Irish Travellers:
Culture and Ethnicity

Edited By

May McCann

Séamas Ó Síocháin

Joseph Ruane

Institute of Irish Studies,
The Queen's University of Belfast

for

The Anthropological Association of Ireland

INTRODUCTION

Séamas Ó Síocháin, Joseph Ruane and May McCann

In the past 20 years majority groups in Ireland, North and South, have had to accept that the communities in which they live are far from homogeneous. Minorities exist – whether religious, political, cultural or sexual – with rights which must be recognised. The minorities in question have long been disadvantaged, but until recently were slow to assert their rights. This has changed and minority rights are now a central political issue. The disadvantages vary from group to group, but they might be summed up as the denial of the right to full participation in the society in which they live, the right to participate as different but as equal. Irish Travellers are one of these minorities.

There exists a small but rapidly growing research literature on Irish Traveller society and culture and on Traveller-settled community relations. It is a varied literature reflecting the disciplinary background of the researcher, the time in which it was carried out, the interests and concerns of the sponsors of the research, the assumptions made about the concepts, theories and methods appropriate to its subject. Like many other research areas, it is marked by controversy. Concepts and theories once widely used and accepted as self-evident are now strongly contested; some are rejected altogether. New concepts are revolutionising the field.

One of these concepts is ethnicity (see below). The concept has radical implications for the study of Irish Travellers because it approaches Traveller culture as distinct and valuable in its own right with its own historical path of development, rather than as a short-term adaptation to poverty or marginality. The concept has led to a new understanding of

Irish Travellers, their culture, and the policies appropriate to resolving conflicts between them and the settled community. It has identified the need for policies which respect cultural differences, rather than ones which seek to erode them in the name of the settled community's image of 'social improvement' or its administrative convenience.

The concept of ethnicity has already entered the public domain. There is disagreement, however, as to what it means and what it implies for policy making. The present volume grows out of a conference organised by the Anthropological Association of Ireland. The purpose of the conference was to provide a context in which new approaches to understanding Irish Travellers could be critically examined by academic researchers, Travellers, policy makers and the general public. The concept of ethnicity was at the heart of the matters discussed at the conference, although the issues raised go beyond it. The purpose of the book is to bring the contributions and debates to a wider audience. This introduction will first outline three theoretical and methodological principles that underlay the organisation of the conference and the selection of papers, before then looking at the issues raised.

One principle informing the organisation of the conference was the importance of comparison. A number of papers look at Irish Travellers in relation to Traveller and Gypsy groups in other European countries. Judith Okely looks at Traveller communities in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England and in relation to the evolution of wide cultural and political relationships within and between the two islands, while Donald Kenrick offers a broad panoramic view of different groups in other parts of Europe. Sinéad Ní Shúinéar and Alice Binchy draw attention to research in the United States on the descendants of Irish Travellers who emigrated there more than 150 years ago. The volume also offers a comparative perspective on approaches used in the study of Traveller communities. Thus, Thomas Acton classifies approaches in terms of the assumptions they make about the origins of Traveller groups, the biological and/or cultural factors underlying their persistence as groups, and the policy implications that follow.

A second organising principle of the conference was the importance of history and of change over time. Ideally, we would have liked to include a paper by a historian drawing on all available historical sources to reconstruct the history of Travellers in Ireland. Unfortunately, that history has yet to be written; even the relevant sources have yet to be identified. Ní Shúinéar identifies some of the issues which will arise in writing this history and offers some general hypotheses that might guide research. No more is possible at the present time. However, it should be borne in mind that the subjective component of ethnicity means that the claim to ethnic separateness rests primarily on contemporary culture and identity, not on historical origins. It is not therefore a question of historical "fact" to be resolved by historical investigation. The crucial question is how Irish Travellers understand their experience at the present time.

The third organising principle was the importance of dialogue and debate. Provision was made for critical responses to many of the papers at the conference. But differences in approach, perspective and conclusion emerged even when a formal response was not explicitly provided for. This is due in large measure to the wide range of groups who attended the conference – Travellers, academic researchers, policy makers, social service professionals, advocates and others. In consequence, the volume should not be read as the elaboration of just one perspective on Irish Travellers – that of ethnicity – but as a critical dialogue involving many perspectives.

We look now in closer detail at some of the major themes addressed by the contributors to the volume.

ETHNICITY

The widespread use of the concept of ethnicity is the clearest example of new thinking in relation to Irish Travellers. The concept is systematically applied to the case of Irish Travellers by two of the contributors to the present volume (Ní Shúinéar and O'Connell), but it permeates the thinking of most contributors. In the process, a number of issues are

thrown up, two of which merit individual comment: (i) the applicability of the term "ethnic group" to Irish Travellers, and (ii) the question of origins.

(i) Ní Shúinéar takes a standard anthropological definition (that of R. Narroll, as found in Barth, 1970) containing a number of criteria, which, when met, are claimed to identify a group as "ethnic". She applies these criteria to Irish Travellers and concludes that "we are dealing then with a group that fulfills all the objective criteria to qualify as an ethnic group" (p.60). O'Connell draws on a wider social science literature to point to some of the salient dimensions of ethnicity (its sociocultural character, involuntary membership, boundary maintenance). He then discusses Travellers as an ethnic group, assuming that the reader will accept the applicability of these dimensions to Irish Travellers. While Ní Shúinéar concentrates on objective characteristics, O'Connell stresses the subjective element and the fluidity of ethnicity ("ethnicity is something which is produced in historically specific contexts and it emerges, changes and adapts in meaning over time" p.111–2).

McLoughlin's is the only voice in the book which directly challenges the use of the term ethnicity in relation to Irish Travellers. This she does, firstly, by examining critically the criteria for ethnicity used by Ní Shúinéar and challenging the latter's interpretation of them. Secondly, she argues that to base a campaign for human rights on the special claim to ethnicity is to betray a conservative agenda (p.79). Better by far to recognise that society in the Republic of Ireland has been oppressively monolithic and that many minority groups have been denied full expression of their individuality (p.85ff.). Travellers would be better to view themselves as one minority among others and join in the broader fight for a more pluralist society.

McLoughlin is not alone, however, in identifying and criticising ideologies and regimes of "homogeneity and conformity" (p.86). O'Connell does likewise (p.114f.) in the Irish context, while Okely ("There is not – and cannot be a single, monolithic way of living in Europe . . ." p.1) and Acton do so in a broader, European, context. They differ, however, in

their assessment of what role the ethnic claim should play in working towards a more pluralist, less oppressive, society. In part, the issue comes down to one of definition: are Irish Travellers an ethnic group, a culture or a sub-culture? McLoughlin accepts that Travellers are "a distinct group within Irish society" (p.91) but disputes the claim to ethnicity, while O'Connell and most other contributors view them as an ethnic group with a distinct culture (see "Traveller Culture" below).

(ii) A second dimension of the ethnicity question is that of origins: if Irish Travellers are an ethnic group, when did they become so? Contributors differ over whether the question of origins should be put at all (see "Comparative Perspective" below) and, if it is, over the likely date for the emergence of Irish Travellers as an ethnic group.

Until recently, conventional wisdom held that Travellers derived from the Irish peasantry, from people dispossessed of their land and forced onto the roads from the time of Cromwell to the Irish famine (Ní Shúinéar summarises this view, p. 66). A distinct ethnic identity emerged gradually over time. This is the viewpoint offered, for example, by Sharon and George Gmelch, the first to formulate an argument for Traveller ethnicity (1976). None of the contributors to the present volume seems to find this periodisation acceptable. Ní Shúinéar hypothesises that Traveller origins should be sought in the early Irish historical period, either from a pre-Celtic group, from one of a number of Celtic groups, or from indigenous itinerant craftworkers of the early Christian period (p.70ff.). This is linked to her view of Gammon (the Traveller language) as very ancient and as underlying Traveller use of English. Travellers have maintained their ethnic separateness from the surrounding Irish society throughout the centuries, partly through language, through endogamy (marriage within the group), and through broader cultural differences.

In contrast, it could be inferred from Binchy's essay that she sees Traveller ethnicity as emerging at the present time. She introduces a Four Stage dynamic model which places groups on a continuum from acquiescence in their disadvantaged position (Stage One) to a point (Stage Four) of

challenge to the status quo and claim to ethnic separateness.
Some Travellers are now at Stage Three of this continuum,
unwilling to assimilate, protesting against the injustices of the
system and seeking to mobilise support for a positive social
identity (p.141ff). Kenny refers to the emergent conscious-
ness of nations, including that of Ireland at the beginning of
the twentieth century, and views ethnic groups also as emer-
gent phenomena. Her statement that "in the early days
of the Travellers' emergence as a people they were 'spoken
for' . . ." (p.183), implies the recent acquisition of that status.

Finally, while not devoting great detail to the history of
Irish Travellers, Acton implies that some Romany Gypsies
reached Ireland in the sixteenth century, to be absorbed by
an existing Irish Traveller Community (p.48).

TRAVELLER CULTURE

Closely related to the claim to ethnic status is the question of
Traveller culture. For many contributors the analytical start-
ing-point here is the rejection of the "culture of poverty"
approach. As Patricia McCarthy points out, this theory was
formulated by the anthropologist, Oscar Lewis, based on a
series of studies of the urban poor in Mexico. It sought to
account for the persistence of urban poverty by attributing it
(at least partly) to a culture which evolved among the poor,
which was passed down from generation to generation and
which was extremely difficult to break down. In her 1972
thesis Patricia McCarthy analysed Irish Travellers as a "cul-
ture of poverty". Within the social sciences the theory was
subsequently subjected to strenuous criticism and Patricia
McCarthy now views it as untenable.

"Culture of poverty" theory has been criticised for ignoring
the structural causes of poverty, i.e. the unbalanced power
relations in society, which keep various sectors of society,
(the urban poor, but also peasants, women and
ethnic minorities) bound in a situation of continued depriva-
tion. Its application to Irish Travellers has been criticised on
similar grounds (see "Traveller-Settled Community Relations"

below). However, it has also been rejected for assuming that Travellers are members of a "sub-culture" rather than a culture in its own right. McCarthy's essay in this volume argues the case. Ní Shúinéar's reference to Traveller's "fundamental cultural values" also assumes that they form a culture, rather than a sub-culture.

These values include nomadism, which we look at separately. They also include the patriarchal and extended family, independence and flexibility in economic adaptation, a resistance to wage labour in favour of self-employment, rituals surrounding death, and rituals of cleansing. These cultural elements are itemised by a range of contributors (Okely, Ní Shúinéar and McCarthy in particular), although, unfortunately, without in-depth ethnographic description. However, the comparative perspective introduced by Okely and Kenrick is important here. Okely points out that most of these characteristics are shared by English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish Travellers (p.8f.). Kenrick, having presented a welcome survey of other travelling groups in Europe, states that "there is no common deep culture shared by all the nomads of Europe or even by all the non-Romany groups" (p.28). But he allows some shared cultural characteristics, probably based on the necessity of travelling rather than on "a common origin and common set of beliefs" (*ibid*).

NOMADISM

Nomadism is an important topic in the contributions to this volume. Kenny describes it as "the core value of Traveller culture", identifying it as "not necessarily the intention to keep travelling, but the nomadic mindset" (p.180). Okely distinguishes the nomadism of Travellers from that of the classical hunter-gatherers and pastoral nomads described by anthropologists, in that Traveller society is closely interknit with the wider sedentary society (p.4f). Acton describes it as economic or commercial nomadism (e.g. p.37). While, in the past, tin-kering was a common economic activity, as is

scrap-dealing today, all the authors strongly reject the identi-
fication of Travellers with any specific occupation. They value,
above all, self-employment (McDonagh p.98) and flexibility in
identifying "gaps in the dominant system of supply and de-
mand" (Okely p.5) and the range of services Travellers offer is
very wide (see the interesting list given by Ní Shúinéar p.64f).

In addition to its economic function nomadism also serves
important psychological, social and cultural functions.
McDonagh suggests that the nomadic mind-set permeates
every aspect of Travellers' lives. "Nomadism entails a way of
looking at the world, a different way of perceiving things, a
different attitude to accommodation, to work, and to life in
general"(p.95). Moving into a house, for example, followed
by the growing realization that they may have to remain there
permanently, can be a "terrifying experience" (*ibid*).

Nomadism serves the social function of allowing small
family groups, which normally travel together, to meet a
wider range of kin so that news is shared and young people
can come into contact with a wide range of potential mar-
riage partners (McDonagh p.97). In contrast, when relations
become strained, moving away becomes a mechanism for
avoiding social tension. Attitudes to death and sexual moral-
ity are also affected by nomadism (Binchy p.150).

The importance of nomadism expresses itself in material
culture. Trailers and vans are important symbolically and
financially. As McCarthy points out, "Travellers spend their
money on what they can take with them when travelling and
therefore a very significant percent of their expenditure is on
transport – cars and vans and specifically on the kind of
transport that enables them to earn a living" (p.126). Jewel-
lery is also important: "Travellers carry their wealth by wear-
ing it" (McDonagh p.99).

Nomadism has also affected Traveller language. Speaking
of Gammon or Shelta, Binchy hypothesises that Traveller
language developed as it did because of nomadism (see
"Language" below). Kenny suggests that nomadism also af-
fects Traveller use of English; for example, the habitual use
of the verb "to go *on*", where we would say "to go", reveals a
Traveller mind-set (p.184).

Ironically, as Kenny points out, this core value of Traveller life has been "turned ... into a key instrument of their oppression, ensuring that forced movement is the only experience of nomadism most Travellers have" (p.180). A great deal of Michael McDonagh's discussion of "the real world" centres on the specifics of this oppression: prohibition orders, inferior accommodation, and the use of boulders, mounds of clay, rubble and deep trenches to hinder Traveller mobility (p.104ff.).

LANGUAGE

Most of the contributors refer to Traveller language in some context, but two are devoted specifically to the topic (Binchy and Ó Baoill). They make substantial contributions to what is, sadly, a neglected topic. The focus of both is on Gammon or Cant (Shelta – a non-Traveller term – is used by Binchy), with passing reference to Traveller use of Hiberno or Irish English.

Binchy outlines how, at the end of the last century, academic members of the settled community in England became aware of the existence of Gammon. It became the object of folkloristic and linguistic studies, opinions differing as to whether it was an ancient or relatively modern language. She deals also with another old debate – whether Gammon is a "secret" language – and examines it in the context of Travellers as a marginal, oppressed, group, similar to refugees or emigrants. She argues that Gammon is a crucial "ethnic marker" for Travellers, including for a community of American Travellers, descendants of Irish Travellers who migrated to the United States at the time of the Famine. It is in this context that she draws on the Four Stage dynamic model on linguistic strategies adopted in intergroup relations, in order to locate Travellers on a continuum of growing group awareness. Stage Three, where she places some Travellers, involves efforts to achieve "a more positive social identity", with emphasis on the "ethnic language" (p.141ff).

Both Binchy and Ó Baoill try to place Gammon in relation to classifications current among linguists. Pidgins, creoles

and social registers are discussed, though it emerges that none fits exactly. "Its grammar and syntactic structure is overwhelmingly English...", writes Ó Baoill, "but a substantial part of its vocabulary and idioms are unrecognisable as anything remotely English." It is used for communication *within* a definite group and from the cradle. Clearly, Gammon's failure to develop a grammar of its own is a major puzzle for the linguist. Binchy suggests the effect of nomadism:

> *"The social setting of Shelta is small family groups, nomadic islands in a sedentary sea, signalling to each other across that sea, and united by the collection of habits and dispositions that we call Traveller culture. The hypothesis is that the dispersion caused by nomadic habits has caused the language to develop as it has. In the present system, lexicon is the ethnic marker, and grammar represents the part of life shared with settled society. " (p.150)*

Ó Baoill addresses a number of other crucial issues. The first is the period of origin of Gammon. His conclusion is that "the Cant must have been created at a time when its original speakers were bilingual, having a knowledge of both Irish and English. This would seem to date the creation as sometime in the last 350 years or so" (p.160).

A second issue for Ó Baoill is why Gammon appears to have fossilized, i.e. is not now generating new words and idioms. Not only are new words not being generated, the existing store seems to be declining. However, the reader gets conflicting signals on this from different contributors. Binchy writes that "the range of Shelta lexicon, as well as direct fieldwork evidence, are indicators that Shelta has a wider usage than was previously thought" (p.137). For McCarthy: "Travellers' language, Cant or Gammon, is still widely understood but not widely used anymore. My impression is that a fairly restricted number of words and phrases is still in common usage" (p.126). Ní Shúinéar cites Harper's opinion that the average Gammon vocabulary of Georgia Travellers aged 35 and over was 150 words, and half that for the younger generation (p.65f). Ó Baoill believes the same to be true of Irish Travellers.

This brings him to a third issue, that of the future of Gammon. He writes:

"In conclusion, may I add that what is really important now is not the origin of Cant, whatever it may be, but its FUTURE. In this respect Travellers themselves must decide how they want it developed, cultivated, taught in schools and extended in away that will make it an integral part of their own self-identity in every sphere of their daily lives" (p.168).

He includes in his essay some concrete suggestions for research into Traveller language, aimed at strengthening its role in relation to Traveller identity.

Closely related to the discussion of Gammon is that of Travellers' use of English, especially Irish English or Hiberno English. Ó Baoill introduces the topic with a series of questions:

"Do Travellers use different varieties of English in their everyday communication, and if they do, how do they (these varieties) interact and, more importantly, what are the social functions that are attached to each variety? Where then does Traveller's Cant fit into the scheme of things? When the Cant is avoided what takes its place — general Irish English, non-standard Irish English, standard English? We know very little about such matters at the present time" (p.162).

Binchy suggests that Travellers, like emigrants, learn only enough of the language of the host society (English in the case of Travellers) to make themselves understood. Gammon is reserved for intra-group communication, where it fulfils the integrative, expressive and directive functions of language as opposed to the propositional or referential.

Two final points on language. The first is the extent, if any, of Romani words in Traveller language. The possibility is mentioned by Acton (pp. 38–9) but not discussed in the papers devoted specifically to language. The second is to draw attention, as Kenny does, to the existence of ethnocentric usages in the language used by settled people. Indeed,

she prefers the term "sedentary" over "settled" because of the loaded value content of the latter.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Two of the contributors, Okely and Acton, make a special plea for a comparative approach to the topic of Irish Travellers, though from different points of view. Okely focuses on the ethnocentric labellings made by members of the dominant society, especially the classification of travelling people into romantically-conceived exotic Romanies, on the one hand, and "drop-out" Tinkers, on the other. This type of labelling, she argues, tells us more about the biases of the dominant society than it does about historical realities. The process of labelling and its significance might not be adverted to if one were to focus exclusively on Irish Travellers. It can only be recognised for what it is by seeing its contrasting application to "Romany" Gypsies and to Irish, English, Scottish and Welsh "tinkers". In her repudiation of the quest for Indian origins and racial purity, Okely tends to stress characteristics which all Traveller-Gypsies share (p.8f) and she comes close to rejecting a historical approach as well as a focus on cultural differences between different groups of Traveller-Gypsies.

Acton's plea for a comparative approach rests on a different argument. He argues that an over-focus on local identities diverts attention away from the shared fate of European Gypsy-Travellers historically – to our peril. His thesis is that there was an influx of Gypsy-Travellers from India at an identifiable period in European history; that a trans-European commercial nomadism flourished for some time subsequently, in which Irish Travellers participated; and that a major genocide of Gypsy-Travellers took place, connected with the emergence of agricultural capitalism and the nation-state (the late Tudor period in England). During this period vagrants and foreigners became prime targets, and Gypsies were both. In response, Gypsy-Travellers could only survive by becoming localized, taking on local identities and patrons, within the new political units. Today, we need to undergo the cathartic exercise of admitting the 16th century

holocaust, in order to help divest ourselves of our racist myths. An exclusive focus on local Traveller identities hinders this process.

Kenrick's paper gives the reader detailed pen-sketches of the range of groups in mainland Europe who are similar to Irish Travellers. He is more comfortable with the Romany/non-Romany distinction than is Okely. His survey covers different national groups (Jenisch, Mercheros, Reisende etc.) and contrasting cultural practices associated, for example, with death, marriage and language. Where cultural characteristics are common to different groups (e.g. "the extreme attention to cleanliness of food and clothing"), he suggests that this is "more likely due to the necessity for this when travelling, than to a common origin and common set of beliefs" (p.28). Because of their shared nomadism, he believes that "in their way of life Irish Travellers are closer to nomadic Romany groups than the latter are to sedentary Romany groups"(p.30).

TRAVELLER-SETTLED COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Another change in perspective illustrated in this volume relates to Traveller-settled community relationships. At one time those in the settled community concerned with Traveller issues viewed Travellers as a poverty-group in need of help towards assimilation. Binchy (p.143) illustrates this well: "The original Itinerant Settlement Commission, set up in the early 1960s [had].. the avowed aim of assimilating Travellers into the settled community: 'it is not considered that there is any alternative to a positive drive for housing itinerants, if a permanent solution to the problem of itinerancy, based on absorption and integration, is to be achieved.'" (Report of the Commission on Itinerancy, 1963 p.62). The newer approach, focuses on Traveller culture and identity, appeals for justice rather than charity, and charges the dominant settled community with bias and discrimination.

Okely, for example, begins her essay with the anthropological concept of ethnocentrism, "the tendency to judge and value everyone else's way of life by one's own" (p.1). She

refers to the growing practice among anthropologists of "study-
ing up", i.e. looking at the "dominant power structures"
operating in society (p.2). She discusses the topic of Travel-
ler-Gypsies in Great Britain and Ireland using the concept of
"internal colonialism".

> *"My intention is to demonstrate that the perception of Irish Travel-
> lers even within Ireland needs to be examined in a context beyond its
> shores. The ways in which Irish, Scottish, Welsh or English Travellers
> are labelled are part of an interlocking pattern and linked to internal
> colonialism" (pp. 3-4).*

She argues that various theories of Traveller or Gypsy origin
have much more to do with the needs of settled community
theorists than with historical fact. For example, the suggestion
that there are genuine pure-blooded Gypsies, of Indian origin,
as opposed to unauthentic drop-outs, Tinkers etc. is a reflec-
tion of the dominant society's need to project its longings onto
'other' imaginary peoples (p.6). And:

> *"The question arises why local origins have been seen as positive in
> the Irish and Scottish cases, but not in the English and Welsh cases?
> The answer lies in the historical circumstances of internal colonial-
> ism" (p.14).*

There is also cause for reflection in Kenny's observation that,
even in the conference from which the present volume de-
rives, "the agenda of the sedentary dominated" (p.181). On
the other hand, one of the hopeful signs of recent years has
been the strengthening of the Traveller voice and of Travel-
ler action, as evidenced by the emergence of the Irish Travel-
ler Movement (McDonagh p.108). Kenny lists other develop-
ments, such as Traveller pilgrimages, radio programmes, and
the national Traveller Women's Forum (p.187).

POLICY

Many of the contributors criticise current government
policies as deriving from an assimilationist or "Traveller-
as-problem" viewpoint. In contrast, the policies they advocate
derive from their acceptance of the Traveller way of life as a

distinct and valuable cultural alternative. Noonan, for example, criticises the Northern Ireland Department of the Environment's "Toleration Policy" (p.172) as well as the guiding viewpoint of the Government Report on Travelling People (p.174). Both reflect the unwillingness of officialdom to take Traveller ethnic status seriously (p.170). On the other hand, positive precedents are to be found in provisions of the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights, which does take the issue of ethnicity seriously (p.175ff.).

Collins suggests that a submerged theoretical approach – akin to the "(sub-)culture of poverty theory" – guides the actions of officials, even when they do not consciously recognise the fact. "They sometimes admit that they do not recognise Travellers as having a distinct cultural identity". This is implicit in the refusal of officials to recognise economically successful Travellers as Travellers, since they are not poor by definition (McDonagh p.106). The consequence of a policy that aims to "help" Travellers to "integrate" into the "community", says McDonagh, is that: "the system makes people dependent on it, taking pride and independence away with one hand and giving the dole and second-hand clothes with the other" (p.107).

The implications are clearly spelt out by Kenny:

"Our difficulty with Traveller economy and accommodation is linked to failure to legitimise nomadism itself: this is evident in the chronic failure to take commercial nomadism as an economic way of life into account in the location of sites. In order to understand and act appropriately, we need to listen to Travellers, but this includes recognising the silencing of their traditions which their delegitimation has imposed: as an integral part of listening we must allow them opportunities to undo internal and internalised colonialism, we must return to them the space to come to terms with their experience and to find their voice" (p.185).

CONCLUSION

Substantial areas of agreement may be found in the contributions to this volume. The most notable agreement is on the

need to recognise Travellers as a distinct cultural minority, with all the practical consequences of such recognition for the dominant settled community, including policy makers. But there is also disagreement: on the relevance of the ethnic claim to minority rights, on the history of Traveller language and the emergence of Travellers as a distinct group, on the pertinence of historical questions as such, on the linguistic nature and extent of usage of Gammon or Shelta.

Whatever one's position on these disputed issues, they point to the need for further ethnographic, historical and linguistic research. But, as pointed out earlier, the subjective nature of ethnicity means that the claim to ethnic distinctiveness (or to human and civic rights) is not something to be denied until "validated" by such research. Finally, it is hoped that the present volume will highlight the need both for further research and for the recognition of the Traveller lifestyle as a distinct and valuable cultural alternative in its own right.

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