# ORCA – Online Research @ Cardiff

**(Dis)comfort in the City: How young Travellers in London negotiate mobility within the City**

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**Highlights**

1. Other passengers on public transport can create uncomfortable affective atmospheres

2. Young Travellers are largely insensitive towards these atmospheres

3. Travellers still see social interactions through a Traveller/non-Traveller binary

4. Training and guidance is provided by older Travellers for younger ones

5. This training involves navigating spaces, and their emotions, beyond the domestic

**Abstract**

Conflicting claims are made about the extent to which Travellers in Britain remain outsiders in urban society (McGarry 2017; Sibley 1981). This paper sheds light on this question by addressing a neglected aspect of Traveller mobility, namely the day-to-day traversing of urban spaces beyond their (typically segregated) trailer sites. Focusing on public transport, it draws on eighteen months of ethnographic research with young people from Traveller backgrounds from a London-based youth group to understand the nature of the encounters they have as they go out and about in the city. The paper is interested in the place of affect in these encounters, and more generally, affect's role in shaping – or failing to shape – young Travellers' behaviour. The paper considers discomfort experienced through the mobility of young Travellers; it argues that young Travellers are encouraged by their elders to discipline and regulate emotional responses in encounters with non-Travellers and that this constitutes evidence of their continuing outsider status.

Gypsies and Travellers; young people; encounter; public transport; affect; mobility

## Introduction: Travellers in the City

Racism against Travellers[1] has been called the last acceptable form of racism in Britain, in that it continues to be expressed openly in a way that is no longer possible in relation to other racialized[2] groups (McGarry 2017). Those who view Travellers as a race and/or racial group consider this categorisation as an indicator of how such individuals are likely to behave and think. Travellers have been characterized as 'outsiders in urban society' (Sibley 1981). Sibley (1981, p. 4) has argued that such groups "are peripheral in the sense that there is a considerable social distance between them and the majority – there is little or no social interaction – and this social gulf is usually, but not necessarily reinforced by spatial separation". Characterizations based on race and/or outsider status inform social interactions and encounters, between Travellers and non-Travellers. Drawing on eighteen months of ethnographic study with young Travellers from a London-based youth group, this paper focuses on the experiences of young Travellers learning to negotiate life outside their domestic spaces as they traverse the city, and investigates how the emotions evoked in these moments highlight the extent to which such individuals are positioned as outsiders in urban society.

The outsider status of Travellers is dependent on internal and external understandings. Following John Berger, Sibley (1981, p. 13) describes how Travellers have an  orientation towards, and view of, social change that differs from the mainstream. He portrays Travellers as viewing their lives, and their goals of their lives, as protecting a particular way of life that they have been born into and will pass on, in a world that threatens to change or destroy it. These threats can be physical, natural, or (as is overwhelmingly the case in contemporary Britain) socio-economic and politico-cultural. Being an outsider is a matter of having values, or more broadly a worldview, that diverge significantly from the mainstream, and deviate from shared notions of social progress (Berger 1999/1979, p. xviii – xxvi). This understanding is consistent with Becker's (1966) classic formulation. Namely, that an outsider is a

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[1] In the UK the terms 'Gypsies' and 'Travellers' are used to refer to a variety of self-identifying and, in some cases, legally defined ethnic groups. While these differ, they share the centrality of nomadism as an ideal, and often idealised, form of existence. The differences between the groups are generally ignored by the non-Gypsy and Traveller population in everyday interactions (and racist hostility), which is why the general term is used in this paper. However, we are aware that in some contexts – including judicial and administrative – distinctions within the umbrella category of 'Traveller' or 'Gypsy' can be very significant. An informed estimate suggests there are 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, over four times more than the official census estimate of 2011 (Greenfields and Smith 2010).

[2] We use the term 'racialized' to refer to the social construction of racial identities – identities based on the notion that dividing humans into mutually exclusive, largely unchanging, and typically (morally and intellectually) hierarchically ordered racial groups is central to any full explanation of behaviour, from the everyday through to major historical events. This kind of thinking in terms of racial 'essences' has no scientific credibility, but is deeply rooted in everyday life, certainly in Britain and the global North (Gale and Thomas 2018).

person "who [in the judgement of insiders] cannot be trusted to live by the rules agreed on by the group" (Becker 1966, p. 1). As a result, such a person may be labelled a deviant. Yet from the perspective of the so-called deviant, the (insider) group that is labelling them is neither regarded "as … competent [n]or legitimately entitled" to judge their behaviour (Becker 1966, p. 9). Thus, traditionally, British Travellers have viewed contact with non-Travellers as posing a risk of what Romany Gypsies term *'mochadi'*, where Travellers may take on outside values through contamination, and the cultural identities of Travellers may be disturbed. As Griffin (2002b, p. 110 comments, "when Travellers describe individuals or groups as 'clean' or 'dirty' and act accordingly, all they are really doing is differentiating the 'inside' from the 'outside', separating 'us' from 'them', marking a border".  This estrangement from the mainstream can lead the 'deviant' group to engage in unruly or disruptive behaviour; in the case of Travellers this leads to their being judged as disruptive to contemporary societal norms, as part of a broader racist stigmatization.

A key factor in the judgement of Travellers is their association with nomadism. Being settled – both physically in housing, and institutionally through enrolment and regular attendance at schools, workplaces, health centres, and so on – is the bedrock of the modern, calculative, industrialised state (see Scott 1999). Commitment to settled housing is thus a central norm of modern states, something not shared by the families of the young Travellers in this study. Due to this nomadic lifestyle, Travellers have traditionally been viewed as a socially and spatially isolated group – the fenced off Traveller trailer site on the edge of town, or on derelict land in the inner city, demonstrate these different lifestyles, and serve as metaphors for widespread isolation and exclusion (Griffin 2002b; Sibley 2000). Yet about two-thirds of Traveller communities in the UK are now living in traditional 'bricks and mortar' housing, even though the overwhelming majority would prefer to live in a caravan (Greenfields and Smith 2010) and feel socially isolated in their residential areas (Greenfields 2010), reflecting their 'outsider' status. Such social distance is conveyed starkly by Greenfields (2010, p. 62) from research of different groups of Travellers in the UK, that concluded:

*'A high proportion (over 70% across all age ranges)…report a lack of meaningful social contact and communication between their families and the surrounding 'settled' population. This finding holds true whether respondents have lived on a particular site for many years, reside in housing amongst relatively diverse populations, or have relatives who are of 'mixed' (inter-married) heritage.'*

Yet, among younger Travellers who live in bricks and mortar housing, Greenfields and Smith (2010) considered that these younger groups focused on identities based in ethnicity rather than nomadism and housing circumstances. They noted elements of cultural hybridisation involving young Travellers in the construction of youth sub-cultures on housing estates with a significant Traveller presence.

These sub-cultural practices are self-consciously new and in sharp contrast to the process of cultural adaptation that Sibley (1981) emphasises Travellers have undertaken for centuries: adapting to a changing environment while always seeking legitimacy through emphasising core cultural continuities with the past. Might Travellers – and younger ones in particular – be beginning to relinquish their outsider status? It is this question that motivates the research discussed in this paper focusing on the under-researched young Travellers off trailer sites.

The lives of those in segregated trailer sites still, inevitably, are intertwined with, and run up against, those who are not Travellers. Mobility – in the basic sense of moving around the city for work, shopping, leisure pursuits etc. – is one important instance of this and a time when they cannot avoid the non-Traveller majority population. How these often mundane and fleeting encounters are experienced and negotiated is a neglected aspect of the lives of Travellers, and one which this paper will explore. In particular it considers how young Travellers learn to negotiate 'non-Traveller spaces', those outside the (typically) family space of the Traveller site (Okely 1983; Griffin 2002 a, b). It looks at how the recognition and discipline of emotions, usually uncomfortable ones, becomes part of this process. The nature of the encounters and the emotions involved, in turn, shed some light on the extent to which young Travellers consider themselves outsiders in urban society. It also contributes to the research literature in its novel focus on, and hence richer understanding of, the spatiality of the lives of young Travellers and their relationship to non-Traveller society.

The paper is organised into four further sections. It begins by reviewing current understandings of encounters in public space, and how emotion is mobilised as part of these. It notes the significance researchers have attached to how atmospheres make non-conforming or deviant behaviour an emotionally uncomfortable activity, and an effective way of managing and reducing non-conformity. Next, the research methods and ethics of the wider research project are outlined. Then follows an analysis of the experiences of young Travellers 'out and about' in London, focused on public transport, before final conclusions are drawn.

**Public Space, Public transport, Encounter and Irish Travellers**

In this paper, public space is understood as a space created when diverse bodies encounter one another in often unpredictable and unanticipated ways (Bridge and Watson 2002; Wilson 2014, 2016b). Public space is not only a space where difference is encountered; it is also one where difference can be underpinned and (re)constructed (Wilson 2016a,b), and in complex ways that

connect diverse pasts and presents. Ahmed (2014, p. 33) puts it thus: "particular histories are reopened with each encounter". These encounters engage all the senses, and Rhys-Taylor (2017, p. 2) argues that the sensations involved – which go beyond the visual – trigger emotions which shape, and reinforce, habituated ways of understanding oneself and others. For example, racists typically rail against, and may claim to feel disgust in relation to, the smells that they associate with the despised racialized other (Rhys-Taylor 2017). This evidences how, as Boyer (2012, p. 552) comments, "difference is materially and affectively experienced as well as socially constructed". So, schooling the body to frame the sensing of other bodies in shared space in particular ways, and become habituated to classifying and reacting to them 'appropriately' , is central to  a developing understanding of oneself and others (see also Alcoff, 1999).  The embodied cues can sometimes be observed/sensed over some time (Peterson, 2017), but often are sensed fleetingly (Monaghan, 2002; Ye, 2016). This process of schooling and habituation in fleeting encounters is one of the important dimensions of urban encounters of young Travellers that this paper examines.

Public transport exemplifies the unavoidable messiness of the notion of 'public' as used in the term 'public space'. Public transport is not necessarily available to all, excluding, for example, those unruly , shameful, bodies socially constructed as 'disabled' (Siebers, 2001) and those unable to pay fares (see Aldred and Woodcock 2008; Church et al 2000) . There are also explicit and implicit norms of expected behaviour and of what constitutes a well-managed body (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006; Bissell 2010; Wilson 2011).  These norms, sometimes reinforced through surveillance (Lobo 2014; Wilson 2013b), are shaped by, and implicated in the sustaining of social, including racialized, hierarchies (Cresswell 1996). Yet, with all of these caveats, there is evidently an important sense in which a bus or a metro system is a very different kind of social space from a family car, just as a public park is very different from a suburban garden. It is the degree of openness and open-endedness about who might be encountered and how that might turn out that is central to the publicness of these public spaces. Public transport in populous towns and cities will still 'throw together' (Massey 2005) people of all kinds. As Wilson (2011, p. 634) comments, of one mode of

public transport, "bus travel is often an intrinsic and necessary aspect of everyday routine and public life…[and] … the bus journey marks a space where interaction with unacquainted others is not only possible but for the most part unavoidable." It is in such spaces that the fieldwork that forms the basis of this paper is focused.

Although researchers have been exploring the lives of Travellers for many years, there has been little attention paid to their mobility in everyday public spaces. There has also been limited awareness of the importance of, and place for, embodiment and emotion in the ways Travellers experience discomfort within their everyday lives. Yet, traversing the city will bring young Travellers into contact with non-Travellers in ways which cannot be wholly anticipated. , How might such encounters turn out, and how are young Travellers encouraged by other Travellers to view and learn from them? Theorists of encounter have made the point that there is no guarantee of any particular kind of outcome, positive or negative, from urban encounters (Amin 2008; Leitner 2012; Schwermang 2019; Valentine 2008). In addition, the significance of fleeting encounters in urban life has increasingly been appreciated (eg Swanton, 2010; Ye, 2016) , but remains relatively little explored compared to the more structured encounters on which hopes for a more respectful coming together and understanding of difference are often  placed (Peterson, 2017).  Yet whatever the outcome of encounter, researchers suggest,  the mobilisation of emotion is central to the character of the encounter itself (see Wilson 2013b). We will briefly consider each of these points in turn, drawing out its significance for this paper's focus.

Interactions between unique embodied individuals will inevitably be, to some extent, uncertain in the fine details of their outcomes. But they take place within a context of a variety of widely-accepted norms about behaviour in particular situations, be this a public library (Peterson, 2017), a queue (Monaghan, 2002), the street (Radford, 2016) or, as in this paper, the metro (Augé, 2002). The perception of whether these norms are being observed, whether bodies are being managed

appropriately, can complicate the way stereotypes are mobilised in encounters , including racialized stereotypes (Lobo 2014;Radford, 2016; Swanton 2010). It has been suggested that this may be especially likely in the fleeting encounters that are so much a part of urban mobility (Swanton 2010; Amin 2008), where, as Radford (2016) illustrates, an 'everyday otherness' can be constructed in pavement encounters when visually unusual bodies also appear to be not conforming to generally accepted norms. Ye (2016), on the other hand, argues that the fleeting encounters of the diverse city offer the possibility of sensitising inhabitants to the sight and sound of difference, with a lessening of social tensions. How these varied possibilities 'cash out' for young Travellers – a neglected question in the research literature - and why the outcomes take the form they do, will form part of the discussion of the findings of this paper.

In few urban encounters is corporeality more (literally) pressing than in the often crowded confines of public transport, where there is necessarily an 'increased awareness of one's body in space in relation to others' (Wilson 2011, p. 638). Emotion is central to these embodied encounters. As Boyer (2012, p. 552) notes, there are occasions on which "…certain bodies "get in the way" (either materially, symbolically or both) disrupting the comfort of others". These are bodies out of place (Cresswell 1996; 2015), creating discomfort, and quite often evoking emotional reactions in turn. For the purposes of this paper, the variety of potential emotional responses in these more fraught encounters (be it anxiety, fear, embarrassment, shame, etc.) (Boyer 2012; Lobo 2014; Wilson 2011, 2013b) are less significant than the way emotion is mobilised to shape behaviour. Boyer (2012), for example, examines the way that embarrassment is induced among mothers seeking to breast-feed in public in an attempt to modify their behaviour. Through tut-tutting and pointed looks, (some) mothers are made to feel uncomfortable about what they are doing. In Wilson's (2013b) account of 'diversity sensitisation', it is shame that catalyses behaviour change. "Yet the potency of shame can arise only if the body cares about the interest of others" states Bissell (2010, p. 282), and the same can be said of embarrassment. It is in the context of a "contractual consensus" (Augé 2002, p. 44), a

shared set of values at least in relation to the circumstances a group of people find themselves in when 'thrown together', that emotions may be mobilised to regulate behaviour. Wilson (2011) highlights how uncomfortable encounters can occur on public transport when people defy social norms such as the expectation "that passengers maintain a minimal awareness of the needs of their consociates" (Wilson 2011, p. 640). But what if these norms and values are not shared, or not even recognised? How do such urban outsiders, perhaps in this case young Travellers, learn to navigate public spaces and public transport? These encounters, in turn, it can be argued will have repercussions for the individual and their sense of self. The paper will begin to shed light on these questions.

## Research Methods and Ethics

This paper draws on data collected by Eales as part of a larger PhD project. The research took the form of eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted as a youth worker volunteering with a youth group which is part of a Traveller-run community project in South London. The group was run *by* Travellers *for* young Travellers and operated out of a community centre in Peckham, which was in close proximity to four Traveller sites. The youth group consisted of approximately twenty young people split into two sub-groups: one for children and young people over the age of eleven and another for children aged between eight and eleven years old. The majority of the children and young people self-identify as Irish Travellers, but some English Travellers also attended the youth group. Members of the youth group met one evening a week for a wide range of activities including playing board-games, make-up and hairstyling events, arts and crafts, and discussions of Traveller history. The youth group also organised events and outings in London and the surrounding areas for members once or twice a month. Over the eighteen-month period, Eales accompanied the young people on the majority of the trips.

Ethical considerations were central to the conduct of this research at all stages. It adhered to ethical considerations along three dimensions (Clark 2014):
  - an ethics of engagement – to ensure that consent, assent and dissent were voluntarily given, taking account of variations in literacy . Consent was re-negotiable.  The researcher remained sensitive to any verbal and non-verbal cues, including silences, that might suggest that the children and young people (and, indeed, adult participants) were no longer comfortable

taking part (Bucknall 2014, p. 74), the very cues that were being observed as the young people ventured into the public spaces of the city.

- an ethics of representation – ideally ensuring that all participants would recognize themselves in the research, and that they were appropriately acknowledged as authors/originators of ideas and data that the research created and drew upon; an ethics of social inclusion – acknowledging that "every child has views and experiences that are of value" (Clark 2014, p. 207), and ensuring that the inevitable power-relations between children did not mean that some were overlooked by the researcher. Running through these dimensions was an awareness of the significance of a geometry of power relations that was present for and between researchers, 'gatekeepers' and other adults, and children and young people (Gallagher 2009a).

The gatekeeper who initially managed access to the fieldwork location, and facilitated gaining consent from parents and guardians of the young people, was the manager of the organisation which ran the youth group. In addition to any responsibilities the manager may have felt due to her position in the organisation, she was also a Traveller and had young children who attended the group.

The researcher was also aware and reflected upon the emotional complexities arising from her voluntary role in the youth centre, which involved some exercise of authority, and her identity as a non-Traveller (Bondi, 2005; Gallagher, 2009 b) .

The ethnographic fieldwork employed several methods. First, observations of the young people and their families were recorded in a field diary and then written up as soon as was practical after the events as field notes. Secondly, formal semi-structured interviews of about an hour each were conducted with the three salaried workers in the youth centre. Thirdly, six semi-structured interviews (ranging from 30 minutes to 90 minutes in length) were carried out with the young people who attend the youth group, as well as three recorded focus groups: one with the younger group (three boys and four girls between the ages of eight and eleven), one with the older group (three girls and five boys, aged twelve to fifteen) and one specifically for the older girls (five girls between the ages of twelve and fifteen). An individual known and trusted by the young people was present for both the interviews and focus groups. All interviews and focus groups were recorded and then transcribed to be analysed, with additional notes made where appropriate. In addition to these, informal focus groups and group interviews were also carried out in a number of the weekly sessions in the community centre with

both the younger and older groups of young Travellers. These allowed questions to be asked about the young peoples' week at school and what they had been doing out of school, on the site or otherwise, without them feeling as though they were being recorded or 'tested' for their response. Finally, some informal interviews also took place on public transport on the way to the youth group outings, which, in Kusenbach's words gave "potential to access some of the transcendent and reflexive aspects of lived experiences in situ" (2003, p. 455).

The analysis process drew out themes from all the data gathered, with consideration of the research issues identified above, to explore the ways in which young Traveller negotiate life off-site in London. Thematic analysis was undertaken for the possibility of "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns … within [the] data" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 79). In line with this method, themes were identified and codes developed through the use of the software package NVivo, in preparation to address the research issues identified earlier in this paper.

## Young Travellers venturing into the city

In this section, we analyse aspects of the experiences of young Travellers as they traverse the city and occupy public space, including the London underground railway. This is widely known in the UK as 'the tube', but in this paper we will use 'metro' as it is the more familiar international term for this form of transport. In the following discussion we outline three indications that young Travellers continue to be outsiders in urban society, rather than being simply one ethnic group amongst many that generally agree on the broad contours of a desirable life in a plural city. First, we point towards the persistence of some binary categories that have been central to the distinctive way of life and world-view of Travellers. These include the Traveller/non-Traveller distinction, and that of clean /unclean (as discussed earlier), used as an ontological rather than hygienic distinction. Secondly, the continuing outsider status of Travellers is indicated by the apparent disavowal by young Travellers of widely shared norms regarding behaviour in public spaces; and, in all the evidence we adduce, the mobilising of particular emotions is at the heart of the way that a value-framework/worldview is performed. Finally, the third episode we illustrate how the emotions of young Travellers are schooled as part of the refinement of their emerging Traveller sensibility. Overall, this paper is not based on one or more 'killer facts' that alone can definitively prove its case. Rather, it suggests a pattern of plausible (but in some cases individually contestable) interpretations of incidents and behaviour which taken together establish its conclusions. Therefore, it provides an initial evaluation of a neglected thesis, and invites further research.

Ontological distinctions, anxiety and being Outsiders

All of the participants for this project lived in caravans on permanent sites in Southwark and regarded themselves as a distinct, somewhat embattled, social group. It was evident throughout a number of discussions and outings with the young Travellers that the site was viewed as a safe space with clear physical and cultural boundaries (cf Griffin, 2002b). But the young people had anxiety-filled perceptions of the world beyond.

Young Travellers, who participated in focus groups and interviews, spoke about the forms of discomfort and fear they feel, even within their own homes. For instance, Patrick (aged 8) stated, *"When we hear the police cars coming, we also think they're going to come onto the site, they think we've been causing trouble again".* It is likely that these young Travellers will have heard their elders talking about deficiencies of the non-Traveller world: its hostility to Travellers, and also the way it differs from several their values including cleanliness, respect for family, and propriety in relation to gender relations (Griffin 2002a, b). These values were seen to be lived out by the young Travellers that feature in this paper on more than one occasion, such as when they exhibited a concern for cleanliness, that revolved around a distinctive understanding of impurity/dirt, as illustrated by the following fieldnote vignette:

> *We're walking from the go karting centre across a field and towards a play park…. many of the group of young Traveller children are running around, shouting and chasing one another. A medium sized dog runs over to the group, clearly excited that there's lots of children to play with. One of the younger girls screams and the children look nervous or apprehensive and stand still. They don't interact with the dog, which takes me by surprise as I know that many of the children have dogs and remember the story that Bobby told me about a fight happening because someone tried to steal his dog. The children come back towards me and Jane, and the dog returns to his owner.*

Jane, the youth leader, explained that although the children do like dogs, they would have been worried that a stranger's dog was not clean or might be dangerous. The first reason is a distinctively Traveller concern. Traveller dogs are not companion animals in the sense understood by mainstream UK society. Moreover, as Griffin (2002b) discusses, Traveller animals who clean themselves (including dogs) are kept outside because they are considered dirty and impure. Furthermore, since the dog belonged to an individual who was not a Traveller it would have been further 'polluted' by association with someone who themselves did not follow the Traveller norms of cleanliness. This appears to confirm the discomfort that contemporary young Travellers can feel when they leave their sites

where there are strict codes and rules surrounding what is considered clean and what is dirty, and any associated spatial practices. This encounter between the children and the dog was a clear adherence to traditional Traveller norms and values, and positions them as outsiders in contemporary Britain I the sense discussed at the start of this paper.

Standing outside behavioural norms

The young Irish Travellers who participated in this project were frequent users of public transport and portrayed themselves as comfortable when doing so. Public transport is a regulated space which creates an atmosphere of authority (Cidell and Prytherch 2015). In the metro system, directional signage is supplemented by visual and aural injunctions about where to walk (and where not to walk), what actions may or may not be permissible (e.g., begging, busking), and commands to be vigilant – in relation to suspect packages, but also personal property and personal safety. Uniformed employees regulate entry and exit to the metro system and occasionally manage passengers on the station platforms. The London metro is certainly a variant of public space, but one overseen by an authority external to passengers, and an authority only partially embodied in its visible staff.

As previously mentioned, some researchers (for example, Boyer 2012) have highlighted the ways in which deviant groups are managed in public spaces through 'looks and tutting'. The effectiveness of these social cues depends on their 'target' subscribing to an implicit "contractual consensus" (to use Augé's (2002) term in relation to public transport norms), that establishes and regulates the norms involved. In other words, the people whose behaviour is to be regulated *cannot* be outsiders if 'funny looks' have a chance of working through mobilising appropriate emotional responses.

Whilst out with the young Travellers the researcher observed 'funny looks and tutting' being directed towards them in relation to some behaviours of the younger members of the youth group. It was clear from the looks, body language and non-verbal sounds such as sighs that some passengers considered their behaviour unruly. Yet, the children seemed almost entirely unaware of the tutting and disapproving looks, and certainly did not acknowledge them or alter their behaviour as a result. The events are outlined in the following fieldnote extract:

> *After changing trains, the children are restless and clearly excited, shouting and making shrill noises. Despite me and Jane asking the children to be quiet and considerate of the other passengers they continue to play games and are running around the carriage. A man, who looks to be in his 50s, glares at the children, closes*

*his paper and moves down the carriage away from the children. The children and Jane*
*make no acknowledgment of this and continue their conversations.*

Jane – the adult Traveller – makes an initial attempt to shape the children's behaviour according to the norms of public transport. But more significant is what she doesn't do, namely explicitly align herself with the behaviour, attitudes and values of a specific non-Traveller and by so doing imply that the children should also do so.

Habituating the body to  nuanced encounters

*Some of the younger boys were waiting on the platform for the train to arrive. As the*
*train pulled in, the doors opened and, despite being told to move away from the doors*
*by myself and the youth group leader, the boys continued to partially obstruct the*
*doors, distracted and chatting loudly. A man, who looked to be in his twenties, stepped*
*off the train onto the platform and said something, inaudible from where I was stood,*
*to one of the boys (Ryan, aged 11) as he walked past and continued down the platform.*
*Ryan responded. Again, I could not hear what was said. Shortly after this, Ryan, walked*
*over to Jane and me and said, "That man just told me to get out of the way and called*
*me a pikey, so I called him a gorgio back". Jane's response to this was "I've already told*
*you never to use that word around Charlotte." –* Fieldnote extract

In order to understand this episode, it is necessary to be aware that 'pikey' is a common racist epithet used for Travellers, and 'Gorgio' is a Traveller term that refers to all non-Travellers. The persistence of the term 'Gorgio' is consistent with the Traveller/non-Traveller distinction remaining more significant in Travellers' ontologies than the possible multiplicity of ethnic groups. This in turn is consistent with the continuing characterization of Travellers as insider/outsiders.

Returning to the metro episode, two sequential and connected components can be identified which will be discussed in turn. The episode begins with an encounter between young (male) Travellers and an adult non-Traveller as the latter disembarks a metro carriage. This encounter is central to what we wish to discuss, but a full understanding of the episode must take into account some norms of metro travel in London, specifically that there is no rigid or otherwise defined manner for those waiting to get on to a carriage to organise themselves (e.g. by queuing). Therefore, where you stand is in effect your own choice, but expectations are that access to enter or exit the carriage will be maintained, and that people disembarking are allowed do so before others board. Feeling that one's

exit or entry is being unreasonably blocked is, according to newspaper reports, a major source of passenger aggravation and dissatisfaction (Ackerman 2017).

The (exiting and obstructing) bodies, associated norms, and material reality of the metro come together, then, in the fleeting encounter described above, and result in an exchange of abuse. It is not possible to understand the exiting passenger's behaviour. Without in any way sanctioning racist abuse, there is a very real danger of radical misinterpretation of the reasons for the behaviour of people encountered for such a short time (Lobo 2014; Wilson 2011). In any event, this paper's focus is the young Travellers' behaviour and its aftermath. Their response to the derogatory term hurled at them was immediate, and not evidently premeditated. It can be interpreted as a habitual bodily response to the kind of racial abuse that Travellers experience regularly. It was of course an emotional response, an angry response, to perceived racism. The anger presupposed and was triggered by their understanding the significance of the word used to describe them. For these reasons, we suggest that cognition runs through the episode in complex ways, but not as conscious deliberation. And it is emotion, not any deliberation, that brings into play the practical understanding of a response deemed appropriate that is embedded in the action.

It was the reaction of the stepmother – who was also a worker at the youth group – which was critical of the young Travellers' application of their knowledge on this occasion, in the second component of the episode. We argue that the grounds of her criticism alert us to important aspects of Traveller life; and also remind us that management of emotions is an important part of urban encounters. Jane's focus is not the angry outburst as such; to that extent she is condoning and underpinning a mode of reacting to hostility from non-Travellers that the young people will have been introduced to, and will have practised, for some time. Her criticism is of their using a term for non-Travellers that emphasises the 'otherness' of non-Travellers. Here, too, subtle but important distinctions need to be underlined. Jane is not critical of their reactive use of essentialised binary categories, but she does not want the term used in the presence of this particular *gorgio.* It is plausible to suggest that she wanted to make it clear that whatever the young Travellers, and indeed she herself, thought about *gorgios* in general, this particular *gorgio* researcher was an exception. Jane's comment is based on the assumption that the young Travellers can work on changing the nature of their responses, even in the most fleeting of encounters. They can practise managing their emotional responses in ways which will allow them to adopt a more nuanced approach to encounters with non-Travellers in the future. Implicit in the step-mother's admonishment is an acknowledgment that expressed anger might well be appropriate in some encounters, particularly those where Travellers feel threatened. But non-Travellers can have varied relationships to

Travellers, and understanding the nuances of possible relationships and habituating the body to act in appropriate ways is central to what the step-mother is teaching in this incident. In this case, this involves trying to sensitise the young Travellers to the potential embarrassment that a friendly and supportive *gorgio* might feel if she believed herself to be no different in their eyes to any other non-Traveller. .

## Conclusions

This paper has shed light on several under-researched aspects of the lives of young Travellers in Britain, namely how they fare as they navigate public space, including public transport, with its inevitable encounters with non-Travellers. The paper illustrates the embodied and emotional modalities of young Travellers experiences of their outsider status in everyday encounters. These young Travellers use their explorations of the non-Traveller world to perform and make their own a view of the world, a view recognisable from research on Traveller identity and behaviour that has existed for many decades. As stated from the outset, there is one 'killer fact' that establishes this proposition, but rather a collection of phenomena that taken together make this supposition plausible, and worthy of further investigation, particularly in relation to the following two findings.

First, it appears that young Travellers view and evaluate the world along dimensions that have long been noted as distinctive of Traveller culture, notably the significance of cleanliness. The nervousness of the young Travellers in the presence of the dog was superficially surprising, given that dogs are ubiquitous on Traveller sites. This was understood as an emotional reaction and learnt restraint originating from the traditional Traveller distinction between clean and dirty animals. This reminds us that the initiation into a worldview and set of values is linked to the development of appropriate emotional responses, which has a practical consequence from the deep-rootedness of the latter helping to embed the former. This was also illustrated in the way in which the Traveller/non-Traveller binary distinction, with a raft of prejudicial connotations in relation to the *Gorgio*, was invoked in an angry exchange with a passenger on the metro. The persistence of the key binary of Traveller/non-Traveller in the thinking of young Travellers is further evidence of an apparent continuity with the thinking and world view of older generations of Travellers.

The second key finding of paper is that the young Travellers were largely (at least outwardly) unphased by uncomfortable atmospheres created by those that perceived them as 'other', that could be used to attempt to mould behaviour in public space (Boyer 2012). We argue that this is evidence that the young Travellers do not feel party to any kind of contractual consensus with respect to norms

of behaviour in public space. This, we suggest, is because these young Travellers are not relinquishing their outsider perspective on contemporary British society, as some have speculated (Greenfields and Smith 2010). Many may, indeed do, have an appreciation of the material benefits of aspects mainstream life such as formal education, but it does not follow that they are adopting the norms and values of non-Travellers.

Finally, standing as they do outside a contractual consensus, young Travellers rely on their willingness and ability to be confrontational if and when encounters with non-Travellers become fraught or escalate. In that respect they bring to their mobility within the city the same capacity for focused anger as they deploy in schools (Cemlyn et al. 2009). Adult Travellers appear to endorse the appropriateness of these behaviours, which is why we argue that they too remain voluntarily 'outsiders in urban society' (a position that does not in any way justify or legitimise racism directed towards to them). However, the adult Travellers in our research expressed a desire to extend the behavioural repertoire of the young people they were responsible for, so that they could control and mould habituated anger in fleeting encounters. We argue that in doing this the adults are developing the practical knowledge of the youngsters in how to deal with these kinds of circumstances, and that some kinds of 'knowing how' – such as the one described in this paper – require their emotional response to be trained and nuanced.

This paper has only begun to explore the embodied reality of urban life for young Travellers. It has focused on encounters between young Travellers and non-Travellers in public space. In these, it is suggested, young Travellers learn, practise and habituate their emotions and bodies for a substantially traditional way of living as an urban-based Traveller, thus confirming (and inviting judgements of) their Outsider status in contemporary Britain. The paper's evidence could, of course, be deepened by further similar research. Perhaps more importantly, it should be broadened by considering how the paper's conclusions need to be inflected by a fuller examination of how the performance of gender plays out in young Traveller's lives and, particularly, in their relations with non-Travellers. The existing literature suggests that Traveller life in Britain involves clear gender roles (Cemlyn et al, 2009), and the wider research project, only part of which is reported in this paper, showed that for adults these roles extended to a division of labour in relation to

encountering and managing relations with the non-Traveller world. A flavour of this emerged in the

Traveller boys' angry and vocal reaction to racism; whether and how gendered differences are

learned in public space would be  an important extension of this paper, and would, we suggest,

show young Traveller women learning the appropriateness of a set of emotions that distinguishes

them from the young Traveller men. **Acknowledgements**

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