn't tell anybody.

Interviewer: What do you think would happen if people found out?

Helen: Well you'd be shunned. They would think you were half radge, they would think that there was something wrong with ya. My aunties and uncles and cousins don't even know that we went into care.

Interviewer: Does your husband know about your time in care?

Helen: Yeah. I didn't tell him at first. Not until years later. I was frightened that he would have left us. I mean his family would not have wanted their son marrying someone like me. We don't talk about it.

Interviewer: You mentioned the word 'half radge'. Can you describe what that means?

Helen: Half radge yeah, it means that your settled – not a true Traveller.

Interviewer: Is that a bad thing?

Helen: Oh yeah, if people knew that I had been in care, they would think that I had been going on like a settled girl, going to clubbing, drinking, taking drugs, and having sex. They would think that I was dirty and that I had lost the Traveller way. People would say that I as half radge. Nobody wants to talk with someone that is half radge.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Helen: Well angry. I never did those things. It's not my fault I was sent into care. I thought I was going on holiday.

In this extract, Helen described how she has been forced to keep that fact that she lived in care as a child a secret. She explained that if people knew the truth she would be ostracised and labelled as a potential imposter. The fact that she had to live in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers compounded this prejudice as rumours about her childhood could be used to label her as promiscuous. As her family had already been marginalised by the community because of domestic abuse, Helen was enabled to keep her childhood experiences secret and maintain an outward impression of socially constructed notions of integrity. For this reason, she has been enabled to marry a Traveller man.

Helens description of being “*half radge*”, a derogatory word that is used to describe Travelling people who are considered to be settled, sheds some light on the potential divisions that may exist within Travelling communities more generally. It highlighted the view that other Travellers and Gypsies may have, should knowledge of her

history become more widely understood. As Helen explained, the labelling of being “*half radge*” can present many barriers in terms of social inclusion and social equality. The concerns regarding the consequences of this label suggested a patriarchal hierarchy within some Travelling communities that sees access, and sustainability, as linked to the ‘purity’ of ancestry and the continued survival of certain ‘in-group’ mores through strictly governed socialisations. When Traveller and Gypsy children enter the care system, there is a developing sense, as within Helen’s experience, that because this type of socialisation cannot be guaranteed, or indeed moderated, the patriarchal values and mores so essential to social inclusion are seen as being diluted or lost. Moreover, if the fact that women had grown up in care became common knowledge, as evidenced in the experiences of Ruth above, the role of many of these women could be reduced to subservience:

Interviewer: Does your husband know about your time in care?

Laura: No.

Interviewer: Can you tell me why?

Laura: Because he would leave me.

Interviewer: Why would he leave you?

Laura: Because he’d see me as dirty. I have to hide all of that. It’s a secret. I can’t talk about it because I would be humiliated.

Interviewer: Is it easy to keep it a secret?

Laura: Ah Jesus! (Shouting) Is it easy to live a lie? Is it easy to hide it all? Is it easy to be someone I am not? (Talking) What do you think Dan? (11) The thing is; I have to, for my children, for my family without them I am nothing. That part of my life has finished. My future is more important do you know what I mean? Can we talk about something else now?

In this section, Laura explained the importance of keeping her care history a secret. To maintain her reputation as being clean, she clarified the concern that if her husband found out that she lived in care as a child she would lose her family because her purity as a Traveller woman would come into question. The prompts used to explore this topic initially provoked a very emotional and angry response. Asking Laura to explain why she has to keep her childhood a secret from her family, the most important people in her life, highlighted the trauma that she can experience whilst trying to pretend that she is someone that she is not.

Laura's description of being someone else, living a different life to that of her childhood, highlighted the coping strategies of those women who are silenced by the community and their ability to maintain a distinction between their childhood and their adult lives. It is as if they have to set aside their early experiences and keep them under lock and key so that they are able to marry and have a family. However, the consequence of suppressing such a traumatic childhood, for the sake of others, can be extremely profound. Whilst three people who took part in this study described an experience of social inclusion within the community because of the fact that they had managed to keep their history secret, they all explained that the pressures of hiding the truth had a serious impact on their emotional well-being. Helen's account of this epitomises the experiences of the whole group:

Interviewer: Are you able to talk to anyone about your time in care?

Helen: No not really. I actually had a mental breakdown a few years and that's when I decided to talk about it with my family and my counsellor. You can't have a breakdown in the Traveller community because you'd be looked upon like you were half radge. Again, you bring humiliation to your family. You'd be ruined.

Interviewer: Were you humiliated?

Helen: No. No one knows about my breakdown. I was in hospital and they thought I went off with the trailer for a few months.

Helen explained how the pressure of concealing the truth about her childhood eventually led her to have a nervous breakdown. Whilst this enabled her to feel able to explore her experiences with her family, the fact that she had to pretend that she was away 'travelling' in order to conceal her hospital treatment highlighted the concern about the significance of the label "*half radge*" and that of respectability so intrinsic to the notion of 'in-group' social inclusion. This suggested that not only do women who have grown up in care have to conceal their childhood experiences in fear of social marginalisation, but they also have to conceal the fact that they may have additional emotional support needs that cannot be met within the 'in-group' because this could be perceived in the same light. If the truth became common knowledge, the whole family could become ostracised and the support offered through collective means could be lost, potentially resulting in the process of social alienation, which led to her accommodation into care as a child.

In contrast to Laura and Helen, Sarah, Ruth, and Mary described an experience of wanting to talk about their experiences in care. The fact that they had grown up in care was common knowledge among their families and communities. However, the ability to make sense of their experiences in a public way was often met with resentment and avoidance:

Ruth: For the most part I am embarrassed to talk to people about it, which is why we don't talk about it. But when I speak to other Travellers that were in care they describe the same hell, you were neglected, you were humiliated but we have to suffer in silence because other Travellers don't like it.

Ruth explained how the embarrassment caused by having to live in care as a child created significant social hardships. She described that although other Travellers may have shared similar experiences, their ability to talk about it, and collectively challenge what happened, remains socially restricted. The 'in-groups' constant reaction to them, and the insistence that they conceal their traumatic experiences, appears only to ensure a sense of harmony prevails. This is further compounded by the social maintenance of strict 'in-group' values concerning the socially expected perception of women. However, the consequence of this meant that whilst some settled people may be able to unite under a commitment to fight for their rights and prosecute those who have abused and neglected them whilst in care, Travellers and Gypsies remain silenced by their experiences because of the social humiliation that the disclosures of abuse could bring. For Mary, the suppression of those who have lived and suffered in care presents a barrier to acknowledgement in their fight for vindication and justice:

Mary: For settled people telling their stories was about whether they were going to be believed. But, for us Travellers we couldn't tell our families or the rest of our community what was done to us in these places. In fact in some instances when Travellers did talk about what happened they were shunned into silence.

The risk of humiliation, associated with the experience of abuse and neglect, further compounded the expectation to remain silent about the types and extent of the ill treatment and abuse that they experienced. Not only can this conceal the lived experiences within the community, but it can also contribute to the marginalisation of Travellers and Gypsies within the care system and dominant discourse more generally. For those trying to fight for Gypsy and Traveller rights, the attitudes of the 'in-group' towards 'out-group' interference can create a significant barrier to social equality and pragmatic recognition of the trauma that was experienced. For Ruth, the

apparent denial that any Traveller or Gypsy child would ever have to go into care created and fuelled additional humiliation for those that did:

Ruth: I try and talk to families about the Traveller and Gypsy children that are in care and people look at me sideways and say that a traveller child would never go into care because the family would always step in to take care of them. For them the idea that a traveller child could go into care is absurd. But its true Traveller children do go into care because the problems that you have are the same problems that we have. In fact, our problems are worse because everything is hush hush. Going into care is seen as a terrible thing. Every woman you speak to would say that they would never let their own child into care. But it happens. I get angry when people say oh Traveller children never go into care. I did. If the community were that concerned about children they would have never let me go into care but they did and I think well what was different about me, if you are that protective why didn't you protect me.

In this extract, Ruth highlighted a crucial point in understanding the attitudes of Traveller and Gypsy communities to childcare, and the way in which those who had lived in care made sense of it. Ruth explained the strong sense of denial that a child would ever be taken into care because the extended family would always ensure that the child remained within the community. Where this did not happen, perhaps because the family had been ostracised or became further victims of their own

chaotic lifestyles, the rhetoric around children in care was seen as being frustrating and confusing. For the six people who were not accommodated by family members or the wider community, there was a strong sense of frustrated confusion. On the one hand, people felt guilty that they were the ones who had to live in care, yet on the other hand, they felt angry and resentful towards the community who failed to recognise their needs, due to their strong sense of 'in-group' cohesion which they believed to exist. The reluctance to accept the realism and position of Traveller and Gypsy children in care constructed real and material barriers that silenced those who did, and suppressed their experiences as being somehow fabricated or implausible according to reported 'in-group' convention.

It is a noteworthy observation that the experiences contained within this theme were limited to women. Neither Peter nor Michael described the experience of being silenced by their community. This is a crucial finding as it further highlights the expected social representation of women within some Traveller and Gypsy communities. For the women who did take part in this study, reputation and integrity were reported as being of paramount importance particularly as it enabled marriage and the ability to raise a family. As we have already seen, where public knowledge of a woman's experience in care, particularly if the carers were non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, becomes common, women can be alienated and labelled as artificial because their strict socialisation cannot be guaranteed. Consequently, they were seen as dirty, and humiliated for their association with the 'out-group'. Not only did this impact on Traveller and Gypsy women's ability to achieve full social integration, but it also prevented them from achieving recognition and vindication of the abuse and neglect that they suffered in care, and can continue to suffer as adults.

5.5.4 Feeling like a jigsaw but with the pieces missing

This subtheme refers to the experience of feeling incomplete and presents the challenges that Travellers and Gypsies may encounter when trying to find their family and sense of self. For those who grew up away from their families and communities, the experience of having lost a sense of a Traveller or Gypsy identity is

very important. Writing in a letter, Josephine suggested that her search for the sense of self has become an all-encompassing pursuit:

Josephine: I have been unable to find my birth parents. This has left me needing to do this before they die and it will help me more emotionally and it is something that I need to do to grow into a more confident person. As a showmen being in care I felt great separation and loss and having no knowledge of your roots rips you inside and causes a massive hole. I have no proper identity. I'm like a jigsaw with the pieces missing. My soul yearns to belong and to understand more, and to find the missing pieces will make me achieve more emotional stability. I've grown up but there are pieces missing aren't there. One of my main dreams is to find my dad and mum. It is part of my world of hope and future. I need this to settle the hole in my soul. Just a cuddle from Dad and mum would help me cope with my future and bring forgiveness and understanding. Maybe create emotional stability within myself.

In this extract Josephine used the metaphor of a “jigsaw with pieces missing” to describe her emotional well-being. The image created by this metaphor enabled an appreciation of the profound effect that adoption can have on some Traveller and Gypsy people. As Josephine explained, the search to find the missing pieces that make up the whole of who she is represents her single most essential ambition. Nothing else matters. For her, this search continues and until the pieces are found,

she feels that she will continue to feel emotional instability and will be unable to move on with her life.

5.5.5 Summary

This superordinate theme has presented the experience of feeling incomplete. Although all of the people who have lived away from their families and communities reflected on, and shared this experience, Josephine's vivid description provided a clear image of the effects of community severance and isolation. The important point to note here is that although Josephine was adopted into the non-Traveller or Gypsy community, she described no sense of emotional affiliation with it. For her, the spiritual connection with the Showman community, and the sense of psychological connection that she feels with it, is much stronger. Like all of those who grew up with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, there was a complete rejection of the 'out-group' mores in order to search for the pieces of their identity which had been lost along their journey through care.

5.6 Inclusion and strength

This superordinate theme includes the positive experiences that are associated with descriptions of living in care and presents the strengths and opportunities that this can enable. It is important to note that in the main, it was due to the work and commitment of Traveller and Gypsy carers, that these opportunities were enabled. In order to explore the theme 'inclusion and strength' in more detail, it has been divided into three sub themes. These are entitled 'a sense of belonging', 'resilient strength', and 'the importance of Traveller and Gypsy carers'.

5.6.1 A sense of belonging

This subtheme includes the descriptions of the positive experiences associated with life in public care and the ability provided for Traveller and Gypsy children to maintain social links with their own community. For the four people who lived with Traveller and Gypsy carers, the sense of belonging that was described was often enabled through familiarity and understanding. As Michael explained, the opportunity to live with Traveller carers empowered him to feel psychologically connected to them - a feeling that he explains was missing when he was living with settled carers:

Michael: When I went to the foster carers in the Travelling community, I could relate to them that bit better as opposed to settled people. I stayed with a settled couple there for a year prior to coming to my Traveller foster carers and I found it ok like, it was good but I suppose you just connect that much better to the Travelling community as opposed to settled people, you know? Yeah I do think so yea, yeah, because I could relate to them more so, as opposed to settled people they knew my

kind of surroundings before I went into care, not the bad side of things of course, but in general like, it is different way of going on. Some settled people wouldn't understand our way of going on as opposed to Traveller people like. You relate to them on a positive note, so yeah I found it helpful.

The experience of living with Traveller and Gypsy carers can also help maintain the cultural mores that are so essential to social inclusion. In a group interview with Lisa, Emma, and Sarah, they explained that the best and worst thing about living with Traveller carers was reflected the strict boundaries. Whilst they saw this as inconvenient, they also understood that their carers wanted them to preserve the sense of integrity:

Interviewer: What is the best thing about living with a Traveller foster family?

Lisa: Well it's like the best and worst thing. You are not allowed to go to discos or out/

Sarah: Yeah girls should be seen and not heard/

Emma: Yeah like you're not allowed to go over and speak to a group of boys even if they are your cousins because you're not allowed. If your brought up within a settled family you're going to act a lot and get a lot of Travellers going like 'they have too much freedom' whereas here your kind of brought up better and you kind of/

Sarah: I think that if a traveller child was put with a settled family their rearing is going to be completely different even if they are there for a couple of years they are going to be

use to a lot more freedom whereas children with Travelling families are going to learn a lot of the Traveller values and that helps Travellers marry other Travellers so that it keeps the culture going so/

Lisa: Yeah boys have more freedom. We have lived with two other traveller foster brothers and they are treated a lot different. That's just the way it is. Girls are meant to be seen and not heard. Do you ever watch Pride and Prejudice? (Laughing) It's just like that. Men are like, not superior but they are allowed to speak up but we are not. We are very guarded.

In this extract Lisa, Emma and Sarah reflected on the differences of the care experience concerning freedom of choice that could affect their social standing within their community. By living with a Traveller foster family, they were taught to maintain certain Travelling mores, which were deemed essential for them to get married within the Travelling community. It is important to note how Lisa's experience of being treated differently to the boys who lived with her foster family and her description of being "*guarded*" highlighted the role and expectations of some women within the Travelling community. It also emphasised the potential differences and importance in perceptions towards gender equality within some Travelling communities.

5.6.2 Resilience and strength

This subtheme presents the experiences of determination and stoic strength. For many, the traumatic experience of interfamilial separation and loss has been significant, yet despite this, eight people described feeling fortunate to be healthy and alive:

Interviewer: How has your time in care affected you as an adult?

Michael: I have no complaints. (4) I don't know if I can answer or not. (5) I am happy with the way that everything has worked out for me in the end. The way I look at life is that no matter how bad you think you are off, there are always those worse off than you and kind of relate all of my meanings of life to that. So if you think that you had a bad time you didn't because there is always someone worse off than you. Maybe I am a bit too relaxed about it. I count my lucky stars that I am alive that I have a roof over my head and a lovely child. I mean what else could you ask for? I'm not going to preach but I am happy in all respects.

Despite the distressing experience of growing up in care away from his family, Michael reflected on his position with resilience. Regardless of the negative experiences that he has encountered, he demonstrated significant stoicism which enabled him to empathise with those who may be less fortunate than himself. The sense of luck that Michel described provided an important understanding of resilience or ability to cope which was also described by Helen and Mary.

Although Helen felt the need to conceal the fact that she grew up in care for fear of social humiliation, she explained that she is able to use her experience of being in care to stand up for the rights of other Traveller and Gypsy people:

Helen: I'll speak my part, but others don't want to be identified. For fear of persecution for their own children and I can understand

that. But that is where I will step in. I will fight for people's rights and children's rights and what I believe in as true and right. Many Traveller women don't because they are married to domineering Traveller men. They don't stand up for themselves. They just shut up and put up. They are born to get married have children and that is it. But you have to respect them because that is what they want to do. But it is not what I want to do. I won't do that because I believe that I have been a victim. No one protected me or my brother and sister. No one wanted to know. We were lucky not to be sexually abused, but unlucky because we're are scarred from it. I do work with Travellers and I do fight for Traveller rights and I will stand my ground for things to change for my children's future. I work with the police, with health and with education and I will not stand back and let what happened to me happen to any child. No child deserves to be punished because of where the family they come from.

This extract showed how Helen maintained resilience and felt a sense of obligation to advocate on behalf of other Travellers. She described the constant struggles and the intimidation experienced, including the risk of further persecution. However, she explained that she was also committed in channelling her experiences of abuse and neglect as an ambassador for her community. For this reason, she is able to liaise with public services to fight for equality and fairness. Whilst accepting the concern that this may be contradictory to certain social rules and expectations, she described

the importance of this in the context that some women can remain powerless in dominant relationships. Her own experience of domination whilst in care has enabled her to feel strong enough to challenge these traditions and work to ensure that children are protected from persecution and abuse.

For Mary, the experience of abuse and neglect enabled her to develop a sense of resilience and power as a disabled woman. Despite the harrowing experience of living in care, she described how she was able to develop a sense of strength and identity that she may not have been able to develop whilst living at home.

Interviewer: How did your experience in care make you think about your disability?

Mary: I loved it because I was with other children. When I was with able bodied people or my family I felt odd. Is that stupid? I know that it's probably institutionalisation but that's my experience. It made me feel normal. It has shaped my opinions. You see people in [Human rights groups] and they are my close friends from my time in the institution. We all live in one area and this is very funny we are also very important people.

In this section, Mary made sense of her lived experiences by considering how they helped her to develop a sense of independence and self-determination. Her ability to temper her childhood experiences enabled her to direct her energy into fighting for Traveller and disability rights. This in turn enabled her to emancipate herself from the oppression that she experienced as a child. On reflection of her wider achievements, deliberately not published in this study, Mary firmly believes that she may not have been so successful without being exposed to the hateful crimes that she experienced as a young and vulnerable girl living in care.

5.6.3 The importance of Traveller and Gypsy carers

The subtheme 'the importance of Traveller carers' presents a summary of the opportunities that can be enabled by placed Traveller and Gypsy children with Traveller and Gypsy carers:

Interviewer: Do you think that your relationship with your family has been made easier because you were adopted by a Travelling family

Michael: Yeah, yeah, definitely. To be fair to my biological family they do kind of respect my foster carers for taking me in. Absolutely. As I have said there have been plenty of cases where traveller kids are not allowed to see their biological family. Even the time we got adopted we kept my surname. We didn't change because my carers knew that that is my name and I suppose my biological family saw that and respected that. For us Travellers changing your name is a lot to ask because that is something that makes you a Traveller. Who you are. Everyone is happy on all accounts. I think that my foster parents being travellers definitely helped.

In this extract Michael described how his biological family respected his adopted parents due to decisions made that helped him maintain family links. Michael explained how a person's surname is an essential component of their Traveller identity, links with wider family members, and the community as a whole. He explains that if his adopted parents did decide to change his surname, as is

customary in the dominant non-Traveller or Gypsy community, not only would he have continued to lose a sense of who he was, but he may also have lost further contact with his biological parents. This experience links back to the subtheme 'making it alone' and the extended discussion on power in particular. By recognising the importance of the Traveller surname, the Traveller adoptive parents were able to communicate to Michaels parents that their role and relationship to his was valued. As the parents began to understand the point that although their child had been adopted, they were still his biological parents, they became more reliable when it came to contact arrangements. As they felt a sense of power, attributed to the fact that Michael was able to keep the family name, their need to apply their own will to power by boycotting contact arrangements was reduced. The opportunity to balance this sense of power through such a sensitive symbolic act sense enabled Michael to develop stronger bonds of mutual respect and attachment with his adoptive parents and biological parents which he believes helped to prevent him from becoming involved in antisocial behaviour:

Michael: Another positive note. Living with Travellers is great in a sense that. I know a few Travellers that grew up in foster care with settled people who, you know once they turned seventeen eighteen, they lost the complete run of themselves and they went off and did their own thing, drinking drugs, stealing, the whole thing. If anything at all it's probably a bad thing that happens to them. But personally speaking I thought you know, I think that Traveller carers have an insight better than anyone else and I suppose due to being let down more by my biological family. I adjusted to my Traveller foster carers as my own and in that sense it was great that they were, they were the ones

that loved us. I can't fault them. They weren't like trying to keep us all to their own, they were making the effort for us to see our biological parents. I witnessed that myself. I have to give credit to them for that. Overall it was a good thing that I went into foster care because as I said to you earlier if I was still with my parents in that sort of environment with the drink the fighting and the drugs, whatever God only knows where I would be now so I'm grateful to them for how I ended up. I am not perfect by any means but I could have been an awful lot worse off if I had been with settled carers. That's the way I look at it.

Here Michael explained how some Travellers who have lived with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers could resort to antisocial behaviour due to having no boundaries; no family ties and no sense of power over their Traveller or Gypsy self. Michael explained that he is grateful to his Traveller carers for protecting him from an antisocial lifestyle and enabling him to develop into the person who he is now. It is significant to understand that Michael makes sense of his position as being directly attributable to the support and sense of empowerment that he received from his Traveller carers.

The opportunity to feel included and respected as a Traveller enabled the development of a Traveller and Gypsy identity that in turn enabled secure attachments to form. This finding presented a further understanding of the differences between the care that is provided by Traveller and Gypsy carers and non-Traveller or Gypsy carers:

Emma: When we moved to the Traveller foster family it was very normal for us we were just like “oh yeah” and we became like daughters. We shared a room so we could spend time together. They understood us and treated us normal like. Not like with settled carers. They didn’t know us and tried to change us. With traveller carers you don’t have to pretend you’re something you’re not.

The opportunities that Emma described are symbolic of the elements which were reported as being crucial to a positive care experience:

Interviewer: Are you still able to feel part of the Travelling community?

Lisa: Yes, of course but only because we lived with another Traveller family. Living with a Traveller foster carer is different because you will never be told to leave. When we left foster care we still lived here because we became part of the family. Even now we have left we can still visit our foster aunts and uncles and they treat us like their nieces they don’t/

Emma: They come and visit us and we look at it now like we are one big family. This is all we know. We have to keep in touch because we have no one else. I doubt that we would have had this if we had stayed with settled carers.

In this section, Lisa and Emma discussed the arrangements of leaving care. They explained how in some cases, once a young person leaves foster care they can lose touch with their foster family. However, because Traveller carers fostered them, they explained that they were able to feel, even as adults, part of the family. Their foster family represented their real family. For Emma, this sense of attachment was essential to the maintenance of relationships and social systems that she felt would be absent if they had been cared for by non-Traveller or Gypsy carers.

Despite the opportunity for positive experiences that have been described, Michael considered some of the possible reasons that may prevent Travellers from becoming foster carers:

Interviewer: What do you think may prevent Travellers from becoming carers?

Michael: I never really thought about it. I suppose a lot of people. I don't know what puts people off becoming a foster carer. I am sure that there are a lot of people out there that don't want the hassle. There should be more courses for Traveller families to give them an insight into the situation of Traveller kids in care. That's why they are not put in a proper home. When a child is put into care it can be very confusing and all they want is someone that loves them and who can make them better off. I think there should be more studies on that matter. Traveller kids that go into care are very vulnerable and they are all over the place. The foster carers should class them as one of their own and not different or lower or anything else for that matter.

Interviewer: Do you think that Traveller kids can feel this way with settled carers?

Michael: I don't know. I am just saying from my experience. I was in the settled community. Then when I was fostered in the Traveller community, I had my first Christmas and got everything I asked for. And that is one of my best experiences ever. I was doing cartwheels and everything, I was ecstatic. I would have never have had that before with settled carers. Being adopted by my Traveller parents was like winning the lottery, they made me feel special. It's the little things that matter. Just the little things that settled people can't know.

The essential and unique contribution that Traveller and Gypsy foster carers can make to the lives of children living in care was also explored with Lisa, Emma, and Sarah. For them, the opportunity for Traveller and Gypsy children to be fostered within the community is seriously jeopardised by institutional prejudice and the constant attitudes within some communities towards the social problems experienced by others:

Interviewer: How do you think fostering could be improved?

Lisa: I think that not enough Travellers know that they can be foster parents. When I was in college doing my social work course the teacher had no clue that Traveller children go into care and they did not think that Travellers could be carers. They think that Traveller foster carers

don't exist. So I had an argument with them saying that Traveller foster carers do exist/

Sarah: But a lot of people still don't know that they can become foster carers and work in the care system so it's very hard because everyone is very hush hush about it.

In this passage, Lisa attributed the shortage of Traveller foster carers to an attitude of structural discrimination which denied the reality of Traveller and Gypsy children living in care. This is significant in many respects, not least because a social work teacher, who is a representative of the future social work profession, held these views. Of further importance, is Emma's description of the barriers that exist within some Gypsy and Traveller communities that may disempower people or preclude them from applying to become carers. In this description, the maxim "hush hush" is used again to describe a collective attitude towards potential social concerns. Based on the testimony provided it was clear that until these taboos are addressed and re-evaluated, the opportunity for those children living in care to be fostered by Traveller and Gypsy families may be reduced because of the more general perceptions that a Traveller or Gypsy child would never go into care.

Summary

This superordinate theme has presented the views of Travellers and Gypsies upon the role of Traveller and Gypsy foster carers. It has shown how the opportunity to live within the community helped them to maintain a sense of identity which was so essential to the development of secure relationships and attachment throughout a person's life. Without this bond, Michael, Lisa, Emma, and Sarah explained that they would have been unable to maintain the sense of self which they reported was so essential to their own perception, success, power and position within the wider community.

5.7 Messages for those living and suffering in care

To close this chapter, the final words of this thesis have been given up for Michael and Mary. Throughout the interview process, each person gave so much of their time to uncover painful memories that had been hidden for many years. By taking part in this study, they each hoped that they could enable change, they each hoped that they could make a difference, but most of all each they wanted to be able to talk to their kin. They wanted to tell them that everything was going to be ok. Consistent with the overarching ambition of IPA, the following two testimonies speak directly to those people living and suffering in care, they provide an important insight into the essence of a lived experience for the reader including a sense of 'in- group' unity that has been introduced in this chapter.

Message from Mary: *I just wanted to turn the attention to Pavees who are not able to take part in this project. To Pavees who feel that they were born just to be beaten and raped by settled people. Who feel their childhood was stolen from them. Pavees who feel their skin is stained and marked by cruel settled people. I want us to turn our attention to the stories we don't know or we'll never hear by Travellers who brought their memories to the grave. I want to focus our attention on Travellers who are living with the demons of having survived an ordeal but who won't or can't share the secret or get help. Our attention, our love, our empathy, our solidarity, our humanity is with you. Lastly, I want to remind them that regardless of what settled people did to you, regardless of who you told or you didn't tell, regardless of how you manage your demons you're still valued members of our*

community and in our moments silence maybe you can find a way back to us. If there is shame, we bear no responsibility for what happened to us, we were children. We were Travellers; our parents had no political, social, cultural or religious influence in this state. We weren't going to be believed. Now we are. Now that shame that stigma is with those who weren't big enough, generous enough or weren't prepared to listen to us. The shame is theirs not ours.

Message from Michael: *To all Travellers and Gypsies in care, have an open mind and hope that your foster carers have a good understanding of who you are and where you come from. Be grateful that they are out for you. Hope that they are aware of where you are from and that you have seen violence, drink, drugs, and sadness. You will be a better person in the long run. You might think that they are strict. You may be used to running the streets all night, but their rules are for a good cause. It is only when you are older that you will realise that they are looking out for you. My love goes out to you.*

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the attempt to explore the way in which Travellers and Gypsies make sense of their lived experience in public care. Based upon the testimonies provided, the chapter explored six superordinate themes, which emerged from the transcripts of interviews held with ten people who had lived in care between the 1970's and 2000's. The next chapter introduces the theoretical construct that was developed alongside the thematic frameworks presented to provide an overall explanation of the interpretative findings provided as part of this study.

Chapter 6

A model of self-concepts

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 presented a systematic exploration of the key themes derived through the process of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Analysis was supported using direct quotations from each interview to support thematic elucidation. In line with the theoretical framework of IPA, testimonies were presented with discrete design, so that the unique sense of each account provided a close reading of what Travellers and Gypsies said as testament to their experiences in care. This chapter builds on the narratives presented in the aforementioned chapter to develop a theoretical model, along with illustrations of the testimonials from which it was derived. As the collective experiences presented in chapter 5 enabled such a detailed understanding of the experiences and affects associated with life in care, the opportunity also presented an opportunity to formulate theory.

The process of theory formulation began with a detailed examination of potential patterns across cases to find ways in which the rich and divergent descriptions were also similar. This involved a constant move between the stages of analysis (described in detail in chapter 4), drawing on the complete cases, detailed sub-sections, and cross-case similarity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process also shared some similarities with analytic induction (see Silverman, 1985) whereby provisional hypotheses were modified in the light of new evidence which emerged.

In this case, tentative hypotheses were constantly refined to deal with challenges from the corpus of the information provided. To promote the tenets of validity, the enduring aim was to produce a theoretical framework that was true for all cases, or every case with clearly marked and articulated exceptions. Thus, the intention of this phase of the study was to propose a theoretical model, which was derived from, but was also based in, the body of each testimonial in response to the second research

question: *To what extent do these lived experiences influence individual self-concepts?*

6.2 A model of reflective self-concepts

In this section the reported experiences of social and emotional change, or the internal processes of change that Travellers and Gypsies experienced when they lived in care is explored. As stated above, the aim is to introduce a schema of a model of change that incorporates the collective narratives that were used in its development. Each aspect of this analysis will be discussed from a perspective that shows relevance to the social and emotional experiential change processes that have been reported to operate in the lives of Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care as children.

In the model of reflective self-concepts presented below, social stigma holds centre stage. Thus, this chapter will also point out the ways in which individuals cope, and make sense of intentionality towards a perception of feeling, and becoming different as a direct result of oppressive social labels (Husserl, 1970, 1982, 1999; Wolfensberger, 1980; Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983). This included differences in language, accent, and ethnicity (Heidegger, 1999, 2005), and the facticity of traumatic lived experience (Sartre, 1957; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). A discussion on how this model may encourage advanced theoretical and empirical work in the area of social and emotional experiential change will be explored in chapter 7.

6.2.1 Moving from textual analysis to theoretical development

As chapter 5 has shown, the implementation of IPA enabled the identification of a series of patterns in the testimonials provided. Prolonged engagement with individual transcripts, and the contextualisation of them within the whole enabled the development of emerging concepts to generate superordinate themes which were seen to be interrelated. Following detailed analysis, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care as children were describing a constant noetic, noematic correlation where their perceived sense of

identity, or self-concept was seen to be directly determined by the quality of care provided.

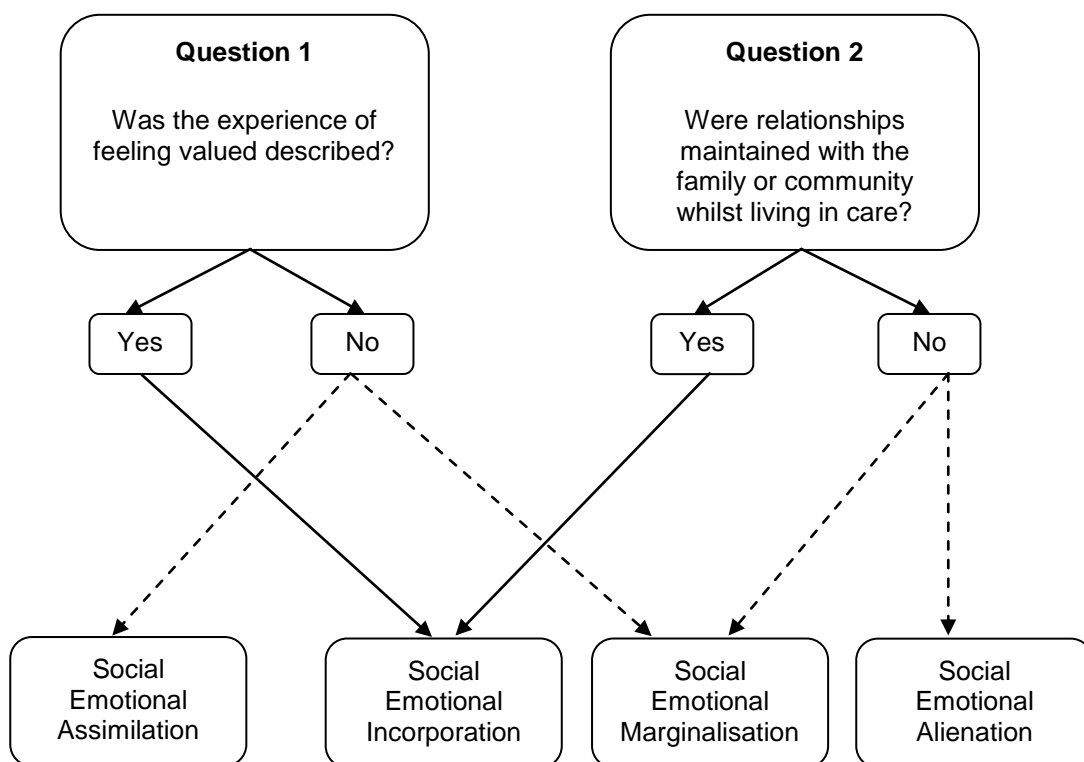
Self-concept has been defined as the level of clarity, consistency, stability, and confidence in one's own sense of being (Campbell *et al.*, 1996). In the present study, individuals with secure self-concepts were seen to have more consistent self-beliefs, and were less likely to change their self-descriptions over time or endorse mutually exclusive self-descriptive traits. Conversely differentiation of the self (an insecure self-concept), was reported to coincide with Donahue, *et al.*, (1993) description of maladjustment, in the form of low self-esteem, social anxiety and negative cognitive perceptions including depression and self-loathing. Although the association between self-concept clarity and self-esteem has been well-established (Sheldon *et al.*, 1997; Anderson & Galinsky, 2006), this study has shown that those with a secure self-concept derived a positive attitude toward the self as identified in those highly articulated beliefs about the self.

This study found that the sense of self was continuously being shaped and challenged by the experience of living in care. This was particularly apparent for those people who were placed in foster care or residential care away from their families and communities. Each person who took part in the study described an experience of conscious engagement with their self-concept in order to reflect on their social representation as Travellers or Gypsies. For those experiencing displacement and cultural isolation, the opportunity to experience a positive self-concept was often described as being destabilised by cultural ignorance, structural discrimination, and abuse.

The testimonies presented in chapter 5 demonstrated how all of the people who took part in this study shared an experience of cultural transition, which procured a deep sense of social and emotional change. The determination of a self-concept then enabled them to adjust to the new social pressures that were experienced whilst living in care. They described how they had to quickly make sense of their new environment and decide how, or whether, they were going to integrate themselves into their new social structure, or conversely fight against it.

By focusing on the concept of intentionality (Husserl, 1999), and symbolic interaction (Denzin, 1992), each person was encouraged to describe the experience of developing a self-concept within the larger in-care context. Although four people described these adaptive strategies as being positively supported within their placement, six people described this experience as being traumatic and destructive. The development of the model of self-concepts was therefore enabled after initial analysis, by examining the responses that were given to the questions that were asked during hermeneutic analysis. These were a), ‘was the experience of feeling valued described?’ And, b), ‘were relationships maintained with family and community whilst living in care?’ The initial framework to emerge from this analysis is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Initial results of cross-case similarity matrices of social and emotional change



Interpretation of the responses to these questions enabled the identification of four distinct experiences. For example, as Peter and Josephine were seen to answer

negatively to both questions, they described an experience of social and emotional assimilation, marginalisation, and alienation. Michael, Emma, Lisa, and Sarah on the other hand, answered positively to both questions and described an experience of social and emotional incorporation. Lastly, Helen, Mary, Ruth, Laura answered negatively to the first question but answered positively to the second. Where Helen, Mary, Ruth, Laura described an experience of social and emotional marginalisation and assimilation, they also considered how the effects of this were minimised by the opportunity to feel socially and emotionally incorporated within the Traveller or Gypsy community during interfamilial contact or in a post-care reality.

In each case, the reported experiences were seen to demonstrate the way in which people made sense of their social and emotional change as a direct result of the factors that were situated within their specific context. However, more detailed hermeneutic analysis revealed that the experiences related to the experience of social and emotional alienation, incorporation, marginalisation, were not as fixed at Figure 2 suggests. In fact, the testimonies of each person revealed that their intentionality towards the conscious experience of feeling valued, versus the experience of feeling neglected, was subject to constant reciprocal change. This change was often determined by the sense of resilience for each person constrained within their own facticity (Sartre, 1957; Merleau-Ponty, 1962), literally the structural constraints of their social and psychological circumstance.

Consistent with the philosophical foundations of IPA, the noetic experience of social inclusion and social rejection and the resultant noematic interpretation, perceived in the unique context of an adapting and autonomous self-concept, became manifest in the descriptions of numerous coping strategies. These were often reported to be driven by a sense of personal power that aimed to exercise control by manipulating the way in which each person appeared as *objects* in the world. In all cases, this required self-reflection that enabled the people to see themselves as if through the eyes of others. Where the noetic object of the self was perceived, a noematic interpretation followed which determined the course of action needed to exercise a sense of power and control. The identification of this pattern enabled the

development of initial cross-case similarity analysis to include this variance in order to represent the experiences which were described.

6.2.2 Communicating 'self-concepts'

The interviewer used neither the phrase 'identity' nor 'self-concept' during the interview process. Instead people were asked to describe, in their own words, if they felt that living in care had affected the way they saw or felt about themselves 'as a person'. None of the people reported any problems understanding this concept, referring to it as 'I' 'me' and 'who I am'. The decision to use the term 'self-concept' over potential alternatives such as 'cultural identity' for instance, was based on the fact that cultural identity could be seen as such a variable term with the diverse group of people who this study aimed to include. Therefore, to avoid potentially stereotypical references, self-concept was seen as the preferred term to refer to a complex set of features that together indicate how Travellers and Gypsies describe themselves.

Applied in this chapter the term self-concept includes the aspect of knowledge. First, this represents the perception or self-belief that one is a Traveller or Gypsy person. Secondly, it refers to the sense of importance or attachment that one has to a Traveller or Gypsy group, or groups, in effect indicating whether being a Traveller or Gypsy is considered an important aspect of one's self-concept. Thirdly, it involves positive or negative feelings about being a Traveller or Gypsy, indicating whether the person gains positive or negative self-esteem by seeing oneself as a Traveller or Gypsy. Fourthly, it refers to the degree of identity maintenance that a person desires, indicating whether one wants to keep and display one's Traveller or Gypsy self-concept, or conversely to change or hide it:

Ruth: I felt that I couldn't be a Gypsy because of the torment that I was getting at school. To them I must have looked different. I cut my hair and tried to change my accent because I just wanted them to see me as normal. I suppose I wanted to feel normal.

In this extract, Ruth described how her sense of self as a Gypsy led to her being bullied by other children at her school. In order to deal with this, Ruth explained how she tried to change her accent in order to change her self-concept and feel normal. Ruth's description is critical to the understanding of the way in which Travellers and Gypsies living in public care develop a self-concept that converts them into a 'social actor' (Parsons, 1991: 62) who responds, through the phenomenological noetic noematic aspect of symbolic interpretation (Denzin, 1992), to the environment which they are experiencing. This in turn transforms their relationship with the self, and the social structures in which they live. This gives their actions a unique meaning as they interact with, and interpret the world around them. Accordingly, they perceive themselves, have conceptions about themselves, and communicate with themselves and so on as objects in the world.

Ruth's extract also provided a clear example of the way in which a Traveller or Gypsy's self-concept acts upon and responds to itself in conjunction with lived experience, and interaction with others, as shown in the previous chapter. An important feature of this type of social interaction was language as it represented a fundamental means by which Travellers and Gypsies come to represent themselves to themselves. However, the key process by which Travellers and Gypsies can come to represent themselves, in order to develop a self-concept, is through the principle of role taking (Giddens, 1991). By perceptually placing themselves in the position of others, Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care described being able to reflect on the socially perceived representation of the self. The important caveat associated with this reflective perception is bound within the facticity of structural disadvantage. Through a process of careful and systematic analysis, it is possible to identify how a self-concept of being dirty, abnormal, or different can be developed and reinforced as symbolic interpretations of an experience of being maligned within the care system is recalled:

Mary:

They [carers] hated me from the word go. They called me dirty and told me that no one would want me not even my own. I hated it. I hated myself. I was ridiculed,

and started to feel dirty. I was humiliated on a daily basis. I hated being a Traveller and wanted to change who I was because I thought they would stop tormenting me,

In this extract, Mary explained how her interpretation of her experiences in care developed herself as being dirty. Based on the hatred that she perceived from her carers, she began to hate herself and attempted to manage her developing negative self-concept by deciding that she was not going to be a Traveller. As Mary explained, if she changed her self-concept as a Traveller, she understood that the staff might have started to treat her with dignity and respect. This powerful description further demonstrated the way in which Travellers and Gypsies living in care can develop a sense of self through their interactions and experience of others in the world. It showed a continued reflection that was able to interpret this experience to inform a representation of the self, which gives meaning and significance to the self. Mary's description of hating herself, being called dirty and being ridiculed for being a 'Traveller', represented specific components of her personal sense of self based on a reflective interpretation of the views of others.

Whilst this understanding provided an important foundation to appreciate the way in which Travellers and Gypsies made sense of their experience in care, it was nevertheless equally important to note that the experiential interpretation of perceptions was not the sole contributing factor in the development of self-concept. Resilience, for instance, was often reported to intervene at the interface between the experiences of a socially perceived representation of the self, and the way in which this is internalised and managed. As with the axiom, 'self-concept', 'resilience' was not a phrase that was used by the researcher or the people who took part in the study. Instead, people described a resistance or 'fight' against the perceived threat that they experienced towards the self-concept. Again, Mary provided a good example of this:

Mary: At times, I hated myself, but the hardest thing is, no matter how much I tried to

change who I was, I couldn't. I was proud of who I was and I loved being a Traveller despite being told that I was no good and dirty. Over time, I stopped caring about what they said or what they did to me that when I realised that they couldn't hurt me anymore.

The description of wanting to change a self-concept but not being unable to, reflected the experience of feeling an emotional attachment to the social self-concept as a Traveller. This is significant as it goes well beyond the belief or knowledge that is emphasised in the positivist notion of the private self described by Fay (1993). For Mary, and every other person who took part in the study, the emotional attachment to a social representation of a Traveller or Gypsy self implied a sense of emotional attachment. This provided a further sense of resilience to their interpretations of the representation of the personal self in the minds of others.

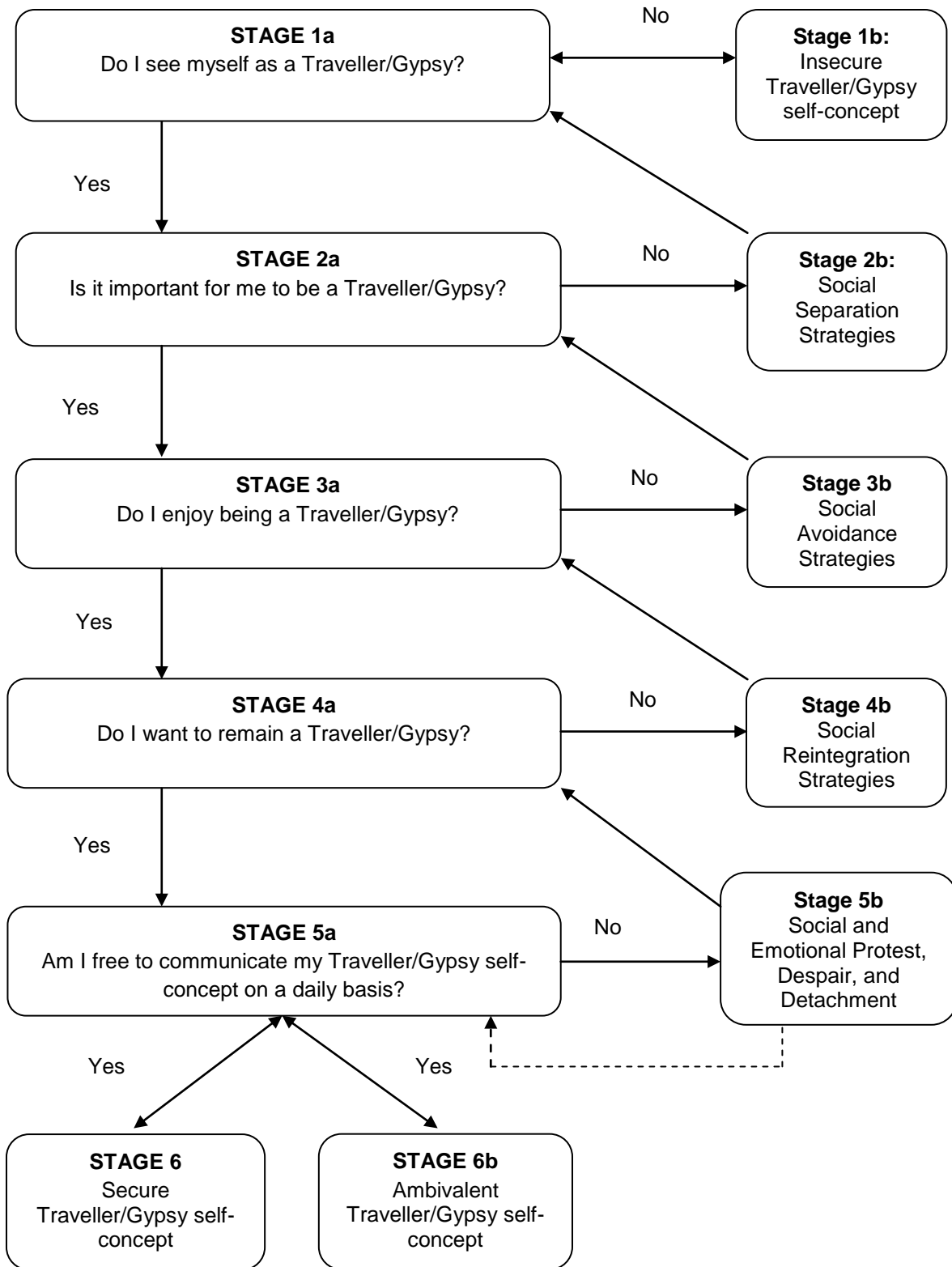
The discourse relating to the threats to a self-concept, their consequences, and the role of personal resilience within the facticity of the care system, are what form the basis of this conceptual explanation. These experiences informed the thematic framework by representing the patterns which emerged in the testimonials provided. This was made possible by cross-case similarity analysis which revealed a number of similarities and highlighted people's constant struggle to feel a positive self-concept. Identification of frequency, antecedent, and the way in which people reflected on their experiences of being a Traveller or Gypsy, enabled the formulation of the sequential model of self-concepts presented in Figure 3, overleaf. This model captured the way in which Travellers and Gypsy's who lived in care as children experienced a threat to their sense of self, and their internal working model of what it meant to be a Traveller or Gypsy.

The factors influencing a self-concept, and the processes involved in making decisions about the sense of self are demonstrated by the model of reflective self-concept which owes some intellectual debt to the *'Features of Symbolic and*

Behavioural Aboriginal Cultural Identity' published by Berry (1999). Although the model shares some conceptual similarity, the version presented in this study holds a rather unique position. Not only does it provide an advanced and more progressive representation of the process of self-concept, it also makes a significant move away from Berry's (1999) original framework by highlighting a crucial point that the experience of the self, and the development of a self-concept, cannot easily be intellectualised as a linear process. Substantiated exclusively by the testimonies provided by the people who took part in this study, it is able to show instead that the development of a self-concept is rather cyclical, and never conclusive.

The ability to acknowledge this phenomenon in such a concise and accessible schematic highlights a further substantial difference from Berry's (1999) work. The model presented here, enables for the first time, the proposal of a theoretical representation which includes, and alludes to, the key aspects of a threatened self-concept and associated strategic action.

Figure 3: A model of reflective self-concepts



6.2.3 Stage 1a: Do I see myself as a Traveller/Gypsy?

Stage 1a of the model represents the question 'Do I see myself as a Traveller/Gypsy?' This begins with the knowledge aspect of one's social Traveller and Gypsy self-concept, and includes the perception or belief that one is a Traveller or Gypsy. All of the people who took part in this study described the social self in this way substantiating the inclusion of it within the model.

Eight people identified themselves as Irish Travellers; one person identified herself as a Romany Gypsy and one person identified herself as a Showman. Although this stage is relevant to the descriptions of the sense of self prior to entering care, it is also significant to those people who decided that they no longer wanted to identify themselves as a Traveller or Gypsy as they progressed through care over time.

The experience of no longer seeing the self as a Traveller/Gypsy was only described by Peter, and will be elaborated further under stage 4. In this case, he reached stage four of the model before evaluating the questions posed, answering no to each, and finally describing how he had developed an insecure self-concept.

6.2.4 Stage 1b Insecure Traveller/Gypsy self-concept

The inclusion of the insecure Traveller/Gypsy self-concept refers to the experience of having no perceptual or meaningful emotional attachment to a Traveller or Gypsy self-concept. Descriptions of experiencing an insecure self-concept were shared across the group at various points throughout their journey thorough care. However, some people were able to evaluate their experience of feeling insecure about their emotional attachment with reflection back to the question 'do I see myself as a Traveller/Gypsy'. This is indicated in the model by the double arrow. In these cases people were either able to re-engage with their own self-concept to move further through the stages of the model or remain living with a sense of insecurity.

Those people who grew up in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers described the experience of continually moving between stages 1a and 1b in particular detail. In

this brief extract Peter defines the experience of moving between these stages in terms of an alienated self-concept:

Interviewer: You said that you were tired of being labelled by other people. In that case, what words would you use to describe yourself?

Peter: Alone. Different. Unwanted. I feel that I don't fit in. The Travellers won't want me because they would see me as settled. The settled don't want me because they see me as a Traveller.

Interviewer: Ok, you said that you feel that you do not fit in. So can you tell me where you do see yourself?

Peter: Ah, I'm not sure (4). Well I'm not either of those things. I'm not settled and I'm no Traveller. I suppose I see myself as a poor old sole with no one where to go (laughing) an Irish puff with no soul.

Interviewer: What does it feel like to be Irish puff with no soul?

Peter: Like I don't belong. Like no one wants me.

Peter described an insecure Traveller/Gypsy self-concept by an experience of not being able to identify with the settled community or Traveller community. As no importance was placed on the fact that he was a Traveller whilst in care, he was unable to maintain contact with his family. As an adult, Peter made sense of this experience by stating that he has “nowhere to go” and that he has “no soul”.

Peter's explanation of feeling as if he had “nowhere to go” defined the inclusion of an insecure self-concept. On the one hand, Peter described feeling alienated from the Travelling community on the basis that he has grown up in care and that he is gay.

He believes that because of this, the Traveller community would no longer want him because he would be seen as being a non-Traveller. On the other hand, he described the feeling of being alienated from the non-Traveller community who refused to allow him to experience integration because of his perceived position as a Traveller. In order to make sense of this dualism, Peter described himself as being an Irish puff with no soul.

By describing himself in this way, it was as if he had separated himself from the word Traveller, and the word settled. By choosing the words "*Irish*" and "*puff*" to describe his self-concept, Peter demonstrated his feelings of isolation from both the Traveller community and the non-Traveller community. His concept of a Traveller/Gypsy self continues to place him in a position of insecurity. As an Irish man living in England, he may continue to experience social marginalisation. Moreover as a gay man, he continues to be alienated and oppressed by the overarching structural conditions that reinforce his sense of difference. Peter suggested that he still feels that he does not belong and that no one wants him. As this has been Peter's experience for so long, he feels that he is unable to be a Traveller. This is further complicated by his sexuality which he feels may not be understood by his extended family (see chapter 5). However, he has been unable to explore this in reality because he has been denied the opportunity to see, or talk to his family including his wider community since he was a young child. The opportunity to feel safe enough to discuss his sexuality has not been provided and his supposition that he will be alienated because of his sexuality remains.

Although in this example the true extent of insecure Traveller/Gypsy self-concept can be seen, it may not be decisive. If, for example, Peter was able to experience positive engagement with the Traveller community, as described by Mary, Helen and Ruth, his sense of insecurity may be redefined enabling him to reenter stage 1a and re-evaluate his perception of self. Until the opportunity is presented, or wanted, insecurity may remain.

6.2.5 Stage 2a: Is it important for me to be a Traveller/Gypsy?

Stage 2a includes the experience that was shared by all of the people who took part in the study. It can be summarised by the question ‘is it important for me to be a Traveller/Gypsy?’ This stage was formulated on the reported experiences of ostracism and social marginalisation and refers to the importance that Travellers and Gypsies placed on their self-concept based on their interpretations of their symbolic social interactions with others.

Five people described how the experience of being verbally abused by settled children whilst living in care led them to answer no to the question ‘is it important for me to be a Traveller/Gypsy?’ By answering no to this question, these five people described how they experienced an alteration in self-concept. This experience is reflected the inclusion of Stage 2b: social separation strategies. In this case, people reported the experience of applying a number of strategies to separate themselves from the Traveller/Gypsy self-concept.

Like Ruth, Laura explained that in order to feel ‘normal’ she decided that being a Traveller was no longer important to her. Consequently she attempted to implement a number of separation strategies from the social and emotional Traveller self in order to feel and look different. By seeing her own Traveller self-concept as being negative, she attempted to reduce the sense of difference by changing her accent and cutting her hair:

Laura: I got back [from school] to the foster house and watched telly. I remember having chewing gum in my hair from the girls at lunchtime, I saw Kyle Minogue on the telly, and I decided that I was going to be like her. I suppose I just wanted to feel normal and I went upstairs, cut my hair, and started practising an Australian accent because I thought the others would think that I was. (3) (Laughing) fuckin idiot aren't

I. Anyways it didn't work and they called me all the more. I had made a right job of my hair all sticking up all over the place but from that day, I decided that I am who I am and that's the way it is. A Traveller through and through (laughing) I found out that I fight good as well. Me da would have been proud.

The experience of answering no to the self-reflective question 'is it important for me to be a Traveller/Gypsy?' led Laura to believe that if she separated herself from her Traveller self she would become more accepted by the other children at her school. The desire to be seen as 'normal' by her peers led her to take quite drastic actions. However, after continued resentment and bullying at school, Laura provided a good example of how she was able to reshape her thinking and quickly realise that her Traveller self was what made her who she was. This promoted her positive self-concept. The fact that she imagined that her father would have reacted favourably to her decision to protect herself, demonstrates the emotional attachment that she felt towards her sense of self, including the pride and the emotional favour of her father.

Within Laura's testimony, it is possible to see both aspects of stage two in operation. When a negative response to the question was given, Laura attempted to separate herself from her emotional and social representation as a Traveller. Based on the constant facticity of the experiences at school, which included torments of other children, Laura re-entered stage 1a where she answered yes to the question 'Do I see myself as a Traveller/Gypsy'. By answering yes to this question she was able to progress to stage 2a where a positive response was given and a positive self-concept so that the importance of being a Traveller could be established.

6.2.6 Stage 3a: Do I like being a Traveller/Gypsy?

The third stage of the model includes the experience of emotional attachment that Travellers and Gypsies living in care attribute to the sense of self. Stage 3a

encompasses the experience of asking oneself the question, 'do I like being a Traveller/Gypsy?'

At various times throughout their experience in care Laura, Helen, Mary, Ruth and Peter described how being a Traveller or Gypsy made them feel dirty, humiliated and isolated. All five explained how they disliked the fact that they were Travellers or Gypsies due to persistent experiences of racism and abuse that this label and sense of self created. In all cases, people described an experience of answering no to this question and described the social avoidance of a Traveller/Gypsy self-concept that warranted the inclusion of stage 3b. This was particularly salient in the narratives provided by Helen:

Helen: Because of the way I was being treated, I hated who I was. They hated me and I hated me. I hated being a Traveller and I hated my parents for sending us there and I hated them for making me a Traveller. I tried to distance myself from it all; I stopped talking to my brother and sister because I hated them as well. I just wanted to be like the other children.

Helen's experience of hating her Traveller self-concept highlighted the way in which Traveller and Gypsy children living in care can struggle to come to terms with the fact that they are Travellers and Gypsies in care. For Helen, being a Traveller meant that she was victimised and verbally abused. She knew that she was a Traveller, and that being a Traveller was important to her, but at the same time, she hated being a Traveller. In this example, she answered no to the question 'do I like being a Traveller/Gypsy?' She explained that she tried to detach herself from her siblings to place distance between her physical self, from the memory of her Traveller self, in order to feel a sense of familiarity with other non-Traveller or Gypsy children. Over time, Helen realised that her emotional attachment to her brother and sister were

more important than the approval of other children living at the Home. As a result, Helen was able to reflect again on stage 2a of the model to progress back through it.

Whilst Helen struggled to maintain a strong emotional attachment to her Traveller self-concept, Mary provided an example of how Travellers and Gypsies may respond positively to this stage. Her description of smashing up the doll's house presented in chapter 5 under the sub theme 'the battle between my heart and my head' demonstrated how an emotional attachment to a self-concept of being, and liking, the Traveller or Gypsy self, can remain strong despite the hardships that this can create. In summary of the fuller extract given in chapter 5, Mary explained:

Mary: I remember one family that I could have lived with buying me a large dolls house...I smashed it up and no one could understand why. But I know why... They were trying to take away my Traveller identity. But they weren't able to.

For Mary the symbolism of the doll's house represented a threat to her sense of self that questioned her position as a Traveller girl. As her emotional attachment to a Traveller self-concept was so strong, her reaction was to make obvious her feelings about a settled life, and the loss of her attachment to her sense of self.

Taken together these examples demonstrate how Travellers and Gypsies living in care are faced with the question 'Do I like being a Traveller/Gypsy?' The experiences of answering no to this question were often associated with the description of an experience of attempting to avoid their Traveller or Gypsy self-concept in order to feel included. The responses that were given in the positive enabled the transition to stage 4.

6.2.7 Stage 4a: Do I want to remain a Traveller/Gypsy?

The fourth stage of the model refers to the degree of pride that Travellers and Gypsies place in the sense of self, indicating the times when people described

making a decision as to whether they wanted to retain and display their Traveller or Gypsy self-concept, or to conversely change and hide it. Nine of the people who took part in this study described how they were able to answer positively to this question thus moving on to stage 5. However, one person described how an accumulation of negative experiences led him to answer no to this question, and all preceding questions, which over time culminated in the alienated Traveller or Gypsy self-concept described above.

In order to overcome the abuse that he was experiencing in care, Peter answered no to the question 'do I want to remain a Traveller/Gypsy?' At this point, he described an experience of attempting a number of reincorporation strategies represented by stage 4b. By answering no to the question, his sense of self-concepts became aligned to the mores of the children's home and the behaviours of the other young people who he lived with:

Peter:

At the start I did yeah. I suppose I wanted to be a Traveller but I wasn't allowed. As I got older I spent more and more time in secure and YOI's. I had lost my accent and my Traveller way. I 'came out' when I was in prison (3). Being gay is not, it's not seen as normal in Travelling circles do you know what I mean. So I suppose in answer to your question, I suppose. (2) No I do not see myself as a Traveller and I don't like that side of things anymore. (Laughing) I don't know what I am, I'm just me. (2) I suppose you could call me a Gorgio [settled] now. But I don't want the traveller way and they don't want me and that's the end of it as far as I am concerned.

In this extract, Peter described reaching stage 4 of the model by explaining that he did want to be a Traveller. However, the constraints of facticity whilst living in care, his sexuality and the experience of marginalisation by his family and community, all led him to feel powerless to the threats against his Traveller self-concept. Over time, Peter explained that he decided that he no longer wanted to remain a Traveller. This decision may have been influenced by his sexuality as he explained that being gay may not have been acceptable if he maintained his Traveller self-concept. Whether this is true or not, once this decision had been made, Peter experienced a period of not liking the fact that he was a Traveller, before deciding that it was no longer important for him to be a Traveller. Re-entering stage 1a and making the decision that he no longer saw himself as being a Traveller did not come about lightly. In line with the stages of the self-concept model, he began to experience reintegration strategies, avoidance strategies and separation strategies from his Traveller self which all placed a great deal of emotional stress on him:

Interviewer: Can you describe how you felt when you decided that being a Traveller was no longer important for you?

Peter: Oh that's a hard one. (4) I don't think I felt anything. I was just getting by; do you know what I mean? Erm (2). When I decided that. You have to understand that the Travellers I knew had all left me and I was getting all sorts of trouble because I was a Traveller. I kind of felt angry about Travellers. I blamed them for me being in care and hated myself for hating them. That's why I tried to just keep quiet and out of the way of things, you know? And then doing the drugs and selling them on gave me, and this may seem stupid now, but it gave me power over the rest of the lads in the home. It was like I was better

than them. In charge. It's like I stopped being a Traveller and became a Dealer.

Interviewer: How did that make you feel?

Peter: Erm (3) I suppose I felt. (4) I don't know. I suppose I felt good? Like being a Traveller had slowed me down (3). I felt faster somehow (2) Oh I don't know, ask me about something easier.

Peter explained how his decision to stop being a Traveller came about because he blamed the Traveller community for allowing him to come into care. In an attempt to socially reintegrate his sense of self into the new social structure, he turned to crime as he believed this developed self-concept was required for assimilation. Peter felt that this reintegration strategy enabled him to have an elevated social status. Rather than being victimised by the other boys as a '*Traveller*', he felt that his self-concept as a '*Dealer*' enabled him to feel more powerful. Although he found it difficult to reflect upon the way that this transition made him feel, he did suggest that being a '*Dealer*' made him feel part of something different.

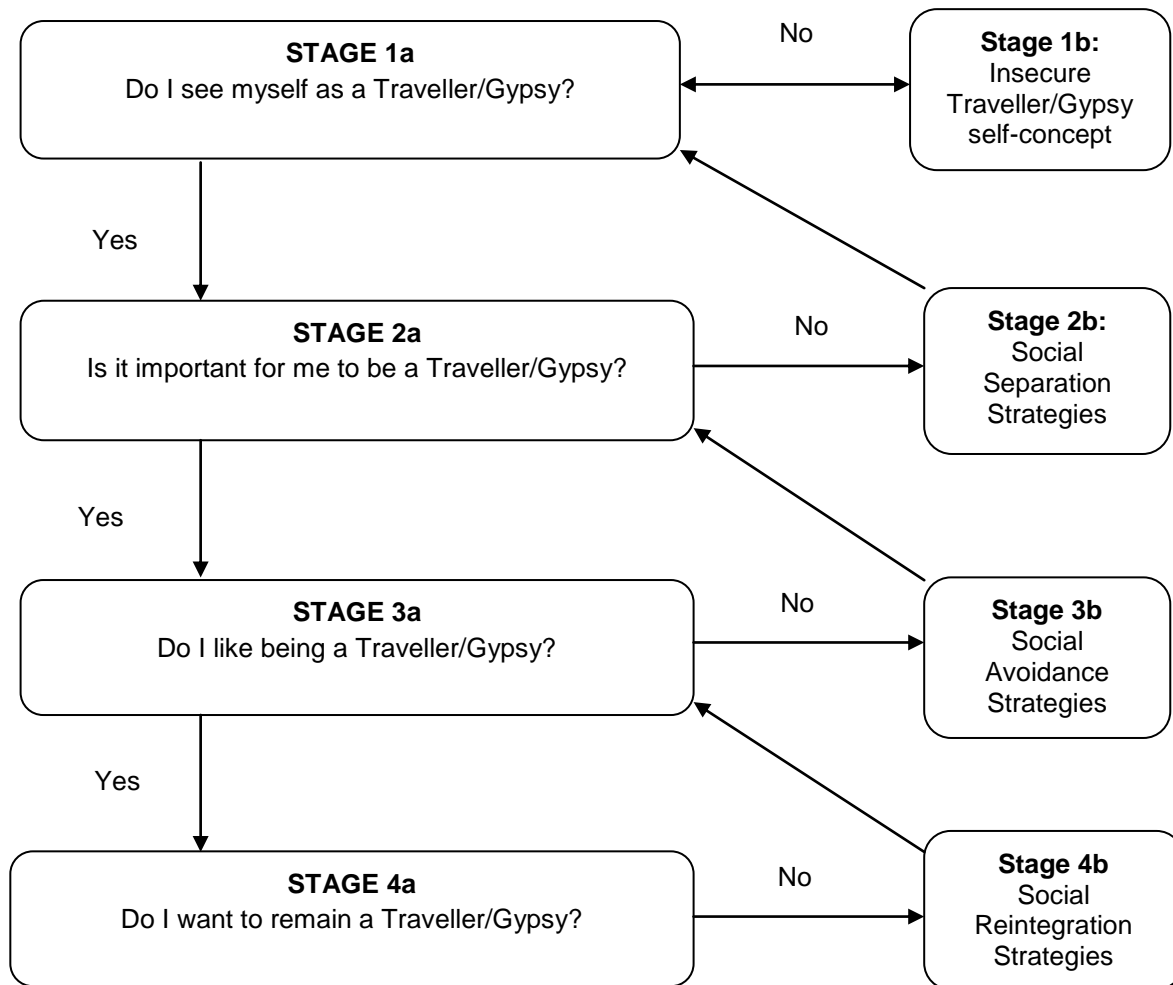
It is important to note that Peter described the experience of having no contact with his family or the Travelling community whilst in care. As we will see in subsequent sections, sustained contact, or emotional attachment with the Traveller or Gypsy community, is an essential aspect for successful transition through to stage five and six.

6.2.8 Summary of stages one to four

Figure 4, overleaf, presents a summary the first four stages of the model. It is important to note at this point that that the inclusion of stages 1a to 4a as separate reflective questions must be seen to be conceptually independent of each other. However, it is also essential that they are seen to exist in a logical sequence. For example, unless Traveller or Gypsy children living in care perceive themselves to be a Traveller or Gypsy, the next three features are irrelevant. Unless being a Traveller

or Gypsy is important, it probably does not matter whether they like or dislike being a Traveller or Gypsy, or whether they intend to maintain or amend it.

Figure 4: Recap of Stages one to four of the model of reflective self-concepts



For this reason, the experience in the development of the Traveller or Gypsy self-concept exists between perceptive reflections of other people's actions, the internal interpretation, and the outward expression of them. Where a Traveller or Gypsy self-concept was described, there were instances where a clear perception of high importance and positive resilience towards the self, and a desire to maintain it were described. However, what people actually did to express their Traveller or Gypsy

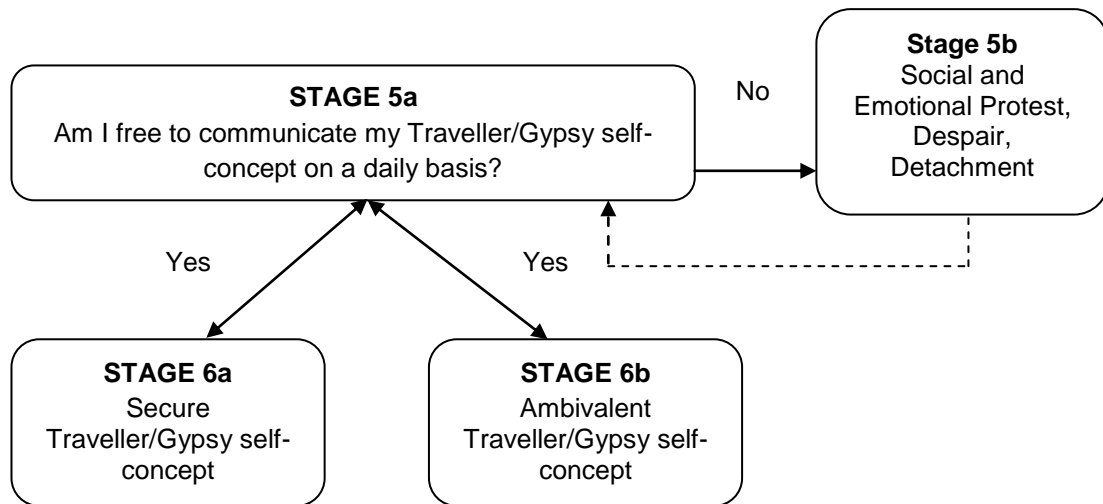
self-concept was not always immediately identifiable in the testimonies provided. Hermeneutic analysis revealed that there were a number of possible reasons for Traveller and Gypsy children living in care not to behave in ways that were consistent with their inner feelings and positive self-concept. As revealed in chapter 5, these include the facticity of social prejudice, racial abuse, fear of ridicule or discrimination and a sense of shame that has been procured through generations of marginality and which still restrict a sense of autonomy and power. Consequently, the first four stages of the model should only really be considered to exist in the realm of reflective perceptual interpretations of the self-concept. The outward expression of a self-concept, on the other hand, involves the underlying beliefs and feelings about the way in which Travellers and Gypsies are able to maintain the sense of self in their daily lives. Speaking their own language, practising their own religion, dressing and eating, and engaging in social relations with children and adults and accommodation in familiar ways, are all examples of the outward expression of the self. For Michael, Emma, Sarah, and Lisa, these expressions were easily accessible because of being placed with Traveller and Gypsy foster carers. However, Mary, Helen, Laura, and Ruth were only able to arrive at this point when they left care and were reintegrated back into their Travelling community. These precise experiences led to the inclusion of stages 5a and 6a of the model presented in Figure 5 overleaf.

6.2.9 Stage 5a: Am I free to express my identity on a daily basis?

Stage 5 represents the experience of empowerment. It is here that *empowerment* should not simply refer to what children living in care are able to do, but rather, and more accurately, it should refer to their *freedom* to *choose* and *lead* the kind of lives that *they* value.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the ability of the care system to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers is relative and dependant on the types of placements and support systems that are offered. They can truly enable or deny the opportunity for children living in care the freedom to live as valued members of the Gypsy and Traveller society.

Figure 5: Stages 5 and 6 of the model of reflective self-concepts



As Sarah, Lisa and Emma explained, not only do Gypsies and Travellers living in care need to be healthy enough to physically survive the challenges associated with state care, but they also need to be empowered to make informed choices about their own lives:

Lisa: The best thing was that we were sent to live with Traveller carers. I was not worried about making an idiot of myself and because they were Traveller carers we could talk to them and do whatever/

Sarah: Yeah like we didn't have to act different like. We were who we were. Going to a settled carer would be hard because they knew nothing about our culture so we would have to tell them about it and they didn't always understand/

Emma: Yeah, it was like they could look after us properly and we could be who we were. That's good in one sense because they can help you. Settled carers make sure that you're healthy and that fed and the like, but Traveller carers look after the way you feel...

In this extract, Emma, Sarah, and Lisa's description of a positive sense of self resulted in the ability to perceive themselves as Travellers or Gypsies on a daily basis. They explained how this experience enabled the inclusion of their outward expression of their self-concept as Travellers. They described being able to maintain a public self-concept and the outward expression of Traveller mores and customs because they did not feel compelled to conceal them for the reasons given above. The result of not being empowered to experience an outward expression of a Traveller/Gypsy self-concept can result in social and emotional protest, despair and detachment shown in stage 5b, which results in the evaluation of the question 'Do I want to remain a Traveller/Gypsy' – an experience that was described in vivid detail by Josephine.

6.2.10 Stage 5b Social and Emotional Protest, Despair, Detachment

The descriptions associated with Josephine's experience in care are difficult to define. This is mainly because they are accompanied by a high level of individual confusion and emotional distress. After close analysis, these experiences were seen to epitomise the experience of social and emotional protest, despair, and cultural detachment. Josephine described the experience of finding out that she was a Showman when she found the adoption papers in her adopted father's writing desk. This knowledge then sparked an apparent obligation for her to develop a Showman self-concept independently. As an adult, Josephine bought a trailer and took to life on the road in order to find her Showman self. Throughout the recall of this experience, she described an experiential process reflecting on the questions posed through stages one to four, but found that her ability to express her Showman self-

concept was impaired by her inability to fit into the Showman community, or communicate her Showmen self-concept on a daily basis:

Josephine: I loved my adopted mum and dad because they were my parents. I used to dream of making my parents proud of me because they sacrificed so much to adopt me...When I was adopted I lived with them in their home [overseas]...But when I found out that I was adopted and that my family were Showmen I knew that I had to leave them behind to search for my real family...I took to the road to look for them but now I have lost my own children...I have been unable to find my birth parents. This has left me needing to do this before they die and it will help me more emotionally and it is something that I need to do to grow into a more confident person.

In this extract, Josephine defined how the experience of being separated from her birth family led to significant social and emotional change. She explained how knowledge of the fact that she was a Showman led her to alienate herself from her adoptive family as she rejected all cultural and psychological contact with them. Although Josephine described the pursuit of her birth family, it is almost as the search for her 'birth parents' was used as a term to describe her search for her Showman self-concept.

Uncertainty of Showman customs and traditions, compounded by the fact that she does not know who her birth family are, led Josephine on a quest to find her true sense of self. Since leaving her adoptive parents, Josephine took to the road in search of herself, but instead of finding a sense of inclusion, she found that she was

rejected by other Showpeople and wider the Travelling community because they saw her as being settled. As a direct result of her internalisation of alienation, Josephine made sense of this experience by alienating everyone else in her life, almost as a mechanism to cope with her own emotional wellbeing. As an adult Josephine remains caught in a cyclical process of social and emotional protest, despair, and cultural detachment. Still on the road she searches for a secure sense of self within a world that has marginalised her and her own sense of power.

In an attempt to exercise her own will to power, Josephine described being compelled to behave superficially as a Traveller or Gypsy person (represented by the inclusion of a dotted line between stages 5b and 5a), without the presence of the underlying (symbolic) self-concept as a Traveller or Gypsy. The social and emotional protest, despair, and detachment, which Josephine continues to experience, are reinforced through her poetry:

*Josephine: In my soul there is a hole that nothing
 can quite fill.
I've searched across the miles, for me
 time has stood still.
I'm still that convoy member, Travellers
 across the land.
We have morals and we're Christian, our
 loyal moral band.
We believe in freedom, in love and light
 and hope.
Even though I keep searching, I cannot sit
 and mope.
I have these precious memories and
 future happy dreams.
So, one day I hope to find my kin, and
 then my life begins!*

Within the words of this poem, Josephine describes the search for self. She describes an inner struggle compounded by her experience of separation. Her search for her sense of family has taken her on a journey that has enabled her to peruse her sense of self. Yet this journey has been frozen in time, perhaps at the exact moment that she found the adoption document in her father's writing bureau. The sense of belonging and attachment that Josephine described provides a graphic understanding of her sense of alienation.

6.2.12 Stage 6a: Secure Traveller or Gypsy self-concept

Beyond the five stages of the model of self-concepts, there is a sixth aspect which is concerned with relationships among components. This can be understood as the secure self-concept and the ambivalent self-concept. Not all descriptions of self-concept are consolidated in the sense that they are clear or consistent. Many are surrounded by conflict or are inconsistent in the sense that five Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children described a sense of not knowing who they really were, or how to manage their incompatible ideas and feelings about their sense of self-concept.

Where a secure Traveller/Gypsy self-concept exists, there was evidence to suggest that people identified themselves as being Travellers and Gypsies and explained that they felt integrated within the community. For Michael, Emma, Lisa, and Sarah the ability to be able to answer positively to all questions meant that their collective experiences were seen to suggest that their social and emotional integration into the Traveller and Gypsy community was securely perceived. It is therefore important to note that the ability to answer in the affirmative to all questions was limited to the experience of living with Traveller and Gypsy foster carers. Had the opportunity to live with Traveller and Gypsy foster carers not been available, their answers and experiences may have been more closely matched to those given by Helen, Mary, Ruth, Laura. For these women, the ability to answer positively to question 5a only became possible when they had left care and redeveloped relationships with other Traveller and Gypsy people.

6.2.11 Stage 6b: Ambivalent Traveller or Gypsy self-concept

The experience of social and emotional integration used to develop the initial model presented in Figure 2 includes the feelings of separation and loss that were associated with the experience of interfamilial severance when entering care. It also acknowledges the ability of Travellers and Gypsies to integrate into their new foster home.

The opportunity to experience social and emotional integration without the accompanying sense of alienation, assimilation, and marginalisation was limited to Michael, Emma, Lisa and Sarah because the Traveller and Gypsy foster carers that worked to support them provided a sense of familiarity that enabled certain mores and customs to be supported and developed. For the majority of their time in care they were able to live with Traveller and Gypsy families, thus being enabled to experience the sense of inclusion and empowerment that was closely associated to a sense of familiarity shared through mutual understanding, sensitivity, and respect.

For those who lived in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers but who were able to integrate back into a Traveller or Gypsy community, this sense of connection, or sense of security, remains tentatively demonstrated. This is particularly true for those women who are unable to marry Traveller men because of their personal circumstances. Although these women report that they are socially integrated within the community, in that they can answer 'yes' to question 5a, they also suggest a frustrated self-concept that is often experienced when there is a negative orientation to any of the other five components that the model has described:

Laura: The thing is I still don't know who I am. I have to pretend that I am a Traveller and hide the fact that I was in care. I drink, and hurt myself to beat the pain that I feel in my soul. Yes, I am a Traveller on the outside, but inside (3) oh I don't know. (4) It's like I'm that girl in care fighting to get out. I see country people on the telly and I

want to be like them. I want a normal life where I can be honest and (6) oh I don't know. I just want to be like everyone else.

In this extract, Laura described her public self-concept as being a Traveller. She was able to answer positively to all five stages, but felt that her private self-concept was often disrupted by the traumatic memory of being in care. For her, the 'private' adult self-concept remains engulfed by the 'private' child self-concept that she developed over time. This experience is demonstrated by the inclusion of stage 6b. Whilst Laura is able to express a Traveller self-concept on a daily basis, she is unable to express her private self-concept. As we have already seen, this is due to a necessity to deny, or hide a settled identity, due to the fear of being ostracised from the community.

The inability to publicly acknowledge the fact that she grew up in care engages in the type of cyclical process experienced by Josephine. However, unlike Josephine, Laura is integrated as a Traveller. Although, analysis has shown that she may not essentially want this due to her obligation to deny, or hide the fact that she lived in care, she continues to struggle to conceal the truth about her private self-concept and engages in substance misuse, which she explained alleviates the sense of struggle. The description of the "*girl in care fighting to get out*" almost suggests that by being forced to hide the truth, she is unable to develop a secure self-concept as a Traveller adult. The girl inside her represents her private self-concept which is hidden by the outward show of physical behaviour. This is then masked by her ambivalent self-concept and true feelings. Similar to the symbolic action of her parents in the hours that led up to her accommodation into care, she hides her true self-concept, her true thoughts, and feelings and lived experiences behind a façade of who she feels she should be, rather than who she actually is.

6.3 Overview of the model

By developing this model, a Traveller or Gypsy self-concept is seen here as an internal symbolic sense of self, made up of cognitive, affective, and motivational components and external expressions of being a) a Traveller or Gypsy person, and

b), a member of a Traveller or Gypsy community. A secure Traveller or Gypsy self-concept is comprised of a number of interrelated features. These include the perception of oneself as a Traveller or Gypsy; considering this to be important; having positive feelings about being a Traveller or Gypsy; wanting to remain a Traveller or Gypsy self-concept and expressing all of these features in one's daily discourse. On the other hand, various degrees of an insecure or ambivalent Traveller or Gypsy self-concept are comprised of not seeing oneself as a Traveller or Gypsy. Where this is the case the person might also not consider being a Traveller or Gypsy to be important, and when not important, not liking or enjoying being a Traveller or Gypsy. Where a person does not enjoy being a Traveller and Gypsy they are less likely to maintain a positive Traveller and Gypsy self-concept, consequently choosing to hide their Traveller and Gypsy self in daily life.

A secure self-concept exists when there is consistency between components. An insecure, or ambivalent self-concept, is present when there is inconsistency or uncertainty, based on the experience of continued social emotional marginalisation, or assimilation, usually as a direct result cultural severance and displacement. This finding is essential to the understanding of the way in which Travellers and Gypsies living in care are able to make sense of their experience of social and emotional change alongside constant reflection of their self-concept.

Where assimilation, alienation, and marginalisation were initially identified, there was an accompanying sense of the way in which these experiences were interpreted to maintain or reconstruct the constant perception of the sense of self. For those experiencing significant social and emotional change, the opportunity to reflect on their self-concept, and determine the positive or negative responses to it, is directly correlated to their social and emotional well-being as adults.

Peter and Josephine could be seen within this category as they described an experience of alienation and marginalisation. The application of the model of self-concepts demonstrates how they have been unable to answer positively to the five stages. Yet it is clear from each testimony that these experiences continue to cause an experience of oppression, which is directly linked to the memory of traumatic lived

experience. In Josephine's case, she is trapped within a cyclical process of wanting to maintain a Showmen self-concept as per stage 4a of the model, but described being unable to, despite her reintegration strategies because of the alienation and marginalisation that she continues to experience as an adult. The extent of this process is minimised for Peter somewhat as he has reported to answer negatively to the question '*Do I see myself as a Traveller/Gypsy*' in stage one. Unlike Josephine, he continues to experience an insecure Traveller and Gypsy self-concept as he describes being caught in the continued process of alienation and marginalisation. These examples are essential to the understanding of the way in which a journey through the care system can lead to the destruction of a Traveller and Gypsy sense of self. When it is described as being relatively permanent, it constitutes marginalisation and alienation of the self. This sense of rejection stems from an experience of being placed with settled carers who were unable to recognise or develop a Traveller or Gypsy self-concept, or where no contact with the Traveller or Gypsy community was facilitated.

For Mary, Ruth, Helen, and Laura, their ability as adults to reach stage six of the model of reflective self-concepts meant that they are now able to acknowledge the negative effects of the alienation, assimilation, and marginalisation that they experienced as children in care. Even though they have been able to reach stage six, and develop a Traveller/Gypsy self-concept, the traumatic memories associated with their experience of care remains a significant factor.

Whilst all four women described an ability to integrate into the Travelling and Gypsy communities, their social roles can be seen as subordinate leading to conflict between a secure and ambivalent self-concept. Moreover, they all continue to suffer from mental health difficulties which were reported to have stemmed from their childhood experiences. Despite their ability to survive their journey through care, the social and emotional scars caused by alienation, assimilation and marginalisation remain a testimony to the abuse and neglect that they experienced as children.

The opportunity for Emma, Lisa, Sarah, and Michael to live with Traveller and Gypsy foster carers appeared to have minimised the effects of social and emotional change

caused by the experience of interfamilial separation and loss. By being placed within their own community, with carers who not only understood, but also had a strong sense of duty towards their developmental and psychosocial needs, all four appeared to reach stage six of the model of self-concepts with relative ease. The experience of being marginalised, alienated and assimilated away from their biological families was minimised by the experience of being empowered to feel normal. This became a catalyst in the development of a secure Traveller/Gypsy self-concept. Notwithstanding the reported feelings of grief associated with the experience of being separated from their biological parents, their resilience to these challenges procured by the experience of living with Traveller carers care appears to have been reduced.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the theoretical constructs and accompanying explanatory narratives which were developed as part of the interpretative phenomenological analysis of this systematic enquiry. The theoretical construct was introduced and illustrated with examples to clarify their meaning and relationship to the thematic framework introduced in the previous chapter. This also gave the opportunity to extend an understanding of the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children, after the initial first order thematic framework was refined in chapter 5, this chapter was able to introduce and demonstrate a theoretical construction of the testimonies provided with models and extracts from the interviews and written testimonials provided.

Chapter 7

Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This study set out to develop an understanding of the way Travellers and Gypsies made sense of their lived experience in public care. Guided by the theoretical principles of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), chapters 5 and 6 presented a number of themes and a theoretical concepts relating to the findings that recurred across a number of accounts.

The themes identified within the previous chapters were useful for organising the discussion in a way that could lend coherence to the overall investigation that was being developed. Analysis was not centred only on a set of thematic headings which were common across accounts, but also attended to the ways that Travellers and Gypsies discussed the issues from which the thematic headings were drawn. This chapter is split in to two parts to give specific attention to the research findings in order to contextualise, and where possible compare and contrast them to extant literature. The first part reflects on the findings to draw out the key findings and consider the original contribution which this study has achieved, and the second part evaluates the methodology used.

7.2 Overview of the findings

This study focused on the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children. It aimed to enhance an understanding of Looked after children's services in a wider social and cultural context. It applied IPA to identify what it meant to be a Traveller or Gypsy living in care, and how this experience affected the perception, interpretation, and internalisation of self-concepts. Previous research in this area has primarily dealt with the challenges that Travellers and Gypsies face when accessing social care services (Cemlyn, 2002; Greenfields, 2002; Fisher, 2003), rather than

providing a detailed interpretation of what it means to experience social isolation, cultural displacement and social stigma whilst living in care. This study goes far beyond the difficulties facing Travellers and Gypsies in terms of accessing social care services in order to give a fuller picture of their lives before care, the details of everyday experiences in care, including the perceptions of the care that was received, and the subsequent challenges that can be experienced when leaving care.

Testimonies provided for this study were analysed and presented in chapter 5. Within this chapter, six main themes were of focus. These included social intervention; an emotional rollercoaster of separation, transition, and reincorporation; a war against becoming settled; leaving care; inclusion and strength and messages for those living and suffering in care. In summary, these themes reflected peoples lived experiences of the public care system. They presented a contextual background to the essence of the phenomenon which was the object of this study. This demonstrated a meaningful phenomenological description of the first research question as people in turn revealed the essence of their experience of living in care and associated this with the feelings of separation and loss.

Chapter 6 then drew attention to the social and emotional/psychological changes that can occur in the lives of Traveller and Gypsy people as they embark on a journey through care. People explained how the experience of separation was deeply stressful, particularly when compounded by cultural displacement. Where reported, cultural displacement was seen to place a number of unique demands on people and prompted the need for them to adopt behavioural strategies as coping mechanisms within their new social context. This reported phenomenon was then explored in the 'model of reflective self-concepts' and revealed how the anxieties that people described often became manifest in a series of poignant experiences (including social perception, family dynamics and cultural conflicts) which required interpretation in order to attain a sense of security and self-preservation. Chapter 6 responded to the second research question.

Overall, people described their self-concept and exposed internal schemas as either preventing, or enabling assimilation within the new social network. On the one hand, the description of a decision to avoid permanence, in the often-tenacious maintenance of a Traveller or Gypsy self-concept, became an important strategy in a '*fight*' against settled mores and relationships. On the other hand, it was clear that the decision to resist assimilation for those longing for a sense of security and permanence became extremely challenging.

For those people who recalled the experience of feeling disempowered by the experience of social separation, the decision to abandon the Traveller or Gypsy self-concept in order to feel accepted by non-Traveller or Gypsy carers and peers became a common coping strategy. Confused by interfamilial severance and cultural isolation, each person recalled the experience of feeling a certain compulsion to become accepted and protected by the new social systems that operated around them. Where this was achieved, each person who described the experience of longing to be accepted by the settled community simultaneously described a deep sense of remorse for abandoning their true self-concept concept, and a cultural attachment to their Traveller and Gypsy community.

As suggested in chapter 6, when the perceived sense of duty to an ideological perception of the Traveller or Gypsy self was seen as being incompatible with settled mores, strong feelings of anomie alienated the self from certain elements of the settled society. Exercising the limited power that was available, people described the experience of subverting settled convention by refusing to attend youth clubs, challenging the authority of the carers that supported them, refusing to eat, becoming aggressive, and in some cases actually engaging in criminal activity. Where separation was reported as a coping strategy to overcome the feelings of confusion, analysis also showed that rather than being supported to overcome these challenges and being helped to develop a sense of integration, people often experienced anti-Traveller oppression as their social withdrawal was seen to be representative of their stereotypical position as Travellers and Gypsies more

generally. Although this experience was reported to reinforce a perception of being 'othered' within the new social network, the ability to maintain some sense of a Traveller and Gypsy self-concept also enabled people to feel reassured that they were not becoming settled, or that their true self-concept was being removed.

The paradox within this experience is that although most people were generally able to survive the journey through care on the basis that they maintained a secure self-concept, their ability to reintegrate back into the Traveller and Gypsy community when leaving care was particularly difficult. Even though people described their experiences of an enduring battle to maintain a secure Traveller and Gypsy self-concept whilst living in care, they also described how members of their families or wider community did not always recognise their individual tenacity when time came for them to move back home.

7.2.1 Becoming a Traveller and Gypsy

Each person who could recall pre-care experiences described the sense of knowing that they were a Traveller or Gypsy before going into care. Whilst describing pre-care experiences, people recalled a specific attitude which enabled their socialisation and the development of a Traveller and Gypsy self-concept. This not only defined them as being 'insiders' to Traveller and Gypsy groups, but it also defined them as being 'outsiders' to the non-Traveller or Gypsy community.

Consistent with the principles of phenomenology, this finding became particularly important as people began to speak about 'in-group' preferences. These became particularly useful points of reference from which to develop an intentionality, or perception, of 'out-group' non-Travellers. This finding also revealed that due to the environment and culture in which they lived, the pre-care self-concept was already moulded and shaped. This included knowledge of their family's historical and social context and their relationship with the non-Traveller or Gypsy other. With the exception of Josephine who was adopted from birth, each person described their pre-care experiences as being governed by strict rules and community expectations,

which valued 'in-group' privacy almost as a Foucauldian coping strategy against 'out-group' surveillance (Karner, 2004). People made sense of their pre-care experiences by giving specific examples of how certain 'in-group' mores formed the basis of a separate, permanent, and secure Traveller and Gypsy self-concept. These discussions were seen to be extremely valuable as they enabled each person to consider their 'in-group' membership and then discuss the affective implications of that understanding.

According to Okley (1983), the pre-care experiences described in this study represent a crucial characteristic of a Traveller and Gypsy self-concept, or ethnic ideology, which creates and maintains a symbolic boundary between the 'Gypsy self' and the 'non-Gypsy other'. Building upon the structuralist notion of 'in-group' identity developed by Levi-Strauss (1966; 1970) and Douglas (1966), she shows that a Traveller and Gypsy cultural logic keeps the classifications of 'in-group' and 'out-group' strictly separate. By way of example, she describes how the insides of camps, trailers, and corporeal purity, all symbolise a Traveller and Gypsy self-concept, which must be kept separate from, and uncontaminated by, the symbolic representation of an 'out-group' non-Traveller or Gypsy influence. Every 'crossing' or blurring of 'in-group/out-group' boundaries, she explains, is a source of pollution that must be guarded against - hence the reported preference for endogamy, and specific rituals of spiritual, physical, and domestic cleanliness described by Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) and others.

The separation between 'in-group' and non-Traveller or Gypsy 'out-groups', presents a powerful understanding from which to contextualise the experience of a journey through care. It provides a useful point of reference from which to consider each person's pre-care experience, and the frequent description of being 'dirty'. However, before this concept is explored in much more detail, it is important to note that Okley's (1983) ethnographic description of 'in-group' and 'out-group' separation represents a paradox that is embedded in each pre-care experience of those taken into care on the grounds of child protection.

Bound by 'in-group' expectations

Each person who took part in this study described the experience of being bound to certain 'in-group' regulations of secrecy and interfamilial privacy. An example of this can be located in those testimonies which bear witness to domestic abuse and negligent parenting. The seven people who described abuse as a typical childhood experience also described a social convention that required family matters to be kept 'hush hush', in order to avoid the surveillance and interference of 'out-group' agencies. A similar discovery has been reported by Sibley (1981), who describes how some minoritised communities attempt to avoid contact with social control agencies (which might include for instance, teachers, social workers, police and local government officers), as they are seen to embody those structural inequalities which impinge on their individual economic and social freedoms. In terms of the present study, this rationale becomes a useful lens to consider 'out-group' control of Travellers and Gypsies by councils, police, and social workers. As the testimonies made clear, not only did these agencies embody state control, they also represented those professions who have been reported to fabricate justifications for rigorous practices, such as the systematic removal of Gypsy and Traveller children from their families (Cemlyn and Briskman 2002), and other 'rescue' and 'assimilate' practices which have been described as an onslaught on the right to family life (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). On this basis, it is little wonder why contact with 'out-groups' was reported to be avoided.

Many Traveller and Gypsy families and communities are reported to live in fear of police and social work intervention (Coxhead, 2005), not purely for the reason which Sibley (1981) describes, but also for material reasons which continue to constrain and encroach upon Traveller and Gypsy freedoms, liberties and human rights (Cemlyn, 2008). Despite the perceived need for social separateness, the people who took part in this study also suggested that whilst Travellers and Gypsies have been able to survive dominant 'out-group' oppression, which Power (2004) argues subject them to external mechanisms of power and control, they also have become skilled in

the management of internally structured inequality as a strategy to avoid the attention of 'out-group' interference.

The description of 'in-group' management is not a new phenomenon. Karner's (2004) paper entitled *Theorising Power and Resistance among 'Travellers'* argues that Travellers and Gypsies have been forced throughout history to become skilled in the art of resistance. A resistance to the 'panoptical gaze and the classifying logic of industrial modernity as well as, perhaps more topically, against the consumerist logic of postmodernity structural inequalities' (ibid: 269) means that Travellers and Gypsies have developed strict internal structures of power suppression which become most clearly reflected in the symbolic and physical representation of 'in-group' privacy. Consistent with Karner's (2004) discussion, this study has shown that the perceived need to maintain 'in-group' privacy and the protection of certain cultural freedoms can lead to instances of abuse and interfamilial hardships being suppressed by 'in-group' dynamics so to protect against the intrusion of 'out-group' agencies. On the material basis of the lived experience of 'out-group' agencies that constrain and encroach upon Traveller and Gypsy freedoms described by Powel (2004) and Crawley (2004), emerges as a real experience and perception of fear that creates resistance to 'out-group' interference.

This finding was crucial to the aims and objectives of this thesis as it defined a perception of micro-contexts and interfamilial-group relations that were reported to govern and limit 'out-group' perception and surveillance. It also corresponded to anecdotal evidence summarised by Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) who suggest that Traveller and Gypsy families might be reluctant to seek support for interfamilial adversities through a fear of 'out-group' control. Most of all, these pre-care experiences connect with the frequent report that interfamilial difficulties had to be kept '*hush hush*' in order to protect the continued functioning of the 'in-group'. However, based on the testimonies provided by those taken into care for their protection, this was clearly a paradoxical perspective. In light of the pre-care experiences that were described, the

people who took part in this study can hardly be said to have been protected from abuse and neglect whilst 'in-group' privacy remained.

Bringing unwanted attention from the 'out-group'

The importance of 'in-group' privacy became particularly noticeable in the testimonies of those seven people who described how 'out-group' attention became a precursor to their social rejection. Describing this experience, Ruth explained that it was not always possible to keep family life private, '*some families bring scandal on themselves by fighting, drinking, or taking drugs. If this happens the community will turn its back on you.*' An important point to note here is that once public knowledge of the 'in-group' challenges was identified, each 'interfamilial-group' member who was associated with 'out-group' involvement was then ostracised from 'in-group' membership. For those people who reported this experience, the consequence of social rejection represented a significant factor in the further weakening of their family structure and the protective ecological systems on which it was reported to depend.

Although seven people described the consequence of 'out-group' surveillance as a precursor to social rejection, there is no detailed exploration of similar experiences in the existing research. Limited references which do exist in regard to 'in-group' ostracism relate generally to homophobic responses to Traveller and Gypsy young people who do not wish to marry, or who explain to family and community members that they might be homosexual, bisexual, or transgender (see for example, Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). Here 'in-group' members who disclose homosexuality are seen to be contaminated by 'out-group' influences which are seen to promote sexual liberality (Okley, 1983).

Further discussion concerning an additional reference to 'in-group' ostracism lies with specific examples of young Traveller and Gypsy women who stand accused of sexual promiscuity. Where reported, promiscuity can substantiate 'in-group' justification to alienate women under charges of contamination by 'out-group' cultural

pressures. As sexual liberality is seen to subvert 'in-group' ideology, including a notion of sexual purity, any unwanted behaviour of young women is seen to bring shame onto a family thus jeopardise the opportunity for endogamy and cultural survival (Bhopal, 2011; Derrington & Kendall, 2004; O'Hanlon & Holmes, 2004; Parker-Jenkins & Hartas, 2002; Power, 2004; Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfCSF), 2012). The punishments for subverting cultural ideology, reported by Pavee Point (2005) and Nexus (2006), often take the form of 'in-group' violence, abuse, social castigation and exile.

Making sense of being shamed

The experiences of shame described in this study were commonly conceptualised as a painful feeling based in the failure to live up to an important standard of 'in-group' regulation. This failure was often taken as a sign that families or individuals suffer a serious defect of the whole Traveller and Gypsy self. It is argued by Tangney *et al.*, (1995) Andrews, (1998) and Tracy & Robins (2006), that when experienced, shame can also predict the self-defensive responses to failure, such as avoidance, covering up, and other forms of social withdrawal described in this study.

A similar concept of 'in-group' regulation is explored by Kwok (2012). By exploring the extroversive character of transient Aboriginal groups, he found 'in-group' privacy to be essential to the management of relationships and the ordering of the Aboriginal social world. He argues that the fundamental social distinction in the Aboriginal worldview lies between the strict separation between the 'in-group', with whom meaningful interactions are acceptable, and those who lie beyond the 'in-group', with whom interactions are seen to be unacceptable. The cultural integrity of Aboriginal 'in-groups' and of the mainstream order of those 'out-groups' from which they are set apart depend on active processes of boundary maintenance. In an earlier study conducted by Barth (1970), it is also reported that the use of 'shaming' and violence is frequently used by some Aboriginal communities to achieve these ends.

Understanding the dual operations and effects of boundary making from a Traveller and Gypsy perspective enables this study to better understand the relative importance of cultures of resistance and cultures of persistence. On the one hand, symbolic boundary making described by Okley (1983), was seen to involve an emphasis on opposition and distinction. On the other hand, the definitive marking and patrol of 'in-group' freedoms created a sense of self-regulation which was seen to be exercised and reproduced in relative isolation through the public 'in-group shaming' of individuals seen to be contaminated by 'out-group' influences. Within this context, it appears that 'in-group' shaming operates not so much to divide the social universe into two, but to mark off the social and moral universe from a dominant influence. Association with 'out-group' stereotypes such as homosexuality, substance misuse, and negligent parenting were seen to subvert 'in-group' ideology and therefore engender shame (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). For this reason, the protection of a sense of 'in-group honour' provides the principal source of social inclusion and material and support. The frequent description of 'shame', or dishonour reported in this study were seen to relate specifically to a response to actual, or imagined encounters with 'out-group' influences. When described, the word 'shame' became a reflection of a felt emotion or signal of a cultural rejection. It provided a means by which regulation was communicated to constrain contact with the 'out-group'.

Where shame was described, the 'in-group' and 'out-group' worlds were seen to collide, jeopardising individual positions within 'in-group' communities. Although Power (2004) argues that Traveller and Gypsy 'shame' could be read against their dominant social, political and historical representation, it should be seen in this study as a capitulation to feelings of inwardly directed accusations of inadequacy and cultural incompetence. Considered in this way, shaming is seen to maintain the subjugation of an encapsulated people which operates as a strategic device to ensure cultural survival (Foucault, 1991). The range of behaviours surrounded by restriction and avoidance of 'out-group' contact were therefore seen to constitute and reproduce Travellers and Gypsies mores and the associated self-concepts of nine people who took part in this study.

Ostracised from 'in-group' membership

The experience of being shamed within the network of 'in-group' relationships was reported to be alarming and disorienting. An example of this was illustrated in the testimonies of Ruth who described how shame has resulted in her family's ostracism. She recalled how her family had brought shame on themselves by fighting, drinking, and taking drugs. This, she explained, created a sense of shame which led to social rejection and compounded the family's vulnerability. For each person, the experience of being isolated from the Traveller or Gypsy community was highly stressful. It was seen to be a reflection of a lack of 'interfamilial-group' solitude, which in itself was seen as shameful.

Although reports of 'in-group' shaming were reported to result in ostracism, there is little understanding about the way in which Traveller and Gypsy individuals respond to this experience. One potentially useful concept that can be used to postulate a response can be located within wider literature that corresponds to some of the experiences described.

Analysing data that emerged from a systematic review of peoples experiences of social ostracism, Smart Richman & Leary (2009) explain that individuals generally experience three distinct responses as they attempt to make sense of their own rejection. Typically, the first response to ostracism involves a heightened desire for social reunification. In many cases, the desire for proximity can be directed toward the individual or group perceived to be the rejecter, but this can also include the seeking out of proximity to others who can provide some reassurance, acceptance, and support. The second response often involves angry, anti-social urges to defend or fight against the source of the rejection. Here the 'blame' for rejection is projected outwards towards the individual or group perceived to be guilty for causing the rejection. Third, people who experience social ostracism avoid further rejection, and the accompanying feelings of distress, by attempting to withdraw from all social contact, including proximity to any individual or social group.

Considered against the testimonies provided for this study, families who became ostracised by the 'in-group', due to bringing unwanted surveillance from 'out-group' agencies, generally experienced the second and third responses of anger and blame. Rather than working to seek proximity and a reconnection to the 'in-group', the family, often controlled by the perpetrator of the unwelcome behaviour, began to direct their resentment inwards thus further compounding the interfamilial difficulties which led to the experience of social rejection in the first place. What is more, the testimonies provided as part of this thesis, revealed that social rejection, and the subsequent actions of the family, enabled social workers to intensify their intervention thus providing the opportunity for protection.

Although under the theme '*social intervention*', seven people described initial social work intervention as representing a welcomed form of protection against the experiences of abuse and neglect, it is crucial to understand that the lack of sensitivity afforded to 'in-group' mores, and a Traveller/Gypsy self-concept resulted in further rejection and cultural displacement. Whilst being protected from harm, people described the experience of being sent to live with 'out-group' carers. This subverted cultural ideology and infringed upon those the mores which maintained the need for 'in-group/out-group' separation. Reflecting on this experience as adults, each person who experienced 'in-group' rejection and cultural displacement, explained that although their pre-care experiences of abuse and neglect were traumatic and gruelling, their journey through care was far worse.

7.2.2 Becoming powerless

The people who were able to recall social work intervention described this as a significant occasion in their lived experience. A summary of these experiences enabled the development of the theme '*An emotional rollercoaster of separation, transition, and reincorporation*'. This theme revealed what the experience of interfamilial separation, social transition and the experience of social work intervention meant to them.

Chapter 5 reported that each person's journey into care was often marked by an event, or rite of passage, which signified the symbolic transition from 'in-group' to 'out-group' status. Presenting some similarity with Okley's (1983) discussion on the ideology of 'cleanliness', Mary, Helen, Ruth and Peter explained that they were prepared for their journey into care by being given increased maternal attention, clean clothes, a special meal, and pocket money. Together, these experiences were seen to strengthen each person's perception of 'in-group' status, and the feelings of attachment toward their own family.

The testimonies provided revealed that those people sent to live with non-Traveller/Gypsy carers were able to describe their experience of preferential treatment in the days and hours that led to the start of their journey into care. However, it is also crucial to understand that they were unable to recall being spoken to about the situation the family was in, or the fact that they would be moving into care. Instead, they all described the experience of being removed from their family home by the police and social workers without warning. At no point could these five people recall being told that they would be leaving home to live in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers. Similar to the theoretical concept of social rejection described above, the typical response to this reported ambiguity resulted in the experience of a culture shock, and the strong feelings of anger which resulted in increased feelings of anomie toward the self and the 'out-group', others who were seen to be responsible for their situation

Feeling isolated and confused

Ambiguity was specifically identified by Mary, Ruth, Helen, Laura, and Peter as they described a feeling of uncertainty about the duration of a foster care placement. When taken into foster care, they explained that they did not know how long they would be in care, or when they would be able to return home. When instances of abrupt, unanticipated, or untimely loss transactions were described, each person also remembered lengthy and maladaptive responses that were rooted in their inability to

plan for anticipatory adjustment. More importantly, because their biological parents are alive but absent, each person also described the experience of feeling ambiguity about their parents' physical and psychological presence.

The experiences of shock described by people who were moved into care with no prior warning corresponds with extant research which identifies parental ambiguity as a significant detrimental factor in a young person's transition into foster care. Summarising the experiences of twenty children living in care, Mitchell & Kuczynski (2010) found that the experience of ambiguity could create conflict in the foster parent–child relationship leading to placement breakdown and further social rejection. However, in contrast to this, Johnson *et al.*, (1994) and Whiting & Lee, (2003) argue that any ambiguity for children living in care creates a preoccupation with the experience of separation and loss. This preoccupation then becomes manifest in a child's social separation and desire to return home or seek proximity to the object of their perceived social rejection. This behaviour then creates conflict in the foster carer parent–child relationship, as the foster carer perceives the child to be reluctant, or unable to engage in a meaningful reciprocal relationship.

Bridging both of these arguments, Fahlberg (2008) explains in her book '*A child's journey through placement*' that children who experience ambiguity about why they have been placed into care can experience a range of different responses which impact on all of their social relationships, including the relationship with the self. For her, the most important thing for social work to do is recognise that children living in care will blame themselves for the situation that they are in as they attempt to rationalise their experience of separation and loss. What is more, she explains that children living in care will also fabricate their own interpretations and reason for their foster care placement which often has little basis in fact, but which does impact on their emotional wellbeing. This explanation is particularly relevant to the present study as each person who shared this experience explained that a sense of ambiguity led to enormous emotional upheaval, which often resulted in states of tension, anxiety, social phobia, and depression.

Parental ambiguity and a will to power

Examining the experience of having a child removed into care from a parent's point of view, Schofield *et al.*, (2011) have shown how difficult it can be for parents who anticipate the removal of their children to manage or resolve powerful feelings of loss, grief and anger. However, because of increased stigma towards parents whose children are taken into care, some are also denied their right to grieve the loss of their children as their entitlement to public sympathy may be compromised by what Doka (1989) has described as 'disenfranchised grief', literally grief that is not culturally acknowledged or supported. For parents of children in foster care, the loss is both ambiguous and stigmatised. Legally, but not practically, they continue to be parents and their grief is complicated by the likelihood that public blame has been attached to them for their loss (Kapp & Propp, 2002; Kapp & Vela, 2004; Alpert, 2005). Not only does this explanation provide some understanding of why the people who took part in this study experienced ambiguity from their parents, but it also provides a frame of reference from which to consider the apparent disengagement of families who were able to maintain contact with their children whilst living in care but chose not to do so.

The testimonies provided under the sub theme '*making it alone*' indicated that whilst some parents had been subjected to 'in-group' rejection for bringing unwanted attention from 'out-group' agencies, the same 'out-group' agencies proceeded to take over in the organisation of their private family life, thus realising all of those stereotypes which the 'in-group' tried so hard to deflect. For Traveller and Gypsy parents, the risk of the being seen to cooperate with the contact arrangements of 'out-group' social services in order to access and visit their own children could have further threatened the boundary distinctions that characterise Okley's (1983) description of the Traveller and Gypsy 'in-group' status. Not only had 'out-group' social workers intervened in Traveller and Gypsy family life, but they were also reported to set the terms and conditions of where and when the Traveller and Gypsy family could meet. As parents tried to apply their own power, they did the only thing

that they could do; either boycott contact all together, or arrive for contact on days which suited them rather than the days scheduled through care planning processes. However, more often than not, rather than establishing their power, their behaviour was perceived by the 'out-group' carers to compound concerns over negligence and insensitive parenting capacity. The reaction of the parents, and perceived commitment to contact more generally, created a further sense of confusion as the people described a sense of unknowing of their own parents commitment.

Most considerably, as biological parents experienced social rejection, not only from 'in-group' membership, but also from their role as 'parents', they were also seen to exhibit the third response described by Smart Richman & Leary (2009). Rather than seeking proximity and an emotional closeness to their child, descriptions clearly revealed a withdrawing from all social contact. This perceived response further reinforced the lived experience of confusion, separation, and feelings of loss for each person who recalled this experience. Reflecting on their childhood memories, they remembered responding to the experience of social rejection in the opposite way to that of their parents. Rather than becoming isolated, they actively sought the sense of close proximity which their family happened to circumvent.

For each person, the sense of confusion regarding this experience resulted in emotional trauma which became manifest in the initial feelings of isolation, self-loathing and the resentment of the non-Traveller or Gypsy 'out-group' who were seen to be responsible for the situation which they found themselves in. However, in light of the testimonies provided by those people who suffered in care, and the suggestion that parents were at the 'mercy of the system', it is worth noting that as adults, people made sense of their parents actions to conceal the truth and avoid contact because of their own ambiguity towards the situation that they were in. This included a lack of understanding about what their transition into care and contact would entail. These findings represent one of the original discoveries of this thesis.

7.2.3 Moving between groups

The people who took part in this study described the devices that were used to coerce a physical and emotional deconstruction of a Traveller and Gypsy self-concept. Similar to the work of Park (1928) and his notion of the 'marginal man' in particular, those people who were accommodated with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers began to make sense the experience of interfamilial rejection with deep sense of physical and emotional disconnection, or 'washing away' of the former 'in-group' self.

Reflecting on the experience of deep emotional crisis, the people who took part in his study described their attempt to compensate for their perception of interfamilial rejection by seeking some sense of proximity to their substitute carers. For those people taken into care for their own protection, these carers were also seen to offer safety and protection from the traumatic experiences of abuse and neglect. Whilst this aspiration became true for Lisa, Emma and Sarah, and later Michael whilst being placed with 'in-group' Irish Traveller carers, those placed with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers reported the opposite.

The testimonies provided by Mary, Helen, Ruth, Peter, Laura, (and Michael whilst living in care in England), each demonstrate how their desire for emotional support from their non-Traveller or Gypsy carers was threatened by their perceived status as outsiders to the cultural ideologies of a settled society. Once placed with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, simultaneous experiences occurred to reinforce their own perception of the self as outsiders to the social conventions that made up their in-care experience. Consistent with the discussion on phenomenology presented in chapter 2, this became embodied in the perception and interpretations of each person. This included seeing stairs, sleeping in a bedroom that was located next to a bathroom, having communal and mixed-sex baths, having to wear other people's underwear when clothes were distributed from the laundry, being forced to conform

to regimental routines, and being sexually, physically and racially abused by those adults responsible for their care.

Ruth: The first memory I have of the foster home was how closed in it was. The house was dark and smelt of damp...there were stairs...I'd never seen stairs.

Helen: ...you were tortured and bullied, and they would say dirty Gypsy children... I remember that we didn't have a lot but we were very clean we had white underpants and white vests, but there you got anyone's knickers to wear, you got anybody's socks. You were fighting for survival really and it made you feel like you weren't human.

Consistent with the phenomenological underpinnings of this thesis, each person described the process of interpreting these experiences through the lens of their own Traveller and Gypsy self-concept. Reflecting on their own understanding of social convention, people explained that their in-care experiences, and the treatment they received by non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, made them feel 'dirty'. Although specific clarification to the meaning and context of the word 'dirty' was not fully explained within the testimonies provided, Okley's (1983) structuralist reading of a culturally specific pattern of cleanliness gives a further dimension to the hermeneutic interpretation of the testimonies provided. The relevance of this analysis to the understanding of the symbolic context described by the people who took part in this study, is inadvertently revealed in Okley's (1983: 83) further observation that all Traveller and Gypsy taboos 'follow from the separation of the inside of the body'.

Okley's (1983) study corroborates Douglas's (1966) insistence that dirt is merely 'matter out of [cultural] place' including the social convention for the separation between 'cleanliness' and 'dirt'. On this basis, it could be argued that the experiences of being 'dirty' revealed an important aspect within each person's journey through care as it highlighted divergent cultural practice and beliefs which amplified a clash of separatist ideologies. Where this was reported, the experience of feeling 'dirty' was seen to equate to the reported feelings of shame as an internalised experience, as much as it does to a 'culturally constructed system of classification' (Andrews, 1998; Karner, 2004: 263), linked with low worth.

As people recalled the experience of feeling like outsiders, they also explained how the experience of being 'dirty', led to a resentment of their Traveller and Gypsy self, their parents and wider their community, as they struggled to make sense of their ambiguity and perception of cultural displacement. In each testimony provided by those people who were sent to live with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, the facticity of feeling 'dirty', galvanised by the simultaneous experience of 'in-group' and 'out-group' rejection, led people to reflect on the perceptual interpretations of the self. When identified, hermeneutic analysis enabled this thesis to show how people felt that their continued sense of being 'dirty' within the non-Traveller or Gypsy social networks stemmed from the fact that they *were* Travellers or Gypsies.

Each person who shared these experiences described a process of wanting to find a sense of security and permanence with the new non-Traveller or Gypsy social network by trying to separate from their previous Traveller or Gypsy self. In order to and feel 'clean', people altered the outward expression of their self-concept. Two people cut their hair, another tried to change her accent, and three began to project anti-Traveller racism back onto their own siblings and families. This was done with the intention and hope, whether overtly realised or not, that some sense of acceptance could be achieved. In proportion to Smart Richman & Leary's (2009) social rejection model, these reactions show that in order to make sense of the experience, each person sent to live with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers attempted to

re-form an alternative self-concept that could enable a sense of proximity to the 'settled' culture that existed around them. This finding and subsequent discussion is contextualised within the present study under the paradigm of acculturation. This theory provides a framework from which to understand how the people who took part in this study attempted to perceive and minimise further rejection, and the accompanying feelings of ambiguity, by struggling to control the spatial distance and sense of social rejection from their own parents, communities, and substitute carers.

Each person described, as a child, the need to form attachments with their primary caregivers who, in their status as 'carers', were initially perceived to provide comfort, recognition and support in the moments of crisis. However, rather than experiencing security or permanence, each person also described the experience of acculturative stress which made them feel even more 'dirty' as they began to feel ashamed for blurring their own socialised understanding of 'in-group' and the 'out-group' membership.

Acculturative stress

Empirical explorations of acculturation and subsequent reintegration strategies for children living in care are relatively rare. A small number of studies have examined the experiences of Black and minority ethnic children (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1969; First Key, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Crocker *et al.*, 1994; Arbona, Flores, & Novy, 1995 and David, Berry, & Berry, 2006), but little is known about the potential impact on Travellers and Gypsies.

The reintegration strategies associated with acculturation have been reported to involve a number of problems in the physical, social, or psychological adaptation of an individual, dyad, or family unit, to a new cultural environment (Bornstein & Cote, 2006). For most, this sense of change results in such feelings such as marginality or alienation, which can have a long term impact on a person's resilience and emotional wellbeing (Tizard and Phoenix, 1993; Robinson, 2000; Fatimilehin, 1999, and Barn, Andrew and Mantovani, 2005).

Reflecting on the testimonies of 78 Mexican people living in North America, Hovey (2000) shows that during the process of acculturation, people frequently experienced marginality and alienation as they encounter discrimination, language difficulties, lack of social and financial resources and the anxiety associated with a feeling of not belonging. As these feelings often remain unresolved, he showed that people who experienced elevated levels of acculturative stress were also at risk of heightened levels of depression and suicidal ideation.

Berry *et al.*, (1987) systematic review the acculturation experiences of immigrants, refugees, Native peoples, sojourners and ethnic minorities in Canada, show that as people acculturate to their new social network, they can also experience tension between traditional in-group customs, values, and norms and those from the new out-group culture. They argue that the stress associated with acculturation is largely dependent on the degree of disparity between the 'in-group' culture and the dominant 'out-group' culture. This implies that more highly acculturated individuals, dyads, or families, who have started to incorporate the dominant 'out-group' culture's values prior to full and prolonged contact would experience less acculturative stress as they begin to experience the effects of social integration.

In terms of acculturation for Travellers and Gypsies then, it could be argued that many Travellers and Gypsies straddle both 'in-group' and 'out-group' cultures in spite of Okley's (1983) claim of ideological distinctness. Whilst Traveller and Gypsy young people continue to encounter the culture of their parents and communities, they also encounter local subcultures within schools, places of work and local neighbourhoods (Ureche & Franks, 2008), including the mainstream 'out-group' culture, as transmitted through sources such as the popular media (Robinson & Martin, 2008). Combining the findings of Berry *et al.*, (1987) study with the theory of social integration (Durkheim, 1997) , it would seem that acculturative stress could be reduced for Traveller and Gypsy children today as they absorb, albeit unwittingly, the conventions and mores of the dominant culture which exist around them. However, the rationale that acculturative stress can be reduced via a system of social

integration remains at best dubious because of the pervasive presence of anti-Traveller racism and hostile stereotypes which McVeigh (1997) reports to exist within the fabric of the dominant community. As anti-Traveller racism is communicated by those subcultures compounded by popular media (Richardson, 2006a; 2006b), an 'in-group' sense of separation can be reinforced by 'out-group' prejudices which incite further disparity and social rejection. Under these circumstances, structural marginality provides an inescapable context, which draws a line around symbolic difference. This did after all represent one of the mainstay features of stress described by the people who took part in this study.

A number of studies (Sen 1995; Van Cleemput, 2004 and Mahutga, 2008; Barn, 2010) have provided support for this finding. Most significantly, Barn (2010) investigated the experiences of Black and minority children living in care. She found that the experiences of prejudice and discrimination, cultural isolation, separation, loss, and a lack of positive role modelling from relatives and carers, represented a primary source of instability, confusion, and loss. She advocates for the significance of 'stability', including the maintenance and development of an *original* self-concept, as a fundamental right for all children.

Winter & Cohen (2005) also illustrate the difficulties that are faced by young people through ignorance or suppression of their personal history, and the sense of loss that this can bring. To overcome this challenge, they advocate that practitioners should work to support children and help them to understand their cultural heritage. Only this, they argue, can help children living in care gain a sense of who they are and where they have come from in order to help buffer against emotional difficulties related to acculturative stress.

Collectively, these studies show that the relationship between children and the care system must be sensitive and reciprocal. Whilst children living in care might experience the tri-dimensional responses to social and parental rejection (Smart Richman & Leary's, 2009), carer's must also acknowledge and respond to the

individual perspective of each child, and not assume that their own sense of socialisation, security and permanence is the same as that of the child's (Thoburn, Murdoch & O'Brien, 1986; Thoburn, 1994).

The significance of protecting and maintaining a child's self-concept is not a new phenomenon. It is well known within social care settings and particularly valid in the field of fostering and adoption (Fahlberg, 2008). Yet, despite the rhetoric of evidence based practice, empirical research continues to report that minority ethnic children living in care experience insecure self-concepts (Barn, 2010). As a result, they are less certain when describing their own attributes (Sinclair, 2005; Ward, 2011), less confident in their self-descriptions (Courtney, 2009; Courtney & Thoburn, 2009; Fernandez & Barth, 2010; Maluccio, Canali, & Vecchiato, 2006; Stein, 2006; Thoburn & Courtney, 2011), and have less stability in their emotional wellbeing over time (DfCSF, 2007). Taken together evidence indicates how the absence of the crucial considerations described by Barn (2010) above, become manifest in the descriptions of disenfranchised powerlessness and insecure self-concepts, epitomised in the testimonies provided by the people who took part in this study.

7.2.4 Clinging on to a Traveller or Gypsy self-concept

The testimonies provided for this study gave separate accounts of an orientation toward the experience of cultural isolation, displacement, severance, and acculturative stress. Whether people were living with Traveller or Gypsy carers or non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, each testimony revealed shared experiences that were organised in two ways. The first pertained to the maintenance and development of a Traveller or Gypsy self-concept whilst being placed within the new social network. The second theme involved the desirability of inter-cultural contact, deciding whether relations with the new social network were of value and therefore whether these should be sought. The individual experiences were then organised into two further themes which corresponded to individual perceptions of the care being provided by the substitute carers.

For those who described the experience of 'being placed' with Traveller or Gypsy carers, or non-Traveller or Gypsy carers who were seen to be sympathetic, understanding and supportive, hermeneutic analysis revealed that each person felt enabled to be a Traveller or Gypsy, whilst adjusting to the mores of their placement. Although the experience of 'shock' was consistently reported, the ability of each individual to make sense of this, and manage the feelings associated parental rejection, were often determined by the placement provided, and the willingness of individual carers and biological parents to promote inter-cultural contact. These findings revealed that the experience of being fostered by supportive carers could significantly reduce the challenges associated with the experience of living in care, whilst strengthening resilience to acculturative stress and preserving some sense of an 'in-group' attachment to the wider Traveller and Gypsy community.

Resisting the possibility of becoming settled

So far, this chapter has explored the findings which related to individual perceptions of belonging to an 'in-group', and the internalised perception of being separate to, or outside of, the dominant 'out-group' of a non-Traveller or Gypsy society. Reflecting on the testimonies provided by the people who took part in this study, the need for separation with a sense of 'cleanliness' or protection from the damaging effect of 'out-group' contact, meant that each person engaged with the world around them from this perspective. However, when each person described the experience of interfamilial or community rejection there followed a stage of ambiguity as people struggled take stock of their own lived experiences. From this point, two distinct pathways were set in motion. One path, described by Emma, Sarah, and Lisa, led to the home of an Irish Traveller foster carer. The other, described by Mary, Helen, Laura, Peter, Ruth, and initially Michael, led to the homes and institutions of non-Traveller or Gypsy carers. The resulting journeys revealed one of the original and most defining features of this thesis.

For those people placed in the care on non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, hermeneutic analysis revealed that there was a brief moment on this journey when people considered the need to conceal their Traveller or Gypsy self-concept in order to feel the social acceptance of those around them. Fahlberg (2008) argues that it can be expected that most children living in care will seek affection, approval, acknowledgment, support, and a sense of emotional attachment and commitment from primary care givers. A similar finding has been advanced in this study as described by those people who did indeed talk about the need to feel safe, protected and wanted. However, an alternative view is offered by the DoE (2011c) who argue that children living in care may also see their situation as their being their fault. When this occurs, children can internalise the stigma that they encounter whilst living in care and then expend a lot of energy trying to conceal their perceived negative identity. As this thesis has shown, this can lead to threatened self-concept, lowered self-esteem, social isolation and in some instances emotional denial which can have a significant impact on peoples' hopes dreams and future aspirations.

The people who took part in this study explained that after a short period in care, they began to realise that in order to obtain a sense of social acceptance from non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, it inevitably meant a complete but voluntary resignation from a Traveller or Gypsy self-concept. With the exception of Peter, who described the need and experience of becoming 'different', those people who were sent to live with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers explained how pressure to forget the enculturated self-concept in favour of complete assimilation revived the need to create an ideological and physical separation between their 'in-group' characteristics and the non-Traveller or Gypsy 'out-group' within which they lived.

Collectively, these experiences were representative of a 'war' against assimilation. Within this theme, people described the experience of being socially rejected in all aspects and how they attempted to survive this experience whilst living in care by seeking some sense of proximity to their Traveller and Gypsy 'in-group'. As contact was never facilitated, or had broken down completely, people described the

attainment of this sense of proximity by behaving in ways that represented their ideological perceptions of Travellers and Gypsies. As people did not want to be thought of as being 'settled', each person, with the exception of Peter, described the need to be 'bold' and refused to do what non-Traveller or Gypsy carers asked them to do. Mary exemplified this experience in her description of smashing up the doll's house, the most significant symbolic threat to her Traveller self, as a way of making sure that non-Traveller or Gypsy carers would not foster her.

Similar to Derrington's (2007) paper '*Fight, flight and playing white*', which reports on the typical coping strategies of Travellers and Gypsies in schools, those who described the experience of fighting for cultural survival in care, also described the ability to resist assimilation. This was achieved by preserving a sense of cultural attachment to their ideological perception of what it meant to be a Traveller or Gypsy. For each person the description of a 'love' for the Traveller or Gypsy 'in-group' was 'spurred on' by their assumed expectations that the wider Traveller or Gypsy community might have had for them. In Laura and Mary's case, this involved fighting against those people or systems that threatened the Traveller or Gypsy self-concept, whilst for Helen, Peter, and Ruth this involved maintaining strict boundaries of cultural separation.

Tactics of separation and segregation

Hermeneutic analysis revealed that when people described their experience of becoming distanced from the non-Traveller or Gypsy network within which they lived, they also described the ability to maintain a secure Traveller and Gypsy self-concept and sense of tradition. However, depending upon which group (the 'out-group' or the 'in-group') was seen to have the most control in the situation, people described a number of experiences of *segregation* or *separation*.

When the experience of dominant 'out-group' pressure was described, Berry's (1980a) explanation of classic segregation to 'keep people in their place' became a useful concept to contextualise the dichotomy between the praxis of care and

control. However, when the stoic maintenance of a traditional Traveller or Gypsy way of life outside full participation in the 'in-group' community was identified, each person's desire to lead an independent separate cultural existence was revealed. In these terms, similar to Smith's (2008a) discussion on strategies on power, the process of segregation and separation were seen to differ primarily with respect to which group, or groups, had the authority to determine the outcome over the lives of the people who took part in the study.

As people began to make sense of their childhood experiences, they described the experience of segregation and found that by exercising their own 'will to power', they could live within the non-Traveller or Gypsy community but also become separate from it. For some, the decision to separate came at a great personal cost. Some people were abused as a form of punishment for externalising behaviours that were seen to conform to Traveller and Gypsy stereotypes; others described placement break down and a drift through care. Yet despite these experiences, the cultural need to be *separate* provided the resilience needed to survive these traumatic experiences and the social pressure to '*be kept in their place*'.

The acculturationalist reading of the experience of social separation presented in this study is supported by Certeau's description of power and resistance. Elaborating on Foucault's (1991) notion of 'docile bodies' as the sign and 'achievement' of segregation (the keeping of people in their place), Certeau (1988) suggests that people can choose to deploy a number of tactics which enable them to resist conformity and realise juxtaposition to the status quo. When experienced, individuals are seen to interact within those social networks and mores which are designed and maintained by 'the [powerful] other' and employ specific strategies with the intention redressing power and scoring temporary victories for the '*weak*' over the '*strong*' (Certeau 1988: xix). Although his empirical focus lies elsewhere, Certeau's distinction provides a useful theoretical framework from which to compare some of the findings identified in this study. The decision to ignore the adults around them, the decision to refuse to eat, the decision to fight, and the decision to boycott foster

placements all revealed 'tactical' qualities which people deployed to protect their self-concept from 'out-group' impurities and the pressure to conform or become assimilated.

7.2.4 Being an outsider to Traveller and Gypsy communities

The findings summarised under the theme 'a war against becoming settled' referred to the process by which Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care described their struggle to maintain some sense of power over the customs and values that were being forced upon them. The description of the 'war' was defined by a number of tactics that included physically striking out against the non-Traveller or Gypsy carers and settled mores in an attempt to preserve a sense of separation. With a specific focus on testimonies provided by the women who took part in this study, these tactics were reported to be of fundamental importance in the preservation of personal integrity and the purity of a Traveller or Gypsy self. This was understood, even as children, as an essential component in their ability to maintain 'in-group' acceptance as adults. Again, the concept of being 'clean' against the feeling of being 'dirty' emerged as a significant factor in the experiences of care that was provided to them as children.

For those people sent to live in the homes and institutions of non-Travellers and Gypsies, the use of separationist tactics were seen to protect the purity of the Traveller or Gypsy self-concept, whilst simultaneously protecting against the threat of being shamed for cross cultural contamination. However, by the end of the journey through care, and at the long anticipated point of 'in-group' reunification, the 'in-group' perception of each person as a care leaver, particularly those Traveller and Gypsy women raised with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, represented an additional barrier and the enduring threat of social rejection. This finding suggested that *being* a Traveller or a Gypsy on a biological basis was not always enough to ensure 'in-group' membership for those people who had been raised with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers.

Accused of being an outsider to the Traveller and Gypsy 'in-group'

Throughout each testimony provided, Mary, Helen, Ruth, and Laura described the experience of being abused by non-Traveller or Gypsy carers. Some of these experiences were random acts of physical or sexual violence, whilst others were premeditated and designed to ensure that these women, even as children, knew their place (Certeau 1988) within the order of the home or institution within which they lived. Plagued by physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in an environment deemed to offer sanctuary from the challenges of pre-care experiences, people who shared this experience described the sense of 'in-group' rejection and a coexisting sense of 'out-group' rejection. The only lifeline in a time of complete chaos came in the form of Traveller and Gypsy ideologies, which only really existed in the memory of each person who had them. When called upon in the darkness of their pain and suffering, this memory formed part of their emotional shield, which offered people protection and stoic resilience to subvert convention and manage the hateful feelings and consequences. For Mary, Helen, Ruth, and Laura, this experience represented a substantial element in their journey through care.

Describing the experience of leaving care, Mary, Helen, Ruth and Laura explained the realisation that if news spread within the Traveller or Gypsy 'in-group' that they had lived in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, they would be disgraced and subject to further social rejection. Despite fighting to maintain a distinct distance from non-Traveller or Gypsy mores in the hope of remaining 'clean', each person explained that the wider Traveller and Gypsy community saw them as being contaminated. Analysis revealed that whilst stereotypes exist towards Travellers and Gypsies from non-Travellers/Gypsies, similar stereotypes exist towards non-Travellers/Gypsies from Travellers and Gypsies. Here the perception of these women as being 'settled' (by way of the fact that they had lived with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers) meant that they also experienced hostility from some community members on the basis that they were no longer Traveller or Gypsies. What is more, stereotypical prejudice meant that some women felt that they would have been

accused of being sexually promiscuous, accused of taking drugs, or going out to nightclubs, all of which, it was described, is condemned within the wider 'in-group' community. For this reason, it was also reported that these concerns were often magnified as each had lost their accent, forgotten how to speak Cant or Romani fluently, or that they had been given an education. According to these testimonies, the cultural perception of each person leaving the care of non-Traveller/Gypsies meant that they were accused of being unclean - 'dirty'.

To overcome the risk of further social rejection Mary, Helen, Ruth, and Laura explained that they have to keep aspects of their childhood experiences 'hush hush'. The participation in this study enabled Mary to talk about experiences which she had never spoken about before. In addition to her traumatic experiences in care, she explained how her transition out of care into an independent living arrangement further undermined her self-concept as an Irish Traveller and identified her as being an outsider to the Irish Travelling community. Lisa, who was able to return to the Irish Traveller community, explained that her need for proximity meant that she continues to suppress her childhood experiences at great cost to her emotional wellbeing. A similar experience was shared by Helen, within her English Gypsy community, until she described having an 'emotional breakdown', and now as part of her recovery is encouraged to engage in talking therapy with a counsellor and her close family members. Ruth, unable to keep her childhood a secret within her own community, is now unable to marry despite being innocent of the accusations being made against her.

This finding showed that Traveller and Gypsy communities can perceive Traveller and Gypsy women care leavers who had lived in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers more generally, to be outsiders, or members of an out-group. Here the value of 'in-group' privacy, which became a pre-care norm, also became a weapon, to use against them during social reunification. Although Okley (1983) does not talk specifically about care leavers, these findings reinforce her description that 'in-group' privacy and regulation represents a crucial characteristic of a Traveller and Gypsy

self-concept, or ethnic ideology. However, these findings have also shown that the maintenance of a symbolic boundary between the 'Gypsy self' and the 'non-Gypsy other' is not always defined by biology, ethnicity or cultural belief.

The point to make here is that the Travellers and Gypsies who took part in this study were made to feel like the 'non-Gypsy other' simply because they had been raised in care by non-Traveller or Gypsy carers. The fact that they were Travellers and Gypsies and had survived a tremendously traumatic experience in care by asserting their perception of what it meant to be a 'Traveller' or 'Gypsy' was never recognised or congratulated. Instead, the feelings of guilt, blame, self-loathing, and ambiguity once again became determining factors as people described the experience of seeking proximity to a community that might reject them if they knew the full extent of the abuse and neglect they faced as children. Although their childhood 'battles' might have been won from a separationist point of view, a war clearly remains as people struggle to find some comfort and recognition by those people who matter the most to them. Until this is achieved, these people may never be truly vindicated for the feelings of guilt, shame, and ambiguity, which continue to haunt them to this day.

Social and Emotional Protest, Despair, and Detachment

Before moving on to consider the experiences of those people who lived in care with Traveller carers, it is appropriate to consider the experiences of Josephine, a Showman adopted at birth by a non-Showman family.

Josephine learnt that she was a Showman at the age of eleven when she discovered adoption papers in her father's writing bureau. The unearthing of these papers sparked a catalyst for Josephine, and, as soon as she was old enough to leave home, she bought a trailer (caravan), and took to the road in search of her biological parents. Up until this point, Josephine had been a member of a settled family. No attempt had been made by her family to reconnect her to her Showmen heritage. She had never travelled on the road before. As a result, she had not been afforded

the appropriate support and guidance needed to navigate the challenges that she described.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis enabled the elucidation of Josephine's idiographic experiences to be contextualised within the more general account of a journey through care. However, because Josephine was the only Showman (and person who had been adopted by non-Traveller or Gypsy carers) who took part in the study, her experience added a certain nuance to the overall findings. Most significantly, her testimony enabled the concept 'social and emotional protest, despair, and detachment', to be added to the model of reflective self-concepts. The opportunity to include this perspective represented an important addition to the model. Josephine's unique experiences began to shed some light on the consequences of being someone who perceives the self to be a member of the 'in-group' from a symbolic perspective, but who is judged to be an outsider and member of the 'out-group' by the people and the culture that she feels the closest attachment to.

Previous research, which specifically focuses on the experiences of minority ethnic children and young people in the care system, has identified important concerns around racial and ethnic identity (First Key 1987; Ince 1998) which are particularly useful to this discussion. The practice of transracial placements, literally the placement of Black and minority ethnic children and young people in predominantly White families, has revealed that children living in care can experience a lack of positive input around identity, and secure self-concepts. This has been highlighted as a key area of concern in social policy (DfES, 2006; 2007). It is argued that for those children who are living in transracial placements, the 'visible' nature of their difference, places them at a unique intersection of race and ethnicity (Wilkinson, 1995). This requires them to cope with issues stemming from physical differences between themselves, and their parents, as well as physical appearance between themselves and the larger society (Brodzinsky *et al.*, 1992; Hollingsworth, 1997; Tigervall & Hübinette, 2010).

Whilst these findings are transferrable, in part, to the experiences of those people placed with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers as children, they are less applicable to the experience of Josephine, who was adopted as a baby, because she has no recall of a pre-adoption experience. Prior to the discovery of the adoption certificate, she had no recollection of what it was like to be a Showman, and, being 'white', she had no visible indication that her ethnicity was any different to that of her adopted parents. Until she was eleven, she had no reason to think of herself as separate to the social environment in which she lived. What is more, her birth parents occupation as Showman would have not then, as would still not today, have been recognised as an 'ethnic' grouping. For these reasons, the concept of a transracial placement for Josephine could be seen as invalid. However, it is important to recognise that the complexity of 'ethnicity', and membership of a minority ethnic group, should not be simplified to the relationship between skin colour and political classification (Gilroy, 1987). Whilst ethnicity is discredited as a biological term, and is generally understood to be a social construct to understand the dynamics of racism, it is often defined 'as denoting socio-cultural factors such as shared histories, memories, myths, customs, sentiments and values' (Goulbourne & Solomos, 2003: 145). For Robinson (2000), this concept represents the social construction of 'ethnicity' in the differences which exist between contemporary identities, but which do not reflect an inclusive self-concept. This point thus emphasises the fluidity of a self-concept and the notion of a plurality of identities which are used to respond to various social stimulus (Hall, 1993; Modood, Beishon & Virdee, 1994; Reynolds, 2006). A similar concept is also theorised within the paradigm of social interactionism and the classification of 'social actors' (Blumer, 1986).

Accordingly, although being a 'Showman' is not recognised with political structures as an ethnicity in its own right, Josephine's perception of herself as a Showman represents a tangible self-concept which has real meaning in the world. Substantiation of this can be found in the way in which Josephine, and the other people who took part in this study, described their self-concept in terms of 'who I am'. What is more, other studies frequently report that Travellers or Gypsies

describe their cultural heritage, as 'being in the blood' (Acton & Mundy, 1997), and Josephine's testimonies are no exception to this.

Developing a Showman identity

Research indicates that during adolescence, obtaining knowledge of being an adopted child, transracially or not, is a momentous experience (Grotevant, 1997; 2000). During this period, children's tend to incorporate knowledge about their adoption status in the formation and exploration of their self-concept (Smith and Brodzinsky, 1994). Thus, the developing Gestalt towards adoption becomes an important aspect in the way in which children interpret the world around them.

According to Benson, Sharma, and Roehlkepartain (1994), adopted children tend to demonstrate three typical responses when confronted with the news that they are adopted. Bearing some similarity to Smart Richman & Leary's (2009) model of social rejection, the first categorisation describes positive responses, which reinforce proximity and a sense of closeness to their adopted parents. The second includes negative responses, which create feelings of shame, guilt, ambiguity, and resentment towards their adopted parents, and the third explains how some children might develop a preoccupation with adoption, whilst developing strong feelings of anomie to their adopted parents and the social network within which they live. The latter was seen to be true for Josephine.

As Josephine found the documentation relating to her adoption in her father's private writing bureau, she uncovered a secret which was kept away from her for eleven years. She discovered that the people who she thought to be her real parents were not her real parents at all. What is more, as the adoption paperwork indicated that her biological parents were 'Showman' the potential search parameters within which to locate them as she subsequently desired, were narrow. If the paperwork recorded one of her parent's occupations as being an Engineer, for instance, she may have been left with a sense of uncertainty about the processes needed to locate them generally, because Engineers are widely dispersed. However, as her parents were

'Showman', a potential trail was illuminated which suggested that her birth parents might be found if she followed, or became part of the relatively small Showman community. As Josephine became preoccupied with her adoption, she began to display separation strategies from her adoptive parents. On her return to England, she attempted to follow the 'symbolic footsteps' of her parents with the hope that she might catch up with them. However, as seventeen years had passed since she had been adopted, and without any further reference to her parents, she found that the trail had become cold. As she searched Showman communities, not only did she begin to experience hostility, but also her driven determination to locate her birth parents resulted in her own children being removed into care. As an adult who has lost contact with her adoptive parents and now her children, she remains searching with 'precious memories' and 'future happy dreams' so one day she can 'find her kin', and then her 'life begins'.

Contaminated by Care

The findings presented in this section represent a further unique contribution made by this thesis. They highlight how the experience of interfamilial-group ideologies can prevent successful transitions back into the 'in-group' community. Although a considerable amount of research examines the experiences of care leavers, no equivalent studies have been carried out with Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers.

Within the testimonies provided there are a number of common, universal leaving care experiences shared by most young people as they make the transition from life in care to independence and adulthood from many different countries and across many different cultures (Stein, 2006; Ibrahim & Howe, 2011). The present study found that Travellers and Gypsies also suffered many of the disadvantages and experienced many of the challenges faced by care leavers in other countries. Like their international counterparts, their leaving care experiences were also

accelerated, compressed, and often abrupt (Stein, 2008a; 2008b; Stein & Dumaret, 2011; Stein, Ward, & Courtney, 2011).

In general, there was a cultural 'in-group' bias towards not treating care leavers as deserving of support, but instead someone who was contaminated, the progeny of immoral behaviour and dishonour (Okley, 1983). The general challenge for care leavers who had lived with non-Traveller-Gypsy carers was therefore one of silenced humiliation, of trying to 'manage a spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1963). Thus, one of the more subtle aspects of being cared for by non-Traveller-Gypsy carers shows that the failure to provide a sense of symbolic separation between a Traveller-Gypsy culture and a settled culture, and the structuralist significance attached to this, caused stigma which extended far beyond that of *being* in care itself.

7.2.5 Valuing an experience in care

This chapter has been organised within a theme of social exclusion, cultural displacement, separation, and loss. It has contributed to a greater awareness of the reduced life chances of Travellers and Gypsies throughout their journey into and through care. Where possible these experiences have been compared to the reported experiences of other minoritised groups, as well as providing a focus on individual lived experience. However, as the findings from this study indicate, not all pathways can be seen to lead to the same destination. Whilst the findings summarised in this chapter reveal harrowing and traumatic lived experiences, some examples provided were very positive. Crucially, this demonstrates that it is possible to counter each of the reported difficulties in those areas where they were seen to exist through the application of safe social work practice.

Reflecting on experiences of 'being placed' with Irish Traveller carers in the Republic of Ireland, Laura, Lisa, Emma, and Michael described the opportunity to be empowered to experience a continuity of care. They recalled how their social worker took time to listen to them and their families in order to understand the concerns that they had about social work intervention. They explained that their social worker was

careful to take time to explain the full extent of the involvement, thus communicating a sense of transparency and equal partnership. For these four people, the opportunity for active consultation enabled them, and their parents, to feel valued and empowered despite the challenges that they were experiencing.

These experiences were seen to confirm the ambition of the Shared Rearing Service for Irish Traveller families described by Pemberton (1999). As shown in chapter two of the present study, this specific service was set up in partnership with Traveller communities due to evidence which reported that the experiences of Traveller children living in care could be greatly enhanced if they were placed with Traveller rather than with non-Traveller families. Although each person lived in a house, they described the experience of having plentiful contact with family members living in trailers. Each person fostered under this scheme also described how the opportunity to live with Traveller carers provided role models who helped them learn how to develop and maintain a positive Traveller self-concept including the resilience needed to live within an anti-Traveller society.

Support for Traveller and Gypsy children within similar specialist and specific services in the United Kingdom are scarce. The significance of the presenting issues and the challenges which do exist for looked after children more generally tend to be reflected in the literature which reports on negative experiences (DfES, 2006; 2007). These include poor outcomes (Sinclair *et al.*, 2007; Ward, 2012) and barriers to service improvement both nationally (Bullock *et al.*, 2006) and internationally (Stein & Munro, 2008; Courtney, 2009; Courtney & Thoburn, 2009; Fernandez & Barth, 2010; Thoburn, 2010). However, where examples of good practice do exist, three dominant theoretical frameworks are identified. The most predominate experiences which are reported in the literature pertain to attachment theory (George, 1996; Howe *et al.*, 1999; Schofield *et al.* 2012), placement stability (Rutter, 1985, 1999; Gilligan, 1997, 2000; Schofield, 2001; 2002) and emotional resilience, which can only be developed if the first two experiences are facilitated (Maluccio *et al.*, 1986; Thoburn *et al.*, 1986).

Where positive experiences were reported by the people who took part in this study, each described how fostering and adoption placements with Traveller and Gypsy carers provided them with the opportunities to form attachments, a more developed sense of resilience, and a feeling of permanence. Providing placements which can offer children 'in-group' membership and a sense of consistent and unconditional emotional security has been identified therefore, as an essential element that can empower child development and secure feeling of belonging. While this message was clearer highlighted in each testimony provided, the need to provided children living in care with a sense of security and permanence is not a new phenomenon. Indeed this knowledge is frequently reflected in those numerous benchmark statements which seek to raise standards of effective placement planning:

'...a good corporate parent must offer everything that a good parent would provide and more, addressing both the difficulties which the children experience and the challenges of parenting within a complex system of different services. This means that children in care should be cared about, not just cared for and that all aspects of their development should be nurtured...'

(DfES, 2007: 18-19)

Taken from the Care Matters agenda, this policy statement is particularly relevant as it provides an overview of the exact types of experiences described by those Travellers and Gypsies who were empowered to live with Traveller and Gypsy carers. It is important to note how the vision of social policy seeks to emphasise the right to family life (Human Rights Act, 1998) and the hopes dreams and aspirations of each person who reported being denied these opportunities by being sent to live with Non-Traveller and Gypsy carers.

7.2.6 Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed contextual understanding of the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children. It has drawn on existing

literature to open a number of new dimensions that have expanded the range of knowledge and understanding so to bring to light a theoretical understanding of a challenges and opportunities faced by Traveller and Gypsy life in public care.

The following section will provide a brief appraisal of the methodology used. During this discussion, aspects of the process will be evaluated in order to consider what went well and what could be improved upon in relation to the overall framework used.

7.3 Part 2: Critical evaluation of the research process

As seen in chapters 3 and 4, IPA does not take the same orientation to the ideals of validity and reliability, as may a piece of quantitative research for instance (Smith Flowers & Larkin, 2009). However, rather than arguing that this research has merely neutrally discovered the essence of Travellers and Gypsies experiences in care, Smith, (2009) explains that it is important for social research to recognise the analytical assumptions made about the testimonies provided. This acknowledgment, he goes onto explain, identifies that the methodological approach applied directly affected the research process and the findings which emerged from it. Whilst this accusation could open this thesis up for critique, Smith Flowers & Larkin, (2009) propose that the best defence against the potential charge of methodological bias is to demonstrate transparency for all decisions taken including the role that the researcher had in the methodological process.

7.3.1 Reflections on the research strategy

The application of IPA has enabled this study to gain a deep insight into the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children. Analysis enabled the findings to be presented in such a way that revealed the nature of these experiences whilst, at the same time, inviting the reader to share in them. However, by using IPA, these experiences were illuminated so that the reader could risk their own personal world as they entered into the '*lifeworld*' of another (Husserl, 1999).

Whilst this may have been achieved to some extent, the IPA methodology was not applied without raising some aspects of concern.

A critical reflection on the theoretical position of IPA was presented in chapter 3. In summary, these criticisms suggest that IPA contains a high risk of variance in the potential interpretation of the themes that emerged from the text. Opponents to IPA, such as Pringle & Drummond (2011) suggest that each reader may interpret the findings differently as they themselves are interpreters who may not accept or share the researcher's interpretation. In addition, Langdrige (2008) highlights a further weakness of IPA by suggesting that the discussions and conclusions that emerge from the testimonials may never be final, as the original noetic experience will inevitably change over the time.

A further criticism of IPA is found in the body of writing concerning grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), but the most significant critique emerges from a constructivist perspective that accuses IPA of possessing too much flexibility in terms of the overall methodological process which clouds its epistemological position (Finlay, 2009). Whilst these concerns were engaged in previous discussions, this thesis is also able to identify a number of additional observations that have not been not covered in extant literature.

IPA and the focus on feelings

The first concern regarding IPA reflected people's perceived hesitance to engage in the types of questioning that this methodology required. One particular concern was identified against those questions which aimed to uncover the essence of a particular experience. In general, the people interviewed, developed an aversion to the style of deep questioning often determined by phenomenology. By applying eidetic reduction techniques to the research schedule the question, "*can you tell me how life in care different was different to life with your family?*" was received with a large degree of scepticism. In fact, it was accused of being patronising. Overall, there appeared to be a certain expectation of empathy on behalf of the researcher. This question in

particular was accused of asking people to state the obvious. Consequently, the positioning of this question appeared, in some interviews, to disconcert people as their perceived position in the interview scenario changed from that of an informal conversation, to one of explanation that was more formal. On reflection of each interview, people seemed to assume some prior knowledge on behalf of the researcher. For them, the proposal of this apparently rhetorical question caused the sense of trust that had been developed in the time leading up to the interview to be reviewed as the researcher was seen to undermine his own credibility. The sense of this concern was epitomised by Helen:

Helen: What did you just say? What was different about living in care to living with my family? (4 laughing) are you ok Dan? What do you think was different? Oh Jesus you do make me laugh...

A further difficulty was identified by the introduction of Merleau-Ponty's contribution to IPA, which requires the embodiment of an experience to be considered as an essential component of an experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). To apply this philosophical position, a number of prompts were used to explore feelings. Similar to the question proposed above, the request to identify aspects of an experience in this way was met with uncertainty, particularly if the person being interviewed was not comfortable to talk about feelings in such depth:

Interviewer: You mentioned the experience of being angry when your social worker told you could not stay at your sister's. Could you tell me how being angry made you feel?
Ruth: (7 laughing). Now Dan, I don't mind talking to you, I think you're a nice lad n'all. You're doing an important job, but come

*on. How did being angry make me feel?
Are you on drugs? I was angry. Raging.
Like I wanted to smash up the whole
place. (5) I suppose I felt hot and prickly –
like a (2) stinging (2)... Oh Mary Jesus and
Joseph, next question and cut the shite!*

The response by Ruth to this prompt, demonstrated how this type of question shifted the balance of the interview. Initially, Ruth appeared to be comfortable, but became impatient when a question was proposed that appeared injudicious, or naive. This led to a shift in the interview relationship. Although Ruth did begin to give a response to the question, she also assumed a more central role as she felt uncomfortable by the question being asked. Certainly, power distribution towards the speaker was always the overall aim, but this change appeared to undermine the credibility of researcher. Although IPA centralised a focus on the 'essence' of a feeling, when pursued here, this line of enquiry was seen to be counterintuitive, inconsequential, and more importantly, quite offensive.

Although the interview schedule was discussed, and shown to each person in the days and weeks leading up to the interview, the researcher did not discuss the aims and objectives of IPA in any particular depth. This did not allow the methodology to be rationalised. On reflection of the early consultation sessions, the researcher believes that main barrier in achieving an equal understanding of the focus of IPA was presented in its name. The language '*interpretative*', '*phenomenological*', and '*analyses*' could be seen as being rather inaccessible particularly when said out loud. Consequently, the researcher made a judgement that the introduction of these words in a conversation, which attempted to demonstrate parity and transparency between the research and the people who showed interest in it, may have alienated them through the complexity of academic jargon and the potentially convoluted image that it creates. This was seen to apply equally to the philosophical concepts of the essence of experience and the early German ontological thought that underpins it.

For future reference, the researcher would do well to recognise this prejudice so to empower the people taking part in IPA to know in detail what the methodology might entail. This would naturally extend the understanding of why the research focused on asking questions that may be seen to have obvious answers. This could involve stressing the phenomenological belief that as we are all individuals, with our own options and beliefs, and that it is this individuality, or expert position, which is important for IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The more complex notion of asking people to describe how a particular emotion felt would be based on a similar principle, but would have to extend to include individual mores, interviewer identity, and so forth (Smith, 2007). When achieved, Langdrige (2008) believes that questioning remains ethical and sensitive to the responses of the person being interviewed. If these points were considered in more depth prior to the interviews, perhaps a deeper understanding of the experience could have been enabled through the informed consent of those taking part. This of course must extend to a discussion on IPA including the types of questions which this may or may not involve.

Contacting people who lived in care as children

Chapter 4 rationalised why a ‘snowball sample’ was used. However, although this strategy was chosen as being commensurate with the overall aim of IPA, the actual process of contacting people was rather more complicated. As we have seen, snowball sampling determines that the people identified to take part in the study become involved via referral, or from other people who have lived in care (Babbie, 2010). Nevertheless, despite the theoretical intention, this did not happen.

Over a period of two years, the researcher systematically contacted every Children’s and Young people’s Department in every Local Authority in England and Wales, including the safeguarding organisations and associated Traveller Educations Support Services. This was done in September 2009 and repeated again in January 2010. In addition to this, the researcher contacted each statutory and voluntary

Traveller and Gypsy support group (see appendix E), and was interviewed on two separate occasions for the Traveller Times Magazine. The researcher also travelled overseas to liaise with The Shared Rearing Service, so that people living in Ireland could be invited to take part in the study.

It is important to note that it was only after contacting all of these organisations were ten people identified who eventually agreed to take part in the study. Therefore, rather than using a snowball sample, in the way that it was theoretically intended (one person nominating two others, and so forth), the research actually used a strategy more typical of an '*exhaustive sample*', simply because the catalyst needed for nominated sample development, never became sufficiently self-sustained.

The main disadvantage identified with beginning a snowball sample, appeared to stem from the fact that Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children did not wish identify themselves to other Travellers and Gypsies for the reasons outlined in chapter 4. On these grounds, a snowball sample technique is now seen to be inadequate for this purpose as it relies on people who lived in care nominating others with a similar experience. As this experience is often concealed, people feel isolated in their own experience and unable to identify with others, even if they may share an understanding of the challenges presented by life in public care.

7.3.2 Reflections on the research methods

IPA is broadly associated with face to face or focus group research methods and there are some sound theoretical reasons why this strategy is linked to them (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). However as Langdrige (2008) advises this apparent partnership should not rule out possible alternatives.

Based on the ethical considerations of Butler (2002), which were seen to permeate this study, the researcher was able to recognise that there was scope to choose among different methods within the post-positivist qualitative paradigm. As the methods chosen for a study can demonstrate particular strengths and weakness, the

researcher based his decision on the inclusion of alternative methods based on the 'criterion of usefulness' described by Denscombe (2007: 36). This flexibility enabled the study to take a broad view that did not identify one method as being superior to all others. Whilst this required considered reflection about which methods were best suited to the task, it did, at the same time, acknowledge the potential anxieties that some research methods might procure for the people wanting to share their experiences. By remaining flexible, each person was empowered to select the method which suited them, and accordingly the researcher was able to manage the study to allow for this. Fuller evaluations of the methods of testimonials collection selected within the study are presented below.

Semi structured face-to-face interviews

The face-to-face interview involved a meeting between a Traveller or Gypsy and the researcher. This type of interview was only applied to those people who requested it. Pragmatic arrangements for the interview were negotiated so that they could be mutually agreed. The person being interviewed chose the interview venue in all cases. This was conducive to empowerment theories (Shaw, 2010) and enabled the person being interviewed to retain control of the interview process.

As the methods used to facilitate the interview enabled a reciprocal conversation, it was guided easily by the semi structured interview schedule presented in chapter 4. This method also enabled the researcher to 'tune into' the words and accent of the speaker, thus enabling closer familiarity with non-verbal communication that was seen in some instances to suggest anxiety and that the fact that the speaker might have wished to stop the interview. A further advantage of the face-to-face interview was that it transferred the decision of whether or not to attend to the person taking part. On two separate occasions, the researcher had arranged to meet people at an agreed location but when he arrived found that the person due to be interviewed had changed their mind and that they no longer wished to participate in this way.

The main disadvantage of the face-to-face method of testimonial collection was that it raised significant concerns in relation to some Traveller and Gypsy mores where people, particularly women, might feel uncomfortable speaking to a man on their own (Okley, 1983). Here the interviewer effect described by Denscombe (2007) became an important factor. Whilst the researcher took great care to be polite, punctual, receptive, and respectful of these mores, the sense of confidence that he aimed to impress could not easily be assured. In light of this concern, the researcher invited each person to be interviewed by a female Scottish Traveller. Although this arrangement was made clear at the earliest opportunity, it was never assumed that all people would want to speak to another woman.

Once the testimonial collection process had been concluded, it became known that none of the people who contributed this way requested to be interviewed by the female interviewer. Although important mores did exist in relation to being alone with the researcher, two women explained that the researcher's identity as a non-Traveller or Gypsy man offered some reassurance that their privacy and integrity would be maintained and respected. For them, similar assurances could not be guaranteed with the invitation to speak to a female Scottish Traveller interviewer.

Group interviews

The limitation of the face-to-face interview in terms of personal integrity was accounted for by the inclusion of a group interview. Three people chose this as a preferred method. On reflection of the interview process, it became known that the potential disadvantage of using a group interview was that it failed to focus on one particular individual. As experiences are understood to be unique (Giddens, 1991), the opportunity to discuss them in single depth was not always available. In fact, the group interview became a regulated conversation where those involved sought continued consensual corroboration with each other. Where an experience was proposed which the other group members did not share, there was a tendency for disagreement amongst the group. In this case, recall of individual noematic

experience was accused of being false. Moreover, intentionality of experience being reported was constantly reshaped until the group achieved mutual agreement on what they thought was the truth. In one group interview, a speaker was constantly challenged by the other members on the basis that her experience was wrong. This constant criticism resulted in her original optimistic involvement becoming introverted.

The ability of the group interview to moderate the themes discussed also reflected the potential power dynamics within the whole system. In this instance, there was a clear group leader able to acquiesce or censor the information being provided. Although a group interview may have enabled a sense of security otherwise jeopardised by face-to-face interviews, the opportunity to talk about deeply personal experiences was not always available.

In recognition of this limitation, each person was also offered the opportunity to describe their experiences in a number of alternative ways. Those options suggested included posting a Dictaphone to people so that they could answer the questions in private. Each person was also invited to describe their experiences through telephone interviews, emails and the opportunity to send song lyrics and poems all guided by the same interview schedule. None of these alternatives was chosen in this case.

Telephone Interviews

The telephone interview was used on a number of occasions, but only when specifically requested. By using a telephone that had a loud speaker, the researcher was able to record the information given about the study and the matter of informed consent before starting the interview. The telephone interview was considered a useful method as it enabled people to speak with a sense of security that could not be guaranteed by face-to-face interviews (Denscombe, 2007). People were able to give their consent to be interviewed by agreeing to talk over the phone. They were also able to stop the interview at any time by terminating the call.

The main disadvantage of this particular method concerned the researcher's inability to monitor the conversation by observing and reacting to body language. Instead, and in line with the advice of Babbie (2010), he had to pay specific attention to what was being said, and how it was being said. By utilising core social work training, he was able to respond to the speaker in order to identify stress or anxiety.

Czaja & Blair (2005) have detailed additional concerns about the telephone interview which became apparent in this study on a number of occasions particularly when the person being interviewed became distracted by their environment. In some instances, their children would vie for their attention, a dog would bark, or their doorbell would ring. Despite these distractions, the researcher was able to regain the speaker's attention, once consent had been given to restart the interview, by paraphrasing what had been said before the distraction had occurred.

Documentary information

The inclusion of documentary information enabled people to send the researcher emails, letters, song lyrics, and poems that reflected their experience of living in care. When these types of methods were requested, the researcher sent each person a copy of the interview schedule.

The opportunity to send written accounts in this way respected the potential anxiety caused by speaking directly to the researcher. The inclusion of these methods also aimed to empower people to take part in the study by describing their experiences in the way that most suited them. Information provided this way was amenable to hermeneutic analysis and was seen to be reflective of a person's intentionality towards the experience of living in care as a child as being true at the time of writing (Langdrige, 2008; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

The main disadvantage with analysis of documentary analysis was that it posed a barrier to the implication of member checking, probing, and prompting techniques, seen to be intrinsic to the IPA pursuit (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In all but one

example, once documentary information had been sent to the researcher, the author requested that they were not contacted again.

7.3.3 Reflection on analysis

As shown in chapter 3, IPA is often criticised for lacking in scientific rigour in light of the possibility for variant interpretation (Pringle & Drummond, 2011). Rigour is clearly considered the key for research success and in some disciplines, the researcher is responsible for achieving it (Bryman, Bell, & Teevan, 2009). However, as IPA departs from this tradition, it requires that rigour must be judged by the readers who are in a position to decide if the results are credible based on the information provided to them (Smith *et al.*, 2009). To assist in this process, the following sections address the core aspects of these pragmatic concerns to evidence how this study was achieved through constant reflection.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity implies sustained self-criticism and self-appraisal of the role of the researcher in interpretative analysis. Although Moustakas (1994) views reflexivity as an optional tool that permits researchers to acknowledge their interpretative role, Smith (2009) argues that it is an essential technique to reduce potential researcher bias. Consequently, the researcher has taken care to document the methodology in detail in chapters 3 and 4. This showed that analysis of people's testimonies was subject to constant and critical review as each testimonial was subjected to analytical procedure on 3 occasions throughout a twelve-month period.

The opportunity to analyse each transcript with a fresh approach on a number of separate occasions allowed potential suppositions to be identified and reduced. This process enabled a reflective awareness of the various possible interpretations of the experiences offered. Sustained analysis also enabled interpretations to become more considered and less judgemental, thus reducing the initial bias that may have been applied. Furthermore, continued consultation with the Traveller and Gypsy

community enabled the researcher to reflect on his own values as a potential risk to the interpretation process. Although the findings presented in chapters 5 and 6 are informed by the researchers social understandings as a social work research student, they are presented in such a way so to allow the voices to be heard within their own context, and in their own lived world. It is hoped that readers will thus be able to verify their voices through interpretation and the developing understanding of what it means to a Traveller and Gypsy to live in care as a child.

Credibility

Credibility is, as Bryant & Christopher (1985) explain, a research term that is used to refer to 'the truth, value, or believability of the findings. In this study, credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement with each testimonial.

As the fundamental concept of IPA recognises that a lived experience can be multifaceted, it asserts that there may be endless meanings in a person's constant interaction with the world and that these cannot be captured or described with complete certainty (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In light of the noema-noesis correlation described in chapter 3, this complexity was magnified by the double interpretation that was present in a research situation. As stated in chapter 4, the researcher was attempting to make sense of the experiences of a person who was attempting to make sense of their own experiences.

In order to reduce bias, and increase credibility, Babbie (2010) suggests offering the transcripts of a person's testimony to a number of analysts. The task of multiple analysis aims, therefore, to highlight the different interpretations created by different people so that they can be compared. Although only the researcher performed the analysis in this study, the resulting conclusions were discussed with the supervisory team. Based on extensive reflection and review, the themes that are included in this study were reached with mutual consent although driven primarily by the researchers own interpretations. Although this could also have been achieved by inviting those

people who took part in the study to be involved in analysis, this opportunity was not available for the reasons outlined in chapter 4.

Dependability

The term dependability in qualitative research closely corresponds to the notion of reliability in quantitative research (Bryant & Christopher, 1985). Taken together, they are used to reflect a means by which the results of a study can be replicated in identical conditions by a different researcher.

It has already been acknowledged that IPA complicates dependability because of the potential variance in a researcher's interpretative perceptions of the constant intentionality of other people's testimonies. Based on the theoretical principle of intentionality, and the noema-noesis correlation, the issue of dependability should have no effect on the value of IPA research because the ability to capture a person's own consciousness, or essence of an experience, is continually subject to reinterpretation and change (Langdrige, 2008). This process of change is included in theoretical principle of indexicality (Garkinklel & Sacks, 1970), which relates to the fact that even if this study could be exactly replicated, 'the change in the research, informants, and meanings of the research tool over time' (ibid: 338) would make it nevertheless a different piece of work. The choice to apply IPA therefore was not driven by a desire to achieve dependability. Whilst the methodology was presented in the most transparent way in chapter 3 and 4, the researcher's unique and developing horizons, relationships with the people who took part in the study, his personal attributes, and limitations, could not be included or described with such precision.

Whilst this study prioritised the safety of each person, and respected their reported experiences, the researcher tried to be as reflective, empathetic, sensitive, compassionate, and considered as possible, in order to gain an accurate understanding of the testimonies provided. These are skills that the researcher has developed over many years in social work practice, and cannot be easily stated for

the purpose of dependability. Overall, the outcome of the study was based on the researcher's ability to engage people in a meaningful and considerate way. This took time. At times, it was challenging. Nonetheless, trust was enabled as a key factor for research with Traveller and Gypsy people who have lived in care as children. Trust, whilst listening to the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies was a priority. Affording time that enabled people to express their thoughts in the way that best suited them, approaching the research question as an eager learner were all skills that enabled this study to develop and should therefore be seen as transferable in the attainment of dependability.

Transferability

The term transferability is applied to qualitative social research in place of the positivist expression of applicability (Flick, 2009). According to Moustakas (1994), the extent to which a study demonstrates transferability depends on the degree of similarity between two contexts. In this case, the original context of the findings must be provided so that the judgement of applicability can be made for those Travellers and Gypsies who did not take part. The concept of transferability presents a number of challenges to this thesis.

The voices of Travellers and Gypsies living in care have been hitherto ignored and suppressed in British research. On this basis, the initial intention of the researcher was not to achieve transferability, but rather to enable those people who had lived in care to tell their story for the first time. At the outset, whether or not their experiences were similar to other Traveller and Gypsy people did not really matter. The individual was seen as the most important aspect of the study. However, despite this commitment to the individuals involved, Smith (2009) points out that the denial of transferability in terms of this overall thesis could be seen as being unethical. In every case, the people who took part in the study were motivated to remember and describe experiences, some they had attempted to forget, so that an accurate understanding of the challenges that they faced could be revealed.

The single biggest threat to transferability is the ethical requirement to omit the type of information that may make transference more obvious. For example, details about people's ages, locations, and placement addresses, have been deliberately excluded from this thesis. The inclusion of this information would be useful to gauge exactly how long ago they left care, as, over the last ten years, significant emphasis has been given to the regulation of Looked after children services (Fook, 2012). Research suggests, for instance, that the way in which children's homes are run today is a far cry from the way in which they were run twenty years ago (Jackson, 2006). Whilst the inclusion of this information may have been useful for the purpose of transferability then, it was also seen as a direct threat to anonymity, which may enable people to be identified within their own communities. As chapter 5 and 6 have shown, if people are identified as having lived in care as children within their own community, they can experience ostracism and social alienation. Therefore, if the safeguards put in place to anonymise the identity of those who took part in the study dilutes transferability, then this is a limitation that the researcher is willing to accept.

Concerning the reported developments of the care system, which may be used to accuse the findings presented in the preceding chapters of being out dated, it must be borne in mind that the experiences described are not bound within the limitations of time. Despite the developments in child protection, the systematic abuse of people living in care continues to occur as highlighted by the recent scandal in Bristol (Brindle, 2011). The argument therefore that the experiences described in this study could not be transferable, based on the reported developments within the care system would be potentially flawed. In addition, the continued institutional racism experienced by Travellers and Gypsies is a frequent theme in dominant discourse (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). As the literature review has shown in chapter 2, although social work practice is committed to the promotion of human rights and civil liberties (Clark, 2006a), its ability to achieve this with Traveller and Gypsy communities remain a cause for concern (Acton, 1974, 2000; Okley, 1983; Acton & Mundy, 1997).

Model of reflective self-concepts

In addition to methodological evaluation presented above, the use of IPA and subsequent analytical induction enabled an original thematic framework to be developed. This framework was proposed as a network of ideas reflecting interpretation of the testimonials provided. When this was presented alongside the explanatory narrative detailed in chapter 5, the model of reflective self-concepts provided a framework which served to illustrate the key themes identified. In terms of critique, the model of self-concepts suggests that there exist simple alternative choices, for example, 'Yes' and 'No' in relation to each stage. In reality, each choice represented the end of a dimension along which people's responses varied from 'strongly no' through to 'strongly yes, or 'very little' through to 'very much'. In this study, all four features were of interest, and whilst attempts have been made to include each one, the model could not be easily designed to demonstrate these unique nuances. For this reason, additional research is needed so to confirm the potential transferability of the model so that the finer details of response which have been omitted could be explored.

Extending the use of the model of reflective self-concepts

The model of reflective self-concepts could be applied as a more generic model which may be applicable to a wider research population. Extending the research population would mean applying the theoretical framework to other individuals experiencing social or psychological acculturation in a wider range of social settings. These may include immigration, parenthood, a change in employment status, bereavement and loss, a transition into adulthood and so forth. This wider applicability is based on the theoretical framework as a model of the factors influencing the ways in which individuals identify and respond to social and psychological change. As the model stands, it could also be applied to other circumstances in which Travellers and Gypsies experience social and psychological change. These may include, for instance, such examples as moving into a house.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to change the register established in the subsequent two chapters to contextualise the testimonies provided in a wider context. An attempt has been made to engage in a dialogue between the findings which were presented and the existing literature. By locating the testimonies of each person in this way, this study has been able to problematise what was said, but also explain how some existing work can shed some additional light on what was found. Some of the literature presented in this dialogue was found in the literature review. However, in the nature of IPA and the process of interview and analysis, this study was taken into unanticipated territory which required some additional literature searching to frame the new angles which were developed. Once a careful selection of existing literature had been connected to the testimonies and themes presented, this chapter moved on to evaluate what this study had achieved in terms of the criteria for validity in qualitative research.

What remains to be considered, in light of these experiences, is what should be done, and what should be concluded about the issues that have been investigated. The following chapter will address these considerations in order to provide a response to the final research question: *How can an understanding of these experiences inform the way in which social work practice should incorporate the needs of Travellers and Gypsies living in public care?* In providing an answer to this question, the following chapter will give specific attention to the way in which the analysis compliments, or conflicts with other work in similar areas, and what the potential consequences of these are in terms of proposing changes to the care system. In addressing these issues, it is hoped that the implications identified in the findings and subsequent discussion will become clearer.

Chapter 8

Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This research has provided a coherent programme of phenomenological study which has been able to explore the experiences of Travellers and Gypsies who lived in care as children. It has expanded the knowledge and understanding of what meaning each person attributed to this experience by responding to two research questions:

- ‘*How do Travellers and Gypsies make sense of their lived experience in public care?*’ and,
- ‘*To what extent do these experiences influence individual self-concepts?*’

By applying the framework of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), close association between the researcher’s interpretation and the testimonies provided was maintained throughout the study. In accordance with the advice of Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009), the rigour of this research was preserved by continuously revisiting the interview transcripts throughout the process of analysis. This also ensured that close engagement with the continuous circle of hermeneutic comparative and thematic examination was enabled (Palmer, 1969). However, while closeness and commitment to the subject and selected methodology has enabled the opportunity of this study to present the *lifeworld* of each person’s experiences, it has not enabled this thesis, thus far, to present the type of recommendations needed to influence wider social policy and fields of social work knowledge and practice in equal depth.

Although the ambition to influence wider fields of policy and practice is not the primary driver of IPA, the testimonies that have been presented in this thesis do provide an unique opportunity to develop an important opening in the dialogue

between evidence based practice and the implementation of social work for day-to-day practice. Therefore, by contextualising the experiences presented within chapters 5 and 6 within the wider structural and material debates that have been advanced in chapter 7, this concluding chapter will respond to the third part of the research enquiry:

- *'How can an understanding of these experiences inform the way in which social work practice should incorporate the needs of Traveller and Gypsy children living in public care?'*

The ability to reflect upon the testimonies that were provided by those people who lived and suffered in care presented the opportunity to provide a series of considered conclusions that reflect realistically on the implications of each experience. In particular, this enabled the themes that were presented within this thesis to be weighed against the principles of safe social work practice in the context of culturally competent care. As this study was guided by the tenets of IPA, specific consideration will be given to the need to draw upon the testimonies provided in order to exemplify the key recommendations that are proposed.

8.2 Practice considerations and social policy implications

Chapter 2 explored the purpose of those social policies which aim to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children living in care. Based upon universal models of human rights, these policies generally focused on the centrality of consultation, culturally appropriate care, empowerment, and the implementation of services within a framework of anti-discriminatory practice (DfES, 2006, 2007).

The importance of these policy agendas in the context of care provision should not be understated. Bassett (2010), for instance, explains that synergy between these components forms the basis of safe social work practice and culturally competent care. As this study has shown, when these principles are applied in a way which was mutually inclusive, four people were enabled to recall the experience of being

provided with the opportunities to develop secure attachments, emotional resilience, and a sustained sense of permanence. Conversely, when these components were seen to disconnect, six people described a range of experiences which were entangled in a series of psychological and social challenges. Compared to the findings presented in extant literature, the latter experiences were also seen to represent the widening gap of disenfranchised outcomes, which Barn (2010) explains can only serve to significantly effect and separate those children living in care who experience cultural displacement compared to those children who do not.

Although the experiences of the people who took part in this study have been described as taking one of two very separate pathways (one which led to a sense of security, resilience and permanence, and the other which led to a sense of shame, security, isolation and confusion), it is important to understand that both routes were essentially superintended by the same vision of social policy. Juxtaposed to the recommendations of the Care Matters (DfES 2006, 2007) agenda, it is clear that each person, regardless of where, or with whom care was provided, should have experienced safe social work practice that majored in the provision of culturally competent care. The fact that this fundamental right was only described by those four people who lived in care in the Republic of Ireland with Traveller or Gypsy carers and did not extend to include those six people living in the United Kingdom with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers represents a particular matter of concern.

In light of the recommendations of social policy, and the evidence which has been provided in this thesis, it could be concluded that the provision of a 'Shared Rearing' model (discussed in chapter 2) presents as a panacea to the challenges which exist for all Traveller and Gypsy children living in care today. In order to achieve similar outcomes in the United Kingdom, it should be possible on this basis to present a series of recommendations that outline a vision for how a Shared Rearing model could be developed to modernise the more fundamental areas of Looked after service provision. However, despite a great deal of encouraging evidence about the way in which Traveller and Gypsy foster carers and adoptive parents are able to

support Traveller and Gypsy children under this scheme (see Pemberton, 1999), this final chapter will not explore this concept in any great depth. While the provision of a similar model might be necessary in the long-term, it seems that before such recommendations can be realistically considered, there first needs to be a series of pragmatic recommendations which bridge the findings presented in this thesis to inform a realistic framework that can be used to improve social work practice in the immediacy.

The foremost conclusion, based on the thematic findings that have been presented then, is that there is an urgent need to reflect the reported deficits in social work policy and practice. To achieve this, the following sections will consider how the testimonies provided could, and should, be used to improve and modernise skills, knowledge, and expertise in current social work and social care training, social policy and practice. In consideration of the challenges identified, this chapter will be based on the premise that before changes can be made to the institutional delivery of social work, individual practitioners must be provided with support in order to recognise, or to verify, their understanding of the challenges faced by Traveller and Gypsy children, families, and communities. Practitioners operating within the fields of social work and social care must be provided with the knowledge in order to develop the necessary skills to implement current social policy in active pursuit of consultation, cultural intelligence, and the protection of fundamental human rights. Only when this is achieved, and social work is able to work collectively with Travellers and Gypsies, can the Shared Rearing model be understood and advocated as a realistic recommendation in the expansion of practice and service provision in foster care and adoption.

In order to advance this position, the subsequent sections present a number of considered recommendations under the following headings:

1. Lessons for social work practice: working to support Traveller and Gypsy children at risk of entering care;

2. Lessons for social work practice: working to support Traveller and Gypsy children living in care;
3. Lessons for social care practice: looking after Traveller and Gypsy children; and,
4. Lessons for social work organisations and social policy

The recommendations provided under these headings aspire to demonstrate how the knowledge that this thesis has advanced can inform the way in which social work practice should incorporate the needs of Traveller and Gypsy children living in public care. Whilst these recommendations are grounded in the testimonies that have been provided, and reflect the overarching methodology used, the clear caveat is that they cannot be seen to be representative of a complete model for social work practice.

The principal reason for this is that each testimony provided in this thesis revealed the essence of an individual journey through care. Not only did they demonstrate the distinctive perceptions of each person, but they also reflected the unique variation, interpretation, or intentionality of human experience and the unique meanings that are ascribed to it. Attempts made therefore, to account for all eventualities and nuanced components of lived reality in order to prescribe the core components of culturally competent care for all Traveller and Gypsy children can never be exhaustive, not least because 'culture', interpretation, and perception of a lived experience remain fluid and complex concepts (Giddens, 1991). No matter how much detail is offered, the unique nature of human existence, and the opportunities for variance in the process of interpretation, will mean that the essential experience is likely to remain richly multifaceted and complex. For this reason, the recommendations that are presented should not be seen as being fully inclusive of all eventualities, opportunities, and outcomes.

Rather than viewing the recommendations presented in this chapter as a definitive response to the challenges faced by Travellers and Gypsies in care, social workers should use this information to further their skills and understanding. By reflecting on

these recommendations, it is hoped that social workers can consider specific strategies that might enable them to engage Traveller and Gypsy children, families, groups and communities, and account for the differences of culture, identity, and self-concept, in a more sensitive and culturally intelligent way. For this reason, the most important message taken from this chapter is that social workers must foreground the self-concept of each Traveller and Gypsy child, family, group and community, in each aspect of support required by always recognising the need to respect the self-determination of others and the ambiguity of individuality, including that of lived experience. In doing so, social workers must be prepared to ensure that the self-concept and identity of the child is promoted through practice, valuing empathy, active communication, partnership working, advocacy, leadership, and a passion to provide Traveller and Gypsy children with the best care possible. Not only would this reflect the essence of each testimony provided, showing deserved respect to those people who provided them, but it will also ensure that social work practice remains embedded in the core values and human rights perspectives, which drive culturally competent care and the practical application of the Care Matters agenda (DfES, 2006; 2007)

8.3 Lessons for social work practice: working to support Traveller and Gypsy children at risk of entering care

The role of the social worker is defined in law and grounded in research and the evidence base of regulation, guidance, and localised procedures, yet as this study has revealed, much of the reported social work carried out with Travellers and Gypsies was seen to be unsupported in social work policy. This finding provided tangible evidence to confirm the concerns advanced in extant literature (see Cemlyn, 2000b; Greenfields, 2002; Power, 2004) which call for a more cohesive strategy for effective engagement with Traveller and Gypsy children, families, and communities.

In light of the frequently reported antipathy that is seen to undermine safe social work practice with Traveller and Gypsy children, families, and communities, (Cemlyn, 2000b), Power (2004) believes that the difficult life circumstances experienced by many are likely to remain obscured by a social worker's pre-judged presupposition that targets a lifestyle choice. Building on from this suggestion, the findings presented in this study have also indicated an apparent complicatedness that some social workers can experience in the transferability or application of core social work ethics, standards and professional capabilities when working to support Traveller and Gypsy children, families, groups and communities. Taken together with the concern identified by Power (2004), the actions, and more importantly the inactions of the social worker, merely served to create and compound material experiences of anxiety, fear, marginalisation, alienation, and social rejection.

The inference drawn from this understanding is that social work practice must focus and elaborate upon four main recommendations to ensure that professional judgement and planned intervention is not only tailored but *accurately* reflects the challenges that are being experienced. Consequently, the principal recommendations are:

- **Focus on the safety of the child**

- **Isolate prejudice to conduct a full and systematic assessment**
- **Understand the environment where families live**
- **Plan and deliver first class services and be prepared to challenge inequality**

8.3.1 Focus on the safety of the child

The history of Travellers and Gypsies in Britain paints a vivid picture of injustices perpetrated by 'out-group' agencies of social control (Acton, 1974). Following generations of oppression, Traveller and Gypsy children, families, and communities have experienced genocide (Frazer, 1995), stolen land (Acton, 1974), stolen children and families (Power, 2004), anti-Traveller racism (McVeigh, 1997), significant inequalities in accommodation provision (Greenfields & Smith, 2010), and frequent attacks on their right to family life (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). Consequently, Travellers and Gypsies are clearly defined as one of the most disadvantaged groups living in Britain across most health and socioeconomic measures (Van Cleemput, 2010). Such disadvantages, for instance, have led to a near 12-year disparity in life expectancy of Travellers and Gypsies compared to that of the total non-Traveller or Gypsy population (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009).

Understanding the history and current socioeconomic position of Travellers and Gypsies is important because its legacy was identified in each of the testimonies provided for this study. Not only did people reflect on their own experiences of structural inequality as defining the structuralist principles that determined the reported need for 'in-group' separation from 'out-group' contamination (Okley, 1983), but they also reinforced Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) claim that the relationship between social work and Traveller and Gypsy communities reflected material experiences of social, political, and historical oppression:

Laura: *To me it was like they [social workers] just came into our life and said to my parents that they were not*

fit to mind us and that we had to go into care as a result of them and the Traveller way. They didn't understand what it was like for us as Travellers. I think that they just saw us as trouble and wanted to get us out of the way. That is why we hate them; they just come in took us away and that weren't fair to me. They didn't try to know us or help us, they just blamed us, and to me that weren't fair.

The threat of unfair 'out-group' surveillance was described in those frequent reports which referred to social work as an infringement on the Traveller and Gypsy right to social independence and self-determination. It was rationalised by those people who lived and suffered in care in the United Kingdom as being meted out unjustly on the basis that the Traveller and Gypsy *lifestyle* was seen as an infringement on the child's right to security and social inclusion. The consequence of this for the child and their family, ultimately reinforced the 'in-group/out-group' dichotomy and led to further experiences of oppression, social rejection, enforced control and ultimately the removal of the child into care.

Reflecting on the presence of reported fear, this study has shown how social workers, attempting to support Traveller and Gypsy children living in, or at the risk of entering care, were seen to operate within an environment of tension, or dilemma. More often than not, this was presented as social workers attempted to navigate between the presence of community resentment, as described by Cemlyn (2000b), and the paramount needs of child detailed in child care legislation and duty (Children Act, 1989). This dilemma was particularly resonant in those testimonies which explained how the challenges experienced in a 'pre-care' reality were often

compounded by the wider cultural expectation that private family matters would be kept private, or *'hush hush'*. As attention from 'out-group' agencies was reported to represent a form of social control which threatened individual, economic, and social freedoms, seven people explained that their family and wider community would conceal, or internally regulate, 'in-group' difficulties, in order to protect against 'out-group' surveillance, and maintain some sense of separatist independence similar to that described by Taylor (2011).

The existence of fear between social work and minoritised groups is not a new phenomenon. Recognising the impact of this, the Department for Children, Schools, and Families (DfCSF, 2007) acknowledged the need for social work agencies to utilise theories of community engagement defined by Cree (2011), and to forge effective links with the communities they should work to support. On this basis, Thompson (2006) argues that effective community engagement is becoming increasingly important in aspects of preventative and responsive social work. However, while these recommendations might seem to steer social work in the right direction in principle, they make no specific recommendations about how social work could achieve strong community relations with Traveller and Gypsy families.

Such weaknesses in evidence-based practice have resulted in social workers reporting that they can feel anxious about their ability to support Travellers and Gypsies (Cemlyn, 2006). Reflecting on Bauman's (2001:71) concept of 'cultural strangers', Powell (2011) explains that professionals can experience low self-confidence when responding to referrals, particularly if they are required to enter campsites. Confronted with their own 'culture shock', they can perceive caravans, trailers, outhouses, pets and animals, the often run down utility blocks, high fences, and cramped layout, with a heightened sensory awareness that can engender racist perceptions and fear (Power, 2004). As social workers can feel out of place while visiting a campsite, their 'out-group' subjective value judgements become a measure of risk that is often used to justify the need for formal social work involvement (Cemlyn, 2000). Rather than working to understand the challenges that were being

faced by children, families, and communities within each individual cultural context, social work, under the guise of social policy, was seen to become an 'out-group' apparatus in the continued experience of oppression:

Lisa: ...to be honest it wasn't a good atmosphere do you know what I mean? It was like a stalemate type of situation. It's hard to explain but there was definitely something wrong between my family and the social worker. Does that make sense?

The solution to manage the multifaceted tension that Lisa introduced here is complex, not least because it is borne out of material experiences of oppression and those material feelings of fear which have also been reported by Karner (2004). Taken together with the testimonies presented in this study, Lisa appears to confirm Cemlyn's (2006) observation that social work operates at the interchange between the two complicated and equally serious concerns described above. The important lesson to understand here is that whilst on the one hand social work can risk causing social rejection and compound the interfamilial challenges being experienced, on the other, it can be seen by some children who might be at risk, as a welcomed form of support. Consistent with the advice of Cemlyn's (2006), the recommendation for social workers standing at the junction of these two pathways is first to ensure that an informed assessment is facilitated to decide whether social work involvement is justified or not.

The response to this recommendation should always be embedded in the fact that ensuring the welfare of the child is the single most important component in safe social work practice (DfCSF, 2010). While it is important to understand the concern that formal 'out-group' involvement might result in social rejection for some, it is also vital that the social worker does not compromise their involvement on this basis, and risk complicity with the 'rule of optimism' (Dingwall, Eekelaar, & Murray, 1983).

Whilst the social worker should be prepared to recognise the complexity and moral dilemmas at the heart of social work practice with all marginalised groups, they should also be clear in their duty to safeguard and protect the welfare of children as the driving responsibility. As shown in the Laming (2003) report, reticence regarding social work involvement on the grounds of cultural incompatibility, or in other words, the fear of being accused of racism, undermines professionalism and the function of statutory intervention. The report also shows that it is always the social workers responsibility to assess risk, including the need to challenge any cultural nuances, which, as demonstrated by the Climbié enquiry, can actually prove to be abusive (ibid). On this basis, it is important that social worker's understand that their ability to acknowledge cultural practices that might present a risk to children is not racist practice, but good practice. If Traveller and Gypsy families become concerned that social work involvement amounts to a breach of their privacy and right to private life, it should be made clear that the welfare of the child is paramount and that nothing is more important. It must also be made obvious that social work involvement is not being instigated with Travellers and Gypsies on the grounds that they are Travellers and Gypsies, but more accurately because there are real and tangible concerns about their child's welfare. In order to achieve this, social workers must be confident in setting out in a clear and understandable way what is needed to be done in order to undertake the assessment and safeguard the child. As governed through examples of safe and competent practice, social workers should also inform families of their rights, provide them with resources and contact details of independent support organisations, and as always, ensure they are aware of the procedures in regard to complaints and access to records (Smith, 2008).

Planning social work support in this way should demonstrate a commitment to listen to the families concerns and ensure that any fear of unwanted 'out-group' attention is acknowledged, whilst ensuring safety of the child remains a priority (Smith, 2004). Only once the child's safety has been assured should the social worker consider the wider process of community engagement and the opportunities which might be available to reduce the risk of social rejection. By working with a family in a way

which engenders equality and upholds public trust (Fook, 2012), practitioners can begin to protect the child while simultaneously engaging community concerns by the sensitive way in which they conduct and manage their involvement. Being engaged in the process of 'family support' should enable social workers to form true associations which could go further in addressing the 'in-group/out-group' dichotomy. This will also serve to realise their duty and responsibility as powerful agents of change (Thompson, 2006).

By standing with children, families, and communities as an ally against inequality, injustice, oppression, and discrimination, social workers should make clear that any formal processes of child protection will only be used if the family and community show, or have shown, that they are unable to protect the child. The potential ways in which a social worker is advised to advocate for Traveller and Gypsy communities are explored below, however as a matter of priority, the processes and skills needed to assess risk shall be considered first.

8.3.2 Isolate prejudice to conduct a full and systematic assessment

The relationship between social work and Travellers and Gypsies described in this study reflects an enduring concern that characterises the perception of social work more generally (Cemlyn, 2000b). While certain concerns exist to position social work as an interfering agency of social control (Powell, 2011), the duty remains which requires professional judgements about private and sensitive aspects of family life to be made (Ferguson, 2011).

According to Smith (2008a), the processes used to weigh this decision can be difficult, challenging, and fraught with risk and a degree of uncertainty. Nevertheless, social workers must navigate this terrain and decide whether a child is safe to remain at home, whether a child should be removed from his or her home, whether a family should be provided with additional support, and how family change can be enabled to facilitate positive outcomes (Higham, 2010). The concern identified in this study, however, has shown that the professional judgment of the social worker as

described earlier, often failed to include a specific acknowledgment of the many challenges which effected a sense of wellbeing and equilibrium thereby adding to the concerns which were presented.

In a move towards resolution, a number of people suggested that this tension could be addressed if the social worker acknowledged the position of Travellers and Gypsies within the historical, social, and political dynamics which have served to construct certain boundary distinctions and the in-group/out-group' dichotomy:

Mary: The social worker should have looked further than our [caravan] so that they could see us as a family. They would have seen us on the road and my disability and been unable to see anything else. They should have seen my parents as needing support. They should have seen me and the support I needed and they should have seen the hardships we faced...Then the social worker would have seen our troubles but instead they said that living on the road was unsuitable...instead [my parents] were blamed...and I was sent off to the institution.

This testimony summarised the views of nine people who took part in this study by suggesting that for social work to be effective, it must abstain from applying any presuppositions, or preconceived ideas that might distort an accurate understanding of the challenges that Travellers and Gypsies face. It was agreed that social workers should be well prepared, self-aware and sufficiently reflective to address conflict in

an honest, transparent, supportive, and empathetic way. On this basis, social workers must be prepared to understand the potential tension that might be caused by elements of their involvement. They need to understand that as in most areas of practice, their involvement can be perceived by community members as being oppressive and assume, on this basis, that initial contact will result in conflict.

Sharing some similarity to the process of epochè (Husserl, 1999) described in chapter 3, social workers should first attempt to achieve a balanced view of themselves by making specific efforts to bracket their own presuppositions of Traveller and Gypsy children, families, and communities. They should critically reflect on their roles and responsibilities, including the influence of social stereotypes, to consider how these may challenge professional judgements and the legitimacy of an assessment. As with the epochè, social workers should not attempt to bracket their knowledge and expertise so that it disappears completely, but should instead use their detailed understanding of social work theories and methods to enable their involvement to be as objective and as transparent as possible.

The challenge for social workers within this recommendation is to allow their initial observations of Traveller and Gypsy children, families, and communities, and the topics being discussed, to appear in their own consciousness as if it was for the first time in an attempt to attend to the child, their family and wider community free from internalised prejudice. The preliminary aspect of the initial assessment therefore should include a careful consideration of the essence of concern so that the role of social work can be contextualised and the presuppositions towards Traveller and Gypsy communities exposed. Whilst in practice, this recommendation may be difficult to apply, social workers might do well to achieve this by first asking the family to describe their perception of the challenges that they are experiencing. This opportunity could then be useful to communicate a sense of genuine interest and a determination to share and provide clarity in the roles and responsibilities of the social worker. If achieved, social work would be better able to attend an initial assessment with certain openness and transparency, ready to learn from the

reported experience, in order to make informed judgements, with a determination to share, shape, and thus provide satisfactory solutions.

By isolating their own beliefs, or prior knowledge and stereotypes, the social worker can move towards equality demonstrated by the questions that they ask. Using the concept of free imaginative variation (Giorgi, 2008a; 2008b), an example of a potential question, acknowledging the need to isolate subjective prejudice, might be *“What are the main differences between a Traveller/Gypsy culture and a settled culture?”* The aim of this question would help to establish the essential features of a Traveller and Gypsy culture and understanding, that is, its essence from the viewpoint of the people who have that experience. The aim of this particular method should be utilised in an attempt to ensure that families do not feel oppressed or bullied by formal ‘out-group involvement:

Mary: [My family] were at the mercy of the system...they were bullied...they did not know that they were able to make a choice...

Through bracketing presupposition, the social worker would attempt to attend to the initial assessment with reduced prejudice and extend the value of the anti-discriminatory practice (Thompson, 2006) in a much more creative and balanced way. By asking how the Traveller and Gypsy culture is different to a settled culture, the family’s own consciousness of what it means to be a Traveller or Gypsy can be explored. This process is also likely to establish the truth about the ontology of a Traveller or Gypsy culture, what this means in the lived experience, and what the practical and emotional features of being a Traveller and Gypsy entail. The questions, *“In your opinion what is the difference between safe parenting and dangerous parenting?”*, *“In what way does social work support differ from the support offered to you by your family and community?”* and, *“if you could change three things about your current situation what three things would you change?”* are further

examples of how this could be achieved. Although the social worker may believe that they know what the difference between these experiences are, or consider these questions rhetorical, they should be used in a more considered way in order to communicate clear messages to the family that no judgements are being made about their unique lives and cultural mores. This will surely begin to engender a sense of trust and an ability to seek an alternative more accurate understanding and provide the opportunity to uncover real clarity about the present situation.

Acknowledging the potential influence of presupposition by asking questions which attempt to look further than the 'caravan' in the way in which Mary describes, social workers might enable themselves to understand how the challenges experienced by some families are attributed to wider failings in social policy. Therefore, through active listening to the experiences of children, families and communities, a deeper understanding may be gained about the unique struggles that are encountered in their daily lives, and how these might be related to wider social structures and historical factors.

8.3.3 Understand the environment where families live

Environmental factors should be a major consideration in the assessment process of Travellers and Gypsies. In addition to the three domains of the assessment framework (DoH, 1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2008), specific attention should also be given to experiences of racist harassment, enforced eviction, unfair access to education and health care services, including services for mental health problems and those experiencing problems with substance misuse. Two potentially useful questions which may be posed and which could shed some light on the essence of these experiences might be *“What is the hardest thing about being a Traveller/Gypsy?”* or *“What does the experience of living (*on a campsite, *by the roadside, *in a house) mean to you as a Traveller/Gypsy?”*

Focusing specific question in this way could empower people to describe their lived experiences in consideration of those situations which may be beyond their control,

but can equally affect the challenges that are encountered. This might include, for example, the way in which the non-implementation of the Caravan Sites Act (1968) and the fact that many local authorities have, to all intents and purposes ignored this law for 30 years without being held to account. Alternatively, how the implementation of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994) has enabled local authorities to increase powers of eviction whilst paying minimal attention to their duty to assess the needs of children and families under welfare and education legislation (Cemlyn 2000a, 2000b). By taking this approach, the most important factor is to allow children, families, groups and communities the time to talk about the challenges that they can experience because information gathered from these responses can be used to develop a deeper, more meaningful and accurate assessment of the family's situation. This should include their needs and social functioning, their perception of social work based upon wider political issues and inequality. The objective of this approach to community engagement should ultimately provide children, families, and communities with the opportunity to engage in the delivery of first class social work services should they be required.

8.3.4 Plan and deliver first class services and be prepared to challenge inequality

In situations where on-going social work help is required, care should be taken to identify creative methods of support which can account for and include the unique needs of the child and family being supported. While this might typically involve working in partnership with other organisations, it is also important to ensure that formal involvement can engage with families in a way that does not invoke unnecessary anxiety. If the child is assessed as being at risk for example, direct and immediate steps should be taken to reduce this risk as per social policy guidance (DfCSF, 2010). Once this has been achieved, the practitioner should offer a solution-focused service as an alternative to care, such as placing the child with family members who do not pose a risk, or with the aim of reducing the amount of time a child has to spend in care if placed in an emergency.

Within the planning and implementation phases of service delivery, social workers should feel confident develop the concept of free imaginative variation to ask families what they want or need to improve their situation, and ultimately move to a position of independence when social work involvement is no longer required. The opportunity to engage families in this way is particularly important to inform the helping relationship as it can provide them with the opportunity to exercise their own will to power and therefore build upon more trusting and valued partnerships (Daniel & Wassell, 2002; Triseliotis, 2002).

A core social work skill needed to achieve this requires the practitioner to ensure that families feel that they have a voice, and that they are being heard. Turnell and Edwards (1999) and Turnell and Essex (2006) show that when assessing signs of safety, social work can help people to focus their concerns by empowering them to realise their own opportunities, strengths and fears. In line with the theoretical concept of free imaginative variation, this could be demonstrated when working with a Traveller or Gypsy family with statements such as *“I can hear that you do not want me to interfere in your life. It must be very hard for you to accept me being involved in your family, given that you do not like it.”* As Ferguson (2011) explains, this can then open the way for the social worker to provide the family with an objective: *“It is very important that I work with you and your family. How can we work together in a productive way so that I do not need to be involved in your family anymore?”*

Seeking particular objectives, and indeed assessment, through hypothetical questions such as those proposed can, according to Smith (2008a), create an opportunity for the social worker to reduce conflict and the possibility of attempts to undermine social work involvement, or as Certeau (1988) predicts, attempt to score temporary victories for the ‘weak’ over the ‘strong’. This being the case as the onus to transfer the experience of power, or expertise, in problem resolution can be communicated and conveyed to the family. As a useful method in the social work assessment, this style of questioning can prove invaluable when applied strategically in carefully considered conversation (Ferguson, 2011).

The importance of selecting hypothetical questions as a strategy in assessment and continuing safe social work practice does, however, raise some concerns regarding the need to exercise a degree of sensitivity to cultural and social mores. A hypothetical question can only really be answered with a hypothetical response. As such, some Travellers and Gypsies may perceive hypothetical questions with a degree of suspicion as it requires a degree of social or emotional imagination that may be otherwise be seen as unusual:

Interviewer: So where do you see yourself in five years?

Ruth: Oh Jesus, now you're asking! Where do you get these questions from?

As shown in this brief excerpt, when hypothetical questions are perceived in this way, some people may respond in such a way as to either protect against or circumnavigate the topic being discussed on the basis that hypothetical situations are difficult to articulate. Being wary of the response given to hypothetical questions is therefore an important strategy in the delivery and interpretation of this approach.

Specific details of the need to be wary of hypothetical questioning and subsequent interpretation are offered by Currer (1986). Although her research focus is located elsewhere, a clearly transferable point helps to understand that if a particular response does not meet the intended expectation of the inquirer, care should be taken to critically evaluate the style of questions posed, including the suitability of any approach within the context of cultural understanding. Summarising the results of a study which aimed to examine concepts of health, Currer (1986) found that the method of asking women of Pathan decent to consider whether their life may be enhanced by being *'in someone else's shoes'*, created a sense of cultural and religious misunderstanding. She found that asking these women to consider a response to this hypothetical question became problematic as each person considered that their place on earth, the shoes that they were in, to have been given

to them by Allah. As such, they found that any attempt to consider an alternative position, what life might be like if they were someone else's shoes, to be incommensurate with their cultural and religious beliefs.

Corresponding to the illustration of variability in meaning given by Cicourel, (1964), Curren (1986) suggests that when a concern over the suitability of hypothetical questions is identified, meaningful attempts should be made to verify responses, or seek alternative responses, through more direct and deliberate forms of inquiry. The findings in the present study have shown that this alternative approach should always major in lived experience and focus strategically and systematically on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that are being encountered or projected.

By engaging children, families and communities so to allow them to discuss their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats using both hypothetical and more direct forms of questioning, social work may be in a stronger position to challenge the 'in-group/out-group' distinction thus demonstrating the fact that intervention is based on the praxis of equity and inclusive respect:

Helen: No one ever sat us down and talked to us. No one ever asked us what we wanted or what we thought was best...To me the [social worker] hated us and saw us a dirty and that we would be better off in that institution where we was all treated like animals. They had no idea of our lives, of what it was like to be a Gypsy.

The potential opportunities available and put forward in this recommendation should enable social workers to understand the way in which inequality, wherever identified,

can directly affect the welfare of the child and so compound the sense of 'in-group/out-group' challenges. Where seen, social workers should then attempt to demonstrate a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice by implementing formal plans of support which aim to protect the child, while simultaneously uniting with the family and community to engage with local authorities to find out why inequality is not being challenged. It is proposed here that social workers must advocate for Traveller and Gypsy children by demanding to know what local authorities are doing to address failures in service provision as this sits squarely upon social care provision and need. Social workers should have the confidence to get up close to inequality and be prepared to advocate for the rights of the people whom they are working to support. This recommendation is based upon findings which were emphasised particularly strongly by Laura when she realised that the researcher was also a social worker:

Laura: The problem with your social workers is that you don't give a fuck about the Travellers. You just sit there in your la de daa clothes looking down on us (3). Your problem is that you don't care about what we have done to get through, you know, to get by and live amongst you all with no proper facilities. No one carers that we don't have things like a hard standing for the trailers and all the mud and shite or that we can't let our children play outside for fear of them being run down. (Shouting) Your man [Traveller Education Service Worker] always goes on about 'children need this'

and 'children need that' but in my eyes he knows fuck all about what we need. No one does nothing for the Travellers and then one day the social come along and say that us Travellers can't mind our own children and that we are all crazy in the head. Now I don't know what world yous comes from sweetheart but to us Travellers all this is make no fucking sense at all. Will yous tell me I'm wrong? (7)

Interviewer: What do you think a social worker should be?

Laura: On the Travellers side next question.

Within the detail of this discussion, Laura suggested that working for, not simply with Travellers and Gypsies requires social workers to challenge the status quo and become (more) proactive in the development of practices that recognise the impact of oppression and discrimination. To be effective here, social workers must be confident in challenging local authorities on poor quality sites and housing provision that pose a risk to public health. They must challenge the local authority about failures in service provision with respect to education, health, mental health, domestic violence, alcohol, and illegal substance use. Where these structural factors are assessed to present a risk, social workers must be able to present their case to the relevant Local Safeguarding Children's Board and demonstrate that the difficulties and risks being experienced by the child are directly linked to inadequate services and wider failures in accommodation provision and social policy, practice and procedure. Where challenges experienced by the family are attributed to frequent eviction, such as directed by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994), social work should be prepared to intervene with police and bailiff agencies

on a human rights basis that enforced eviction sticks a blade right through the heart of safe social work practice and the paramount nature of child welfare.

Where families are seen to experience hardships because of planning application and appeal procedures, detailed plans of intervention should include recommendations that support Travellers and Gypsies to make a strong case for site development. In line with the fundamental responsibility of social work (International Federation of Social Work, 2012), practitioners must be prepared to challenge local communities, local authorities, and planning committee decisions, on the basis that campsite development should be sanctioned to maintain principles of human rights and social justice. The ability of social workers to highlight structural inequality in this way can also begin to confront the prejudice that social work is an embodied oppressive agency, which serves to limit economic and cultural freedoms (Webster, 1995). By proving that it is ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with Travellers and Gypsies in matters of social justice as well as family support and protection, practitioners can begin to reverse certain 'in-group/out-group' distinctions based on the core social work traditions of respect, understanding, and meaningful support (Fook, 2012).

8.4 Lessons for social work practice: working to support Traveller and Gypsy children living in care

The findings presented in this study have highlighted how the complex relationships between social workers and Travellers and Gypsy children living in care have led to the less than optimal outcomes. Some of these relational complexities have been attributed to the statutory nature of 'out-group' surveillance inherent in most aspects of child protection practice (Ferguson, 2011). The question of how social work can heal these relationships and build stronger, positive outcomes is one concern that needs to be addressed in order to move forward. The implication drawn from this reflection is that five interrelated recommendations are needed to strengthen safe social work practice for all Traveller and Gypsy children living in care. These recommendations are:

- **Engage friends, family and wider community in the placement planning process**
- **Acknowledge the risk of acculturative stress**
- **Listen to children**
- **Support parents to value the continuation of contact**
- **Focus on a quality pathway plan and the need for safe and effective transitions**

8.4.1 Engage friends, family, and wider community members in the placement planning process

In many jurisdictions, placing children who have been removed from their homes with friends and family members is preferred practice (DoE, 2011c). As shown by the Shared Rearing Service in the Republic of Ireland (Pemberton, 1999), friends and family care can be delivered to Travellers and Gypsies in a proactive way to support their best interests. However, despite a great amount of work that has been accomplished in relation to kinship care and the placement of Black and minority ethnic children with people who are connected to the family, (see Broad, 1999; 2004;

Broad, Hayes & Rushforth, 2001; Broad & Skinner, 2005), evidence of similar developments for Traveller and Gypsies living in the United Kingdom remain weak.

Reflecting on this disparity, the people who took part in this study offered a potential resolution for this. Their unequivocal and unanimous agreement was that local authorities must focus on the recruitment and training of Gypsy and Traveller foster carers and childcare practitioners for those children who are unable to remain at home. Each person recognised that this was essential to the development and on-going social inclusion of Traveller and Gypsy children living in care. Based upon the testimonies provided, and the need to ensure that all children living in care have a clear sense of security and or permanence (DfES, 2006; 2007), each local authority should consider how it could develop a Traveller and Gypsy fostering recruitment strategy. The aim should be to recruit Traveller and Gypsy foster carers who can provide alternative short or long-term care.

Michael recognised a potential difficulty in the realisation of this recommendation in his explanation of 'in-group' relations and the respectability of the family requiring social support. However, he also saw it as an essential process to break down social taboos to ensure that secure cultural attachments were both enabled and promoted:

*Michael: There is a real need for more
Traveller and Gypsy carers...This is
just my opinion but I think that
sending a Traveller to Traveller
carers is better than sending them to
Gorgios any day of the week.*

The value of engaging friends, family and community members as connected people in this way was reinforced by four people who described the opportunity to live with Traveller and Gypsy carers as being a positive and valued experience. Not only did this opportunity enable Traveller and Gypsy children to form a strong bond with their carers, it also enabled them to feel like they belonged:

Emma: When we moved to the Traveller foster family it was very normal for us. We were just like 'oh yeah' and we became like daughters....you don't have to pretend you're something you're not.

Here, it was explained that the experience of being cared for by Travellers and Gypsies promoted a heightened sense of wellbeing and confidence. For each person who shared this experience, the opportunity to live with Traveller carers was seen as being considerably more preferable to living with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers for reasons which are now hopefully clear.

In relation to the promotion of resilience, permanence and a developing Traveller and Gypsy self-concept, it is apparent that social workers must seek to engage friends, family, and wider community members in the placement planning process. Not only is this consistent with evidence based practice (DoE, 2011c) but, as shown in the testimonies provided, Traveller carers can help provide the right type of protective environment that might assist Traveller and Gypsy children recover from the adverse pre-care experiences which were described:

Michael: Being adopted by my Traveller parents was like winning the lottery, they made me feel special. It's the little things that matter. Just the little things that settled people can't know.

In this statement, Michael identified how Traveller and Gypsy carers can support Traveller and Gypsy children to feel special and valued as Travellers and Gypsies in their own right. As shown by the model of reflective self-concepts detailed in chapter 6, the experience of being supported to maintain a positive self-concept, enabled

only through the care that was provided by Traveller and Gypsy carers, became vital in the development of resilience, permanence and a secure sense of inclusion:

Emma: We are like one big family...I doubt that we would have had this if we had stayed with settled carers.

This reflection demonstrates how friends, family and community care can provide continuity that helps Travellers and Gypsies to make sense of their family history, reduce the sense of separation and loss and provide the chance for permanence and the opportunity for each person to build on these experiences to plan for their future hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Contextualised within the whole, this experience cannot be undervalued particularly as it differed so starkly from the experience of acculturative stress described by those people who lived in residential or foster care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers.

8.4.2 Acknowledge the risk of acculturative stress

The experience of being taken into care was often interpreted by as analogous to kidnapping or being 'stolen'. As Helen and Ruth explained:

Helen: I remember them coming for us in their fancy car. I went with my sister and my brother and we were taken from our parent's trailer. And then as soon as they got us in the car, they were shouting at us to shut up and stop making a noise. You know, stop the crying and the tears.

Ruth: I remember the police coming with the social and knocking on the door

*and my Ma flying out and screaming
and shouting and I didn't know what
was happening...I didn't know that
that was the last day I would see my
Ma...I thought they were stealing us.*

These reflections illustrated how the experience of being taken into care can be appraised as traumatic, especially, although not exclusively, for those who interpreted and/or equated the experience to that of being genuinely kidnapped. The five people who believed that they were apprehended from their home, and in the absence of cues from their parents to explain the experience, made sense of this memory by describing it as being threatening to their personal wellbeing. For people who shared this experience, the removal from their home was seen to distinguish social work as being meted out unjustly. The consequence of this early experience was that the shock of being removed from their home came to represent a standard for their entire journey through care. As people felt aggrieved, they also felt resentment. The experiences that were described were identified through certain behaviours which externalised feelings of confused frustrations. Analysis of this provided very clear links to the paradigm of acculturative stress:

*Helen: Because of the way I was being
treated, I hated who I was. They
hated me and I hated me. I hated
being a Traveller and I hated my
parents for sending us there and I
hated them for making me a
Traveller. I tried to distance myself
from it all; I stopped talking to my
brother and sister because I hated
them as well.*

Helen's testimony revealed a sense of anxiety and ambiguity which became common experiences for all of the people who took part in the study. By recognising this as a credible risk, social workers should attempt to reduce the possibility of acculturative stress by ensuring that all children are fully informed of what decisions are being made, and what information is being used to inform them. This conversation needs to be facilitated in recognition of the child's age and understanding. If the child is too young to make sense of their experiences, the social worker responsible for taking the child into care should consider writing them a letter so that they can read (or have the letter read) at a later date, with the precise details of why their biological parents were unable to look after them. The primary intention here is for social workers taking children into care to ensure, as far as possible, that the child does not blame themselves for their situation (Forrester *et al.*, 2008). They must be helped and enabled to understand that their situation is not their fault, and sensitivity and care applied to the real reasons which determined why the child was removed.

While social workers must ensure that a child is fully informed of the reasons why they have been taken in to care, a significant responsibility to reduce acculturative stress also rests with the child's new carer (Moyers & Mason, 1995). The way in which this can be achieved will be discussed below within the relevant section. By remaining focused on the role of social work within Looked After services, here the unavoidable adjunct to the recommendation in order to acknowledge and reduce acculturative stress is the need for social workers to listen to the children they are working to support.

8.4.3 Listen to children

Reducing acculturative stress requires social workers to fully engage with and listen to Traveller and Gypsy children and the Framework for the Assessment of Children and Need and their Families (DoH, 2000a) provides a useful model to underpin this. Gill & Jack, (2003) explain that when used well, the assessment process and

accompanying guidance can become extremely helpful to understand the challenges faced by Traveller and Gypsy children. However, as shown in the present study, it can be very easy to lose sight of the single most important source of information about a Traveller or Gypsy child's needs, namely the views, wishes, hopes and aspirations of the child:

Mary: No one talked about my family and community. When it all got too much and I started to cut myself and I refused to speak, no one helped me. They just thought that I was being bold to get attention. They didn't know the pain I felt in my heart from not knowing who I was, from being, from being (7 sobbing) from being treated like animals, worse than animals. No one cared about me as a Traveller.

The message being proposed in this extract showed that through the process of listening, social work practice can enhance the well-being of Traveller and Gypsy children and work towards the attainment of improved outcomes. However, even though social policy requires social workers to listen to children and demonstrate to them a sense of unconditional regard (DfES, 2006; 2007), they should also recognise that listening requires sensitivity to the fact that Traveller and Gypsy children might be feeling confused, powerless, and vulnerable. Failing to recognise this as a potential consequence of acculturative stress can create a significant barrier which further disempowers inclusive communication and silences the voices of children who can experience trauma. This point was articulated particularly powerfully in the subtheme '*washing away my individuality*':

Ruth: The first memory I have of the foster home was how closed in it was...I remember my bedroom being next to the toilet...I remember thinking to myself how dirty that was. It wasn't anything that I was used to...It was like unlearning what I knew was right...unlearning the Traveller way of life.

In this summarised quote, Ruth described how a lack of empathy, trust or a sense of understanding on the behalf of her social worker came together to force her to feel alienated from the decisions that were being made. Rather than being supported to talk about her sense of cultural displacement and culture shock, Ruth's descriptions show how she was required to make sense of her experiences by changing the external presentation of her self-concept. This experience was not unique in that five other people expressed a sense of anger at the lack of information and their consequent powerlessness. As shown in the subtheme 'harrowing realisation', people felt that there was a lack of effective communication, which is a basic social work requirement, in order to prepare them for their transition from a pre-care reality into an in-care reality.

This finding has particular relevance for those people who saw the opportunity to enter into care as representing a welcomed intervention in their pre-care experiences. While people initially described a sense of relief as they were distanced from a pre-care reality, they also explained that this anticipation was short lived as the feelings of marginalisation, cultural displacement, and the lack of opportunity to participate in their new non-Traveller or Gypsy life reinforced a perception of insecurity, fear, and social rejection. Each person who shared this experience described the process of attempting to make sense of their confusion and sense of

injustice by exercising their freedom, or will to power, in the only way that was available:

Ruth: The kids at my new school picked on me because of my accent...I told my foster family but they didn't care...So I thought oh well, I won't speak with an accent anymore that way no one will know I am a Traveller. I wanted to make the Traveller me invisible.

This reported memory elicited concerns where the essential values and skills in listening to the things that were desired by Traveller and Gypsy children verbally or otherwise were not always afforded. Listening is an essential skill to enable a full understanding of a child position and in order to understand why certain behaviours occur, and whether the response is likely to be supportive, or provoke resentment and compound similar behaviour.

Specific details of the importance of listening were provided by Mary in her account of smashing up the doll's house that was given to her by non-Traveller or Gypsy carers. Rather than talking to Mary about her views and opinions in an attempt to understand her motivations and the potential antecedents to this behaviour, anti-Traveller stereotypes were reinforced, and her behaviour was labelled as being peculiar. It would appear that no attempts were made to reflect upon Mary's behaviour in order to analyse its cause. As there was no meaningful dialogue in an attempt to discuss this with Mary, not only was she criticised for her behaviour, she also felt disapproved of and judged. In this example, Mary felt that she knew what was best for her and communicated this through her behaviour. As this was not considered against her own values, hopes, dreams and aspirations, which may have appeared to be confusing to non-Traveller or Gypsy social workers, a satisfactory assessment of her views on being fostered by non-Traveller or Gypsy carers was

never accurately constructed. However, reflecting the reported presence of ‘in-group/out-group’ boundary separations, it is clear that some children may remain determined to keep private matters “*hush hush*”. For this reason, social workers must be aware that some Traveller and Gypsy children may not choose to talk to ‘outsiders’ about themselves or their families. By accepting this possibility, the child’s right to participate in decision-making forums must include the right not to participate if that is what an individual child wishes, but this must also extend to consider the reasons why participation might not be important to them.

8.4.4 Support parents to value the continuation of contact

The Children Act (1989) requires local authorities to support the contact between children who are Looked After and their families. Under schedule 2 of the Act, local authorities must ‘endeavour to promote contact’ with parents, relatives and others for all Looked after children unless this is not ‘reasonably practical or consistent with [the child’s] welfare’ (Sch. 2, s. 15 (1)). Only in emergencies, or by agreement with the child’s parents, can contact be restricted. As some commentators have argued that the balance of power to facilitate and provide contact continues to be biased towards the local authority (Mitchell & Kuczynski, 2010), the testimonies presented in this study have shown that social workers must strive to support the presumption that contact will be facilitated, promoted and maintained in line with clear legislative and social policy guidance.

This study has also shown that the opportunity to deliver on this strong legislative and social policy mandate is not without complication. Reflecting on the reported experiences of those people who lived and suffered in care, it could be argued that family contact was not necessarily constructive for all children:

Michael: Say I was supposed to meet the mother and father in the morning for something to eat, there was times when they would not show up and

that was disheartening...they would be off too busy drinking...their kids were not important to them.

Mary: ...when [my parents] would come [to visit me] it might be on the wrong day, or the wrong time...the staff turned them away. I remember crying as I could see them out of the window and hear the staff telling them to leave.

While these testimonies reflected the harmful emotional effects of family contact, care must be taken not to compartmentalise contact as a simply positive or negative endeavour. Instead, it is important to weigh these testimonies against the reported desire, which all people shared, to receive more help to stay in contact with family and friends and to establish some interaction with key members of their network with whom they had lost contact. Within this context, it is important to recognise that both of the testimonies given by Michael and Mary do not necessarily suggest a desire to terminate contact or seek distance from it, but more accurately reflect a sense of powerlessness and ambiguity in the face of disenfranchised social work practice. Set against the backdrop of cultural displacement and experiences of rejection, the apparent ability of social workers to marginalise parents was more closely associated to the harmful emotional experiences which were described as result of being let down by poorly managed contact arrangements. As suggested by Mary, this may have been due to personal and institutionalised prejudices and social worker feeling out of their comfort zone.

Within this context, Mitchell & Kuczynski's (2010) concern that the balance of power in contact arrangements is biased towards the local authority, takes on a distinctive meaning for the position of Travellers and Gypsies. People who spoke about the

where traveller kids are not allowed to see their biological family. Even the time we got adopted we kept my surname. We didn't change because my carers knew that that is my name and I suppose my biological family saw that and respected that.

This extract highlights how social work can become an active and empathetic medium by recognising the importance of inclusive consultation in all decision-making processes. As detailed in the recommendations for a systematic assessment, cultural intelligence of the parents' difficulties and experiences of cultural alienation is important, but this must also extend to develop an awareness of the way in which the child-parent relationship can change over time. Here social work practice must enable parents to exercise their parenting capacity, and their parental self-concept including empowering them, in order to show their interest and concern for their child and by enabling them to participate and comment on the care planning processes that are in place. As shown in the thematic inclusion of *'harrowing realisation'* in chapter 5, the need to enable Traveller and Gypsy children to resolve feelings of ambiguity about their birth family is an absolute necessity in order to reduce acculturative stress and adjust or accept an in-care reality. The extent to which parents themselves can contribute to this process requires social workers to engage in partnership with them to identify the goals needed to enable a successful transition, thereby giving parents the power to give their child permission to move from a pre-care reality and in doing so accept an in-care reality.

Those people who suffered in care specifically highlighted that where there were gaps and misunderstandings in the relationship between parents and social workers parents were more likely to externalise their own perceptions of being depowered, disenfranchised and socially rejected, by becoming distant, dis-engaged, uncooperative, and confused about their parental powers:

Lisa: I think that social workers are frightened of Traveller families because they see us as being something different and I know my parents were frightened of them [social workers] on account of knowing all them families who had their children taken away on them.

The description of 'fear' presented in this extract supports the conclusion presented by Cemlyn *et al.*,(2009) that social workers might often assume that for most Traveller and Gypsy parents, the dominant feeling is anger, and that angry parents would not want contact from social workers. Yet, as suggested under the paradigm of social rejection (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009), the emotional essence of this experience is likely to be far more complex. Traveller and Gypsy parents who have angry feelings about some aspects of their wider historical, social, and political treatment are often oppressed. As such, they might appreciate the progress their children could make whilst living in foster care (even with settled carers). As shown in the subtheme '*my last supper*' some parents appeared to accept some responsibility for the risk and harm to their children, even if they felt that their children might be returned to them at a later date. However, as shown in the testimonies presented by Michael, even the most disenfranchised parent could become re-enfranchised if they felt that their position as biological parents was taken into account. This was not achieved by increasing contact or changing the balance between parent and the foster family, but it did require the social worker to be actively engaged with the parents to ensure that when contact was organised it was facilitated in the child's best interests.

Social workers therefore, need to protect Traveller and Gypsy children living in care from possible negative destabilising experiences attributable to identified parental limitation. However, this must be equally balanced to promote and draw upon the

parental strengths and their valuable contribution to the welfare of the child. Concerning Smart Richman & Leary (2009) conceptual analysis of rejection, wherever parents are on the spectrum of managing this, they are entitled to precise inclusive support which could empower them to understand the statutory systems and their child's needs. This is important to establish the parent's influence on the positive outcomes for their child and the placement, which this study has shown, is a crucial component in the eventual transition out of care.

In light of these findings, social work practitioners would do well to spend time with Traveller and Gypsy families to talk to them about the importance of attachment in order to help them make sense of their own responses to interfamilial separation. By empowering families to understand this perspective against the developmental needs of the child, and presenting this information in a way that is sensitive to a perception of 'out-group' interference, it should be hoped that any feelings of reluctance on behalf of the parents could be minimised against their sense of parental responsibility. Where this is a possibility, it should be made clear that the family's capacity to recognise the needs of their child during contact would also become an important component if a return to home strategy were in place.

8.4.5 Focus on a quality pathway plan and the need for safe and effective transitions

It is only in recent years that studies have emerged which recognise the situation of Traveller and Gypsy children leaving care. Of the empirical literature that is available, most has been conducted in the Republic of Ireland (O'Higgins, 1993; Pemberton, 1999). Therefore, as with the evidence base to support friend and family foster care, social policy guidance for Travellers and Gypsies leaving care in the United Kingdom is very weak. The first concern based on this finding reflects the need to take forward an agenda of research which aims to deepen the understanding of the leaving care pathways of Traveller and Gypsy young people, and of the ways in which social workers support them throughout this transition. Nevertheless, until such a time

when this research is available, the recommendations presented below reflect a summary of the knowledge that has been enabled by and through those people who took part in the present study.

Reflecting on the testimonies provided, it has become clear that the stability of a supportive Traveller or Gypsy placement provides the single most important opportunity for Traveller and Gypsy children to build new attachments and construct networks of social support. This finding is not wholly surprising and, allied to reliable social work planning and support; it is highly consistent with what is known about the features of good preparation for young people living in care (Jackson, 2006; 2008; Munro & Stein, 2008). However, as shown by those six people who reported the experience of being denied this opportunity, it is clear that children who are placed with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers are much more likely to face emotional and mental health difficulties which impact significantly on their ability to experience successful transitions into adulthood:

Mary: I'm an adult that is not able to have any intimate relationships...and that I find very difficult to understand and to live with and to manage.

A sense of isolation from both Traveller or Gypsy communities and the settled society:

Josephine: Being an adopted Showman has affected who I am as an adult because I haven't had proper support to find my family and I am finding it hard to communicate my feelings, or even find someone to help me. Because I felt that I have been sheltered from the Showmen world...the community didn't want me...

And, the need to suppress their past in order to make sense of their present experiences and hopes for the future:

Ruth: [I am] Damaged goods...I feel like I have to pretend that I am someone else to feel normal.

Interviewer: What is that other person like?

Ruth: Strong, confident, nice. Someone that people can love.

Interviewer: How is that person different to you?

Ruth: You don't want to know. I am too ashamed.

These three quotations exposed some knowledge of how the experience of being isolated from a Traveller and Gypsy culture or community whilst living in care can have a long lasting and harmful impact on the leaving care process and each individual's life course development. They demonstrate how the complex experiences of growing up in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers underpin the importance of maintaining connections with Traveller and Gypsy cultures and communities as an intrinsic element of the care and pathway planning process. For the transition out of care to be effective, it is evident that cultural continuity *through* care represents an essential aspect in the development and formation of a secure self-concept and the ability of Travellers and Gypsies to communicate this as adults.

These testimonies also showed that while it is essential to support Traveller and Gypsy children to experience continued cultural inclusion, it is equally important for social workers to engage with Traveller and Gypsy communities in order to work with them to help recognise and understand the challenges faced by Traveller and Gypsy children living in care. The need to forge and maintain community relations in the lives of Looked After children emerged as a crucial consideration for social work

practice. The importance of community engagement and its relevance in the leaving care process is essential to help formulate and strengthen individual and group identity for Travellers and Gypsies preparing for independence. The attainment of this recommendation would also go some way to achieve similar transitional outcomes which have been enabled by the Shared Rearing Service:

Interviewer: *[Now that you have left care] Are you still able to feel part of the Travelling community?*

Lisa: *Yes, of course but only because we lived with another Traveller family...Even now we have left we can still visit our foster aunts and uncles and they treat us like their nieces they don't/*

Emma: *They come and visit us and we look at it now like we are one big family...I doubt that we would have had this if we had stayed with settled carers.*

The most significant difference between the experiences of those who thrived in care and those who did not, appears to be identified in the determination of the individual social worker to place the child with carers who could include them as valued members of the family. In the testimony provided by Lisa and Emma, social work practice was seen to recognise and include the need to place children with carers who could care for the child, not only for the duration of the placement, or care plan, but forever. The point made here therefore, is that if non-Traveller or Gypsy carers are able to care for and respect Traveller and Gypsy children, they must also be able to communicate the fact that they will be fully included, and that the level of care provided will be safe, secure, and enduring. The sense of security should then provide the foundation from which to build a sense of permanence, a secure self-

concept and sense of resilience, which can enhance the opportunities for a successful transition into independence as detailed in the Care Matters agenda (DfSF, 2006; 2007).

8.5 Lessons for social care practice: looking after Traveller and Gypsy children

The recommendations presented in this chapter have highlighted the minimum requirements for safe social work practice. It must be understood, however, that the alignment of these goals requires social workers to work closely with foster carers and adoptive parents so that the messages presented can be implemented on a day-to-day basis. To enable this to happen, the following section speaks directly to carers and introduces a number of key themes which need to be interwoven in the praxis of high quality professional social care provision. While the recommendations presented here share some similarity and overlap with the recommendations that have been proposed, it is important to view these similarities not as repetition, but as a signifier that social work and social care must work in partnership from their specific standpoints to enhance practice and attain the best possible outcome. The recommendations presented below, therefore, complete the picture of positive care that can only be provided through formalised safe and consistent social work practice and culturally competent service delivery.

The testimonies included in this study have shown that working to support Travellers and Gypsies living in care is not a question of treating them the 'same' as any child, but recognising that any child who has a different background and culture to that of the carer will require a series of delicate and nuanced approaches to care which meet all of the child's needs, including their cultural needs. Traveller and Gypsy children who are placed with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers are expected to adapt to a cultural environment that values things which might be different from their own community. The people who took part in this research described the experience of having to make sense of different social mores and social conventions and come to terms with the fact that their non-Traveller or Gypsy carers viewed the world differently to their Traveller or Gypsy families and communities. The six people who described the experience of suffering in care also explained how experience of culturally incompetent care added to their sense of alienation, marginalisation, and oppression.

The need to provide children living in care with culturally competent care has been explored in many areas of social work research (Courtney, 2009; Courtney and Thoburn, 2009; Fernandez and Barth, 2010; Maluccio, 1986; Stein, 2008b; Triseliotis, 2002). However, the pragmatic realisation of this for Travellers and Gypsies remains problematic because, as Okley (1983) explains, many important aspects of a Traveller and Gypsy culture are not written down. As Traveller and Gypsy cultures tend to be passed on orally, or by example from generation to generation, carers might find it difficult to recognise and understand what important cultural practices exist. This is further complicated as culture does not remain static but constantly changes as individuals continue to make sense of the world around them (Giddens, 1991).

To overcome these challenges, non-Traveller or Gypsy carers must recognise that they might not know all of the answers to questions about Traveller and Gypsy cultures. However, by reflecting upon this position, carers should be able to place themselves in the role of 'student' ready to show a genuine interest in the child and the need to talk to and listen to them in order to learn about their culture and self-concept. To support the carers commit to the process of learning from the child, the conclusion drawn from the findings presented in this study is that four recommendations are needed to provide Traveller and Gypsy children with a sense of inclusion. These recommendations are:

- **Be sensitive to feelings of cultural displacement**
- **Acknowledge the consequence cultural displacement**
- **Be determined to promote a Traveller and Gypsy culture**
- **Work to support contact**

8.5.1 Be sensitive to feelings of cultural displacement and changing self-concepts

This study has shown how a Traveller and Gypsy child's self-concept, cultural mores, and language often came from their families and their visualised relationship

with their 'in-group'. Consistent with the tenets of phenomenology (Husserl, 1999), it is now clearer that the action of placing children in non-Traveller or Gypsy placements often meant that they made sense of their feelings of separation, loss, rejection, neglect, and abuse from this perspective. Furthermore, the people who took part in this study knew that their culture was not held in high esteem by mainstream society. As each person was aware that Travellers and Gypsies have been subject to racist ridicule, violent eviction, and targeted anti-social behaviour because of their cultural background and popular stereotypical belief, they interpreted their own experiences marginalisation as a form of further 'out-group' control. The damage caused by perception this was then reflected in those testimonies which reported an insecure self-concept:

Mary *...what I really remember more than anything else, if there was anything in the news about Travellers, which invariably there was, everyone knew you were one of them. The news would be on television and I would sit there and the other children [in the residential home] would resent you and if they saw a Traveller on the road, going by, the racism was unbearable and I felt embarrassed to be one.*

Ruth: *You trust these people...but they hated us, especially the foster carers. They hated our culture.*

In these reflections, the experience of feeling 'hated' on the basis of cultural identity optimised the frequently reported concern that the expectations of settled carers and

the unusual settled social conventions were perceived to represent an attack on the Traveller and Gypsy self. In light of the historical, political, and social presence of anti-Traveller oppression (McVeigh, 1997), each person who shared this experience viewed their foster carers as being repressive, particularly as they appeared to approach the role of parenting with no regard to their cultural understanding, or sense of identity. As a result, people explained that the care being provided by non-Traveller or Gypsy carers destabilised a Traveller and Gypsy self-concept, heightened ambiguity, and compounded a sense of acculturative stress. The lack cultural awareness described was also seen to heighten feelings of anxiety, isolation, separation and loss. This revealed how some knowledge of a Traveller and Gypsy child's pre-care experience and identity, as well as a developing cultural awareness of their social and emotional needs, is a crucial characteristic of competent care.

To acknowledge this concern, non-Traveller or Gypsy carers must reflect on their own understanding of Traveller and Gypsy cultures, and evaluate how their personal views about Traveller and Gypsy people could influence the care that they provide. The significance of this recommendation is particularly powerful against the testimonies provided by those people who described the opportunities to thrive during their journey through care:

Michael: When I went to the foster carers in the Travelling community, I could relate to them that bit better as opposed to settled people...I suppose you just connect that much better...I could relate to them more...

This passage showed that when Traveller and Gypsy children are placed with carers who recognise their culture and identity and see it as being important, children can be supported to feel included and valued. By promoting the child's self-concept, and showing a genuine interest in them as Travellers and Gypsies, will help the child to

feel more comfortable in the placement. Although this testimony summarised the advantage of Traveller and Gypsy carers, it is important to consider how non-Traveller or Gypsy carers could and should achieve the same ambition. More often than not, carers will be aware of the importance of constantly giving children a positive view of themselves. However, this must also extend to the child's culture and identity so that the child can develop pride in the richness and diversity of their cultural background and self-concept.

8.5.2 Acknowledge the consequence of cultural displacement and the impact on self-concepts

The current study builds on previous research showing that for Traveller and Gypsy children living in care can experience feelings of cultural displacement, dislocation, separation, loss and social rejection (O'Higgins, 1993; Pemberton, 1999; Fisher, 2003; Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). A shortage of Traveller and Gypsy foster carers, means that many Traveller and Gypsy children are being shifted from 'in-group' communities to the care of non-Traveller or Gypsy carers (Cemlyn, et al, 2009) who can be seen to represent assimilationist approaches to out-group organised child care (Hawes & Perez, 1996). The perception of difference between 'in-group' and 'out-group' mores can then lead Traveller and Gypsy children to feel stigmatised and which can then result in a variety of externalising behaviours, as a form of coping, as shown in the subtheme *'the battle between my heart and my head'*:

Mary: *I was a bold [naughty] child. I didn't like them [potential foster carers], I was bold. I wouldn't do as they told me. I had no interest in what they wanted me to do.*

Peter: *I didn't do anything that the care staff wanted me to do. I feel bad about it now because I used to give them*

real trouble. I think that I must have been restrained every day. But I thought that if I did what they said, I would become like them.

These accounts showed that although in principle, non-Traveller or Gypsy foster carers who care for Traveller and Gypsy share the same task and responsibilities as any other foster carer, they have the added task of providing care that recognises, nurtures and promotes a Traveller and Gypsy self-concept. Recognising the difference between 'in-group' and 'out-group' mores requires non-Traveller or Gypsy carers to support Traveller and Gypsy children and empower them to develop and maintain a secure sense of self and cultural pride. To achieve this, non-Traveller or Gypsy carers must attempt to be empathetic to the position of culturally competent care within the framework of human rights and wider experiences of historical 'out-group' social and political oppression. When these things are not provided, cultural socialisation, and the development of insecure self-concepts, within the pretext of substitute parenting, provides a message of marginalisation, or unrecognised alienation which in turn creates a negative impact on the development of a Traveller and Gypsy identity and the experience of permanence, security and resilience:

Peter: I forgot who I was. Being a Traveller was seen to bring me trouble. The other lads [living in the home] saw me as someone to fight with and if they beat me up or trashed my bedroom, they would say that they had beaten up a Pikey like that was something to be proud of. And the staff saw me as trouble too and they would restrain me just like that and phone the police for little things.

Being a Traveller in care was hard and because people only saw the Traveller and not the child. I was trouble to them and they were trouble to me and that is why being a Traveller [in care] is no good.

This reflection showed that it is important for non-Traveller or Gypsy carers involved in the support of Traveller and Gypsy children to be culturally aware of their parenting practices and understanding of the needs of each child. While this might suggest that the challenges faced by Travellers and Gypsies who live in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers might be addressed by simply shifting to same-race placements or the implementation of a Shared Rearing model, this may not be an entirely viable solution. The unique challenges associated with the provision of care to Traveller and Gypsy children by non-Traveller or Gypsy carers must be balanced with the current realities of the child welfare system in which the number of Traveller and Gypsy children in need of placement is significantly greater than the number of qualifying Traveller and Gypsy families (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, other options, such as cultural intelligence and identity training for foster care families should be considered:

Ruth:

You trust these people to look after children but they hated us especially the foster carers. They hated our culture...They didn't understand the culture, they wanted to change it. You were an innocent child who didn't know what was going on and you were persecuted for having a culture.

Reflecting upon the lived experiences described by Ruth, there are various cultural competence training models in place for foster carers and adoptive parents who are parenting children who do not share their ethnicity, language, religion or recognise their cultural mores. These models could be used as a framework for non-Traveller or Gypsy foster care families. For example, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence and Social Care Institute for Excellence (2008) present a good practice guidance which highlights the need to train expert foster carers and support adoptive parents. It focuses on increasing racial awareness, skills for coping with the child's experience of racial discrimination, and understanding of the importance of maintaining ties to the child's culture. Evaluative studies have shown that the program described is able to increase carer's perceptions of the importance of cultural competence (Schofield, Beek & Ward, 2012).

Other researchers who report on cultural competence training for foster families have suggested initial and on-going training is required to improve outcomes and the opportunity for the developments of security, permanence and a developing sense of resilience (Fahlberg, 2008) as well as promoting equitable socialisation which can recognise and promote cultural differences and therefore promote secure self-concepts:

*Ruth: You have to accept who people are
and where they come from. You
can't try and change people it is
wrong.*

It is clear from this testimony, and the conceptual analysis provided by the model of reflective self-concepts, that strident efforts in training are needed to raise the cultural intelligence of foster carers. This would improve upon the capacity, motivation, and ability to meet the needs of Traveller and Gypsy children in reducing acculturative stress, and improving opportunities to develop a secure identity.

8.5.3 Be determined to promote a Traveller and Gypsy self-concept

This thesis has already established that few studies have been conducted to examine the experiences of Traveller and Gypsy children living in care. Whilst it has been suggested that Traveller and Gypsy children living in care achieve improved outcome when they are placed with relatives rather than with non-relatives (Pemberton, 1999), the current study provides the first step in understanding the importance of enabling Traveller and Gypsy to develop a secure self-concept.

Consistent with the model of self-concepts presented within chapter 6, Schofield *et al.*, (2007) and Schofield & Simmonds (2009) argue that an important opportunity to promote a secure self-concept for children living in care requires social workers to prepare children for independence so that they can experience a positive transition out of care. For Traveller and Gypsy children, the model of reflexive self-concepts has shown the crucial importance of maintaining some sense of a cultural connection to a Traveller or Gypsy self to maximise the continuity they will need as Traveller or Gypsy children in care and as Traveller or Gypsy adults. Where this does not occur, the people who took part in this study have shown that Traveller and Gypsy care leavers often experience an insecure or ambivalent Traveller or Gypsy self-concepts as they struggle to make sense of their identity which can locate them outside of both the settled society and the Traveller and Gypsy community. This dislocation then leads Traveller and Gypsy children and adults, and in particular, women, to feel alienated and unwanted. The consequence of this was identified in those examples of significant emotional health concerns which each person who shared this experience described.

The key recommendation based upon this finding and the information presented in the model of reflexive self-concepts is that social workers must recognise the need for sensitivity and subtlety as the best way to support the child to accept and appreciate their own Traveller or Gypsy self-concept, particularly as they begin to make sense of their situation in care and plan for their live post-care. As shown by

those four people who lived in the Republic of Ireland, this type of considered support can make a real difference to the child and their potential outcomes, transitions and perceptions of self-concept in later life.

The importance of secure self-concepts is also reflected in evidence-based practice which majors in the requirement to maximise continuity for children entering into, and living in care (Jackson, 2008). This means that wherever possible, schools and friendships should be maintained as should contact with family members and the child's wider community. Not only is seen as essential in the process of reducing acculturative stress for children (DfES, 2006; 2007) but also reflects the need to ensure some continuity between a child's placement and their home so that the experience of moving into care and out of care is made to be as positive as possible (Kendrick, 2007).

The policy and practice statements relating to consistency provide an important contextualisation for those five people who described how their placement within a bricks and mortar house created a sense of culture shock. For each person the 'house' represented inconsistency that was perceived to represent the distinction between 'in-group' and 'out-group' separation. For each person, the 'house' came to represent a form of 'out-group' control, and symbolised a source of forced assimilation including those structural inequalities which have served to impinge on Traveller and Gypsy freedoms throughout the centuries (Power, 2004). As the perception of the 'house' was not recognised in their sense of disruption, it began to compound a sense of separation, loss, rejection, and ambiguity. As a result, people described the experience of being unable to settle in their new environment and then communicated their confusion through examples of what was considered by their carers to be disruptive behaviour.

Creating consistency

Reflecting once more upon the testimonies provided, it is clear that carers living in houses should address these concerns by talking to the child about how the foster

home or residential home might be different to the home that they lived in before coming into care. By recognising that some children might never have been into a 'house' before, carers should consider what aspects of the house might be unusual or seen as a form of anti-Traveller control. The use of photographs would prepare and enable children to see their new home, their bedroom, the stairs, the kitchen, and bathroom. While preparing the child, as far as possible, for their transition in to care in this way, is essential it is also equally important to ensure that the child can minimise their own sense of disruption by being encouraged to take as many of their personal belongings as they want with them. This might include family photos, CD's, DVD's posters, clothes, toys, bedding, trophies, and even pets. Ultimately, the decision must rest with the child and the carers should be expected to fully understand why this would be important and necessary. Practical measures such as these, including the ability to show an understanding of feelings and need, will begin to impart significant messages by the carers who must communicate to Traveller and Gypsy children that they are interested in maintaining their Traveller and Gypsy culture. Carers must attempt to build a secure self-concept, and enable a positive self-worth. There a many ways in which this could be achieved. However in order to develop some specific recommendation in this area, Box 1 provides a useful non-exhaustive list of activities which could prove useful to communicate unconditional positive regard.

Box 1: Opportunities to promote and celebrate positive self-concepts

Several techniques can be employed to promote a Traveller or Gypsy self-concept. These might include:

- Interacting and participating with Traveller and Gypsy culture, community events such as horse shows and sales, storytelling events, films, and plays that are written by, and include Traveller and Gypsy talents
- Providing a talking day, or evening, which enables the child to talk about their own families, cultures, lived experiences, hopes dreams and aspirations
- Promoting positive Traveller and Gypsy role models such as sports people, artists, actors, community leaders. Finding out who they are and showing a keen interest in them

- Showing pictures and articles that reflect a positive view of Travellers and Gypsies and discussing these with the children
- Maintaining a life story book which includes family photos, records of achievement, holiday memorabilia, letters and any other items which could be used to provide the child with a recordable memory of their life
- Putting up posters of Traveller and Gypsy works of art around the house
- Accessing Traveller and Gypsy learning materials, including storybooks and websites
- Listening to Traveller and Gypsy music
- Watching documentaries about Traveller and Gypsy cultures and talking to the child about the accuracy of them
- Encouraging schools to commemorate the International Holocaust Remembrance Day and other important events
- Liaising with community representatives to organise opportunities to visit community members and other campsites to learn about Traveller and Gypsy cultures
- Inviting Travellers and Gypsies to the foster home/residential home and schools to talk about their own experiences and tell traditional stories
- Facilitate Traveller and Gypsy art and craft projects at home such as making paper flowers, flags, and jewellery.

Promoting the Traveller or Gypsy child's secure self-concept in the ways that are suggested in Box 8a should also enable carers to gain an appreciation of the way in which different cultural expectations can create conflict. Nonetheless, these activities must be embedded into the praxis of culturally competent care and must not be carried out in a way which could be construed as being tokenistic. As this study has shown, a carer who is aware of cultural factors can minimise conflict for the child by being able to talk about the main differences between a Traveller and Gypsy culture and the new expectations being put on them by the placement. This finding also supports advice of Everson-Hock *et al.*, (2011) who argue that carers should never underestimate the power of talking to the child about their culture, self-concept, and live experiences.

Working to understand and promote the essence of a Traveller and Gypsy culture and identity must also have some basis in the need to understanding of cultural protocols. According to Shubin (2011), acknowledging these protocols will indicate respect. Some of these might include male and female relationships and boundaries in communication, understanding that some siblings who are placed together might

be used to sharing a bed. Recognising that some girls and young women might feel the necessity to look after younger children who also live in the foster or residential home, and that each child will expect to have their own clothes and bedding. While a positive attitude towards a Traveller and Gypsy self-concept on the part of the carer is the best means to achieving an optimistic outcome including a secure self-concept, there is an important caveat which must be understood.

Four people who took part in this study initially saw the prospect of living in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers as a welcomed form of support which enabled them to escape their harrowing pre-care experiences:

Michael: ...I didn't want the whole er, the fighting the drink, you know all that side of things, I didn't like that surrounding so, I suppose when I was with my settled carers...I felt kind of loved, you felt loved, probably for the first time...,

This extract showed how the experience of entering into care came with a sense of relief because of the safety that was provided and because the carers did not force them to acknowledge their Traveller and Gypsy culture. While this finding is important, it should not be read that carers should only respond to a Traveller or Gypsy culture at the child's discretion. As each person explained, although their entry into care was initially welcomed, the lack of attention given to their Traveller and Gypsy self-concept by their carers meant that after time, they considered their experiences in care to be far worse than their experience at home:

Helen: When we had a bath. They were like the old tin bath, and we all had to bath together with boys and girls. I mean I had never seen boy's bits before and although we had a

brother, we never saw you know, bits! We just weren't use to that you know coming from a Travelling family you know we all washed separately you know, so it was like a culture shock for me to have to go through this.

This reflection revealed how carers must demonstrate a positive attitude towards Travellers and Gypsies, cultural protocols, self-concepts, people and role models at all times. As this study has shown, children who are supported to develop a secure Traveller and Gypsy secure self-concept while living in care often felt that they were valued as individuals. This sense of inclusion enabled each person who recalled this experience to describe the opportunity to feel safe, accepted, and respected which ultimately led to continuity of care, resilience, and successful transitions.

8.5.4 Work to support contact

The testimonies provided in this study suggest that foster carers play a vital role in supporting contact and assisting children to make sense of their family backgrounds, problems, and structures. Reflecting on the experiences described in the present study it could be concluded that foster carers mostly displayed a negative attitude to contact. Accordingly, care plan arrangements which placed the responsibility for promoting contact on unsupported, or unresponsive foster carers, were seen as being unlikely to succeed:

Lisa: I think that some foster carers and residential staff are frightened to letting children living in care see their family or community. They are frightened to go on to campsites and they are frightened during contact.

The staff at my home were frightened of my family, they used to call them drunks and all sorts of things so they stopped me seeing them because they said it was unsafe. They would not let them come to the unit and would not let me go on to the camp. I lost contact with them, not because they didn't want to see me but because the staff were afraid.

The stereotypes that Lisa highlighted were also reported by people who described the experience of being ambivalent about how much, and in what ways, they wanted contact with their own families. There were also wide differences between how each person described the type of contact that *they* would have liked or wanted. Where ambiguity was experienced, by both the child and the parent, this study has shown that the risk of losing regular contact with family members and the community is of great significance. The testimonies have shown that if interfamilial and community contacts are interrupted during childhood, it is likely that Travellers and Gypsies living in care will be unable to restore their 'in-group' status, and as such risk losing, amongst other things, important resources of support in adult life.

This finding suggested that membership in a Traveller or Gypsy group is a unique part of a defining Traveller or Gypsy self-concept which is essential to promote a sense of belonging, positive self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. Good management of contact is therefore essential to encourage and nurture healthy relationships. In principle, children have the right to see their family (Children Act, 1989). If this right is not supported by the social worker, foster carers must always attempt to make a strong case for promoting and facilitating contact.

This recommendation squares with the advice of Donaldson (2006) because it requires foster carers to develop their relationship with the child, in ways already described, in order to help this reach its maximum potential. In line with social work policy (DfES, 2006; 2007), this will guarantee that specific attention can then be given to obtaining the child's views and opinions on the importance of contact with their family and friends. It will also ensure that the child's welfare and safety during contact is accounted for. By seeking to support the child in this way, the duty to look after the child as governed by the Care Matters agenda (DfES, 2007) will also be met. Carers should attempt to be creative in organising and facilitating contact, be respectful and sensitive to both theirs and the child's perception of their parents; the child's past experiences and by working in partnership with parents will enable a stronger understanding and value base in relationships and cultural difference.

8.6 Lessons for social work organisations and social policy

Throughout this study, there has been an emphasis on the centrality of supporting Travellers and Gypsies to have a voice. The evidence of positive experiences reported by those people who lived in care with Traveller and Gypsy carers rests on the communities and individuals involvement in claiming their rights in the face of hostility, indifference, or neglect. On this basis, the negative experiences of those people who lived suffered in care were reported to be located in unsafe social work practice which misplaced the central importance of individual and community rights.

The recommendations presented in this chapter demonstrate a need to emphasise with Traveller and Gypsy children, families, and communities. To develop effective community engagement plans which enable transparent communication, sensitivity to individual mores, and a deep respect for cultural ideologies which determine a sense of separateness between 'in-group' and 'out-group' contact. Whilst the recommendations for individual social work practice are presented in the hope that they will go some way to reverse this finding and modernise practice, they must not be seen as a series of first aid measures. Although the recommendations reflect the voices of those people who took part in this study, they only really scratch the surface of a much deeper engrained problem. The conclusion drawn from this finding is that three recommendations are needed to support social work training and social policy in the implementation of the recommendation discussed; these are:

- **Develop networks with organisations working to support Traveller and Gypsy children, families and communities**
- **Provide training and education**
- **Develop a Bill of Traveller and Gypsy Rights**

8.6.1 Develop networks with organisations working to support Traveller and Gypsy children, families and communities

Cemlyn *et al.*, (2009) point out to us that social work practice with Traveller and Gypsy communities is often constrained by apprehension. For many Traveller and Gypsy communities this is created by an inherent belief that the sole duty of social work is to remove children (Greenfields, 2008). This position is also created for many social workers who view Traveller and Gypsy mores and customs with a degree of (mis) recognition (Garrett, 2005).

The testimonies presented in the present study make it clear that the need to break down these barriers is an intrinsic necessity for the realisation of the recommendations that have been proposed. Whilst the need for training and more robust social policy is required, as this section will make clear in due course, social work managers and practitioners should also consider a series of 'mid-range' strategies which could serve to bridge the organisational changes which are required. Whilst these strategies must reflect individual circumstance, Box 2 provides a useful non-exhaustive list of approaches that could prove to be useful to breakdown some of the barriers described and enhance the success of initial contact and on-going community relations.

Box 2: Mid-range strategies for social work involvement

Several techniques can be employed to enhance relationships with Traveller or Gypsy communities. These might include:

- **Liaise with the Traveller Education Support Service.** Most Local Education Authorities organise specific Traveller Education Support Services (TESS) that aim to support Traveller and Gypsy parents find places in local schools for their children. The TESS also supports schools by offering advice, teaching support and home/school links so that they can meet the needs of Traveller and Gypsy pupils who may be home tutored. In terms of social work practice, the TESS could also work with social work departments and other agencies to raise awareness of Traveller culture and help address prejudiced views.

- **Liaise with Traveller and Gypsy liaison officers.** A number of local authorities employ Traveller and Gypsy liaison officers to manage residential and transit sites. They are responsible for assisting families who are camping on unauthorised sites and work closely with police and the TESS when undertaking welfare enquiries. In most cases, the Traveller and Gypsy liaison officer may personally know the families living within the local area, and for this reason, they might be able to provide key information about culture, family difficulties, health, education, and so forth. In some cases, the Traveller and Gypsy liaison officer might also offer assistance and advice when planning initial contact.
- **Develop relationships with Traveller and Gypsy communities.** Throughout this thesis, a series of recommendations have been proposed which focus on the discharge of safe and culturally competent social work practice. A major theme contained herein is the need to develop close and trusting relationships because this may serve as a doorway to successful and meaningful support. The need to develop links and community relations is therefore an essential component in the achievement of proactive and preventative support. Whilst social work is becoming increasingly driven by crisis intervention, social work teams must consider how they could engage Traveller and Gypsy communities in a more meaningful and focused way.
- **Keep a resource file in the office.** The opportunity to develop relationships with Travellers and Gypsies can be enhanced by a social worker who has a sensitive and considered understanding of cultural practices, mores and topical issues. This understanding could be enhanced with the regular revising of an office resource file. An essential publication for any team is Cemlyn's *et al.*, (2009) *Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: A review*. This invaluable document presents a review and evaluation of existing evidence to provide a basis for action to address the inequalities that Traveller and Gypsy communities face including the issues which the policy agenda often neglects. A further invaluable resource would be Traveller Times. Subscription is available for this publication, which is currently distributed on a quarterly basis.
- **Celebrate good practice.** Smith (2009) points out that social work, in general, appears to be reluctant to celebrate achievement and innovation. One potential consequence of this in terms of social work with Travellers and Gypsies has resulted in a dearth of good practice examples that could be used to feed into national or local policy. In order to develop this area of practice, social work organisations should consider publishing details of their work with Travellers and Gypsies so that others may use this information to develop their own approaches and learn from the lessons being discussed. As shown by the Travelling People's Team in Haringey, Community Care magazine is just one media output interested in publishing articles on safe and culturally competent practice with Travellers and Gypsies.

8.6.2 Provide training and education

Chapter 2 explored the concepts that situate social policy for children living in care as central to welfare rights, participation, culturally appropriate care, and empowerment (DfES, 2006; 2007). We have seen that these concepts represent universal ambitions that should be promoted to achieve improved outcomes and experiences (DoE, 2003). Despite this ambition, this study has shown how the realisation of these core concepts require an informed understanding of the unique challenges faced by Gypsy and Traveller children living in care and the ability to provide permanence, security, inclusion and an effective transition to an in-care reality.

Arguably, the biggest challenge for those people who lived and suffered in care was the concern that social work practice failed to recognise their welfare rights as Travellers and Gypsies. It failed to enable their participation, which in turn neglected the duty to empower the core concepts of social policy by ignoring the responsibility to provide culturally appropriate or even culturally intelligent care. Instead, social work decision-making, or lack of it in treatment and service delivery, compounded confusion and anxiety. What was lacking throughout the entire journey was a detailed knowledge and respect for the Traveller and Gypsy culture and their specific way of life.

Training social workers to support Traveller and Gypsy children

This chapter has explored the challenges presented by a lack of cultural intelligence and recommended the need for social workers who are working to support Traveller and Gypsy families to obtain this and to do so, as far as possible, free from presupposition. While this is appropriate in the immediacy, The Social Work Task Force (SWTF, 2010) argue that culturally competent social work practice relies on confident, effective frontline professionals who can be supported by a system of high quality training. The SWTF (2010), acknowledge that the importance of effective social work training has implications in all aspect of social work practice. Not only is it

important for the development of core competencies, but it can enable social work practitioners to forge constructive partnerships with people who find themselves vulnerable or at risk to help them make a sustained difference in their lives (Carpenter, 2011). Considered against the testimonies provided in this research these principles have shown that social work practice with Travellers and Gypsies living in care can often fall short of these basic conditions for success. If, as the SWTF (2010) recognise, high quality training is an essential pre-requisite to confident and effective culturally competent social work practice, it could be argued that the failings reported in the present study, reflect wider failings in this ambition.

Barn (2009) argues that for social work and social care practitioners to practice in a safe and culturally competent way, they must be trained to identify and challenge the political, economic, and historical contexts, which may have impact upon the liberty and social freedoms of the people they work to support. In terms of Travellers and Gypsies therefore, training must be able to support practitioners to recognise that the challenges faced as individuals, families, groups and communities are not attributable to lifestyle choices, but rather to their disenfranchised position in all aspects of society. On this basis, social work training must stop being complicit with the perpetration of inequality and disadvantage, and start to include these groups consistently within the benchmark statements of quality assurance systems. Rather than repeating the mistakes of the past, training must seek to establish more culturally responsive training programmes which recognise the truths about the unique social care, health and accommodation needs of all Travellers and Gypsies living in Britain today. However, as training of this kind appears to have suffered from having a low priority within policy and practice (Mason and Broughton, 2007; Mason *et al*, 2006) the need to increase effectiveness depends, in part, on clarity of purpose and priority setting.

Most examples of training events which exist within the literature concern cultural awareness and communication (NFER, 2008) including engagement skills for outreach (Cemlyn, 2000b); understanding specific cultural factors (Warrington &

Peck, 2005; Warrington, 2006) and family group conferences (The Connexions Traveller Education Support Services Alliance, 2006; Diacon *et al.*, 2007). Reflecting on the conclusions drawn from these papers, it is clear that training must be delivered in a way that is sensitive to the local contexts of Traveller and Gypsy communities (Coxhead, 2004) and of the different professional groups involved (Hatley-Broad, 2004). Although there are few attempts in the literature to systematically evaluate formal similar training programmes, including needs assessment and culturally competent service delivery, the discussions on informal learning opportunities highlight the opportunities enabled by effective multi-agency work whenever it is successfully organised and managed (Essex County Council, 2004; Scottish Executive, 2003; Murray, Tarren-Sweeney & France, 2011).

Training programmes which take a reflective approach to cultural awareness-raising and engage with controversial areas such as the non-implementation of the Caravan Act (1968), the oppressive elements of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994), racism, prejudice, cultural displacement, social marginalisation and forced eviction are recommended for some professional groups (Cemlyn *et al.*, 2009). As Coxhead (2004) and Hester (2004) have shown, these approaches are more likely to succeed if they are developed with strong support for trainers who are themselves skilled and expertly trained, and significance placed upon community participation. However, the success factors required to achieve lasting change for Traveller and Gypsy children living in care, including strategic embedding of training/awareness-raising within broader organisational objectives and reinforcement through training of existing best professional practice (Riches, 2007), close involvement of community members in capacity building projects must be seen as a priority.

Attempts to build capacity must promote training programmes which build upon well-developed networks involving Traveller and Gypsy communities and service providers. Whilst seeking to improve the outcomes of Traveller and Gypsy children living in care, training programmes should seek to engage with topics such as community expectations, awareness of service accessibility concerns, empowerment

of community members through experience and the formation of new community groups. These opportunities might also create greater cultural awareness among providers, including the need to acknowledge differences of power and the 'in-group/out-group' dichotomy (Okley, 1983; 1997; Kiddle, 2000; Parry *et al.*, 2004; McNeil *et al.*, 2005; Diacon *et al.*, 2007; Mason *et al.*, 2006). Taken together, these recommendations should be embedded within a continuum of training which can run from formal events to more open sessions and informal learning opportunities involving outreach work, work shadowing, and attendance at multi-agency meetings, and family group conferences, so to achieve a tangible impact on the lives of Traveller and Gypsy children living in care.

8.6.3 Develop a Bill of Traveller and Gypsy Rights

The testimonies provided by those people who lived and suffered in care revealed how arbitrary decisions of social workers often led to reduced opportunities and harrowing experiences. Those people who lived in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers, for instance, gave testimony to experiences of social isolation, rejection, feelings of confusion and anger, alienation and forced assimilation.

Among the major areas of response for Traveller and Gypsy children living in care, this chapter has presented a number of recommendations that speak directly to the culture of practice. These recommendations reflect the testimonies provided and demonstrate why increased cultural intelligence, effective partnerships, and innovative practice are all required to support children to remain at home. However, in terms of care planning, this chapter has not fully identified a specific need to ensure that the decisions made about Traveller and Gypsy children accurately reflect the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law. To account for this, this section presents the final recommendation of the thesis. It has been developed in direct response to the testimonies provided and of particular concern, that the fundamental principles of Human Rights Act (1998) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the more recent Equality Act (2010), were seen to be

omitted from the process of effective care planning and review. Indeed, this reflects a wider concern that acknowledges the limited impact of equality legislation in the wider social and political and treatment of Travellers and Gypsies throughout history (Cemlyn, 2008; Powell, 2011).

The individual experiences of discrimination reported throughout this thesis demonstrated a general lack of equality and access to those basic principles enshrined in human rights legislation and duty. The study revealed, for the first time in British research, how the depth and extent of the systematic denial of a human rights framework for Travellers and Gypsies living in care, led to the reported experience of assimilation, alienation and marginalisation. As shown in the model of reflective self-concepts, the active denial of individual human rights through substantive social work practices and shortage of adequate resources, ultimately led to the destruction of a Traveller or Gypsy sense of self. In these cases, the right to a family life, the right to protection from displacement and the right to experience security and permanence were denied when non-Traveller or Gypsy carers were unable to promote a secure Traveller or Gypsy self-concept in the way that has been described.

Supporting the implementation of the recommendations with social policy

The recommendations that have been advanced reflect the need to develop the type of knowledge and skills necessary to promote a secure Traveller or Gypsy self-concept. Arguably, the most important message is that social workers and substitute carers must work in partnership with the child, the family, the wider community, a range of partners at local, national, and even international level to ensure that the best quality care is delivered. By building upon examples of good practice, like for example the work being undertaken in the Republic of Ireland, social workers can begin to ensure that innovative and flexible approaches to care planning are foregrounded in the comprehensive, integrated and long-term response to the unique challenges that a life in public care can bring.

Whilst these recommendations hold out some hope for the development of social work and social care practice, it is important to recognise that there is every risk that these actions will be purely tokenistic if inconsistently applied or not incorporated in universal service provision. As no specific evidence base is currently available to direct practice and the development of local and national procedures for Traveller and Gypsy children living in care, it is likely that the care provided to them will remain inconsistent, and possibly lead to the types of experiences that have been reported here. It is widely known, for example, that the most prominent aspect of domestic law embedded in the Children Act (1989) and other areas of the human rights framework serve to ensure that children do not become isolated or displaced from their families and communities. While these laws and associated regulations require all placement decisions to account for and promote children's religion, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, this study has shown that no durable substantive solutions were provided to protect the rights of those Traveller and Gypsy children living in care with non-Traveller or Gypsy carers. Although what was experienced as a lack of cultural sensitivity may have been driven by a lack of suitable placements rather than oppressive attitudes, the fact that the words 'Traveller' and 'Gypsy' remain excluded from key social work policies such as the Care Matters agenda (DfES, 2006; 2007) represents a significant division and a real opportunity for social work policy to be misinterpreted. Indeed, this observation was confirmed in the apparent lack of suitable placements and the dislocation of Traveller and Gypsy children, which, as this thesis has shown, was perceived by each person who shared this experience to be in itself oppressive.

This finding showed that the various failings in social work and social care practice could be directly linked to failings in social policy. As the words, 'Traveller' and 'Gypsy' are widely omitted from social work policy, Bentham's (1987) concern that the social policies that societies produce can be understood by the way in which any particular society recognises, and gives expression to, the autonomy and ultimately the importance of its members offers a powerful contextualisation of the function of structural inequality. It also indicates that Traveller and Gypsy children living in care

remain marginalised within the British social work policy, because as Travellers and Gypsies, society affords them little recognition, expression, value, or importance.

Reflecting on the experience of being marginalised in this way, three people explained that the fundamental human rights of Travellers and Gypsies living in care could only be protected if the words ‘Traveller’ and ‘Gypsy’ are explicitly included in social policy. They felt that the compartmentalisation of Travellers and Gypsies under the term ‘ethnic minority’ does not go far enough to safeguard them and their unique position in society. In fact, they explained how their exclusion from dominant discourse results increased in their political invisibility, reduced their social status, and compounded their historical exclusion. In particular, Helen gives unequivocal consideration to what she feels is required:

<i>Helen</i>	<i>‘Social policy for children and young people who live according to the settled way cannot be applied to Travellers and Gypsies. It’s the same in sport: the rules of football cannot be applied to cricket. It just doesn’t work. There would be chaos...</i>
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On this basis, this study has found that radical structural reform is required before the rights of Travellers and Gypsies living in care can be consistently realised. As mentioned earlier, while it might be simple to recommend the development of a Shared Rearing model as an ideal long-term objective, there exist some practical and political reasons which mean that the attainment of this resource may be distant and uncertain. However, there are more realistic steps that could be taken in order to respond to the human rights of Travellers and Gypsies and restore integrity in social policy and social justice regardless of whether the words ‘Traveller’ and ‘Gypsy’ are mentioned, or not.

Bill of Rights

Reflecting on Helen's testimony within the context of Morris & Clements (1999) discussion on Traveller and Gypsy law reform, it is recommended that a Bill of Traveller and Gypsy Rights should be designed to supplement existing human rights frameworks. This will advance the protection of Traveller and Gypsy communities and incorporate their specific rights into domestic law. The development of a Bill of Traveller and Gypsy Rights would also ensure that the process and result of any social policy change, and subsequent interpretation, would involve and include all sectors of the Traveller and Gypsy community.

Once attained, the Bill of Traveller and Gypsy Rights should create a feeling of ownership in the community as a whole, and allow active consultation to be adequately resourced and conducted by an independent body, which can forge links with wider community representatives. In its planning and development, the Bill of Traveller and Gypsy Rights should include three essential characteristics:

1. The protection of those human rights which are considered, at a given moment in history, to be of particular importance to Travellers and Gypsies;
2. A specific set of binding instructions of equal rights which can only be overridden with significant difficulty; and,
3. The provision of forms of redress in the event of any violations against Traveller and Gypsy human rights that may arise through social injustice.

(Adapted from Donald, 2010).

The purpose of the Bill of Traveller and Gypsy Rights therefore, would be to protect Travellers and Gypsies against infringement in housing, education and the provision of fair health, education, social work and social care, and criminal justice. For Travellers and Gypsies living in care, the Bill would also provide an essential framework for protecting their liberty and dignity against structural inequality and help to ensure that specific needs are met through equal discharge of social work policy.

The Bill of Traveller and Gypsy Rights would be instrumental in communicating a symbolic role in highlighting the fundamental principles of a democracy thus signifying the true meaning of British equality. In a more modern and powerful context, the Bill of Traveller and Gypsy Rights would act as a baseline of common values which respect the position of Travellers and Gypsies and aims to address the 'in-group/out-group' dichotomy identified in this study, by communicating positive messages of their valued position as members of a diverse society. Assessed against the characteristics that the Bill would embody, social work, education, housing, health, police, and popular media could then measure their performance against a specific yardstick of equality. This power could thus enable the inclusion of Travellers and Gypsies in a way that has never been sufficiently 'owned' by British people. Not only would this result in the attainment of improved outcomes for Travellers and Gypsies, but it would also support the implementation of the Equality Act (2010) and accurately reflect the letter and the spirit of the human rights framework and all other related bodies of law.

8.7 Conclusion

This thesis has identified significant deficits in meeting the social care needs of Travellers and Gypsies living in public care. In the light of these findings, a series of recommendations have been introduced concerning the way in which social workers and carers should begin to interrogate their structural ethos in order to achieve true empowerment.

Like social policy, the power of these recommendations can only become manifest through interpretation and implementation. This of course, may not come easily or quickly. In the immediacy, it is hoped that this thesis has shown that the challenges faced by Gypsies and Travellers are not attributed to a lifestyle choice, but rather see their disenfranchised position in all aspects of social inclusion and equity as attributable to those structural forces which create anti-Traveller values in the first place. It has been explained that social workers and carers should seek to establish more culturally responsive services for Traveller and Gypsy children, families and

communities. By taking the findings of this thesis seriously, social work practice would be in a better position to use social policy more effectively to empower Gypsies and Travellers in choosing and leading the kind of lives that they value while challenging the prejudicial dilutions of social policy.

It is important to recognise that the findings included in this thesis hold out the hope for a developed understanding of the unique challenges faced by Travellers and Gypsies living in care. It is hoped that the presentation of this thesis will prove useful in highlighting the changes that Travellers and Gypsies have faced, as well as the considered solutions that have been offered to protect those children currently living, and suffering in care. Until the position of Gypsies and Travellers in society becomes valued with inclusive importance by all its members who understand and recognise the disparity, true social equality may never be equally realised. However, as the voices of Travellers and Gypsies who have lived in care in the United Kingdom have remained suppressed for so long, any certainty regarding whether the recommendations and messages included in this thesis will be taken seriously is a matter that perhaps only time will tell.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Information Sheet



Study Title: Changing relationships with the self and others: an interpretative phenomenological analysis of a Traveller and Gypsy life in public care

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done, and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the study about? This study intends to look at your experiences of living in care. It would like to recognise your experiences of being in care, both good and bad. By taking part, you may help members of the settled community to understand more about the challenges that Travellers face and possibly help identify solutions for these.

Why have I been approached? Because you are a member of the Travelling community who has lived in care. This is a national study, which is taking place in England and Ireland. During the period of the study, you will be asked to discuss your experiences of being in care.

Who is involved in the study? The study is led by a research student from De Montfort University, Leicester. The study has the support of the University and the ESRC. The researcher who will contact you has been checked out by the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure that he is safe to work with children and vulnerable adults.

Do I have to take part? No, the study is voluntary. However, if you decide that you do want to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form. Once you have taken part, you are still free to withdraw from the study, if you change your mind, at any time up to January 2011. You do not need to give a reason if you wish to withdraw.

What is involved? If you are willing, you will be asked individually or with others who share the experiences to discuss your thoughts, memories and feelings about being in care over a number of

different days, (all interviews would be tape recorded and would take around one hour). The number of times you are interviewed is completely up to you, but in order to understand your experience in detail, the researcher would like to talk to you on at least three separate occasions. During these discussions, you could be interviewed at your home, on your site, or at another place of your choice. If you would prefer not to be interviewed, you are also able to talk to the interviewer in a group, or over the telephone. If you would prefer to describe your experience through poetry, song lyrics, paintings, or in any other way, then arrangements can be made to fully support you with this.

What happens to the information? All the information will be treated anonymously. No one will be able to identify you from the study. The sound files from interviews are transcribed (listened to and written down in full). The notes taken by the interviewer, the tapes and the transcripts will be kept safely in locked offices at the University, and only the researcher and his supervisors will be able to see it. Notes, tapes and transcripts will only have codes and not names in order to safeguard your identity. At the end of the research, the sound files will be erased. All data will be treated in accordance with the current Data Protection Act and any original interview paperwork will be returned to you.

How will the information be used? All of the information will be used to create an understanding of what was like for you living in care, away from your family. In order to achieve this, some of the information you provide may be used within the final report. This may include direct quotations of what you said, or the inclusion of the stories and poems that you may provide. This information will be recorded in a research thesis, and other related publications. Any publications that include the information you provide will be sent to you by the researcher.

Will anyone be able to identify me from the final report? Although what you say may be quoted in the final report, and any other published work, no information regarding your name, age, places that you lived, names of people you lived with or any other features that may identify you will be included in any publication.

What if I wish to complain? Please raise any difficulties or questions with Roger Smith on (0116) 207 8741 email rsmith@dmu.ac.uk If they are unable to give you a satisfactory answer, please contact Professor Paul Whiting (Chair of Health and Life Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee at De Montfort University) on (0116) 207 8283 or email paulwhiting@dmu.ac.uk

What will happen to the results of the study? The results will be made available following the completion of the study in 2011. You will be provided with a summary and you will be able to receive a copy of this if you wish. Workshops may also be held to feed back the results and suggestions

about what policies should be put into place to enable Travellers to have a better experience of life in care.

Who is organising and funding the study? The study is organised by a research student at De Montfort University, Leicester through the Economic Social Research Council.

Contact for further information: If you would like any further information about the study please contact Dan Allen via his email p04057705@myemail.dmu.ac.uk or by the number on the enclosed business card. Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. We are very grateful for your participation in this study.

Appendix B: Consent Form



CONSENT FORM: INTERVIEW

Title of Project: Travellers and Gypsies in the Public care system

Name of Chief Investigator and Interviewer: Daniel Allen.

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet datedfor the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the interview at any time and that I do not have to give a reason.

I understand the information given will be used in a research project for De Montfort University and the ESRC. I understand that whilst some of the information I give may be included in the final report and any other published work, no information regarding my name, age, places that I lived, names of people I lived with, or any other features that may identify me will be included in any publication.

I understand that the final report will in no way be traceable back to me. I understand that I have the right to withdraw my involvement and related interview data at any time, up to January 2011.

I agree to have my views and opinions included in the main findings of the study and I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date Signature

Name of Researcher

Date Signature

Appendix C: Structured Questionnaire



Questionnaire/Interview Reference Number

Dan Allen is conducting a research project with the support of De Montfort University to ask Gypsies and Travellers questions about their experiences of living in care.

We would like your help in answering the following questions, which will take about an hour but can be as long or as short as you want. We would like to take your name (if you agree) **but will not pass this to anybody else so you can speak freely**. We hope that this will lead to the inclusion and review the position of Travellers and Gypsies within the care system with specific emphasis given to racial equality and the Travelling way of life.

Date	
Time began	
Time finished	
Interviewer	
Number of interview	
Place of interview	
Name of person(s) interviewed	
Age	
Gender	
Any further information:	

How would you describe yourself?

- English Gypsy/Romany
- Irish Traveller

- Other - please give details

How long did you live in care?

Thank you.

We will now, with your consent move onto our interview. Please feel free to stop the interview at any time and only answer questions that you feel comfortable in answering. These interviews will be tape recorded as long as you agree. Do you give permission to be interviewed about your experiences of life in public care.

- Yes
- No

Appendix D: Example of an email sent to non-statutory agencies

Dear

I am a social worker and a higher degrees research student studying at De Montfort University in Leicester.

I am hoping to produce a report that outlines the experiences of Traveller and Gypsies within the public care system. I have received ethical approval from the University to start my research and am now in the process of interviewing people that may like to talk about their experiences of living in care. I have put together a website that explains in more detail what my project is about and what it hopes to achieve. I would like to invite you to look at it by clicking on the link below.

www.irishtravellersandromanygypsies.co.uk

In regard to this, is there any one in your organisation that knows of a Traveller or Gypsy who grew up in care, away from their families as a child and who may like to talk about their experiences. If there is, I wondered whether you would be able to pass on my contact details and information of my study, see attached. I would value the opportunity to talk to Travellers and Gypsies that may have been in care so that the position of Travellers within the care system can be recognised more fully. I am hoping to interview as many people as possible and am in the process of recruiting a Traveller/Gypsy interviewer, should any potential participants feel uncomfortable talking about their experiences to me.

Thank you in advance.

Best wishes

Dan Allen

Appendix E: Non-statutory agencies contacted through snowball procedures

1. Aberdeen Gypsy Traveller Education & Information Project
2. Action for Children
3. An Munia Tobar Belfast Travellers Support Group
4. Brent Irish Advisory Service (BIAS)
5. Bromley Gypsy/Traveller Project
6. Cambridgeshire Travellers' Advocacy Service Working for Traveller's Rights
7. Cardiff Gypsy Sites Group
8. Church Network for Gypsies and Travellers
9. Clearwater Gypsies
10. Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group
11. Devon Racial Equality Council
12. Doncaster CVS "Give us a Voice" Gypsy and Traveller forum.
13. East Cork Travellers
14. European Committee on Romani Emancipation
15. Famous Gypsies
16. Friends Families and Travellers
17. Fundación Secretariado Gitano
18. Gay Travellers websites/forums
19. Gypsy and Traveller Drugs Helpline
20. Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month
21. Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Team Hackney Homes
22. Hull Gypsy and Traveller Exchange
23. Irish Community Care

24. Irish Community Care Merseyside
25. Journey Folki
26. Labour Campaign for Travellers Rights
27. Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange (GATE)
28. Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange (GATE)
29. Leicester Gypsy Council Liaison Group
30. Lincolnshire Gypsy Liaison Group
31. London Gypsy Traveller Unit
32. National Romany Rights
33. National Small Woods Association
34. National Travellers Action Group
35. Norfolk Travellers' Initiative
36. One Voice
37. Ormiston Children and Families Trust
38. Pavee Point
39. Roma Support Group
40. Romani Cymru
41. Save the Children
42. SchNews
43. Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association
44. Sheffield Gypsy and Traveller Support Group
45. South-West Alliance of Nomads (SWAN)
46. Southwark Traveller Action Group (STAG)
47. Suffolk Travellers Website
48. Sussex Traveller Action Group

49. The Exchange House
50. The Gypsy Council
51. The Gypsy Lore Society
52. The Irish Traveller Movement – Ireland
53. The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain
54. The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups
55. The Redbridge Traveller Women's Group
56. The Romany and Traveller Family History Society
57. Travellers Advice Team
58. Travellers Aid Trust
59. Travellers in Leeds
60. Travellers Tairing
61. Travellers Times
62. TravellerSpace
63. Travelling Together (part of Framework) Floating support and a drop in service
64. UK Association of Gypsy Women (UKAGW)
65. York Traveller Trust